



Working with children and Police Checks

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This document is provided for general guidance only. Organisations should use the information contained in this resource as reference material and should interpret in the context of their own organisation or program. The information should not be relied upon or be a substitute for professional advice.

Working With Children Checks, Police Checks and Homework Clubs

For organisations working with children, the Working with Children Act (2005) and the Working with Children Regulation (2006) stipulate that any person working or volunteering with children regularly (a child is defined as anyone under the age of 18), and who is not directly supervised, needs to obtain a Working With Children Check (WWCC).

This means that in a homework club setting (where a volunteer does work with children regularly and is not directly supervised by another person) volunteers need to undergo Working With Children Checks.

Volunteers are not legally required to undergo Police Checks, however many homework clubs do choose to include Police Checks as part of their screening procedures – see below for information and advice.

Important Note: A Working With Children Check is a mandatory precaution but should not be relied upon as the sole strategy for volunteer screening. Comprehensive screening procedures, including interviews and reference checks, are essential in ensuring the person is right for the role.

The Centre for Multicultural Youth is a Victorian not-for-profit organisation supporting young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to build better lives in Australia.

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The difference between Working With Children and Police Checks

- Police Checks identify and release relevant criminal history information relating to convictions, findings of guilt or pending court proceedings.
- The purpose of the Working With Children Checks is to make an assessment of the level of risk an individual poses to children's safety. As such:
 - WWCCs are more extensive than Police Checks, gathering information from additional sources.
 - WWCCs monitor card-holders in an ongoing manner – organisations/employers are informed of relevant new offences.
- Essentially this means that a Police Check is only valid at the time it is issued, while a WWCC screens volunteers over several years.
- At the same time, WWCCs target information that is related to the harm or mistreatment of a child. Information about other convictions (not related to working with children) may be released under a Police Check, but not under a WWCC.

Do volunteers need both checks?

While all volunteer tutors should undergo a Working With Children Check, it is up to you whether you ask your volunteers to do Police Checks as well. It really depends on the duties that the volunteer will be carrying out and, accordingly, the types of convictions that might be relevant. For example, if the volunteer is dealing with money or confidential files, a Police Check is probably a good idea (as offences related to theft, fraud, etc., may not be identified in a Working With Children Check).

More information about volunteers and WWCCs

Can a volunteer start before we receive their WWCC?

Volunteers may start volunteering once they have submitted their WWCC application. When a volunteer submits their WWCC application at the Post Office, they will receive a receipt - you should see their receipt before they start volunteering. Also, the volunteer should not work unsupervised until you receive the actual check, which normally takes several weeks.

What if a volunteer already has a Working With Children Check?

If a volunteer already has a current Working With Children Check they do not need another one. However it is NOT enough just to see their card. The volunteer must complete a Change of Details form, to nominate your organisation/school. This ensures that if any new information related to harm or mistreatment of a child is detected, your organisation will be notified. The form is simple and available online:

<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/justlib/working+with+children/home/maintaining+your+check/wwcc+-+change+of+personal+details+form+%28pdf%29>

What about teachers and Working With Children Checks / VIT Registration?

Legally, registered teachers do not apply for Working With Children Checks. As long as the teacher is registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), they are monitored in a similar way to those with a WWCC. However, it is the responsibility of the organisation to ensure that their VIT registration is up-to-date, which you should do at least annually. (For this reason, some organisations ask teachers to do WWCCs so that they do not have to follow up on its currency.) To check whether a VIT registration is current:

- Go to the VIT website: http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/content.asp?Document_ID=959
- Click 'Search the register', then 'Search'
- Enter the VIT registration number. If the teacher is registered, it will come up as 'Registered' in the Registration column.

Do volunteers who are aged under 18 need these checks?

- Volunteers who are the age of 18 do not need to apply for Working With Children Checks.
- Volunteers can get Police Checks from the age of 17, however this up to your organisation.

Are there any other exemptions?

There are also a couple of other 'types' of volunteers who are exempt from applying for a Working With Children Check. For more information:

<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/Working+With+Children/HomeApplication+Process/Who+Needs+to+Apply/WWCC+-+Exemptions+from+Applying+for+a+Check>

More information and finding the forms

Working With Children Checks: Department of Justice, WWCC Unit. 1300 652 879

<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/Working+With+Children/Home/>

Police Checks: Victoria Police, National Police Record Check. 1300 881 596

www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?Document_ID=274

Important Things to Remember!

- Screening procedures should always include WWCCs, interviews and reference checks
- A volunteer should not start until you have seen a receipt of their WWCC application; they should not tutor unsupervised until you receive the WWCC.
- VIT registered teachers: you need to check that their registrations are current, at least once per year.
- Remember to respect confidentiality and adhere to privacy principals when storing information on employees/volunteers.