



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 Shine Bright EYM Services, while ensuring that children's health, safety and wellbeing is protected at all times.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Shine Bright EYM is committed to:

- supporting connections with educational institutions to provide opportunities for students to undertake practicum placements and work experience 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, Nominated Supervisor, Responsible Person in Charge, teachers, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Shine Bright EYM Services.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

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 Shine Bright EYM wherever appropriate and possible.

Shine Bright EYM 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*).

Shine Bright EYM 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

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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 or student (aged 18 years or over) must be in possession of a Working with Children (WWC) Clearance (refer to *Definitions*).

Parents/guardians and family members closely related to children attending the service are exempt from needing a WWC Check (refer to *Definitions*). 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 (refer to *Definitions*).

Volunteers and students should be engaged to complement, not replace, the work of paid staff and are not included in staff ratios.

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

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

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.

Prior to commencing volunteer work at the service, all volunteers should meet with the Educational Leader to ascertain their suitability for, and interest in, the tasks they will be undertaking, to assess whether their goals can be achieved and ensure that they complete Stage 6 Induction (Attachment 1) The process also provides an opportunity for volunteers to have their questions answered. Reference checks must be undertaken by the Approved Provider, to confirm work abilities or character attributes. Good practice in volunteer management includes acknowledgement and recognition of volunteer contributions, and this can involve a mixture of formal and informal recognition strategies.

It is a requirement under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* that the Approved Provider uses the student and Volunteer Application Form (refer to Attachment 2) to document the details of all students and volunteers. The form must include the full name, address and date of birth of each student or volunteer who participates at the service. The Approved Provider of a centre-based service must also keep a record for each day on which the student or volunteer participates at the service, including the date and the hours of participation. In addition to this, it is recommended that students and volunteers undertake an induction to the service and complete an induction checklist (refer to Attachment 1), which should also be stored with the student and Volunteer Form.

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)
- *Worker Screening Act 2020* (Vic)
- *Worker Screening Regulation 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 (refer to Definitions), 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 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 clearance is a legal requirement under the Worker Screening Act 2020 for those undertaking paid or voluntary child-related work in Victoria. 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.

Working with Children (WWC) Clearance: A WWC Clearance is granted to a person under Worker Screening 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.cryp.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 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 is 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/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*)
- checking the status of the Working with Children (WWC) Clearance of volunteers and students where required, and ensuring that the details are recorded in the service register
- developing a range of strategies 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 access to 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
- developing an induction checklist for volunteers/students attending the service (refer to Attachment 1).
- 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

The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- ensuring that the application for Volunteer and students form is complete (including referee checks completed by the approved provider, refer to Attachment 2) contains information 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 (Regulations 145, 147, 149)
- assisting the Approved Provider with decisions in relation to accepting/rejecting a potential volunteer/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*) Students and volunteers are not to be counted in educator-to-child ratios.
- ensuring that, where required, that volunteers/students only commence at the service with a Working with Children's Clearance, and that details are included on the staff record
- 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
- 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 access to 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 have completed the induction checklist (refer to Attachment 1) and have access to a copy of the staff handbook, if applicable.

Other educators are responsible for:

- ensuring that, the Working with Children (WWC) Check has been read/sighted prior to the volunteer's commencement at the service.
- assisting the Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor to develop guidelines for applications 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 access to 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
- complying with the requirement 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
- complying with the requirement 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 to 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 volunteers/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 application for volunteer and student form, including three referees
- undertaking a Working with Children (WWC) Check and presenting a current WWC Check card
- 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 (refer to Attachment 1) 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:

- 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
- 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 and volunteers 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.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: [Induction checklist for volunteers/students](#)
- Attachment 2: [Student and Volunteer Application Form](#)

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Shine Bright EYM on July 2021.

REVIEW DATE: 2024