



CASE STUDY

REACH (Reading Enriches All Children)

Organization Background

REACH (Reading Enriches All Children) is a 501(c)(3) volunteer organization that supports the literacy needs of homeless and at-risk children living in shelters throughout the South Hampton Roads community in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Through its Shelter Read-Aloud and Growing Readers programs, REACH distributed 17,172 books free of charge to children in 2015 alone.

Background

REACH does big things on a very, very small budget (just under \$129,000 in 2015). The organization has only two full-time employees and a small office that's overflowing with new and donated books. With limited resources, Leslie Clarridge, REACH's Volunteer & Program Coordinator, is responsible for recruiting and managing over 200 local read-aloud volunteers. The volunteer application and onboarding process had been a time-consuming, manual, and paper-based system for many years.

For volunteer background checks, REACH had been sending volunteer information to the Virginia Department of Social Services—a formality that took nearly nine weeks on average to complete. This was a huge detriment to their program as volunteers either lost interest or went elsewhere in the meantime. "By the time their background check from the Commonwealth came back, their excitement to volunteer dwindled significantly," said Ms. Clarridge. "They've waited an entire school semester trying to get a background check done."

Solution

In 2014, after reviewing Sterling Volunteers' services, REACH proposed changing its volunteer background check process to its Board of Directors. The Board, which includes several local attorneys, reviewed the proposal carefully and found that the Sterling Volunteers Advanced Level background check was "leaps and bounds better" than what the organization had been employing and very attractive with its affordable price point and online process. Since making the change, Ms. Clarridge has processed well over 200 volunteer background checks via the easy online Sterling Volunteers platform.

Results

According to Tilah Larson, the Department's Program Coordinator, the switch to Sterling Volunteers has produced more comprehensive and accurate screening results—with no ambiguity. This has made processing volunteer applications dramatically more straightforward for the Department and allowed personnel to outsource the communication of denials and disputes.

Key Highlight

To increase the number of volunteer applicants REACH utilized a very unique feature of the Sterling Volunteers platform - the Fast-Pass, which allows volunteers to share their background checks with other organizations both within and outside of the Sterling Volunteers community. Many volunteers give time to more than one organization each year, and with the Fast-Pass they don't have to undergo repeat screenings or pay more than once for their check. It's a win-win for both the volunteer and REACH.



Using Sterling Volunteers has streamlined our volunteer background check process tremendously. Our volunteers have found it very easy to use, and it has made conducting a background check much more time efficient."

- Leslie Clarridge, Volunteer & Program Coordinator, REACH