Supporting people experiencing disadvantage

March 2025

This resource is for organisations who support people experiencing disadvantage. It has been created by the **Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria** to assist you to help your clients get their life event certificate (e.g. their birth certificate).

We have also created resources for specific client groups, such as people experiencing homelessness. For more information on these, turn to the [last page of this resource](#_Help_for_specific).

# Why a birth certificate is important

Birth registration is a universal human right. A birth needs to be registered before a certificate be issued. It can form part of a person’s connection to their birth family and cultural identity. It can also provide someone with information they may not already know. For example, this might include where they were born.

A birth certificate helps establish a person’s identity. Everyone needs a birth certificate. They can help someone access services such as:

* Government benefits
* Education
* Childcare
* Employment
* Opening a bank account
* Help with housing.

Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM) records life events for the Victorian community and issues certificates. Birth certificates are the most common certificate requested by someone experiencing disadvantage. However, the advice in this document is relevant for our other certificates, too.

For people born outside Victoria, contact the Registry in the state or territory where they were born.

# Get the right information

We are here to help! If in doubt, contact us to discuss. It’s important you have the right information.

To contact us:

* Email [bdmapplicationmanagement@dgs.vic.gov.au](mailto:bdmapplicationmanagement@dgs.vic.gov.au)
* In the subject line, mention ‘assisting a client who is experiencing disadvantage’. This helps us manage these enquiries so that you get information you need.

# Types of help available

The ways we can help people experiencing disadvantage include:

* Help with proof of identity exceptions, or
* Help by waiving fees (free certificate).

# Proof of identity exceptions

The easiest way for someone to prove their identity is with:

* Their driver licence (if it confirms residential address), and
* Their passport.

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| A Victorian learner permit | An Australian passport |

However, some customers can’t meet BDM’s standard **proof of identity requirements**.

For these customers, we have a **proof of identity exception policy**. The policy supports organisations to help clients who don’t have the standard documents. It provides guidance on what documents to provide.

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| QR code to bdm.vic.gov.au/proof-identity | For more information about proof of identity, scan the code or visit  bdm.vic.gov.au/proof-identity  For more information about our proof of identity exception policy, email bdmapplicationmanagement@dgs.vic.gov.au |

# Fee waiver

People experiencing hardship and disadvantage may be eligible for a free legal certificate.

Our **Financial hardship and fee waiver policy** outlines the evidence that a person may need to provide.

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| QR code to bdm.vic.gov.au/financial-hardship-fee-waiver | For more information, scan the code or visit  bdm.vic.gov.au/financial-hardship-fee-waiver |

# Help your clients apply

You can help your client to apply themselves.

You can also::

* **Act as a guarantor** if your client doesn’t have enough proof of identity of their own
* **Apply on their behalf**, if you have their authority to do so (‘Third party authority’).

With both these options, you will need to provide documents and evidence to support the application.

If you have questions, please email bdmapplicationmanagement@dgs.vic.gov.au

In the subject line, mention ‘assisting a client who is experiencing disadvantage’.

You can either apply offline (via post), or online via our website.

Following these steps does not guarantee that BDM will issue a certificate. We still need to assess your client’s application.

## Apply offline

### 1. Request a paper application form

Email bdmapplicationmanagement@dgs.vic.gov.au

Tell us what type of certificate and/or registration your client is applying for.

### 2. If required, download a fee waiver application form and attach it to the application

Download and help your client fill out and sign a **fee waiver application form**.

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| QR code to bdm.vic.gov.au/financial-hardship-fee-waiver | To download a copy, scan the code or visit  bdm.vic.gov.au/financial-hardship-fee-waiver |

Attach the form to the paper application. If applying offline, no payment is required to submit the application

### 3. Attach evidence

Help your client attach the evidence that needs to be provided.

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| QR code to bdm.vic.gov.au/proof-identity | For information about identity documents, scan the code or visit [bdm.vic.gov.au/proof-identity](http://www.bdm.vic.gov.au/proof-identity)  For more information about our proof of identity exceptions, email us at [bdmapplicationmanagement@dgs.vic.gov.au](mailto:bdmapplicationmanagement@dgs.vic.gov.au) |

All identity documents must be:

* Certified copies. Check the rules about who can certify documents at [justice.vic.gov.au/statdecs](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/statdecs)
* Current, or dated within the last 12 months. Passports may be current or expired less than 3 years.

You do not need to pay to submit the application if your client is applying for a fee waiver.

If you are applying on behalf of your client or acting as a guarantor, you will also need to provide:

* Your own proof of identity, and
* Any other evidence required.

You can [contact us](#_Need_help?_Contact) to discuss how you can use your professional ID instead of your personal ID to prove your identity.

### 4. Post the forms

Post the forms to:

Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria  
GPO Box 4332   
Melbourne, VIC, 3001

or visit a Justice Service Centre. Find their locations at justice.vic.gov.au/service-locations

## Apply online

The fastest way for your client to apply for a certificate or registration is online. You can help your client apply online. You can’t apply on their behalf if you have legal authority to do so. If applying online, they will need to **pay** up front. If your client is successful in applying for a fee waiver, we will refund the fee.

### 1. Apply online

Help your client to apply online for the certificate and/or registration.

They will need to prove their identity:

* Online, or
* By providing certified copies of their identity documents.

### 2. If required, download a fee waiver application form and attach it to the application

Help your client fill out and sign a **fee waiver application form** and save it electronically.

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| --- | --- |
| QR code to bdm.vic.gov.au/financial-hardship-fee-waiver | To download a copy, scan the code or visit  bdm.vic.gov.au/financial-hardship-fee-waiver |

Help your client attach the form to their online application.

### 3. Upload the evidence

Help your client upload the evidence that needs to be provided.

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| --- | --- |
| QR code to bdm.vic.gov.au/proof-identity | For information about identity documents, scan the code or visit [bdm.vic.gov.au/proof-identity](http://www.bdm.vic.gov.au/proof-identity)  For more information about our proof of identity exceptions, email us at [bdmapplicationmanagement@dgs.vic.gov.au](mailto:bdmapplicationmanagement@dgs.vic.gov.au) |

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### 4. Pay and submit the application

Pay the fee to submit the application/registration. Note the order number in case your client needs to follow up with us.

## Has your client already applied?

If your client didn’t apply for a fee waiver at the time, they may be able to apply for a fee waiver and have their fees refunded.

To learn how to do this within four weeks of applying, see   
bdm.vic.gov.au/financial-hardship-fee-waiver

# Need help? Contact us

We are here to help. If in doubt, **contact us** to discuss at [bdmapplicationmanagement@dgs.vic.gov.au](mailto:bdmapplicationmanagement@dgs.vic.gov.au)

In the subject line, mention assisting a client who is experiencing homelessness. This helps us manage these enquiries.

We regularly review our website and our policies to meet community needs. Visit bdm.vic.gov.au/supporting-people-experiencing-disadvantage to make sure you have the latest information.

# Help for specific client groups

There are specific steps you should follow if you are helping people experiencing homelessness. We have general advice on our website for the following groups:

* Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander prisoners
* Refugees
* Survivors of family violence
* People affected by natural disasters.

Visit bdm.vic.gov.au/service-partners for more information.

You can also visit bdm.vic.gov.au for:

* Information in other languages about BDM’s services
* Information in other languages about registering a birth.