

Statement from Outreach Associates Regarding Employment Questions

Since its inception in 1991, Outreach Associates has prided itself in offering a second chance to qualified individuals for whom employment is a challenge. These include people with disabilities, a history of drug and alcohol abuse, or troubles with the law. In fact, in 2005, Goodwill Industries honored the company with its Power to Work Award for its dedication to lending a helping hand to these individuals, underscoring the proactive nature of our initiative.

However, it has been brought to our attention that in Pennsylvania, individuals who have been convicted of a serious misdemeanor or felony offense of any kind cannot be involved in fundraising for nonprofit organizations. Among our current 150 employees, we determined that nine employees fall into this category. Upon receiving the information, we suspended all nine in compliance with accepted labor relations practices, and launched an exhaustive investigation, which is currently underway. If additional employees are found to be in violation of the Pennsylvania statute, they will be suspended pending investigation.

With regard to hiring individuals with felony and serious misdemeanor backgrounds, we were erroneously advised by legal counsel that if an offense was committed more than seven years previous and was not work-related, it was to be considered satisfied. That was simply not the case; in Pennsylvania, it is one strike and you're out. However, ignorance of the law is not an excuse and we will do whatever is required to bring Outreach Associates into compliance.

Historically, Outreach Associates conducted background checks on each of our employees, focusing on Allegheny County. More recently, the company expanded its checks nationally. While we did uncover evidence of past legal difficulties, we were operating under the false assumption that since these individuals had been rehabilitated and were at least seven years past their conviction, they were okayed for employment. Clearly we were wrong.

Part of our current investigation concerns our compliance with Pennsylvania laws and regulations. We have contacted the Pennsylvania Department of State and are working with them to determine if sanctions or penalties might accrue to Outreach Associates. Our goal is to remedy the situation as quickly as possible.

Outreach Associates has raised tens of millions of dollars for dozens of local, regional and national organizations representing animal welfare, civil rights, medicine, public broadcasting, and educational institutions. Our clients have expressed extreme satisfaction with work done on their behalf. There has never been a hint of any activity that was less than 100 percent ethical nor has the Department of State ever questioned any of our campaigns.

Fundraising is one of the most transparent activities in Pennsylvania today. Solicitors and fundraising counsel must be registered and bonded by the Commonwealth. A fee, which accompanies a detailed description of each campaign, must be paid. All information is a matter of public record and easily accessible through the Pennsylvania Department of State.

About Outreach Associates

Outreach Associates is the sister company of Share Group, Watershed and The Legacy Giving Group, a family of fundraising companies owned by IFMS, a privately held company headquartered in Boston. Outreach Associates was acquired by IFMS in 2003.

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