

# Introduction to Background Checks

# What does the subject want?

What claims are the sources/subjects making -- explicitly or implicitly?

Example: Charitable purpose?

# Finding the right person

Get the person's full name, including middle initial and correct spellings!

Get the person's date of birth, if possible.

# What to check?

Depends on:

- context of story
- time and resources available

Simple checks can be done in minutes or even seconds.

Complex checks take longer and may cost money.

Who is your subject? Do they own a business? Have a license? Where do they live?

# Basics

Google!

Example: Jairo Osorno

Check the clips! Never walk in cold!  
(Newsbank or Nexis)

# Court records

How many courts do we have?

State/federal

Criminal/civil/bankruptcy

Related: Recorded documents

# Example: Miami-Dade Clerk of Courts

What is a "clerk of courts"?

Counties and state judicial circuits -- not all the same

In Miami-Dade: Three most common searches:

- Civil
- Criminal
- Recorded documents

Miami-Dade Clerk of Courts

[http://www.miami-dadeclerk.com/online\\_services.asp](http://www.miami-dadeclerk.com/online_services.asp)

(Other counties are similar but recorded docs may be

# Federal Courts: PACER

Civil/criminal and bankruptcy

National or local search available

[www.pacer.gov](http://www.pacer.gov)

Getting records may cost money.



# FDLE

What is FDLE?

What records does it include?

What does it NOT include?

<https://web.fdle.state.fl.us/search/app/default>

# Property Records

Remember: It depends on location!

## Miami-Dade Examples

What property does the subject own?

Miami-Dade property records:

<http://gisims2.miamidade.gov/myhome/propmap.asp>

Did the subject pay its property taxes?

Miami-Dade Tax Collector:

<http://www.miamidade.gov/proptax/>

# Professional Licenses

Many types. Two common Florida searches --

Florida DBPR:

<https://www.myfloridalicense.com/wl11.asp?mode=0&SID=>

Florida Bar:

[floridabar.org](http://floridabar.org)

# Business Ownership

In most states, records kept by an agency with name like "Secretary of State, Division of Corporations"

Florida: [sunbiz.org](http://sunbiz.org)

What is a "nonprofit" corporation?

Other terminology -- you may have to do more reporting!

# Nonprofit Organizations

-- Determined by IRS, not state.

IRS: <http://apps.irs.gov/app/eos/>

[guidestar.org](http://guidestar.org)

-- IRS Form 990

# College degrees

-- Sometimes you can just call the school

National Student Clearinghouse: <http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/ddev/default.htm>