

University of Illinois Extension

Background Screening and Sterling Volunteers



What are Illinois Extension policies for volunteer background screening?

Background screening is a requirement to provide liability insurance coverage as part of Illinois Extension's risk management plan and includes the following processes and checks:

- Completed Illinois Extension volunteer application with three references
- Interviews
- Reference checks
- National background check by Sterling Volunteers
- Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System (CANTS) check through DCFS
- Registered sex offender check
- Driver authorization for adult volunteers (ages 21 and above) who will be required to drive as part of their volunteer role
- Volunteer rescreening

Screening Requirements

Process or Check	New Volunteers	Annually	Every 5 Years
Extension volunteer application	X		
Three reference checks	X		
Interview	X		
Extension child protection training	X		
Registered sex offender check	X	X	X
Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct (signed)	X	X	
Program Volunteer Agreement (signed)	X	X	
Background screening through Sterling Volunteers	X		X
Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System (CANTS) check through DCFS	X		X
Extension Participant/Volunteer Agreement to assume risks and fully release all claims	X		
Driver authorization for those who will be driving as part of their volunteer role		X	
Additional requirements may be needed per Extension program	X	X	X

Sterling Volunteers

What is Sterling Volunteers?

- University of Illinois Extension has partnered with Sterling Volunteers as a volunteer background screening provider.
- Sterling Volunteers offers volunteer screening services to nonprofits and volunteer programs across the country. Learn more at: www.sterlingvolunteers.com/about/

When should a volunteer be screened through Sterling Volunteers?

- See Extension policies and requirements.
- All new volunteers must be screened through Sterling Volunteers.
- All current volunteers must be rescreened every five years.

Why does Extension use Sterling Volunteers?

- Sterling Volunteers provides a secure online volunteer screening platform that allows the volunteer to enter and control their information when ordering a background check.
- A background check is completed online within 24 to 48 hours (about two days).
- Verified volunteers may use their completed background check to apply for additional volunteer positions with other volunteer organizations within and outside the Sterling Volunteers community.
- More than 5,000 organizations trust Sterling Volunteers, including Girl Scouts, CASA, and Catholic Charities.

Is a Social Security number required for the background check through Sterling Volunteers?

- Yes. A Social Security number is required for all background checks.
- Should a volunteer not have a Social Security number, please contact your local Extension office.

Why am I being asked for my Social Security number when other similar organizations do not require this?

- A Social Security number is a unique reference number that helps verify if an individual has a similar name.
- A Social Security number is used to check seven years of address history, and an in-depth criminal search is conducted in each of those jurisdictions.
- A review of land-grant universities and other organizations has shown that indeed Social Security numbers are being collected as part of background screening processes.

Is my personal information secure?

- The Sterling Volunteers platform is extremely secure.
- Sterling Volunteers complies with all national and local regulations regarding 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.
- Personal information is encrypted when it sits in Sterling Volunteers systems and transits between systems.
- They use firewalls, data loss prevention tools, and other barriers and alerts to watch out for hackers, viruses, and other threats.
- They do their best to reduce the amount of information they process and transfer to the bare minimum.
- They collect and communicate personal information outside of Sterling through secure channels whenever possible.

- They lock paper documents in secure places.
- They make sure only approved people come into their offices.
- They only work with service providers that also have a high standard for protecting personal information.
- Please visit Sterling Volunteer's Privacy Policy for more details: <https://privacy.sterlingcheck.com/>

Does Illinois Extension require fingerprinting?

- No. Fingerprinting is not required by Illinois Extension.

Does Sterling Volunteers run a credit or any other checks as part of background screening?

- No. Illinois Extension does not conduct credit checks for any volunteers.
- Illinois Extension only contracts with Sterling Volunteers to collect criminal background checks.
- Sterling Volunteers is governed by the Fair Credit Report Act (FCRA) and mandated to include this language in their screening information.
- Illinois Extension is unable to remove this language as it is required by law for Sterling Volunteers to include.

Is there a fee involved for a background screening?

- No. Illinois Extension does not charge for background screenings.
- We are unable to change or delete any preset language in the Sterling Volunteers system.
- A candidate can bypass the payment screen.

How does this process work?

- An e-mail invitation will be sent from Sterling Volunteers on behalf of University of Illinois Extension.
- Please check your spam or junk mail if you have not received the invitation.
- Click the link in the e-mail to begin your background screening.
- You will be asked to create a username and password to log into the Sterling Volunteers system.
- Please contact your local Extension office with any questions regarding your background screening invitation.

Modified June 2023



Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Build your best life.
Trust Extension to help.

extension.illinois.edu