

## Participation of Volunteer and Students Policy

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### 1. Policy Statement

#### Values

NERPSA 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.

#### Purpose

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

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to NERPSA, individual kindergartens within the NERPSA cluster, their committees, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of NERPSA Kindergartens.

### 3. Background and Legislation

Volunteers and students may participate in programs and activities at the service from time to time in order to observe and experience the provision of centre-based education and care. This will be encouraged and facilitated by NERPSA wherever appropriate and possible.

NERPSA 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*). NERPSA 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*).

Volunteers and students can expect:

- a safe and well-managed workplace
- meaningful work experience with appropriate direction, supervision and training
- recognition for their contribution.

The role that volunteers play in children's 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 children's 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.

Prior to participation at the service, a volunteer (aged 18 years or over) must be in possession of a Working with Children (WWC) Check card, unless they are under the direct supervision of an educator who is over 18 years of

age and holds, or is actively working towards, an approved diploma-level education and care qualification (Regulation 358).

Parents/guardians and family members closely related to children attending 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.

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.

Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to:

*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)

*Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (Vic)

*Working with Children Act 2005* (Vic)

#### 4. Definitions

**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.

**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 children's service in an unpaid or honorary capacity. These activities may include direct contact with children, administrative tasks, or preparing materials or food.

**Working directly with children:** For the purposes of the National Regulations, working directly with children is defined as being physically present with children and directly engaged in providing them with education and/or care.

**Working with Children (WWC) Check:** The check is a legal requirement for those undertaking paid or voluntary child-related work 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, notice or document (valid for five years), 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 NERPSA Policies

- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA): [www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au)
- National *Early Years Learning Framework*: [http://www.deewr.gov.au/earlychildhood/policy\\_agenda/quality/pages/earlyyearslearningframework.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/earlychildhood/policy_agenda/quality/pages/earlyyearslearningframework.aspx)

- Working with Children Check Unit, Department of Justice, Victoria:  
[www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren/](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren/)
- *Child Safe Environment Policy*
- *Code of Conduct Policy*
- *Complaints Policy*
- *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*
- *Determining Responsible Person Policy*
- *Interactions with Children Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Privacy Policy*

## 6. Procedures

NERPSA is responsible for:

- 6.1 Developing an induction checklist for students attending the service (refer to Attachment 1 – Sample induction checklist for students) in consultation with educators.

Educators are responsible for:

- 6.2 Making decisions in relation to accepting/rejecting a potential volunteer/student based on the circumstances of the service at the time
- 6.3 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)
- 6.4 Ensuring that information is recorded for all volunteers/students attending the service with details of name, address, date of birth, days and hours of participation and details of the Working with Children (WWC) Check where required (Regulations 145, 147, 149)
- 6.5 Ensuring that, where required, the Working with Children (WWC) Check has been read/sighted prior to the student's commencement at the service, and that details are included on the staff record
- 6.6 Ensuring that volunteers/students and parents/guardians are adequately supervised at all times, and that the health, safety and wellbeing of children at the service is protected
- 6.7 Ensuring that volunteers/students and parents/guardians are not left with sole supervision of individual children or groups of children
- 6.8 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)
- 6.9 Ensuring strategies are in place to enable and encourage the participation and involvement of parents/guardians at the service
- 6.10 Providing volunteers/students and parents/guardians with access to all service policies and procedures and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*
- 6.11 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
- 6.12 Assisting the Approved Provider to develop an induction checklist for students at the service (refer to Attachment 1 – Sample induction checklist for students)
- 6.13 Ensuring that students have completed the induction checklist (refer to Attachment 1) and have been provided with a copy of the staff handbook, if applicable.

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

- 6.14 Ensuring they have provided all information required

- 6.15 Undertaking a Working with Children (WWC) Check and presenting a current WWC Check card or other notification, as applicable
- 6.16 Understanding and acknowledging the requirement for confidentiality of all information relating to educators and families within the service (refer to *Privacy Policy*)
- 6.17 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
- 6.18 Undertaking the induction process and completing the induction checklist (refer to Attachment 1) prior to commencement at the service where applicable
- 6.19 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:

- 6.20 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 attending the service
- 6.21 Following the directions of staff at the service at all times to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of children is protected.

## **7. Evaluation**

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

- Seek feedback regarding the effectiveness of the policy
- 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.

## **8. Authorisation**

The policy was adopted by NERPSA on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2013.

## **9. Review date**

The policy will be reviewed every two years from date of adoption.

## **Attachments**

- Sample induction checklist for students

**ATTACHMENT**

**Sample induction checklist for students**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

To be completed by all students participating at NERPSA Kindergartens and returned to the Kindergarten prior to commencing at the service.

|  | <b>Please tick</b> |
|--|--------------------|
| I understand the content of service policies and procedures, including those relating to:  |                    |
| • conduct while at the service ( <i>Code of Conduct Policy</i> )   |                    |
| • emergency, evacuation, fire and safety, including locations of fire extinguishers and emergency exits ( <i>Emergency Policy</i> )  |                    |
| • first aid arrangements for children and adults, including the location of the nearest first aid kit ( <i>Administration of First Aid Policy</i> )  |                    |
| • daily routines   |                    |
| • the importance of OHS and following safe work practices ( <i>Occupational Health and Safety Policy</i> )   |                    |
| • interacting appropriately with children ( <i>Interactions with Children Policy</i> )   |                    |
| • reporting hazards in the workplace ( <i>Occupational Health and Safety Policy</i> )  |                    |
| • child protection ( <i>Child Safe Environment Policy</i> )  |                    |
| • privacy and confidentiality of information ( <i>Privacy Policy</i> )   |                    |
| I am aware of the non-smoking policy of the service  |                    |
| The expectations of my placement/engagement, my role and responsibilities (including attending to the requirements of children with additional needs) have been clearly explained to me by my supervisor |                    |
| I am aware that I am expected to participate in general tasks, including maintaining the environment in a clean, safe and tidy condition   |                    |

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominated Supervisor's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_