



Guidance Notes: Blue card requirements for Lay Workers Lay Preachers and Volunteers

C/2.1.2.11

Purpose

Under state legislation, volunteers, lay workers, helpers and lay staff are all considered an 'employee' for blue card purposes. This guidance note provides basic information about blue card and exemption card requirements for people wishing to work with children and young people (aged under 18 years) in a congregational setting within the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod (the Church). Additional information may be obtained from bluecard.qld.gov.au. This is a general guide only and if you need specific advice please contact the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer at the Synod office on 0491 491 227 or safeministrywithchildren@ucaqld.com.au or Blue Card Services.

Scope

This guidance note applies to all lay workers and volunteers wishing to work or volunteer with children and young people (aged under 18 years). The lay worker category includes church councillors, elders, worship leaders, chairs of committees, team/activity leaders, lay preachers, and lay pastors. That is, any lay person who accepts a volunteer or leadership role within a congregation, presbytery, Synod or Assembly. It does not apply to those ministry agents holding paid positions, in placement or receiving stipend.

The Guidance Notes: Blue card requirements for Ministry Agents (C/2.1.5.2) is the correct reference document for ministry agents.

What are your blue card obligations?

1. You must hold a valid blue card or exemption card which is linked to your congregation

No card, no start:

- No card, No Start will mean that paid workers must have a blue card (not just a pending application) before they can start working with children.
- You can continue to work in paid employment, volunteer, run your business or undertake your student placement as long as you submit your renewal application **before your current card expires**.
- If you don't apply to renew your card before it expires, you will be subject to the No Card, No Start policy and will not be able to continue **working or volunteering** until a new blue card has been issued.

Change in Blue Card Status:

- If a person applying for a blue card has a charge for a serious offence that has not been resolved at court, their application will be withdrawn, and they will be unable to re-apply until the charge has been finalised.
- If a blue card holder has a **change** in their police information and they are charged with a serious offence, their blue card will be automatically suspended, and they must cease child-related work immediately.
- In both cases, the person must **not** work or volunteer with children for the entire period that their blue card is suspended or withdrawn. Failing to comply with these requirements is a criminal offence and carries significant penalties: the organisation may be subject to a fine of up to 200 penalty units or two years imprisonment.

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2. Who needs a blue card?

- 2.1. Every church council member requires a blue card or exemption card. Council members must hold blue cards because they are relevant decision makers. This means that persons who are ineligible for a blue card, or who do not hold a linked blue card are unable to be council members*
- 2.2. *Note: the exception to this rule, is when a formal church council resolution is made that the congregation will not undertake child-related activities or programs. This resolution must be formally minuted and is only able to remain in place for a 12-month period. Therefore, this resolution must be formally renewed and minuted every year, if applicable;
- 2.3. Every volunteer, student, trainee student and paid employee of the congregation who works or volunteers with children and young people in the congregational setting must hold a blue card or exemption card, unless an exemption applies;
- 2.4. Police officers and registered teachers who work or volunteer with children in the congregation must hold a valid exemption card if they are providing child-related services which are outside of their professional duties;
- 2.5. Registered health practitioners require a blue card if the work they are doing with children and young people in the congregation does NOT relate to their function as a registered health practitioner;

3. Apply for a blue card or exemption card

- 3.1. On the application form, you should list the details of your church council chairperson as the organisation's contact person; the church council secretary is reflected as the organisation's contact person on the application form for the church council chairperson;

4. Validate your blue card or exemption card

- 4.1. If you already hold a blue card or exemption card, you will need to have your card validated before you start volunteering or working for the Church;
- 4.2. Your card can be validated via Blue Card Online Services, and the email from Blue Card Services provided to the church council as proof that the blue card or exemption card has been validated;

5. Commence your role

- 5.1. Volunteers are NOT to commence in a role working or volunteering with children until such time as the letter of positive notice (or email) from Blue Card Services is received by the church council;
- 5.2. From 31 August 2020, a paid employee may NOT commence employment until such time as the letter of positive notice from Blue Card Services is received by the church council.

6. Link your blue card or exemption card

- 6.1. If you work or volunteer in more than one congregation, you need to link your blue card or exemption card to each congregation, unless your position is a presbytery position. In the case where you hold a presbytery position, your blue card or exemption card should be linked to the presbytery;
- 6.2. Use the [Link an applicant/card holder to this organisation](#) form to link your blue card or exemption card to each congregation or organisation where you volunteer;
- 6.3. On the linking form, you should list the details of the person nominated in the organisation's contact person section;



6.4. If you already hold a blue card or exemption card which has been validated, you must also complete a form to link your card to the congregation

7. Renew your blue card or exemption card

- 7.1. Blue cards and exemption cards are valid for three (3) years;
- 7.2. From the 31 August 2020, you'll be able to continue to work in paid employment, volunteer, run your business or undertake your student placement as long as you submit your renewal application **before** your current card expires;
- 7.3. If you **don't** apply to renew your card before it expires, you will be subject to the **No Card, No Start** policy and will not be able to continue working or volunteering until a new blue card has been issued.
- 7.4. All new exemption cards and blue cards will have a picture of the cardholder, and exemption cards will have an expiry date listed on them. There is no cost associated with obtaining a photo from the Queensland Department of Transport, for the purposes of obtaining a blue card or exemption card. Information about obtaining a suitable photo for your blue card or exemption card is available on the Blue Card Services website.

8. Notify a change in police information

- 8.1. If you become aware of a change in your police information, it is important that you immediately complete the '**Change in police information notification form**' and lodge it with your organisation's contact person. You **cannot** continue to work or volunteer until this form has been lodged;
- 8.2. You do not need to provide details of the change to the church council, only that a change has occurred;
- 8.3. Failure to notify your church council of the change is an offence and you may be subject to a penalty.

9. Expired card

- 9.1. You **must** stand aside from all child-related activity if your blue card or exemption card expires;
- 9.2. Employees: If your renewal application is received by Blue Card Services before expiry, you are deemed to still have a positive notice and may continue your employment conditions. If not, you no longer have a valid positive notice from the day after expiry. You **must** cease employment activities until you receive the letter of positive notice.
- 9.3. Volunteers: If your renewal application is received by Blue Card Services more than 30 days prior to expiry, you are deemed to still have a positive notice and may continue your volunteer conditions. If not, you no longer have a valid positive notice from the day after expiry. You **must** cease volunteering activities until you receive the letter of positive notice.

Revisions

Document number		C/2.1.2.11			
Version	Approval date	Approved by	Effective date	Policy owner	Policy contact
5.0	30.06.2021	Risk and Compliance Manager	30.06.2021	ED Strategic Resources and Assurance	Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer
Next scheduled review		30.06.2026			

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