# Volunteer FAQs

**Q.      What is Sterling Volunteers?**

**A.**      Sterling Volunteers offers volunteer screening services to nonprofits and volunteer programs 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. This results in significant savings for organizations, their volunteers, and the communities they serve.

Sterling Volunteers provides a secure online volunteer screening platform that allows you, the volunteer, to enter and control your information when ordering a background check.

**Q.      Why would I need to complete training and a background check and where do I go to do it?**

**A.**      Training and a background check are required by AEC for church members who volunteer at the local church level to work with minors or handle church funds. The training and background check is thru Sterling Volunteers.

Please log into the Sterling Volunteers' site to complete the training and background check by accessing the following website:

**https://www.ncsrisk.org/adventist**

If you have any questions, please contact Kelly Strickland at 610-326-4610 ext. 330 or you may e-mail her at kstrickland@aecsda.com.

**Q.      How secure is the website used to collect information on the volunteers?**

**A.**      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.

**Q. Does a volunteer applicant have to consent to a background check?**

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

**Q. How much does background screening cost?**

**A.** At this point, the churches or volunteers are not paying anything. When a volunteer registers in Sterling Volunteers there will be a screen that allows the volunteer to contribute to help offset the cost of their training and background check; however, contribution is not mandatory to complete the training and background check.

**Q. What does a typical background check consist of?**

**A.** The typical background check is meant to verify whether the volunteer is being truthful about not/having a criminal record. Criminal record searches and reference checks are the most common background checks. While database searches are the most common type of volunteer background check, Sterling Volunteers runs county/state criminal record searches to supplement often incomplete and out-of-date databases. The database searches Sterling Volunteers runs are always validated to ensure they provide you with the most accurate information.

**Q. What information is required for an accurate, thorough background check?**

**A.** Three things: 1) first name and last name correctly spelled and exactly as it appears on your birth certificate or other legal documentation (i.e. no nicknames or shortened names); 2) date of birth; and 3) Social Security Number (SSN).

**Q. Why is a Social Security Number (SSN) trace so important?**

**A.** While a Social Security Number isn't required to run most criminal record checks, Sterling Volunteers' Complete Criminal Locator uses SSN trace to automatically find and search up to 20% more criminal records than other volunteer background screening vendors. This ensures that they provide volunteer organizations with the most comprehensive volunteer screening results possible to help protect their people and their missions.

**Q.**   **How long does a background check usually take?**

**A.**   We often use the term Turnaround Time (TAT) to describe how long a background check takes. The TAT can vary significantly based on the types of searches conducted in the check and on the vendor that provides them. Sterling Volunteers can claim the fastest TAT in the industry for county courthouse records – the most common background check for volunteers. The majority of searches will be returned in 24 to 72 hours. In some cases, especially if we find criminal information or if a volunteer has lived in multiple jurisdictions, the search can take a bit longer.

**Q.**   **If my background is being checked what are my rights?**

**A.**   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 background screening report in your name for our client, you have access to that report at any time via Sterling Volunteers' platform. Log in to your account to read your report.

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

**A.**   At Sterling Volunteers, compliance is our expertise. Our background checks comply with all federal and state background screening laws, and our compliance team 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 each volunteer background check, ensuring that every screening we do is 100% compliant with all applicable regulations.

**Q.**   **Do you sell my information to 3rd parties?**

**A.**   We will not share your personal information with third party marketers for direct marketing purposes. We may use and share the information internally 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.

**Q.**   **How often must a volunteer complete training and a background check?**

**A.**   AEC's current policy states "every three (3) years."

**Q.** **What happens if a volunteer does not want to complete the required training and background check?**

**A.** There are other ministries that they will be able to assist with; however, they will not be able to work with minors [which are defined as a person who has not yet reached their 18th birthday] or with their local church treasury department.

**Q.** **Who determines whether someone is eligible or ineligible to volunteer at my church?**

**A.** Allegheny East Conference is responsible for determining the fitness of all screened volunteers. 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.

**Q.** **I serve as clerk at my church and am responsible for reporting whether our volunteers have completed Sterling Volunteers. How do I know if all the volunteers in my church who are required to do so have completed Sterling Volunteers?**

**A.** Once you have completed Sterling Volunteers, please send an e-mail to Kelly Strickland at kstrickland@aecsda.com notifying her of the same. You be given administrative rights to run compliance reports for your church. After the request is made, access is usually granted within 48-72 hours.

**Q.** **Because I am the church clerk, I have been asked to find out who is compliant and who is not. How do I run compliance reports for my church?**

**A.** Login into https://www.ncsrisk.org by using the **user ID** and **password** that you created at the time of your registration then select the ***ADMINISTRATION*** tab:

- Under ***Reports*** select ***Training Reports*** to run a report on who have completed the required course, "Child Protection Online Awareness Session."
- Under ***Reports*** select ***Background Checks*** to run a report listing volunteers who have completed the background check process.