



Screening and police checks for volunteers

Choosing the right person for a volunteer role is vital. Many volunteer organisations conduct screening and police checks as part of their recruitment processes. It can also be a requirement under legislation for volunteers working with vulnerable groups, such as children, older people and people with disability.

What are screening and police checks?

Depending on the roles they are performing, volunteers may require either a police check or screening check.

A police check is a record of a person's criminal conviction history. In South Australia, volunteers can apply for a 'National Police Certificate', from South Australia Police (SAPOL). 'National Criminal History Record Checks' can also be obtained through accredited CrimTrac agencies, such as the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) Screening Unit.

A screening check provides an assessment of a person's criminal conviction history and their suitability for a particular position within an organisation as a minimum. Certain types of DCSI screening involve an assessment of a very broad range of criminal history and other relevant information. There is no such assessment with a police check: it is simply a record of a person's criminal conviction history only. The DCSI Screening Unit offers a range of screening check services for organisations whose volunteers work with vulnerable members of the community.

Do I need to get a police check or screening check?

Not all volunteers have to undergo a police check or a screening check, but you may be required to have one if your role involves:

- supporting vulnerable members of the community, such as children, older people or people with disability
- access to certain types of sensitive information
- volunteering with a government agency, or with a non-government organisation that receives funding from government
- volunteering with an organisation that chooses to screen the criminal history of its volunteers as part of its risk management policy and recruitment processes.

If you are unsure about whether you are required to have a police check, the best place to start is often by speaking to your volunteering organisation.

Legislation requiring screening and police checks

Whilst organisations have some choice as to how they screen their volunteers, there are some requirements under legislation, if their volunteers work with vulnerable members of the community.

Organisations have a responsibility to understand and meet these requirements to help ensure all volunteers and community members can enjoy a safe environment.

Government departments, who administer the particular areas of legislation, can assist organisations with their specific queries about screening their volunteers.

A summary of the legislation that includes police check and/or screening requirements, and relevant contact information, is provided below for organisations whose volunteers work with the following vulnerable groups:

- **Children**

The South Australian *Children's Protection Act 1993* requires organisations to ensure that before a volunteer is appointed to a prescribed position that an assessment of the volunteer's criminal history is undertaken. Organisations may choose to obtain a police check, prepared by SAPOL or CrimTrac, or other prescribed evidence of the person's criminal history and to conduct an assessment themselves. Alternatively, organisations may obtain a criminal history assessment from an authorised screening unit, such as 'Child-Related Employment Screening' from the DCSI Screening Unit. For further information, visit the [Families SA website](#) or phone (08) 8463 6468.

- **Older people in Aged Care Facilities**

Aged care providers, funded by the Australian Government under the *Aged Care Act 1997*, are required to have staff and certain volunteers undergo a police check to assess their suitability to work in aged care. Organisations may choose to obtain a National Police Certificate or a National Criminal History Record Check as part of their recruitment process. Further information, visit the [Department of Health website](#) or phone 1300 653 227.

- **People with disability**

As of 1 July 2014, new screening processes have been introduced through amendments to the *Disability Services Act 1993* and corresponding *Disability Services (Assessment of Relevant History) Regulations 2014*. South Australians who volunteer in certain roles for disability service providers, funded under the *Disability Services Act 1993*, are now legally required to undergo 'Disability Services Employment Screening' by the DCSI Screening Unit. For further information, visit the [DCSI Screening Unit website](#) or phone 1300 321 592.

How much does a police check or screening check cost?

Free police checks, in the form of the National Police Certificate, are available to volunteers of community organisations who work with vulnerable groups such as children, older people or people with disability. To qualify, their organisation must have a Volunteer Organisation Authorisation Number (VOAN), from SAPOL. If an organisation is not eligible for a VOAN, the volunteer may be entitled to a reduced fee, which is currently \$37.50 compared to the individual full fee of \$58. For further information, visit the [SAPOL website](#) or phone (08) 7322 3347.

Alternatively, the DCSI Screening Unit offers a range of screening checks, for people working with vulnerable members of the community. These services are available at a reduced rate of \$55 for volunteers. Their screening assessments are valid for three years and volunteers are only required to pay one fee, regardless of the number of applications they submit, as long as the applications are submitted together. For further information, visit the [DCSI Screening Unit website](#).