



Safety screening policy for funded organisations

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OFFICIAL

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Purpose

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and the Department of Health (DH; collectively, 'the departments') fund organisations through a Service Agreement to provide health and/or community services to clients, patients or service users (referred to as 'clients').

This policy aims to inform organisations about the safeguards they need to apply when conducting safety screening checks before workers, volunteers or carers engage with clients.

What is safety screening?

Safety screening involves conducting pre-employment checks across a scale of increasing intensity. This is proportional to the level and type of involvement a worker, carer or volunteer will have with clients. For example:

- Almost everyone who engages with clients as a worker, carer, volunteer or student on placement will require a **referee check** during their recruitment process. This helps to confirm they can do the required work and helps organisations prevent fraud or misuse of public funds.
- Many workers, carers and volunteers will require a new Australian and, if relevant, international **police check** before they start supporting clients. For out-of-home care services (also referred to as Care Services) for Child Protection clients, this includes police checks on kinship and foster carers, their partners or spouses, regular visitors to the home and other household members.
- Some programs require evidence the worker has met **minimum qualification** requirements before they start working with clients. These requirements are outlined in standards and program guidelines linked in your organisation's Service Agreement at Schedule 3 and will not be listed in this policy.
- Some programs require additional **program-specific checks**. For example, workers, carers and volunteers in disability services or caring for Child Protection clients will be subject to more stringent checks including carer prohibition or worker exclusion processes. Kinship carers, usual adult household members residing in a foster care or kinship placement and others who care or support clients aged under 18 require a Working with Children Check (WWCC).

Why do safety screening?

Safety screening is a Service Agreement requirement. It enables organisations to check that job applicants have the experience and expertise to meet performance and quality expectations for the services they deliver. It also allows organisations to check whether any past actions by the applicant could present a risk to the organisation or to clients.

Organisations must also report on their safety screening practices through the annual **Service Agreement Compliance Certification (SACC)**. To find out more about the SACC, at [Service Agreement](https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/service-agreement) <<https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/service-agreement>> and scroll down to the section titled 'Service agreement compliance certification (SACC)'.

Scope

The safety screening policy applies to all organisations funded by DFFH or DH under a Service Agreement to provide **direct interactions** with clients.

Clients include:

- children, young people and adults
- statutory and non-statutory clients.

People the policy applies to include:

- paid employees
- volunteers
- carers
- other household members for some services (for example: usual adult household members residing in foster care and kinship care households)
- regular visitors to the household for some services
- students on placement.

Direct interactions include:

- face-to-face supports
- remote service delivery such as email or other written contact, telephone or online services where a worker interacts directly with a client as an individual or as part of a group
- services provided in the person's home and in settings outside the home
- residential and non-residential services
- occasional interactions, regular contact and round-the-clock care.

Organisations should check program guidelines for all services they deliver to confirm whether there are specific program or legislative requirements in relation to safety screening or mandatory qualification requirements.

Program, policy and legislative requirements are listed in Schedule 3 of your organisation's Service Agreement. These relate to the specific activities your organisation is funded to deliver.

Links to program guidelines can be found via the following websites:

- DFFH-funded programs:
 - [DFFH Providers website](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/funded-agencies) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/funded-agencies>
 - [Housing](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/housing) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/housing>
 - [Children, youth and families](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/children-youth-and-families) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/children-youth-and-families>
 - [Disability](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/disability) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/disability>.
- DH-funded programs: [Policy and Funding Guidelines for health services](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/policy-and-funding-guidelines-for-health-services) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/policy-and-funding-guidelines-for-health-services>.

Activity descriptions for most DFFH- and DH-funded activities are at [Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and Department of Health activity search](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/families-fairness-housing-health-activity-search) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/families-fairness-housing-health-activity-search>.

What do we screen?

Safety screening requirements can differ by funded program. See below separate tables summarising the required screening checks for organisations that deliver Care Services, Disability Services and other programs.

Table 1 Screening checks required by staff type summarises safety screening requirements relating to staff that deliver DFFH- and DH-funded programs other than Care Services and Disability.

Table 2 Screening checks required for Disability Services by staff type summarises requirements relating to staff that deliver Disability Services.

Table 3 Screening checks required for Care Services by staff and carer type summarises requirements relating to staff, volunteers, carers and household members delivering Out-of-Home Care Services for statutory clients including kinship care, foster care (including foster carers being assessed for permanent care), residential care and lead tenant services.

Additional information is provided later in this policy.

Table 1 Screening checks required by staff type for programs excluding Care Services and Disability Services

This table applies to all programs funded by DH and all DFFH programs except Care Services (DFFH-funded out-of-home and residential care for statutory clients) and Disability Services.

Type of staff	Referee check	New police record check and Proof of identify	International police record check (lived overseas 12 months or longer in past 10 years)	Employment history	Qualification check (if mandatory)	Working with Children Check (WWCC) or Victorian Institute of Teaching registration (VIT)
All staff who provide direct interactions with clients	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, if supporting clients aged under 18 years
Volunteers	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, if supporting clients aged under 18 years
Person 16 years or younger	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Student placement 17 years or younger	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Student placement 18 years and older	No	Yes, prior to the confirmation of the first placement and a recurrent check in each subsequent year of study.	Yes	No	No	Students aged 18 or 19 years of age do not need a WWCC to do volunteer work organised by, or held at, their educational institution. Students older than 19 years will require a WWCC if placement will involve direct contact with children or if the placement organisation requires it.

Table 2 Screening checks required for Disability Services by staff type

Type of staff	Referee check	New police record check and Proof of identity	International police record check (lived overseas 12 months or longer in past 10 years)	Employment history	Qualification check (if mandatory)	Working with Children Check or Victorian Institute of Teaching registration	Disability Worker Regulation Scheme (includes criminal check)
All staff who provide direct interactions with Disability services clients, including labour hire staff	Yes	Yes (If the organisation is a registered NDIS provider the worker may have an NDIS Worker Screening Check that includes a Police record check. If so, a new Police Check is not required at recruitment.)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, if supporting clients aged under 18 years	Yes

Table 3 Screening checks required for Care Services by staff and carer type

Note: Care Services policy refers to the Working with Children Clearance process. This requires applicants to have a Working with Children Check, similar to other programs.

Type of staff	Referee check	New police record check and Proof of identify	International police record check (lived overseas 12 months or longer in past 10 years)	Employment history	Qualification check (if mandatory)	Working with Children Check	The Worker and Carer Exclusion Scheme	Pre-existing injury check
Out-of-home care residential care direct client contact employees	Yes	Yes, at offer of employment and again every three years	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Labour hire residential care services (out-of-home care)	Yes	Yes, prior to engagement and again every three years	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Staff moving from a non-client contact role to a client contact role in residential care	Yes	Yes, when first moving from non-client to client contact functions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Staff from other organisations providing direct client outreach services in a residential setting including volunteers and workers such as nurses or legal advisers.	Yes	Yes, prior to engagement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Check with Social Services Regulator as differs depending on worker type (eg allied health and legal are out of scope)	No

Type of staff	Referee check	New police record check and Proof of identify	International police record check (lived overseas 12 months or longer in past 10 years)	Employment history	Qualification check (if mandatory)	Working with Children Check	The Worker and Carer Exclusion Scheme	Pre-existing injury check
Foster carer, kinship carer*, their partner, usual adult household members residing or regularly staying overnight in foster care and kinship care.	Yes	Yes, prior to being approved to care and every three years	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Approved foster carers - Yes Kinship carer - No Approved household members in foster or kinship households - No	No
Foster carer, usual household member applying for accreditation with another organisation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Carer – Yes Usual household members - No	No
Foster carer being assessed for permanent care	Yes	Prior to being approved for permanent care	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Lead tenant including their partner if they reside in the house	Yes	On offer of engagement and every three years	Yes	Yes Previous lead tenant or carer role check	Competency-based assessment	Yes	Lead tenant - No Paid relief staff for lead tenant - Yes	Evidence of physical and mental fitness

*** Kinship care safety screening requirements**

From February 2024, WWCC requirements extend to usual adult household members residing in a kinship care placement. This now aligns with requirements for foster care screening checks. For kinship carers and usual adult household members, police record checks are required every three years and WWCC every five years.

Child Protection staff and authorised Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC) providers conduct initial police record and WWCC at the Assessment Part A stage for kinship carers, and also for kinship carers being assessed for permanent care orders.

Organisations that support kinship carers including pre-authorised ACAC providers and contracted case management providers may conduct later checks during the Assessment Parts B and C processes, and the recurrent checks. This may depend on individual case issues or case management contracts. Organisations should liaise with Child Protection to confirm who will conduct the recurrent checks before the previous checks expire.

For further information, see [Working with Children Clearance for kinship carers and usual adult household members – advice](https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/out-home-care/working-childrens-check-kinship-carers-advice)
<https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/out-home-care/working-childrens-check-kinship-carers-advice>.

Additional information

Referee checks

Referee checks are mandatory and require a minimum of two checks to confirm the applicant's suitability, including contact with their most recent employer.

Police record check (including proof of identity)

Where an organisation is considering recruiting someone they do not currently employ, the organisation must complete a new police record check prior to making an offer of employment or engagement to that person. This applies to all relevant staff, volunteers, carers, students on placement and contract agency staff in accordance with applicable departmental and other government policies. The check must also include a proof of identity check. This is required even if the person has had a police record check done recently by another employer.

Recurrent police record check – once every three years

For organisations that deliver some services, including residential and out-of-home care services to children and young people who are statutory clients of DFFH, recurrent police record checks must be undertaken at least once every three years. The recurrent police record check is in addition to the initial new police record check undertaken prior to any offer of engagement.

This additional requirement applies to staff and carers including:

- staff providing residential care
- foster carers
- kinship carers
- lead tenants
- usual adult members of the household in home-based care and kinship settings (including carers and their spouse/partner, children aged 18 and older and persons who regularly stay overnight).

Organisations funded to deliver Care Services should refer to the **CSOs undertaking national police history checks** policy in the Child Protection Manual at [CSOs undertaking national police history checks](https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/policies-and-procedures/national-police-history-checks/csos-undertaking-national-police-history) <<https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/policies-and-procedures/national-police-history-checks/csos-undertaking-national-police-history>>.

Other health or community service programs may also have similar requirements, so check program guidelines to confirm if this requirement applies.

Note: The NDIS only requires recurrent police checks every five years. However, where an NDIS-registered organisation delivers a service funded under a non-disability program it must follow the worker safety screening requirements for the funded program. This may require more frequent recurrent police record checks, such as every three years for Care Services. Check program guidelines to confirm service-specific recurrent police check requirements.

International police check

An international police check is required for applicants who have lived overseas for 12 months or longer in one country in the last 10 years. This is not applicable if they were travelling through countries, for example, backpacking and only staying in some countries for very short periods or if the applicant was a minor when they were overseas.

If an applicant can demonstrate that they have applied for an international police check and the wait for an outcome is expected to be unreasonably long, the applicant can provide a statutory declaration stating where and when they worked and whether or not they have a police record in that country.

The employer can decide whether or not the applicant can commence. Upon receipt of the international police check the applicant must provide it to the employer.

If an international police check is provided in a language other than English, the organisation can use discretion about whether it accepts the document in that language. If the organisation is satisfied that it understands the international police check, the applicant does not have to provide it in English.

Disclosable outcomes

In Victoria, police have a policy that governs what information is released in a police check. The release of information may consider the age of the police record, the purpose for which the information is being sought and the relevance of the criminal history. This is called the **disclosable record**.

Victorian disclosable records include all court outcomes that are findings of guilt. Disclosable records from other states may only include information about spent convictions in certain circumstances. Further information is available at [AFP Spent conviction laws & police checks](https://www.afp.gov.au/our-services/national-police-checks/spent-convictions-laws-police-checks) <https://www.afp.gov.au/our-services/national-police-checks/spent-convictions-laws-police-checks>

Any disclosable records, court outcomes, outstanding charges or other information gained from a police check will be a key factor in relation to assessing the suitability of a potential employee. An adverse police check result does not necessarily preclude a person from becoming an employee.

Some program requirements oblige funded organisations to inform departmental staff of any potential employees with a disclosable outcome (for example, Home Based Care). Check relevant program guidelines for details.

Employment history (including misconduct or disciplinary action disclosure)

Applicants must be asked to disclose any misconduct or formal disciplinary action taken against them by any current or former employer. This includes any finding of improper or unprofessional conduct by any court or tribunal of any kind and any investigations that the applicant has been subject of by an employer, law enforcement agency or any integrity body or similar in Australia or in another country.

Qualification check

If qualifications are a mandatory requirement of the role, original qualifications must be copied, certified as being a true copy of the original and dated by the relevant delegate then returned to the applicant. Check relevant program guidelines for details. In some circumstances the accreditation of the certifying institution may be checked.

Victorian Working with Children Check (WWCC)

The Worker Screening Act 2020 (the Act) replaced the Working with Children Act 2005 from 1 February 2021. All Victorian paid workers, volunteers, carers and self-employed persons who perform child-related work, and Ministers of Religion, must hold a valid Victorian WWCC.

Victoria Police members require a WWCC when they engage in child care related work or are a usual adult household member in an out-of-home-care placement. For further information see the Child Protection Manual information sheet at [Working with Children Clearance for kinship carers and household members – information sheet](https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/information-sheets/kinship-care/working-children-clearance-kinship-carers-and) < https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/information-sheets/kinship-care/working-children-clearance-kinship-carers-and>.

Visitors who normally live outside Victoria and hold an equivalent Check from their home State or Territory can do child-related work in Victoria without a Check for a maximum of 30 days in a calendar year, which can comprise one or several events or occasions.

Visitors who normally live outside Victoria and do not hold an equivalent Check from their home State or Territory can do child-related work in Victoria without a Check on only one occasion or event per calendar year, which may last for a maximum of 30 days.

Information on the WWCC is available at [Working with Children Check](https://www.vic.gov.au/working-with-children-check) <<https://www.vic.gov.au/working-with-children-check>>.

Victorian Institute of Teaching Registration

Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registered teachers and early childhood service workers continue to be exempt from holding a WWCC for all programs other than Care Services (out-of-home care to statutory clients). VIT-registered teachers and early childhood service workers must notify Working with Children Check Victoria (WWCCV) of any child-related work they do outside of their school or early childhood service-based position (whether paid or voluntary).

People who work, volunteer or are carers or household members of statutory Care Services clients must obtain a WWCC even if they have a current VIT registration.

VIT cards are valid for one year and have a registration date of 30 September. The individual must show their VIT card to their line manager for their records. The sighting and documentation of each new VIT card must be undertaken every year.

Worker and Carer Exclusion Scheme (WCES) database check

Until June 2024, all foster carers and residential carers (including permanent, part-time, casual and temporary agency staff and providers of services to children at an out-of-home residence) were required to have a disqualified carer check conducted and cleared, and to register the carer within 14 days of engagement.

This requirement changed with the launch of the Worker and Carer Exclusion Scheme in July 2024. There is no longer a requirement to register carers. Out-of-home-care service providers must conduct a Worker and Carer Exclusion Scheme (WCES) database check before approving, employing, or engaging a foster carer, residential carer (including permanent, part-time, casual and temporary agency staff) or person to provide services to children at an out-of-home residence.

A WCES database check tells the service if the prospective carer is excluded or is under investigation. The check is to be conducted by the registered service provider with the Social Services Regulator.

Further information about the WCES database check can be found at Social Services Regulator – The Worker and Carer Exclusion Scheme <<https://www.vic.gov.au/worker-and-carer-exclusion-scheme>>.

Disability worker screening checks

For registered NDIS providers delivering services funded through DFFH Disability Services activities, the department will accept an NDIS Worker Screening Check as suitable safety screening for new staff. The NDIS Worker Screening Check includes criminal history, workplace misconduct, apprehended violence orders, information about past employment, juvenile offences and any other relevant information that may determine whether a worker poses a risk to a person with disability.

For those organisations that are not registered NDIS providers, a new police record check is required for new staff.

The NDIS Worker Screening Check does not replace Victoria's WWCC. This is still required for child-related work.

Further information is available at [NDIS Worker Screening Check](https://www.vic.gov.au/ndis-worker-screening-check) <https://www.vic.gov.au/ndis-worker-screening-check>.

Where an organisation is delivering disability-related services funded by other programs such as DFFH Care Services (residential and out-of-home care for statutory clients), organisations must follow the safety screening requirements of those program guidelines even if the organisation is NDIS-registered.

Disability worker regulation scheme

The Disability Worker Regulation Scheme (the Scheme) involves the regulation of registered and unregistered disability workers in Victoria. Further information is available at [Disability Worker Regulation Scheme](https://www.vdwc.vic.gov.au) <https://www.vdwc.vic.gov.au>.

The Scheme applies to all disability workers in Victoria and is administered by two independent, statutory bodies: the Disability Worker Registration Board of Victoria (the Board) and the Victorian Disability Worker Commissioner. Both are supported by the Victorian Disability Worker Commission (VDWC, the Commission).

The Scheme includes:

- A Code of Conduct that disability workers must comply with, regardless of how they are funded.
- Mandatory notifications for providers and workers to report concerns that a disability worker may be putting the safety of a person with disability at risk.
- An independent complaints service, with power to investigate the conduct of disability workers.
- Voluntary registration, which involves the Board setting registration standards for registered Victorian disability workers and registering Victorian disability workers.

The Board has set three registration standards – competency in English, criminal history and continuing professional development. The Board will undertake a criminal history check before deciding on an application for registration.

The Commission's role is to receive and investigate complaints about disability workers. All disability service providers are required to ensure they do not employ a person who is subject to a prohibition order issued by the Commission.

The VDWC publishes a list of people who are subject to a prohibition order at [Victorian Disability Worker Commission – Prohibition Orders](https://www.vdwc.vic.gov.au/prohibition-orders) <https://www.vdwc.vic.gov.au/prohibition-orders>.

Use of labour hire staff

Use of labour hire staff - only licensed labour hire providers

Funded organisations may use labour hire providers to fill staff vacancies. Labour hire providers must have a labour hire licence.

Further information is available at [Labour Hire Authority](https://labourhireauthority.vic.gov.au) <https://labourhireauthority.vic.gov.au>.

Use of labour hire staff for residential care services for children and young people

Funded or registered organisations using labour hire staff for residential care services for children and young people must comply with **Engaging Labour Hire Agency Residential Care Staff in Out of Home Care Services** at [Labour hire procedures](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/labour-hire-procedures) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/labour-hire-procedures>.

Labour hire staff must undergo a satisfactory police record check, international police check (where required under the department's Police Records Check Policy), WWC Clearance (referred to as WWC Check in other programs), Worker and Carer Exclusion Scheme (WCES) database check and referee checks. This is in addition to policy expectations regarding minimum qualification requirements for residential care. The

organisation engaging the labour hire staff must also complete a WCES database check prior to allowing a labour hire staff member to enter the residential care premises.

Student placements

Students aged 17 years or younger require a referee check.

Students aged 18 years or older require a National police record check prior to the confirmation of the first placement and also require a recurrent National police record check in each subsequent year of study.

WWC Checks – Students aged 18 or 19 years of age do not need a WWC Check to do volunteer work organised by, or held at, their educational institution.

Students older than 19 years will require a WWC Check if the placement will involve direct contact with children or if the placement organisation requires it.

Persons 16 years or younger require referee checks. Teachers, parents and others who personally know the individual should act as referees and the credentials of any referees should be verified.

Student placements in health settings

For further information on student placements in health settings, see the Department of Health [Standardised Student Induction Protocol](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/publications/standardised-student-induction-protocol) at <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/publications/standardised-student-induction-protocol>>

Safety screening for Health services

Information on safety screening for health services is included in the Department of Health's *Policy and Funding Guidelines*, available at [Policy and Funding Guidelines for health services](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/policy-and-funding-guidelines-for-health-services) <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/policy-and-funding-guidelines-for-health-services>>.

Chapter 15 of the guidelines includes sections on:

- Pre-employment Safety Screening
- Staff Safety in Victorian Health Services
- Child Safety
- Patient and client safety.

Record storage and destruction

Use and storage of safety screening documentation (consent forms, proof of identity information documentation and information provided about an individual's police check history) must be in accordance with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and any contractual requirements of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission accredited agency.

Information is available at [Record storage and destruction](https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/record-storage-and-destruction) <<https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/record-storage-and-destruction>>.

For further information

[Service Agreement Strategy and Policy](#)

Email: SAPolicy (DFFH) SAPolicy@dffh.vic.gov.au

Document history

Version 1	January 2020	
Version 2	January 2022	Text refresh
Version 3	November 2023	Removed references to Disability Worker Exclusion Scheme
Version 4	August 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text refresh throughout • Added introductory text • Added text on referee checks • Clarified requirement for a new police check each time a person is employed by a new organisation • Clarified requirements for NDIS-registered providers of Care Services to undertake recurrent police checks every three years • Updated sections on kinship care Working with Children Clearance process, Disability Worker Regulation Scheme and Worker and Carer Exclusion Scheme • Added sections on Department of Health safety screening

To receive this document in another format, [email](mailto:MonitoringFramework.Helpdesk@dffh.vic.gov.au) Monitoring Framework Helpdesk <MonitoringFramework.Helpdesk@dffh.vic.gov.au>.

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In this document, 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 'Indigenous' or 'Koori/Koorie' is retained when part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

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Available at [Safety screening policy for funded organisations](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/safety-screening-policy) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/safety-screening-policy>.