

The Child Safe Standards and Working with Children Checks

Volunteers – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What are the Child Safe Standards?

All organisations in Victoria that provide services or facilities for children must comply with the Child Safe Standards.

The Child Safe Standards were introduced by the Victorian Government in 2016 and state what an organisation must do to keep children safe. The seven standards are designed to bring about cultural change in organisations, so that child safety is part of the everyday thinking and practice of its leaders, employees and volunteers.

Parks Victoria is dedicated to being a child safe organisation, and has zero tolerance for child abuse.

As a result, we are progressively introducing and updating new child safety policies and procedures to ensure that we comply with the Child Safe Standards.

You can read the standards in full on the [Child Safe Standards website](#).

The Standards are a way for us to:

1. drive a real culture of child safety within Parks Victoria (Standard 1: Governance and leadership)
2. state how Parks Victoria will commit to child safety (Standard 2: Clear commitment to child safety)
3. demonstrate how Parks Victoria employees and volunteers will behave in the presence of children (Standard 3: Code of conduct)
4. guide Parks Victoria recruitment to get the most suitable people (Standard 4: Human resource practices)
5. ensure that all allegations of child abuse are properly reported (Standard 5: Responding and reporting)
6. identify risks to children (Standard 6: Risk management and mitigation)
7. help make children feel empowered so they will speak up (Standard 7: Empowering children)

2. I am involved or coordinate a volunteer group that operates on Parks Victoria estate. Does Parks Victoria's child policy cover us?

You may be wondering if you or your volunteer group falls under the Parks Victoria Child Safe policies and procedures. All associated volunteers and volunteer groups will now come under our Child Safe framework. This ensures that we are all working consistently and meeting the Child Safe Standards across all aspects of our park management. We want to offer as much support as possible to help with this transition. If you or any member of your volunteer group would like to see our Child Safety Policy (POL-240), please find a copy included in this pack. Alternatively, if your group would like to create their own child safety policy, there is guidance on the Child Safe Standards website:

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/being-a-child-safe-organisation/the-child-safe-standards/>

3. **Because of the changes to our policies, all volunteers will be required to get a Working with Children Check. Why do I need to get a Working with Children Check (WWCC)?**

Parks Victoria is committed to maintaining a child safe environment. Standard four (4) of the Child Safe Standards states the need for human resource practices to ensure the most suitable volunteers are recruited. A Working with Children Check is an important part of meeting that standard.

4. **What is a Working with Children Check (WWCC)?**

A Working with Children Check is a review carried out by the Department of Justice under the *Worker Screening Act 2020*, in which a volunteer is screened for the level of risk they pose to children's safety.

The screening focusses on serious sexual, violence and drug offences. Once a volunteer has been deemed safe to work with children, the Department of Justice issues a five-year, Volunteer, Working with Children Check card.

Unlike the National Police Check, the WWCC is a "live document". That means, it remains active for the five years and during that time, if a volunteer is involved in any legal infractions relevant to a WWCC, the Department of Justice will inform the organisations and/or groups that they volunteer with.

5. **Do I need a WWCC if I have already had a National Police Check?**

Yes, if you have had a recent Police Check, you will still need a WWCC as they serve different purposes.

A Police Check is a record of your criminal history at the time of application and only works retrospectively. A WWCC on the other hand, will only provide results for offences that are considered relevant for child safety purposes (sexual, violence and drug offences), and will flag whether someone is suitable to work with or around children. The WWCC will also alert a volunteer organisation if a volunteer was charged with a relevant offence during the life of the WWCC.

6. **Do I need a WWCC if I already have a Blue Card?**

If you have a Victorian Institute of Teachers (VIT) card (also called a blue card) you do not need to apply for a WWCC. But you will need to apply for an exemption. Please visit this page to apply for an exemption: <https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/about-the-check/when-you-dont-need-a-check>

Example: Claire is a secondary school teacher currently registered with VIT. She volunteers to coach children at a local chess club and does not need a Check to do this work. However, as this child-related work is not teaching in a school or early childhood service, Claire must notify WWCCV within 21 days of commencing this work. www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au

7. Do I need to reapply for a WWCC if I already have a current one?

You do not need to reapply for a volunteer WWCC if you already have one. However, if you have NOT nominated **Parks Victoria** as an organisation that you volunteer with, you need to update this information on your current WWCC. As a WWCC cardholder you have an obligation to keep your records up to date. Every WWCC cardholder can login to check their WWCC to change or update their details. Visit the WWCC website and login in via [MyCheck](#).

8. How do I apply for a WWCC?

You can apply for a WWCC online. Below is the link to the government website to start your application. Once you have completed your application online, you will then need to visit a participating Australia Post office to verify your identity and to have your WWCC card photo taken.

The Victorian Government no longer offer the option of a hand-written application, it must be completed online. If you do not have access to the internet, or need support to navigate the website, please contact the leader of your volunteer group in the first instance, or our Volunteer Team at volunteer@parks.vic.gov.au

To apply for a WWCC visit:

<https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/individuals/applicants/how-to-apply>

9. Do I have to pay for my check/how much will a WWCC cost?

No. Volunteer WWCCs are free (including the photo). Please ensure you select 'Volunteer', not 'Employee', when completing your online application and select **Parks Victoria** as your 'volunteer organisation'.

10. What details do I use for Parks Victoria on my WWCC application?

Please use the following address and phone number for Parks Victoria on your WWCC application, or if you have an existing WWCC, please ensure that you update your details to the following address and phone number:

**Parks Victoria
Level 10/535 Bourke Street
Melbourne VIC 3000**

Phone: 13 1963

In the next section that asks for occupation fields and type, please use the exact information below to complete your application:

Occupational fields = 44, 46, 48, 50, 52

Occupational type = Volunteer

11. Can I continue volunteering while my WWCC application is being processed?

You will be able to continue to volunteer with Parks Victoria while your application is being processed.

However, by law you must not work with children if you:

- have been charged with, convicted, or found guilty of a sexual, violent or drug offence listed in clause 2 of Schedule 3 of the Act
- have been given a Negative Notice in the past
- intend to supervise a child under the age of 15 in employment under the *Child Employment Act 2003*
- intend to work in a service regulated by the *Children's Services Act 1996* or in an education and care service under the *Education and Care Services National Law (Victoria) Act 2010*
- are subject to orders or reporting obligations under the:
 - *Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004*
 - *Serious Sex Offenders Monitoring Act 2005*
 - *Serious Sex Offenders (Detention and Supervision) Act 2009*.

If any of the above apply to you, please contact our Volunteer Team at volunteer@parks.vic.gov.au to discuss your individual circumstances.

12. How long do WWCCs last?

WWCCs are valid for **five years**. You will receive a renewal reminder from 'Working with Children Check Victoria' 28 days before it is due to expire. You will also receive an automated email from Parks Victoria's ParkConnect system. You must renew your WWCC before it expires to ensure that you are able to continue to volunteer with Parks Victoria.

13. The volunteer activities I undertake do not directly involve children, and/or their parents/carers are always present: do I still need a WWCC?

All organisations in Victoria that provide services or facilities for children must comply with the Child Safe Standards. The presence of parents/carers supervising children does not remove the requirement for meeting the Child Safe Standards or WWCC requirements. This is because the presence of parents/carers does not eliminate the risk of child abuse occurring in organisational contexts, although it may reduce the risk. Even if activities do not directly involve children, Parks Victoria is committed to creating a child safe environment.

14. I think I may have a problem with passing my WWCC. What should I do?

As a first step, please speak to your volunteer group, or if you are not comfortable doing so, you are welcome to contact your Parks Victoria contact or our Volunteer Team at volunteer@parks.vic.gov.au to discuss your individual circumstances. All conversations will be handled in accordance with our confidentiality and privacy policies.

If you do not pass your WWCC, you will be issued with a Negative Notice by the Victorian Department of Justice. You, the Volunteer (applicant) and Parks Victoria will be informed. Parks Victoria maintains strict adherence to privacy legislation which regulates the receipt and use of personal information. If you receive a negative notice, you cannot volunteer at Parks Victoria.

15. What if I need to report a child abuse allegation? What do I do?

You must report child abuse. Even if you are not sure or suspect it may have happened or be happening. It is everyone's responsibility to keep children safe, you must report it.

To report child abuse that you have witnessed or been told about, first determine if the child is safe or if it is an emergency.

Call '000' immediately and get help from the police or ambulance if it is an emergency.

If it is not an emergency and you have witnessed or been disclosed to about child abuse, collect as much information as you can and then tell a Parks Victoria Ranger or employee, and potentially an external body, such as the Police.

When you collect information about an allegation, consider the following fact-finding questions such as:

- Can you tell me what happened from the start?
- When and where did the incident occur?
- Did anyone see the incident?
- Who was there?
- What was said/done?

Especially if the complainant is a child, it is important to write down the details of the allegation using the complainant's own words to avoid jumping to conclusions without getting all the facts. For instance, a six-year-old child is unlikely to say, "That person sexually assaulted me," but they might say something like, "I don't like the games that man plays with me."

If you have any more questions about how to report an allegation of child abuse, please contact the Statewide Volunteer Team on volunteer@parks.vic.gov.au