

CASE STUDY

# Big Sister Association of Greater Boston

## Organization Background

The mission of the Big Sister Association of Greater Boston is to ignite girls' passion and power to succeed through positive mentoring relationships with women and enrichment programs that support girls' healthy development. It aspires to create a mentor-rich community in which every girl has access to the individual nurturing, guidance, and support she needs to become a confident, competent and caring adult.

## Background

The Big Sister Association of Greater Boston seeks to connect 700 women mentors with girls throughout the Boston area. To do this, Heidi Ziobro, Vice President of Programs and Recruitment, and her enrollment team process, review and interview over 700 applicants each year. After completing the application and interview, the volunteer mentors must complete a background check.

In an effort to ensure a safe environment for girls, the national Big Brothers Big Sisters of America organization updated its screening policy directive in 2016, requiring affiliates to run a layered background check that included at minimum a national criminal records check, a local criminal records check and a motor vehicle records check. That's when Big Sister Boston began seeking out a background screening provider to replace its manual in-house process.

## Solution

Ms. Ziobro learned of Sterling Volunteers from another Big Brother Big Sister affiliate already using the service who recommended it as the fast, easy solution to bringing the Boston affiliate into compliance with the national directive. "It was all pretty smooth and simple," says Ms. Ziobro, "Once the applicants complete their interviews, we send them to Sterling Volunteers and they complete their background checks themselves. All we have to do is log-in to access their results." In addition, Big Sister Boston gives volunteers the option to pay for some part of their background check even though the organization budgets to pay for the service."

## Results

Sterling Volunteers was rolled out to Big Sister Boston volunteers early in 2017, shortly after the organization signed on to the service. The switch went smoothly and has freed up Ms. Ziobro's team to do more direct work with their volunteers and the young girls they serve. The quick turnaround on screening results—under 48 hours and sometimes much faster—has also been welcomed, as it helps to expedite volunteers through the Big Sister Boston onboarding process.

In addition, Sterling Volunteers helped the organization rework its standard donation language in 2015. As a result, the organization saw the percentage of volunteers contributing to the cost of their checks rise from 23.6% to more than 28% the following year. In 2016, Big Sisters volunteers donated nearly \$3,000 "in kind" to offset the costs of their background checks and the number of Big Sisters volunteers who contribute continues to increase.



## Key Highlight

Sterling Volunteers allowed Big Sister Boston to easily upgrade to a layered background check, as directed by national Big Brothers Big Sisters of America when it updated its national screening directive in 2016. "We always had our own local screening policy, but it has to meet the basic standards of the national organization," says Heidi Ziobro, Vice President of Programs and Recruitment for Big Sister Association of Greater Boston. "When the national policy was updated, we had to implement a layered background check." Big Sister Boston applicants now go through a comprehensive, multi-layered background check with Sterling Volunteers that includes a nationwide criminal search, a state/county criminal search, an Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctions search, a DOJ Sex Offender search, and a motor vehicle record check.



*The switch to Sterling Volunteers has been great. We haven't had any implementation issues. It all went pretty smoothly."*

**- Heidi Ziobro, Vice President, Programs & Recruitment, Big Sister Association of Greater Boston**