



Why reference check?

This Guidance Note will provide details about the child safe reference checking when someone is interested in becoming an Adult in Guiding which includes as an Adult Member, Ongoing Volunteer or an Employee with Girl Guides Australia (GGA) or a State Girl Guide Organisation (SGGO). Reference checking is an integral part of the screening and recruitment process required by the Child Safe Child Friendly Framework implemented by Girl Guiding in Australia (GGiA) in 2021. Reference checking allows background information to be gathered about a person wanting to become an Adult in Guiding. Whether the role is working directly with Youth Members or a role in a State office the commitment to child safe recruitment and screening remains as everyone must play a part to maintain the Child Safe Child Friendly Community within GGiA.

How to reference check?

Each SGGO will have a process to undertake the reference checking. Telephone calls to referees made by an Adult Member or an Employee is good practice. Reference checking may also be facilitated through a digital platform. However the checking is done in the SGGO, it must allow verification that reliable information is being received.

A person wanting to be an Adult in Guiding will be asked to provide relevant details of two referees. If the role is a girl facing role, then both referees must have observed the person working with children. If the person is applying for a non-child facing role, then one referee with recent experience of the applicant's experience working with children will be sufficient. The term 'working with children' includes work that is not paid employment i.e., the referee(s) needs to be able to speak of their observations about how the person interacts with children.

If more than two referees are provided by the applicant then use those that are likely to have the most information about the applicant's experience working with children. This is often their most recent direct manager or supervisor in a voluntary role. If they do not give you the name of their most recent direct manager or supervisor (for a voluntary role) you should find out why. There may be a good reason.

Conflicts of interest

An important part of the process will be to find out how the referee knows the applicant. Only in exceptional circumstances will Girl Guides will consider using a referee who is:

- related to the applicant or
- in a relationship with the applicant – domestic, personal or financial.

These situations create a conflict of interest. If there are conflicts of interest, or if you are not sure if there are conflicts of interest, then you should consult with your supervisor or the relevant Commissioner and/or CEO. Conflicts of interest can be actual conflicts or perceived conflicts.

Actual conflicts arise if there is a relationship (as described above) between the applicant and the referee. The referee must not be in the same family/household, nor have business dealings with the applicant.

Perceived conflicts can arise when it appears to others that the referee would be unlikely to be able to be impartial in the matter e.g., if they have a particular friendship, or an unusually close working relationship with the applicant. For the purpose of a referee check it is not a perceived conflict if the referee and the applicant work in the same workplace, in fact this will be common.

Important information for the applicant and referee

Tell the person interested in becoming an Adult in Guiding that they will not have access to the responses provided by their referees. Similarly, it is important that the referees are informed that their responses will not be disclosed to the applicant. This allows people to speak freely to Girl Guides to enable the best child safety outcome from a reference check.

The outcome of a reference check may be that membership, ongoing volunteer status or employment may not be offered or may be discontinued/terminated (if referee check comes after engagement). Even when this occurs the person seeking to be an Adult in Guiding will not be given information from the reference check. Each SGGO has a process for reference checking that adheres to the requirements of the GGA Child Safe Child Friendly Policy and procedures.

More information about the process can be found in the member's section on the website of the SGGO or by contacting the Girl Guide State office. Region Manager are available to provide support. Working together we all help maintain Girl Guides to be a Child Safe Child Friendly Community.