

Child safe for kids?

A guide for parents

April 2014

Every day children around NSW spend time with adults outside of their home in lots of different environments such as sports clubs, youth groups, music, dance and drama tuition.

As a parent or carer you play a vital role in helping these environments to be safer places for children.

This guide will help you understand 'child safe' environments and how to verify the Working With Children Checks of the adults involved with your kids.

What is 'child safe'?

Child-safe means taking steps to help keep children safe from physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

Ideally, a child safe organisation will have policies and a code of conduct specifically to protect children including how they:

- recruit, train and supervise staff; and
- manage potential risks in their particular work environments.

Having good policies and practices in place will help an organisation to properly respond to any concerns or complaints about behaviours towards children.

The Working With Children Check

In NSW all people who work or volunteer with children are required to have a Working With Children Check, unless they are exempt (such as a parent volunteer in an activity that involves their own child eg. a sports coach).

This new on-line system checks for relevant criminal records that may indicate a person is not suitable to work or volunteer with children.

The Check provides either a clearance or a bar to work with children.

It is a criminal offence for a person with a bar to work or volunteer in child-related roles.

It is very important that staff and non-exempt volunteers in child-related services have had a Working With Children Check and been cleared.

This includes situations where there is only one person offering a service, such as an individual child care provider, tutor or coach.

What parents can do

Employers have a legal obligation to verify their staff and non-exempt volunteers have a valid Working With Children Check.

A parent should also verify that an individual providing services to their child has a current Working With Children Check clearance.

To verify a Working With Children Check, follow the simple steps on the next page of this information sheet.

Verifying online

To verify, follow these simple steps:

1. Obtain the person's surname, date of birth and WWCC or APP number.
2. Go to www.newcheck.nsw.gov.au and click on this blue button:
3. Under Verify, click the *Individuals (e.g. parents) Verify* button.
4. Complete the form, including the reason for verification (e.g. sports coach, nanny etc) and information about the worker.
5. Click *Submit*. You will receive the outcome by email.



What else can I do?

While a Working With Children Check can be an important step in becoming child safe, they can't identify people who have not previously been caught or are yet to offend.

Managing potential risks in the environments where children spend their time is the most effective way to keep them safe.

Before choosing an activity or service find out what they do to help protect the children who are using their service - ask to see their child safe policies and codes of conduct and when staff Working With Children Checks were last verified online by the employer.

If the service provider is self employed, ask for their WWCC number so that you can go online to verify if they are cleared or barred from working with children.

Become more familiar with the environment where your child spends time and ask other parents whose children use the service what they have observed. Drop in at unexpected times.

Ask your children about their experiences and let them know you are interested in what they do. This helps kids feel they can tell you when things aren't going well or they have worries.

Reporting your concerns

Child protection Helpline

If you think a child or young person is at risk of harm from abuse or neglect, contact the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111.

Kids Helpline

A counseling service for Australian children and young people aged between 5 and 25 years. You can call 1800 55 1800, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week or go to www.kidshelp.com.au If you would like to know more about Child Safe Organisations go to www.kids.nsw.gov.au

NSW Ombudsman

If you have any queries, comments or complaints about a child related government service provider call the NSW Ombudsman's Employment Related Child Protection Division on 02 9286 1000 or go to their website www.ombo.nsw.gov.au

Police Assistance Line

The Police Assistance Line (131 444) operates 24hrs a day, 7 days a week.