

FACT SHEET

DCSI Screening Unit: Child Related Employment Screening



Government of South Australia
Department for Communities
and Social Inclusion

What is Child-Related Employment Screening?

Child related employment screening by the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) Screening Unit is a comprehensive assessment of information obtained about an individual to determine whether they may pose a risk of harm to children in a workplace or volunteer environment.

When is it required?

Relevant legislation

The Children's Protection Act 1993 (the Act) and Children's Protection Regulations 2010 (SA) (the Regulations)

The DCSI Screening Unit is authorised under the Regulations to conduct child related employment screening.

In accordance with the Act organisations are required to ensure that, before a person is appointed to or engaged to act in a 'prescribed position,' an assessment of their relevant history is undertaken.

The Act defines a 'prescribed position' as one which involves the performance of one or more of the following prescribed functions:

- regular contact with children or working in close proximity

to children on a regular basis, unless the contact or work is directly supervised at all times; or

- supervision or management of persons in positions requiring or involving regular contact with children or working in close proximity to children on a regular basis; or
- access to records of a kind prescribed by regulation relating to children; or
- functions of a type prescribed by regulation (currently only the provision of overnight care is prescribed see Regulation 10).



Child related employment screening is required for people who perform, or will be performing, prescribed functions in government or non government organisations providing the following types of services wholly or partly for children:

- health
- welfare
- education
- sport
- recreation
- religious

- spiritual;
- child care
- residential
- overnight care

Also, from 1 July, 2014, the Regulations (Section 7 (3)) states that: *An authorised screening unit may undertake an assessment ... (a) for the purpose of assessing the person's suitability for enrolment as an **adult in secondary education**;*

The need for child related employment screening must be considered in the context of the legislation, as exemptions may apply in some circumstances.

As an alternative to obtaining a child related employment screening through the DCSI Screening Unit, the Regulations allow for the assessment to be conducted by the employer organisation

itself. If the organisation conducts its own assessment, it is required to obtain a criminal history report and assess that report in accordance with the *Standards for dealing with information obtained about the criminal history of employees and volunteers who work with children (the Standards)*, issued by DECD and any information provided by the applicant relevant to the assessment process.

What does it involve?

Child related employment screening conducted by the DCSI Screening Unit involves the consideration of extensive cross-jurisdictional expanded criminal history, such as information relating to charges for offences alleged to have been committed regardless of the outcome of those charges such as acquittals, dismissed, withdrawn and pending charges as well as convictions and spent convictions. It also includes information from government databases, such as care concern investigations records and child protection information held by DCSI and DECD.

Assessments are conducted in accordance with Standards issued pursuant to section 8A (j) of the *Children's Protection Act 1993*.

The DCSI Screening provides a 'point in time' assessment of risk, based on the information disclosed to the Screening Unit at the time of screening. Information may be shared with an employer.

A risk assessment provided by the DCSI Screening Unit is intended to assist an organisation to make informed decisions about recruitment of its employees and volunteers. Child related employment screening is considered as one part of the recruitment process. The final decision-making responsibility about engagement rests with the employing organisation.

How long does it take?

The screening process commences only when the DCSI Screening Unit has received a correctly completed form.

If there is no criminal history and no match of the applicant's name against any government records searched, screening should be completed within **20 business days**.

If the DCSI Screening Unit obtains information that requires further assessment, for example, information from Courts, Police agencies or other sources, or if the applicant's name registers as a match against any government records assessed by the DCSI Screening Unit, additional time may be required. In some cases an assessment **may take more than 8 weeks** to finalise, depending on the relevance, complexity, and amount of information to be taken into account.

If the Screening Unit does not identify any risk requiring assessment, the turnaround time for your clearance should be **approximately 20 business days**. If your name registers as a match in any of the databases assessed by the Screening Unit, additional time **beyond the 20 days** may be required to process your application.

If the Screening Unit obtains information that requires further assessment, your application may take **more than 8 weeks** to process. This will depend on the relevance, complexity, and amount of information which requires assessment.

Procedural fairness

Applicants must give written informed consent to undergo screening by the DCSI Screening Unit.

All matters are assessed in accordance with the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness. If the DCSI Screening Unit assesses information about an applicant that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to the safety of children, the DCSI Screening Unit will contact the applicant to discuss the matter before finalising the assessment. Applicants will also have access to a review process in the event they do not agree with a screening outcome. Further information is available on the Screening Unit website.

What does it cost?

Screening fees are gazetted annually. Refer to the DCSI website for the current fees.

How often is screening required?

DCSI child related employment screening clearances are valid for three years. Employer organisations may however require their employees or volunteers to undergo more frequent screening.

A clearance letter issued by the DCSI Screening Unit providing a general clearance is designed to be portable across organisations within South Australia. However the acceptance of this letter is a matter for the relevant organisation/agency, dependent on their employment policies.

Is it different to a National Police Certificate?

Yes. A Child Related Employment Screening by the DCSI Screening Unit also involves a risk assessment specifically focused on an applicant's risk of harm to children in a workplace or volunteer environment. There is no such assessment with issuing a National Police Certificate (NPC) which is simply a record of a person's disclosable criminal conviction history.

Also the DCSI Screening Unit has access to additional sources of information, including child protection information, care concerns investigations, cross-jurisdictional expanded criminal history information and police reports. This information is not included on a NPC or available to an employer organisation conducting its own assessment of a NPC.

Contacting the Screening Unit

Please email the Screening Unit. Your query will be directed to the appropriate area for a response.

Email:

Screening@dcsi.sa.gov.au

Website:

www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/services/screening

Postal address:

Screening Unit
Department for Communities and Social Inclusion
GPO Box 292
ADELAIDE SA 5001

More information

For more information about child safe environments please contact the Child Safe Environments team in Families SA by emailing:
DECDCChildSafe@sa.gov.au.