



Policy and Procedures Participation of Volunteers, Visitors and Students

PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines for the engagement and participation of volunteers and students at Acacia, while ensuring that children's health, safety and wellbeing is protected at all times.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Acacia Children's Centre is committed to:

- supporting connections with educational institutions to provide opportunities for students to undertake practicum placements as part of their studies
- building relationships with community members and providing suitable opportunities to engage volunteers to contribute to the programs and activities of the service
- ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of each child at the service through consistent compliance with this policy and procedures when engaging volunteers and students.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Persons with Management or Control, Nominated Supervisor, Persons in day-to-day Charge, educators, staff, students (refer to *Definitions*), volunteers (refer to *Definitions*), parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Acacia

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

Students may participate in programs and activities at the service from time to time including observing and experiencing the provision of centre-based education and care. This will be encouraged and facilitated by Acacia Children's Centre wherever appropriate and possible.

Acacia Children's Centre values the participation of parents/guardians and other family members, and the voluntary contribution they make to the education and care of their own and other children. "In genuine partnerships families and educators value each other's knowledge and roles, communicate freely and respectfully and engage in shared decision making" (*Early Years Learning Framework – refer to Sources*).

Acacia Children's Centre aims to provide a range of opportunities for family members, volunteers and students to participate in programs and activities while adhering to clear guidelines regarding appropriate interactions and communication with staff, and other adults and children at the service (refer to *Code of Conduct Policy*).

The role that volunteers play in education and care services varies and can include working with groups of children, preparing materials or food, assisting with administrative tasks or working one-on-one with individual children. The service is responsible for ensuring that volunteers are suitable to work with children, and that children's health, safety and wellbeing is protected at all times.

Volunteers should only be engaged to complement, not replace, the work of paid staff. Accordingly, services should not engage volunteers to fill the place of an employee who is ill or on leave, or to fill a vacant budgeted position.



Volunteers must **not** be asked to perform tasks:

- that they are untrained, unqualified or too inexperienced to undertake
- that put the children or themselves in a vulnerable or potentially unsafe situation
- where there is a conflict of interest.

Prior to participation at the service, a volunteer or student (aged 18 years or over) must be in possession of a Working with Children (WWC) Check.

Parents/guardians whose children usually attend the service are exempt from needing a WWC Check. However a service may decide, as a demonstration of duty of care, that all parents/guardians who volunteer at the service are required to undergo a WWC Check.

In line with Child Safe Standard 4 and the *Child Safe Environment Policy*, prior to engaging a volunteer or student an assessment should be undertaken of the nature of the responsibility to determine whether a position description is required, and based on that whether an interview and referee checks are required.

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Child Safe Standards
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth)
- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 4: Staffing Arrangements
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (Vic)
- *Worker screening Act 2021* (Vic)

4. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Child-related work: In relation to the WWC Check, child-related work includes work with children which may involve physical contact, face-to-face contact, oral, written or electronic communication.

Conflict of interest: (In relation to this policy) refers to an interest that may affect, or may appear reasonably likely to affect, the judgement or conduct of the volunteer, or may impair their independence or loyalty to the service. A conflict of interest can arise from avoiding personal losses as well as gaining personal advantage, whether financial or otherwise, and may not only involve the volunteer, but also their relatives, friends or business associates.

Staff record: A record which the Approved Provider of a centre-based service must keep containing information about the Nominated Supervisor, the Educational Leader, staff, volunteers, students and the Responsible Person at a service (Regulations 146–149). A sample staff record is available on the ACECQA website: <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/>



Student: A person undertaking a practicum placement as part of a recognised early childhood qualification. This student will be supported by an educational institution in the completion of their placement.

Volunteer: A person who willingly undertakes defined activities to support the education and care programs at a service in an unpaid or honorary capacity. These activities may include child-related work (refer to *Definitions*), administrative tasks, or preparing materials or food.

Working with Children (WWC) Check: The check is a legal requirement for those undertaking paid or voluntary child-related work (refer to *Definitions*) in Victoria and is a measure to help protect children from harm arising as a result of physical or sexual abuse. The Department of Justice assesses a person's suitability to work with children by examining relevant serious sexual, physical and drug offences in a person's national criminal history and, where appropriate, their professional history. A WWC Check card is granted to a person under working with children legislation if:

- they have been assessed as suitable to work with children
- there has been no information that, if the person worked with children, they would pose a risk to those children
- they are not prohibited from attempting to obtain, undertake or remain in child-related employment.

This policy has been developed under the CHILD values framework to ensure that all participants follow our values when attending Acacia's children's centres

C- Compassion:

Acacia follows code of ethics and does not discriminate against any participants.

H- Honour:

Acacia will honor and respect each participant roles whilst at the service, and offer assistance when needed. Students will be mentored and guided throughout their placement to ensure they gain valuable experience. Visitors will be guided to follow relevant guidelines to ensure their duties or purpose adheres to laws and regulations.

I - Integrity:

This policy ensures that families, visitors, students, volunteers and staff adheres laws and regulations that protect the safety and wellbeing of all participants.

L- Learning:

Acacia has a learning culture where we all collaborate with each other to learn from each other.

D- Diversity:

All students' visitors and volunteers are made to feel welcomed regardless of their cultural background. All participants are to follow our centres philosophy and values when interacting with children and their families.

Conflict of interest: (In relation to this policy) refers to an interest that may affect, or may appear reasonably likely to affect, the judgement or conduct of the volunteer, or may impair their independence or loyalty to the service. A conflict of interest can arise from avoiding personal losses as well as gaining personal advantage, whether financial or otherwise, and may not only involve the volunteer, but also their relatives, friends or business associates.



Procedures

The Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor or Certified Supervisor will:

- Maintain a visitors register (located in the centre foyer) and request all visitors to sign in on arrival and out when leaving the premises, with an explanation of the organisation they belong to and the reason for visit.
- Ensure the QR code is available for track tracing for the purpose of Pandemic outbreaks such as COVID-19
- Ensure educators and staff understand the regulatory and ethical guidelines relating to visitors at the Centre.
- Screen all persons entering the centre to ensure they are suitable able to undertake their duties in a professional manner.
- Allocate the placements of all students and volunteers.
- Keep a record of all volunteers and students who spend time in the service. The record will include: *full name address; date of birth; emergency contacts; name of school or organisation; copy of working with children check: signed agreement of their expected roles and responsibilities whilst at the Centre.*
- Keep an attendance record of each student and volunteers who participates in the program (located in student/volunteer sign in sheet.
- Be aware of protocols and guidance supplied by universities, TAFE's or RTO's in relation to participating students.
- Ensure all Volunteers and Students participate in an *Induction Procedure* prior to commencing using the induction checklist, placing emphasis on communicating the code of conduct, child protection and health and safety procedures.
- Ensure all students receive a student/volunteer handbook.
- Ensure that working with children checks have been checked online for all students and volunteer's at induction time and on commencement of any future placements.
- Ensure communication between students/volunteers, their organisation and supervising mentor is carried out to ensure professional conduct is up kept.
- Support all participants when needed.
- Prior to commencing work at the service, all volunteers should be interviewed to ascertain their suitability for, and interest in, the tasks they will be undertaking, and to assess whether the volunteer's goals can be achieved. The interview process also provides an opportunity for volunteers to have their questions answered. Reference checks must be undertaken by the Approved Provider or a nominee of the Approved Provider, to confirm work abilities or character attributes.

Priority is given to students on placements from reputable Registered Training Organisations (RTO's), Universities and TAFE's who are undertaking various Early Education Courses. The Director will co-ordinate and arrange dates and times so that students will gain maximum benefit from their placement and that the Centre and children's needs will not be disadvantaged.

Educators will:

- Ensure all visitors, volunteers and students are easily identified with a name tag, photo notification on notice boards or entrances to rooms.
- Ensure all visitors, volunteers and students are supervised at all times and they are not left alone with children.



- Ensure all visitors, volunteers and students have a clear understanding of their roles and adhere to the policies and procedures of the Centre.
- Ensure all visitors, volunteers and students abide Acacia's privacy policy by not taking any photos of children, families or staff.
- Ensure all visitors, volunteers and students treat children with respect and dignity.
- Students are supported whilst on practicum, by offering constructive feedback and communicating with respective training organisations.

Volunteers/ students and visitors will:

- Abide by Acacia's Code of Conduct, policies and procedures whilst at the Centre or attending activities organised by the Centre.
- Read and understand policies but will not take copies. All policies will be available for viewing via Acacia's Website.
- Ensure they hold a valid working with children check.
- Ensure the Attendance record is signed on arrival and leaving.
- Undertake duties and roles in a professional manner.
- Ask for assistance when needed or take on directions from management or leadership group.
- Will treat children with respect and dignity where appropriate behaviour and language towards children is displayed at all times (calling children by their name, no giving of gifts, no display of favouritism and limited physical affection such as cuddling, tickling, kissing).
- Ensure that physical contact is non-intimate - appropriate physical contact could include holding hands, hugging (only if child initiated), assistance with climbing equipment, touching an arm
- Not ever be left alone with children.
- Will be supervised when undertaking food handling tasks.
- Students are to join in at meal times with the children but eat a small portion to act as a role model.
- Respect the property of Acacia.
- Follow Occupational Health and Safety guidelines.
- Have an understanding of child protection laws and mandatory reporting.
- Will respect privacy and confidentiality of all staff, children and families by not taking any photos of staff, children or families.
- Will respect the privacy and confidentiality of all staff, children and families by not discussing or disclosing information about staff, children nor families outside the Centre or on social media.

Parent Involvement

Parents and family members are welcome to visit at any reasonable time, with due consideration to the children's program.



Parents are encouraged to share their skills, interests and cultures both informally (by simply spending time in the Centre) and formally (through arrangements with educators/staff). Refer to Covid Safe Plan

Parents are invited to be involved in decision making for Acacia through involvement on the Management Committees, social functions, working bees, educator/parent interviews, reading, helping with excursions and contributing to the newsletter.

The Centre acknowledges the central role of parents in the program and seeks to work in partnership with parents. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in the Centre to participate in the daily life of Acacia including activities with children.

The Centre involves parents in the following ways:

- Sharing information about their child's development through parent/ educator, meetings, informal conversations, child development records, newsletters, information sessions, social functions.
- Including parents in children's activities such as:
 - Excursions/ incursions
 - Special days
 - Celebrations
 - Visits with children
 - Pick up and drop off times
 - Formal and informal visits

Unwelcome Visitors

Unwelcome visitors will be calmly asked to leave the Centre. Refusal to leave will necessitate the Director or person in-charge calling the local police for the removal of the unwelcome visitor. Educators and staff will not at any time try to physically remove the visitor. (See lockdown procedure in Emergency policy for more information)

Educators/Staff will consider the safety of the children and act accordingly.

Unauthorised persons are not permitted to visit the Centre for the purpose of questioning children, nor should any information concerning a child be given to any unauthorised person.

Staff Visitors or Personal Visitors

The Centre acknowledges that personal calls and visitors can distract educators/staff from providing a duty of care for children.

- Educators and Staff have a duty of care to the children within their group. Educators and staff will be aware of the importance of constant supervision and their engagement within the program.
- Personal visits from children, siblings, parents or partners must not occur within the children's rooms. This will ensure that educator remains focussed on their work.
- Educators will ensure any necessary visits occur outside of their contact time with children.
- Under no circumstances can a person who is not employed by the Centre be responsible for any child/children.
- Personal visitors must report to the office and they will be advised of the staff members availability.
- Any visitors within a children's room are the responsibility of the educator within that room.



Research

Acacia supports research project which promote and enhance quality children's services and community development.

Students (or academics) wishing to undertake major research at the Centre must present a written proposal for approval to the Director. The Management Committee will review all proposals and ensure they follow ethical standards.

Approval or denial will be given within 30 days of the application being received by the Director, and no work may proceed without written approval. The Director will ensure that the researcher/s and supervisor/s abide by the Acacia's Code of Conduct. Information about the research project will be given to families of the children involved, including complete details of the research topic, the university/institute and names of all students and supervisors.

Families will be informed of any research undertaken within the Centre through the newsletter, notice board or letter.

During the research, the Director will ensure research methodologies and procedures comply with Acacia's Code of Conduct and Privacy Policy.

Details required for application are:

- Names and qualifications of researchers, professional positions and addresses
- Reasons for research and focus of the research.
- Necessary involvement of educator, staff and/or children, specific requirements.
- Perceived advantage to the Centre and any possible problems for the Centre.
- Specific support needed to carry out the project.
- Time factors involved, and any expenses or funding incurred as result of participating.

A copy of any report or paper written as a result of research carried out at the Centre is to be sent to the Director immediately after completion of the project.

The Director may approve minor research, which includes student assignments and projects.

References

Dept. of Education and Early Childhood Development, Dept. of Human Services

- *Protecting the Safety and Wellbeing of Children and Young People*, State of Victoria 2010
- *Responding to Child Abuse*, State of Victoria 2002

Legislations

- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2018*
- *Worker-screening-act-2020/001*

BREACH OF THIS POLICY

Any educator or staff found to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

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ACACIA CHILDREN'S CENTRES

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