



Volunteering Canterbury

Checking Criminal Records

If volunteers are working with vulnerable clients, or if your organisation has funding from Child Youth and Family you may wish to check whether a potential volunteer has a criminal record before they become involved.

The New Zealand Police process requests for information from organisations/agencies which deal with the care of others (younger, older and more vulnerable persons). This process is called "**Police Vetting**". To access this service your organisation will need to apply for approval by writing to: The Liaison Officer, Licensing and Vetting Service Centre, Office of the Police Commissioner, Box 3017, WELLINGTON.

While people sometimes refer to a "Police Clearance" there is no such document in New Zealand. However a person can apply for a copy of their own records which they can then show to another party if they wish.

The information, which is drawn from computer systems administered by the Ministry of Justice includes -

- Criminal and traffic convictions which have proceeded through the Courts, it may include Youth Court charges where the charges have been proved
- Custodial and non-custodial sentences

The Criminal Records (Clean Slate) Act 2004 means that so long as certain conditions set out in the legislation are fulfilled, after seven years convictions will not appear on the Criminal Record.

The applications take approximately twenty days to process but can be done more quickly if there are sound supporting reasons. Application needs to be made on the official form which can be downloaded from the website www.justice.govt.nz/privacy. The form is also obtainable from the District Court, or from The Privacy Assistant, Ministry of Justice, National Office, Box 2750, Wellington (phone 04-918-8800, fax 04-918-8820). The completed form needs to be signed by the person applying and accompanied by a photocopy of a suitable form of identification such as a passport, birth certificate or driver's licence.

There is no charge for either Police Vetting or to obtain a copy of your personal information stored on the computer systems administered by the Ministry of Justice.

It's important to remember that any information obtained about a potential volunteer is private and must be kept confidential. You also need to take care not to discriminate against someone whose criminal record is not relevant to the voluntary work they have applied to do, e.g. a conviction for careless driving need not preclude someone from doing gardening.

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