



commission for  
children and young people  
and child guardian

# Blue cards for volunteer parents

People providing certain child-related services in the areas of work regulated by the Commission's Act need a blue card, unless they are exempt.

Volunteer parents may be exempt when providing child-related services in the following categories:

- schools (other than teachers)
- child care
- churches, clubs and associations involving children, and
- sport and active recreation.

## Who is a parent?

Under the Act, a parent is a child's mother, father or someone else who has parental responsibility for the child on a permanent basis.

A person exercising parental responsibility temporarily is not defined as a parent under the Act.

For example, a grandmother looking after her grandchildren while their parents are overseas is exercising parental responsibility temporarily and is not exempt from holding a blue card.

A parent of an Aboriginal child includes a person who, under Aboriginal tradition, is regarded as a parent of the child. A parent of a Torres Strait Islander child includes a person who, under Island custom, is regarded as a parent of the child.

## When does a parent need a blue card?

| Category                                | When does a parent need a blue card?  | When doesn't a parent need a blue card?  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Schools</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• working in a paid capacity at a school</li> <li>• an office bearer on a Parents and Friends or Parents and Citizens Association licensed to conduct an out-of-school hours care service</li> <li>• volunteering at an out-of-school hours care service where their child does not receive care</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• volunteering at their child's school</li> <li>• volunteering on a school board at their child's school</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Child Care</b>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• working in a paid capacity at a child care centre</li> <li>• volunteering at a child care centre where their child does not regularly receive child care services</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• volunteering at a child care centre where their child regularly receives child care services</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Churches, clubs and associations</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• working in a paid capacity at a church, club or association</li> <li>• volunteering at a church, club or association in a range of child-related activities, including different activities to those in which their child participates. Please refer to your state governing body about the nature of the activities you may be involved in, and whether they differ from the activities in which your child participates</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• volunteering at a church, club or association in the same or similar child-related services to those received by their child</li> </ul>                         |
| <b>Sport and active recreation</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• working in a paid capacity in sport and active recreation activities</li> <li>• volunteering in sport and recreation activities, including different activities to those in which their child participates. Please refer to your state sport or recreation body about the nature of the activities you may be involved in, and whether they differ from the activities in which your child participates</li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• volunteering in sport and recreation activities in which their child participates (even if, on occasion, their child is sick and not participating).</li> </ul> |

## Can an organisation require a volunteer parent to have a blue card if they are exempt under the Act?

No. Organisations can only apply for blue cards for people working in the specified categories of employment and business listed in the Act.

However, if an exemption applies to the parent's activities under these categories, an organisation can **not** apply for a blue card for the parent.

## How do parents know if they are exempt?

Parents should speak to the volunteer coordinator of the organisation they intend to volunteer for about the nature of any child-related activities they will be involved in as a volunteer.

The volunteer coordinator should then be able to determine if the parent needs a blue card.

The Commission's application forms require both the organisation and applicant to declare that the applicant will be involved in regulated child-related activities, and that an exemption does **not** apply.

## Why are volunteer parents exempt in certain circumstances?

Parental involvement in their child's activities is central to the functioning of the family unit and the relationship between the parent and the child.

Given the critical role parents have in their children's education, recreation and personal development, the Government did not want the blue card system to discourage parental participation in their children's interests.

The blue card is an important risk management tool, but is not a guarantee of safety.

The best way to create safe environments for children is for parents to be vigilant and for service providers to implement thorough risk management strategies.

## What is a child protection risk management strategy?

A child protection risk management strategy is a combination of an organisation's protocols, policies and practices to foster a safe service environment.

These things should help identify potential risks to children and prevent harm from occurring.

## Who is responsible for ensuring risks are managed in particular environments?

Employers or Businesses listed in the Act must have written child protection risk management strategies in place which are reviewed annually. They must include:

- a statement of commitment to the safety and well-being of children and protecting them from harm
- a code of conduct for interacting with children and young people
- procedures for recruiting, selecting, training and managing people who will work with children and young people
- policies and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm, including reporting guidelines
- a plan for managing breaches of the risk management strategy
- a register of blue card holders in the organisation
- risk management plans for high risk activities and special events, and
- strategies for communication and support.

## Parents can strengthen safeguards by:

- talking to the organisation or service provider to reassure themselves it is safe for their child to take part in activities - eg. they should be satisfied that:
  - the premises or venue is safe, and there are adequate numbers of qualified staff
  - the activities conducted, the number of children participating are safe
  - they are happy with the access parents and other adults have to children
  - there are policies in place to protect children from harm and
  - there are procedures in place if a child gets sick or has an accident
  - if something sounds amiss when children talk about their activities, they can ask questions of the service provider
  - children can talk to their teacher, coach or other adult service provider if they have a problem or are worried about something
  - they teach their child how to contact them or another family member in an emergency, and
  - they talk to their child about safety - it is vital children know they have a right to always feel safe and understand how to stay safe.

**Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian**

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