



Volunteer FAQs

About Sterling Volunteers

- **What is Sterling Volunteers?**

Sterling Volunteers offers screening services to nonprofits and volunteer programs all across the country. We are the only screening provider that allows volunteers to own and share their background check with multiple nonprofits in a safe, tamper-free environment.

- **How do I “Get Sterling”? I’m interested in getting screened and finding an organization.**

Each organization operates under its own set of guidelines and procedures, which need to be understood and respected. To ensure a smooth process, it is recommended you work directly with the organization you wish to volunteer with. This approach will help you gain clarity on their specific policies and requirements, which can vary significantly.

- **What if my background is being checked? What are my rights?**

The Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions (FACT) Act was enacted in 2003 and amends the Fair Credit Reporting Act. The FACT Act entitles consumers to obtain one free copy of their consumer files from certain consumer reporting agencies during each 12-month period.

If Sterling Volunteers has prepared a consumer report or investigative consumer report in your name for one or clients, you may request a free copy of the report(s) in your file. For detailed information, please review your background report on the Sterling Volunteers portal at www.SterlingVolunteers.com.

Technical Concerns

- **Which browser should I use to access the web portal?**

Some browsers will not work properly with the Sterling Volunteers website. For the best possible viewing experience, please use Internet Explorer 9 (IE9) or later or the latest versions of Chrome, Firefox or Safari. If you choose to use an alternate browser or a tablet, some content may be skewed or unavailable.

- **Why do I need a username and password?**

When a candidate gets screened through Sterling Volunteers, they are actually joining the Sterling Volunteers community. That means they can re-enter the platform at any time, check the status of their background check, view the background check report itself, share with new organizations, and more. Without a username and password, this type of access and control would not be possible.

- **What is a “GOOD DEED Code”?**

A GOOD DEED Code is a code provided to the candidate by their prospective volunteer organization or employer. When entered into the Sterling Volunteers system, it will connect the candidate with the organization, and the system will automatically know what level of check to order, the pricing, etc.

- **Can I upgrade my search?**

Unfortunately due to compliance reasons, there is not a way to upgrade an existing check. If a more in-depth check is required, a new order must be placed at the required level.



- **How do I change my username?**

You cannot change your username within our system.

- **How do I change my password?**

Once you have logged into your account, click on "Edit Profile". From there, click on "Login/Pass". Here you can select to edit your password. If you have set up your screening questions, then you will be asked to answer one of them to verify your identity.

Please note that you will be required to change your password annually. This is to add an additional security layer within our platform to continuously meet or exceed industry standards.

- **What do I do if I forgot my password?**

If you have forgotten your password, click the Forgot Password link on the login screen. Simply enter your username on the Forgot Password screen and we will send an email with a temporary password to the email address associated with that username. Once you use that temporary password to log in, you'll be prompted to set a new password.

- **What do I do if I forgot my Username?**

You need to call The Advocates so that they can verify your identity. Please call or 1-855-326-1860, Option 3.

- **Who are the Advocates?**

The Advocates are the Sterling Volunteers customer care team. They are available via phone and email to all Sterling Volunteers community members – volunteers and organizations – and can help with platform-usage questions and general inquiries. They can be reached at TheAdvocates@SterlingVolunteers.com or 1-855-326-1860, Option 3.

Security and Privacy Concerns

- **Do you sell my information to 3rd parties?**

We will not share your Personal Information with third party marketers for direct marketing purposes. We use and may share the information to provide and improve the Site and the Services; deliver correspondence, communications, or services, such as newsletters, events or training; solicit your feedback, and inform you about the Site and the Services, our products and services and the products and services of our promotional partners.

- **Why are my DOB and SSN required?**

There are three pieces of information needed for an accurate, thorough background check: 1) legal first name and legal last name, correctly spelled; 2) date of birth; and 3) Social Security Number (SSN)*. ** The SSN is only required for the Complete Search and our Locator Select product. It is optional on the Basic & Advanced searches.*

- **I have questions on my report. Who should I call?**

Call The Advocates at 1-855-326-1860, Option 3. We are here to help.



Organization FAQs

About Sterling Volunteers

- **What is Sterling Volunteers?**

Sterling Volunteers offers screening services to nonprofits and volunteer programs all across the country. We are the only screening provider that allows candidates to own and share their background check with multiple nonprofits in a safe, tamper-free environment. And because we put candidates in charge of their own check, we save the nonprofit organizations we serve time and the headaches associated with screening administration.

- **What packages are offered in Sterling Volunteers?**

We currently offer an Advanced Package as well as a Complete Package to our clients. Contact us for details on what these packages include. We also currently offer products like driving records, credit reports, Office of Inspector General (OIG), Locator Select, FACIS, Federal Civil, Federal Criminal, Global searches, ID Confirm, Abuse Registries and personal references on an a la carte basis.

- **What searches should I run on my candidate?**

It depends on your organization and what type of role your candidate will play. We always recommend the most robust searches for those working directly with vulnerable populations such as the elderly, disabled or children. We can help talk you through best practices and your options. Contact us at 1-855-326-1860, Option 1 or info@Sterlingvolunteers.com.

- **How long will the search take?**

The majority of searches will be returned in 48-72 hours, although that is not a guarantee. In some cases, especially if we find criminal information or if a candidate has lived in multiple jurisdictions, the search can take a bit longer.

- **Can I just receive shared checks instead of becoming a Sterling Volunteers client?**

In order to fully take advantage of the Sterling Volunteers service and all of its benefits, it is in your best interest to sign up with Sterling Volunteers. It's free to do so, and it will allow you to use our free volunteer management software, view complete background checks, and manage renewals and more. If you do not join the Sterling Volunteers service, then you will receive a summary of the report only.

Making Sterling Volunteers Work for Your Organization

- **Who determines whether someone is eligible or ineligible to volunteer or work for my organization?**

As the organization, you are responsible for determining the fitness of all screened candidates. Sterling Volunteers does not establish, recommend, evaluate or verify the suitability or legality of any custom evaluation criteria nor does Sterling Volunteers make the final decision regarding eligibility for volunteer service or work requirements.



- **How do I adjudicate results?**

You can view this video to learn how to adjudicate results. <https://vimeo.com/111907896> You can access the report information under the "Review Background Checks" tab.

- **What does "unperformable" mean?**

Certain reports will be returned as "unperformable" if we were unable to process the search. This is typically caused by invalid order information, i.e. An incorrect drivers license number or if additional information was requested and not provided by the candidate. The background check report will show 'unperformable' with a yellow exclamation point or icon if there is an unperformable product.

- **Will I be alerted if one of my candidates has a new record when the monthly updates are run?**

Yes, for the first year we will run monthly updates and send an alert if a record shows up on any of the candidates within your organization. If there are no hits, you will not be notified. After a year, provided the complete background check is re-run, we will continue to run the monthly updates and send you alerts if necessary.

- **What is a "GOOD DEED Code"?**

A GOOD DEED Code is a code provided to the candidate by their prospective organization. When entered into the Sterling Volunteers system, it will connect the candidate with the organization, and the system will automatically know what level of check to order, the pricing, etc.

- **How do I send an e-invite?**

Inviting candidates to become part of your candidate pool is simple. You can choose to send an invitation using the Communications dropdown menu from your Candidate Management dashboard. You can upload a large list of candidates to your dashboard and send a batch invitation. Or Sterling Volunteers can provide you with a GOOD DEED Code for your candidates to enter when they begin their background check order process. To learn more about any of these options, please contact The Advocates at theadvocates@Sterlingvolunteers.com or 1-855-326-1860, Option 1.

- **My candidate did not receive their invitation. How can I resend it?**

It is easy to resend the invitation using the "Resend" button. Please also refer to your [Training Guide](#) or call The Advocates at 1-855-326-1860, Option 1.

- **My candidate states that their report is incorrect. How can they dispute it?**

Have them call The Advocates at 1-855-326-1860, Option 3. We can help them and will walk them through our Adverse Action process. If there is a valid error, we can also help them clear up the incorrect record.

- **Can a candidate upgrade their search?**

Unfortunately due to compliance reasons, there is not a way to upgrade an existing check. If a more in-depth check is required, a new order must be placed at the required level.

- **I want to "renew" my candidate background checks each year. Can I do that on this platform?**

Of course! We've made it easy to monitor your candidates. You can set the renewal time by position. The system will then alert you when your candidate background check is about to expire and can send your



candidates an email asking them to renew. You can also do a bulk upload of candidate renewals. Of course, you can change the payment options for renewal too.

- **Can I order products a la carte?**

Yes! We currently offer driving records, credit reports, Office of Inspector General (OIG), Locator Select, FACIS, Federal Civil, Federal Criminal, Global searches, ID Confirm, Abuse Registries and personal references on an a la carte basis.

- **Are a la carte products shareable?**

In order to maintain our strict compliance standards, some of these products are not shareable. The Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) limits the sharing of credit reports, driving records and personal references. The Driver Policy Protection Act limits the share-ability of driving records.

- **Do you offer Abuse Registries and/or fingerprinting?**

Sterling Volunteers offers solutions to most screening requirements to meet state and regulatory requirements. Please contact us at TheAdvocates@SterlingVolunteers.com or 1-855-326-1860, Option 1 if you have any questions.

- **How do I pay for my invoice?**

You will be billed at the end of each month. You can pay via check or credit card by emailing accounting@SterlingVolunteers.com.

- **How do I find out if my candidates contributed?**

Candidate contribution information can be accessed from the "Reports" tab on the dashboard. Additionally on the dashboard you can add the 'Payment' column to view what volunteers have contributed.

- **What is an access fee?**

Certain state and county courts charge access fees to obtain criminal history information. Like any other provider running real background checks, at Sterling Volunteers these fees are separate from the base cost of the background check. They are passed along at cost to whoever is responsible for the cost of the background check (the organization or the candidate). We never mark these fees up. NOTE: Currently, fees are charged for state searches in 6 states and approximately 3-4% of the 3,800 counties. The number of locations that charge fees – and the amounts of those fees – is subject to change. Before charging access fees, we apply our Smart Order Builder Technology. This technology takes into account a rigorous evaluation of various county and state data sources and chooses the source that provides the most comprehensive data at the lowest cost.

- **What is the difference between a database Sex Offender search and the Department of Justice (DOJ) National Sex Offender Search (Dru Sjodin/NSOPW)?**

The DOJ Sex Offender Search / National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPW) is a comprehensive nationwide sex offender search – it is the only up-to-date, comprehensive source of sex offender information. Database sex offender searches, on the other hand, are updated intermittently and inconsistently by the various states. While the NSOPW is maintained by the U.S. Department of Justice, it is the responsibility of each jurisdiction in the United States to keep sex offender information for their area accurate, up-to-date, and accessible by the NSOPW. Sex offenders are not reportable under Nevada state law, so Sterling Volunteers is not able to return

results for offenders registered in Nevada. Oregon only reports information for those sex offenders considered to be “predatory.”

- **What is a “Nationwide Criminal History Search with Validation”?**

A Nationwide Criminal History search uses the full name and date of birth provided by the candidate during the order process to search over 900 criminal information data sources from all 50 states. Although this sounds comprehensive, the quality and breadth of data varies by state, and is limited for over 2/3 of the nation’s states (defined by limited data sources or stale information updated infrequently). At Sterling Volunteers, we recognize the limitations of this search. Still, it’s a valuable locator tool that helps us identify areas outside of address history where criminal history might have occurred – areas where the candidate has worked, travelled or played. We always validate potential matches found in the Nationwide Criminal History search at the primary source of information (county or state courthouses) for criminal history records. This helps us ensure clients that the data reported about their candidates is the most accurate and up-to-date possible.

- **How do I leave or provide feedback while using the site?**

A blue question mark is displayed in the lower right hand corner of each page of the platform. When you select the icon, you or your candidates will have the option to leave comments or concerns, as well as capture and submit screenshots of the page you’re on.

Technical Concerns

- **Which browser should I use to access the web portal?**

Some browsers will not work properly with the Sterling Volunteers website. For the best possible viewing experience, please use Internet Explorer 9 (IE9) or later or the latest versions of Chrome, Firefox or Safari. If you choose to use an alternate browser or a tablet, some content may be skewed or unavailable.

- **Can I download or print my candidate’s background check?**

Yes, you as the organization may print or download your candidate’s background check. In order to do so, navigate to the background check report view. Then, select the printer icon in the upper left corner to either print or print to a PDF to save. (The report format may be slightly altered, but all of the information will be viewable.)

- **How do I change my username?**

You cannot change your username within our system.

- **How do I change my password?**

Once you have logged into your account, click on “Edit Profile”. From there, click on “Login/Pass”. Here you can select to edit your password. If you have set up your screening questions, then you will be asked to answer one of them to verify your identity.

Please note that to add an additional security layer within our platform and to continuously meet or exceed industry standards, organization’s passwords are now required to be changed every 90 days. Additionally, volunteers/employees will be required to update their password once a year.



- **What do I do if I forgot my password?**

If you have forgotten your password, click the Forgot Password link on the login screen. Simply enter your username on the Forgot Password screen and we will send an email with a temporary password to the email address associated with that username. Once you use that temporary password to log in, you'll be prompted to set a new password.

- **What do I do if I forgot my Username?**

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Security and Privacy Concerns

- **Does a candidate have to consent to a background check?**

Yes. Certain state laws and the Fair Credit Reporting Act, a federal law that regulates who is permitted to access your consumer report information and how it can be used, generally require that you must obtain written or electronic consent from the candidate prior to a third-party screening company like Sterling Volunteers conducting any criminal record search, credit history check or reference check.

- **Who are the Advocates?**

The Advocates are the Sterling Volunteers customer care team. They are available via phone and email to all Sterling Volunteers community members – volunteers and organizations – and can help with platform-usage questions and general inquiries. They can be reached at TheAdvocates@SterlingVolunteers.com or 1-855-326-1860, Option 1.

- **Does VV resell the information collected on the candidates to 3rd parties?**

We will not share Personal Information with third party marketers for direct marketing purposes. We use and may share the information to provide and improve the Site and the Services; deliver correspondence, communications, or services, such as newsletters, events or training; solicit feedback, and inform users about the Site and the Services, our products and services and the products and services of our promotional partners. Additional information can be found in our [Privacy Policy](#).

- **How secure is the website used to collect information on the candidates?**

The Sterling Volunteers platform is extremely secure. Sterling Volunteers complies with all national and local regulations with respect to the storage and transmission of sensitive data and is hosted in ISO 27001-audited data centers. The Sterling Volunteers platform is audited regularly throughout the year with external vendors. These audits include a network perimeter security assessment, an application penetration test and a physical security assessment.

- **How can I make sure my background checks are legal?**

At Sterling Volunteers, compliance is our expertise. Our background checks comply with all federal and state background screening laws, and our compliance team always stays on top of each state's current and pending



legislative and regulatory changes. Sterling Volunteer's automated screening technology also applies relevant content filters based on the state and location of background check, ensuring that every screening we do is 100% compliant.