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**WORKING WITH CHILDREN / POLICE RECORDS CHECK POLICY**

**PURPOSE**

The Working with Children (WWC) Check helps to protect children from sexual or physical harm by checking a person’s criminal history – for serious sexual, serious violence or serious drug offences. The WWC Check is a mandatory minimum standard across Victoria. This policy is being reviewed based on the new laws that came into effect 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017.

The WWC Check helps to keep children safe while at Merinda Park Learning and Community Centre by preventing those who pose a risk to the safety of children from working with them, in either paid or voluntary work.

**SCOPE**

All Staff & Volunteers who are working directly (face to face, Contact by post or other written communication, contact by telephone or other oral communication, or contact by email or other electronic communication) with children at a given time, if at that time the person is physically present with the children and is directly engaged in providing education and care to the children under the age of 18 must have a current Working with Children (WWC) Check before commencing work or volunteering with the Centre.

People who have passed the WWC Check are subject to ongoing checking. Where a person has a ‘relevant change in circumstances’, their eligibility to hold a WWC Check card will be re-assessed. If this re-assessment results in the person having their Assessment Notice revoked by the Department of Justice (a Negative Notice issued), even if their WWC Check card has not expired, MPLCC shall terminate the immediate employment of the person.

MPLCC will use the Check Status Online Enquiry feature to confirm the validity and authenticity of a WWC Check card before engaging a person in ‘child-related work’. The online enquiry will also be used by the Centre Administration Manager every 6 months to check the validity of WWC’s of all staff who are required to hold them.

A Criminal History Check commonly referred to as a Police Records Check (PRC), must be undertaken by all staff on commencing with MPLCC and then sign a Safety Screening Statutory Declaration (As per DHHS website) each year.

## **PROCEDURE**

Any staff member or volunteer including practical placement students who meet all the following criteria must apply and receive a valid WWC before commencing employment at MPLCC:-

- duties involves working with children in connection with one of the 20 listed child-related occupational fields (Section H Table of Occupational Fields on the WWC application form);
- works on a regular basis;
- has direct contact with children under 18 years of age
- does not qualify for an exemption from the need for a WWC Check (holding a VIT registration).

A new employee who currently holds a WWC does not need to apply for a new WWC (except if moving from a volunteer to a paid position) as the WWC Check is valid for five years, unless it is revoked or surrendered in that time.

A WWC is not required for staff or volunteers who are under the age of 18 working or volunteering their time in the Centre but must be supervised at all time.

### **Check the Currency and Authenticity of the Working with Children check**

All staff members must present a current WWC check before commencing employment which will be checked by the C.E.O. on the website for validity or authenticity, before engaging a person in 'child-related work'.

All staff WWC Checks will be checked every six (6) months by the Centre Administration Manager on the website <https://online.justice.vic.gov.au/wwccu/wwccu-online-check> and recorded on the staff wages listing under the Management / Staff documents file and also on the Staff Database which will record the WWC check number. A copy of the Status Check will be placed on the personnel file. Any staff member who's WWC is due to expire in the following 12 month period from the check date will be placed as a reminder in the CEO and CAM outlook calendars as a prompt to remind the staff member. (new process October 2017)

The decision to allow new staff or volunteers to work with children must be made on the following basis:

- The centre's obligation to ensure safe and appropriate care for all the children in its care; and
- That each case should be assessed individually, taking into account the employment obligations under State and Commonwealth legislation, ensuring that the Centre prevent discrimination in the workforce.

### **Responsibility of the Employee**

When the WWC card expires it is the responsibility of the employee or volunteer to obtain a new card, this must be done within three (3) months of it expiring. Any changes to address, contact details, change of employer or moved to another voluntary roll needs to be reported to

the Department of Justice within 21 days. Please note that the infringement for working with an expired WWC can be a monetary penalty and / or up to 2 years in imprisonment.

Any staff or volunteer who is given a Negative Notice will be removed from their employment and cannot perform child related work even under supervision. The term supervision has been removed from the Act.

[www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren)

Working with Children Act 2005

Children's Services Act 1996

