

Blue Card System – Information Sheet

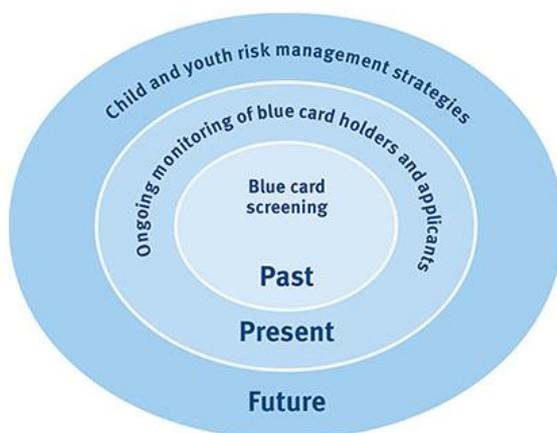
Understanding the blue card system

Since 2001, the blue card system has been a key prevention and monitoring system for people working with children which aims to minimise the risk of harm to children receiving services essential to their development and wellbeing.

How does the blue card system protect children in Queensland?

The purpose of the blue card system is to contribute to the creation of safe and supportive environments for children when receiving services and participating in activities which are essential to their development and wellbeing such as child care, education, sport and cultural activities.

The system's three dimensions consider past, present and future risks of harm to children. It operates as a strong preventative and monitoring system that includes effective screening, ongoing monitoring and requiring organisations to develop, implement and maintain child and youth focused risk management strategies.



Blue card screening

The initial screening assesses a person's eligibility based on their known past police and disciplinary information. This process prevents people from working with children in regulated service environments if their past behaviour indicates that they are unable to protect a child from harm and promote their wellbeing. It also disqualifies certain people upfront from applying for a blue card (i.e. those convicted of a serious child-related sex or child pornography offence or the murder of a child).

Ongoing monitoring

Blue Card Services monitors the police information of all applicants and card holders. If the information changes, Blue Card Services can take steps to immediately protect children from harm, including suspending or cancelling a card. Blue Card Services also monitors and audits service providers' compliance with blue card system obligations to ensure that appropriate safeguards are being implemented and maintained.

Risk management strategies

Organisations and self-employed persons who fall within the scope of the blue card system are legislatively required to develop, implement and maintain child and youth focused risk management strategies. These strategies aim to ensure that there are appropriate policies and procedures in place to identify and minimise the potential risk of harm to children, including codes of conduct, procedures for recruiting, managing and training of staff, policies for identifying and reporting disclosures or suspicions of harm. These strategies are monitored by Blue Card Services.

What is the blue card check?

The blue card check assesses:

- national criminal history, of all charges and convictions (including spent and not recorded)
- child protection prohibition orders (whether a person is a respondent or subject to an application)
- disqualification orders
- if a person is subject to reporting obligations under the *Child Protection (Offender Reporting) Act 2004* or *Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003*
- disciplinary information held by certain professional organisations including teachers, child care providers and foster carers
- information that the Police Commissioner may provide in relation to police investigations into allegations of serious child-related sexual offences, even if no charges were laid.

A person whose application is approved is issued with a positive notice letter and a blue card. If a person's application is refused, they are issued with a negative notice which prohibits them from carrying on a business or providing child-related activities in the categories regulated by the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*.

Who can apply for a blue card?

Employers, volunteer coordinators and education providers are responsible for applying for blue cards on behalf of their employees, volunteers or trainee students. Business operators or people seeking to operate a business working with children are responsible for applying directly to Blue Card Services for a blue card. However, if you have had your blue card suspended, are a negative notice holder or a disqualified person, you are unable to apply for a blue card and should contact Blue Card Services for further information.

Are there any exemptions?

Exemptions from blue card screening apply in relation to certain categories of regulated child-related employment and business. An exemption from screening requirements in relation to one category does not mean that a person will be exempt in relation to another category. For details about any relevant exemptions visit our website.

How long does a blue card application take to process?

Blue card applications where no police or disciplinary information is received are generally processed within 28 working days provided the form is complete and no further information is required from the applicant.

When can I commence work?

Paid employees can commence working while their blue card applications are being processed, but volunteers and people carrying on a business must wait for their blue card to be issued before commencing regulated child-related work.

It is important to note that if volunteer and business applicants submit their renewal applications at least 30 days prior to the expiry of their card, they can continue to work while their renewal application is being processed.

Blue Card Services sends out renewal notices approximately 10 weeks prior to the expiry of a blue card holder's card to remind them to submit their application. Organisations employing applicants under these conditions should address potential risks in their risk management strategy.