

# NDIS Worker Screening

## Frequently Asked Questions for Employers

### What is NDIS Worker Screening?

The broad objective of NDIS worker screening is to protect people with disability who receive NDIS supports or services from an unacceptable risk of harm. The paramount consideration is the right of people with disability to live their lives free from abuse, violence, neglect or exploitation.

From 1 February 2021 Queensland will commence the new NDIS worker screening system. The NDIS worker screening check will determine whether a person is cleared or excluded from working in certain roles with people with disability.

As an employer it is important for you to understand the changes to screening in Queensland, your obligations and the impact on your organisation and employees.

### Who needs a worker screening check?

From 1 February 2021 workers in risk assessed roles who are newly engaged by an NDIS registered provider must undergo an NDIS worker screening check. Risk assessed roles include:

- Key personnel roles with a registered service provider delivering NDIS supports or services.
- Those directly delivering NDIS supports or services.
- Roles where workers have more than incidental contact with a person with disability.

Unregistered providers and self-managed NDIS participants may also request that workers providing NDIS supports or services be screened.

### What about existing workers who have a valid yellow card or yellow card exemption?

Existing workers or new workers who already have a valid yellow card or yellow card exemption won't need to get an NDIS worker screening check straight away. The existing card can be used until it expires, is suspended or is cancelled. There is a dedicated fact sheet which guides employers through transitional arrangements to the new NDIS worker screening system.

NDIS registered providers are responsible for identifying risk-assessed roles and ensuring all their workers in these roles hold a valid NDIS Worker Screening clearance.

*It is an offence for a registered provider to engage or continue to engage a worker to carry out risk assessed NDIS work unless they hold a clearance. Penalties apply for non-compliance.*

### Are any of my employees exempt from NDIS worker screening?

There are no exemptions from NDIS worker screening, other than for school students in certain limited circumstances.

A school student carrying out work experience for you in a risk assessed role will not require a clearance if they are directly supervised by a person with an appropriate clearance.

## What if my worker needs a blue card too?

If you are delivering services or supports to children with disability, your workers will need both a disability worker screening clearance and a blue card. These workers can make a combined disability worker screening and blue card application for one fee.

The Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (Disability Services) is responsible for processing the NDIS worker screening component of the application. Disability Services will forward the application details to Blue Card Services who are responsible for processing the blue card application component.

A dedicated fact sheet has been developed for workers on the application process 'Application process for NDIS workers'. The combined application is made through Disability Services by the worker and cannot be submitted directly to Blue Card Services.

Workers who apply for and receive an NDIS worker screening clearance and subsequently need a blue/exemption card can apply through Blue Card Services for a reduced fee.

## When can my employee start working?

Queensland has passed legislation to support a 'no card, no start' approach to NDIS worker screening. This means that people who are engaged by registered providers in risk assessed roles must have a clearance before they can start work. The changes are consistent with the reforms in the blue card system and are designed to increase safeguards for people with disability who receive NDIS supports and services.

The following workers are not subject to 'no card, no start' and can begin work after their application is lodged:

- Workers in non-risk assessed roles engaged by registered providers
- Workers engaged by unregistered providers

It is your responsibility as an employer to be aware of the type of role your workers are undertaking and whether 'no card, no start' will apply to them.

## Who applies for a worker screening check?

Workers are now responsible for applying for their NDIS worker screening check. The quickest way to apply is online via the [Worker Screening website](#). A dedicated fact sheet has been created to help workers navigate the [worker portal registration](#), online identity check and application process.

A worker cannot make an application unless you (the employer) are engaging or proposing to engage them to carry out NDIS work in Queensland. You must instruct your employees to make an application if a clearance is required for the role they are performing. Please also provide your NDIS employer ID number to your employee, as they will be asked to enter this on the application form.

## How much does the application cost?

The following application costs will apply:

- NDIS worker screening application for paid workers: \$120
- Combined NDIS worker screening application and blue card application for paid workers: \$130
- Volunteer applications: Free

As part of the application process, a worker can make a payment or defer it to an employer or nominated representative. If you have arranged to pay for your worker's application, you will receive an email providing payment options including BPOINT (online), cheque or money order.

## How do I verify applications?

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission) is responsible for the operation and administration of the NDIS Worker Screening Database (NWSD) which will hold a register of workers who have applied for or hold an NDIS worker screening check across Australia. NDIS providers must access the NWSD to verify applications for their workers and view outcomes. Once the Worker Screening Unit (WSU) uploads an application to the NWSD, the NWSD will contact you, the nominated employer(s) by email and request that you verify that the applicant is, or will be, engaged by you to deliver NDIS supports or services.

The NWSD will send automatic reminders to you, 28, 21, 14 and 7 days before the verification request expires. If you do not verify an application before the verification request expires, the NWSD will notify the WSU, which may cancel the application or ask the applicant to nominate a different employer, and the 30 days will re-commence.

Employer verification is the last step in the application process. Once an employer has verified the application, it becomes a "valid application" and will be assessed by the WSU.

The NWSD will be operational from 1 February 2021. The NDIS Commission will release further information for service providers about the access and use of NWSD.

## How will I know if a worker is eligible to work?

The NWSD will display information to help employers know whether a worker is eligible to work. For applications in progress, the 'eligible to work' status will read "No". Only workers subject to 'no card, no start' will be prohibited from starting work in Queensland while their application is processed.

After a clearance is issued, the 'eligible to work' status in NWSD will be set to "Yes". You will be notified through NWSD of any change to the 'eligible to work' status of your worker.

Workers in non-risk assessed roles can work once a valid application has been submitted, despite the NWSD 'eligible to work' status reading 'No'.

If the 'eligible to work' status of 'No' is accompanied by a 'screening' status of Interim Bar, Suspension, or Exclusion, the person must stop work immediately.

## How does the application process work?

After you have verified the application through the NWSD, the Worker Screening team will:

- ü Complete checks to determine if the applicant has any assessable information (such as criminal history, disciplinary information or other relevant information)
- ü Review any assessable information received and contact the applicant for further details if required
- ü Decide the application

## **What is an interim bar?**

During the application process if assessable information is received that is of concern, an interim bar may be imposed on the applicant. This will prohibit them from working while their application is in progress and includes applicants in non-risk assessed roles. You will be notified through the NWSD if the 'eligible to work' status of the applicant changes.

*It is an offence for an NDIS provider to have a worker carry out NDIS work if that worker has been issued an interim bar. Penalties apply for non-compliance.*

## **How am I notified of the screening outcome?**

Once an outcome is available, you will be notified through the NWSD. Applicants who have been approved to work will be issued with a clearance. Applicants who have not been approved to work will be issued with an exclusion.

Workers will also be notified directly of application outcomes. Successful applicants will be sent an NDIS worker screening card.

*It is an offence for an NDIS provider to have a worker carry out NDIS work if that worker has been issued with an exclusion. Penalties apply for non-compliance.*

## **How long does the application process take?**

The new online processes will make screening easier, quicker and more efficient. As part of the screening check, we rely on other departments to provide us with relevant information so processing times can fluctuate.

Applicants who have no assessable information to review will be processed quickly. It will take longer if assessable information is received so that the information can be carefully reviewed before a decision is made.

Workers can login to the worker portal to obtain updates on the status of their application.

## **How long is a clearance valid for?**

An NDIS worker screening clearance is valid for five years from the issue date unless it is cancelled earlier.

## **Can worker screening checks be used in other states or territories?**

From 1 February 2021, NDIS worker screening checks (clearances and exclusions) are portable across roles and employers within the NDIS. This means that workers issued with a clearance can use it with any NDIS provider in Australia. Workers issued with an exclusion are prohibited from engaging in NDIS work anywhere in Australia.

## **Where do I link or remove workers associated with my organisation?**

Through the NWSD you can link new workers who already have existing NDIS worker screening clearances and remove workers who are no longer engaged by you.

## **What if my worker has a change to their criminal history or other relevant information?**

If a worker who has been issued with a clearance has a change to criminal history or other information relevant to the screening process (assessable information), they must notify the WSU. A reassessment of their eligibility to hold the clearance will be conducted. You will be advised of any change of the worker's 'eligible to work' status through the NWSD.

If it is necessary to suspend the worker's clearance during the reassessment process, they will be unable to continue to undertaking NDIS work. You will be notified if this occurs.

*It is an offence for an NDIS provider to have a suspended worker carry out NDIS work. Penalties apply for non-compliance.*

## **Do I need to use the Queensland employer portal?**

From 1 February 2021, the Yellow Card Online portal will no longer exist and the new Queensland Employer Portal (the employer portal) will commence operation. You can use the employer portal to link new employees that already have a valid yellow card or yellow card exemption and remove employees that are no longer engaged by you. The employer portal cannot be used for employees with NDIS worker screening clearances and this must be done through the NWSD as outlined above.

NDIS providers who already have access to the Yellow Card Online portal will be contacted to confirm instructions for transition to the new employer portal. If you do not have an existing login you will need to register for the portal via the [Worker Screening website](#).

A detailed guide has been developed for employers to help them use the Queensland employer portal.

## **What screening is in place for disability workers outside the NDIS?**

A small number of workers other than NDIS service provider employees will also need screening. Queensland will maintain a separate but similar state-based system called Queensland disability worker screening to screen workers in this category.

People covered by this system will include, workers in the Queensland Government run Accommodation Support and Respite Services and Queensland Government-funded disability advocacy services.

A dedicated fact sheet has been developed for employers on the Queensland disability worker screening system.

## **How do I keep up to date with news about disability worker screening in QLD?**

Updates and important information for the disability services sector is regularly released through the 'Latest News' link on the [Worker Screening website](#).

## What if I need help?

The easiest and quickest way to get help is by reading through our detailed fact sheets and user guides or accessing the [Worker Screening website](#). The [NDIS Commission](#) also has information to assist on their website.

If you can't find the information you need through the available resources, you can contact:

- Queensland Worker Screening Unit: email [Workerscreening@dndsatsip.qld.gov.au](mailto:Workerscreening@dndsatsip.qld.gov.au) or phone 1800 183 690
- NDIS Commission: 1800 035 544
- Blue Card Services: 1800 113 611 or (07) 3211 6999