



# SCREEN YOUR TEAM FOR SAFE SPORT

## Protecting Children and Young People with the Right Reference Checks

Recruitment and screening processes are critical to attract the right staff and volunteers to your sport, especially when it comes to protecting children and young people. This fact sheet provides tips and tools to help you attract the right people to child-facing roles, as well as a layer of checks to prevent you employing the wrong people. A person's responses and past behaviour can be a reliable indicator of future behaviour, so let's explore how to conduct thorough referee and background checks.

## Verifications – Qualification and Registration Checks

It's your organisation's responsibility to verify a new employee or volunteer's identification and documents. This includes things such as education certificates, coaching/training licences, and Working With Children Checks or Working With Vulnerable People registration cards (WWCC/MWVP).

You should verify these documents during the recruitment process. In the case of WWCCs or MWVP registration, your organisation must comply with your state/territory requirements. You can find more information on the [Australian Institute of Family Studies website](#).

## Reference Checks

You should obtain at least two reference checks to gather information about the applicant's suitability to work in the role. Make sure you confirm their suitability and experience working with children and young people.

References give you objective and factual information to support your appointment decisions. Verbal referee checks are preferable as they allow you to expand on questions if you sense any hesitation or reluctance in responses. Written reports may be subject to forgery and don't always give the full picture.

Before asking questions, you should:

- Identify yourself and your position
- Give the name of the candidate and the reason for your call
- Describe the job and the competencies you are seeking

You should ask the same questions of each referee. Some example questions to ask include:

- Are you related to the applicant? If the person answers yes, you should obtain another referee from the applicant.
- In what capacity have you known the applicant and for how long? If it's less than 12 months, you may want to consider how relevant the answers from a referee are and, in some cases, obtain another referee from the applicant.



- To your knowledge, has the applicant lived or worked overseas in the last 10 years?
- In your time working with the applicant, did you have any concerns about this applicant working with, or being in contact with, children or young people?
- How does the person respond to supervision/oversight?
- To your knowledge, has this person ever been involved with the abuse, harm or neglect of children or young people?

Referees should be able to answer your questions confidently and in detail.

Examples of green flags and red flags to look out for during a reference check:

### Green Flags:



- Positive feedback
- Willingness to rehire
- Good work ethics

### Red Flags:



- Vague or evasive responses
- Hesitant to rehire
- Doesn't know the applicant well

You should check that information from the referee is consistent with information provided by the applicant. Review any discrepancies. Any information about gaps in employment or misconduct should be considered in the circumstances of the individual case.

An organisation can obtain references from:

- former or current employers
- supervisors of a voluntary role

In cases where children or young people have not had previous work or voluntary experience, you can obtain references from:

- community group leaders
- sport coaches
- school teachers
- others with relevant knowledge of the applicant's suitability to work with, or be in contact with, children



## Key Resources

Below listed resources are located on the [Sport Integrity Australia Resources page, Safeguarding section](#):

- Recruitment and Screening of Staff and Volunteers in Child-Related Positions booklet
- Recruitment and Screening Checklist
- Induction of New Volunteers / Staff Checklist

National Integrity Framework Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy Appendix 2: Recruitment, Screening and Training Recommendations.

National Integrity Framework Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy Appendix 5: Reference Check Recommendations and Sample Questions.

[National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#), Human Rights Commission. Principle No 5 is: People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

## Contact Us

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