



Yarralea Children's Centre

PARTICIPATION OF VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENTS POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 4

PURPOSE

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

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Yarralea 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 Yarralea Children's Centre.

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 Yarralea Children's Centre wherever appropriate and possible.

Yarralea 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*).

Yarralea 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.

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)
- *Working with Children Act 2005* (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). **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.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA): www.acecqa.gov.au
- *The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia: Belonging, Being, Becoming*: www.acecqa.gov.au
- A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation (The Commission for Children and Young People) www.ccyp.vic.gov.au
- Working with Children Check unit, Department of Justice & Regulation – provides details of how to obtain a WWC Check: www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au

Service policies

- *Child Safe Environment Policy*
- *Code of Conduct Policy*
- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*
- *Determining Responsible Person Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Interactions with Children Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*
- *Staffing Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider and Persons with Management or Control are responsible for:

- developing guidelines for accepting applications from volunteers and students to work at the service in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor and educators and which are aligned with the *Child Safe Environment Policy*
- accepting or rejecting a potential volunteer or student based on the circumstances of the service at the time, in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor
- ensuring that children being educated and cared for by the service are adequately supervised, and the legislated educator-to-child ratios are complied with at all times (Regulations 123, 355, 360) (refer to *Supervision of Children Policy*)
- ensuring that the Nominated Supervisor, educators and other staff, volunteers and students on placement at the service are not affected by alcohol or drugs (including prescription medication) that would impair their capacity to supervise or provide education and care to children (Regulation 83)

The Nominated Supervisor and Persons in Day to Day Charge are responsible for:

- assisting the Approved Provider to develop guidelines for applications from volunteers and students to work at the service and which are aligned with the *Child Safe Environment Policy*
- assisting the Approved Provider with decisions in relation to accepting/rejecting a potential volunteer or student based on the circumstances of the service at the time
- ensuring that children being educated and cared for by the service are adequately supervised, and the legislated educator-to-child ratios are complied with at all times (Regulations 123, 355, 360) (refer to *Supervision of Children Policy*)

- ensuring that, where required, the WWC Check has been read prior to the volunteer/student's commencement at the service, and that details are included on the staff record
- ensuring that the staff record contains the name, address and date of birth of volunteers and students attending the service (Regulations 145, 149(1))
- keeping a record for each day on which each student or volunteer participates with the date and the hours of participation (Regulation 149(2))
- ensuring that volunteers, students and parents/guardians are adequately supervised at all times when participating at the service, and that the health, safety and wellbeing of children at the service is protected
- ensuring that volunteers, students and parents/guardians are not left with sole supervision of individual children or groups of children
- ensuring that parents/guardians of a child attending the service can enter the service premises at any time that the child is being educated and cared for, except where this may pose a risk to the safety of children or staff, or conflict with any duty of the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor or educators under the law (Regulation 157)
- ensuring strategies are in place to enable and encourage the participation and involvement of parents/guardians at the service
- providing volunteers, students and parents/guardians with access to all service policies and procedures, and a copy of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*
- ensuring that volunteers, students and parents/guardians comply with the National Regulations and all service policies and procedures, including the *Code of Conduct Policy*, while attending the service
- assisting the Approved Provider to develop an induction checklist for volunteers and students at the service developing an induction checklist and ensuring that volunteers and students have completed the induction checklist and have been provided with a copy of the staff handbook, if applicable.

All other educators are responsible for:

- assisting the Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor to develop guidelines for applications from volunteers and students to participate at the service and are aligned with the *Child Safe Environment Policy*
- ensuring that children being educated and cared for by the service are adequately supervised, and the legislated educator-to-child ratios are complied with at all times (refer to *Supervision of Children Policy*)
- providing volunteers, students and parents/guardians with access to all service policies and procedures, and a copy of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*
- ensuring that volunteers, students and parents/guardians comply with the National Regulations and all service policies and procedures, including the *Code of Conduct Policy*, while attending the service
- ensuring that volunteers, students and parents/guardians are adequately supervised at all times, and that the safety, health and wellbeing of children at the service is protected
- ensuring that volunteers, students and parents/guardians are not left with sole supervision of individual children or groups of children
- enabling parents/guardians of children attending the service access the service premises at any time the child is being educated and cared for except where this poses a risk to the safety of children and/or staff
- encouraging the participation and involvement of parents/guardians at the service
- assisting the Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor to develop an induction checklist for volunteers and students at the service assisting volunteers and students to understand the requirements of this policy and the expectations of the service.

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for:

- ensuring they have provided all details required to complete the staff record
- undertaking a WWC Check and presenting a current WWC Check card or other notification, as applicable
- understanding and acknowledging the requirement for confidentiality of all information relating to educators and families within the service (refer to *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*)

- complying with the requirements of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* and with all service policies and procedures, including the *Code of Conduct Policy*, while at the service
- undertaking the induction process and completing the induction checklist prior to commencement at the service
- following the directions of staff at the service at all times to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of children is protected.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- providing information for the staff record as required
- complying with the requirements of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* and with all service policies and procedures, including the *Code of Conduct Policy* and *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* while attending the service
- following the directions of staff at the service at all times to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of children is protected.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- check staff records on a regular basis to ensure details of students, volunteers and where appropriate parents/guardians are maintained in line with all legislative requirements as outlined in the policy
- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures unless a lesser period is necessary because of a risk.

INDUCTION CHECKLIST LOCATED IN INDUCTION PAPERWORK FOLDER

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Yarralea Children's Centre in 2022

REVIEW NOTES: