



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 Parkdale Preschool, while ensuring that children's health, safety and wellbeing is protected at all times.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Parkdale Preschool 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, Nominated Supervisor, Persons in Day to Day Charge, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Parkdale Preschool.

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 Parkdale Preschool wherever appropriate and possible.

Parkdale Preschool 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*). Parkdale Preschool 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 *Staff 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 or student aged 18 years or over, must be in possession of a Working with Children (WWC) Check card, (Regulation 358).

At Parkdale Preschool, all volunteers and students are closely supervised by staff and are not left alone with children. Therefore, parents/guardians and family members closely related to children attending the service are exempt from needing a WWC Check. We do, however, encourage all parents/guardians and family members to apply for a volunteer WWC Check or to provide us with a copy if they already have one.

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 commencing work at the service, 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. Students will only be accepted from reputable secondary/tertiary institutions.

The Educational Leader is responsible for approving applications from volunteers and students requesting placement at the service. Where possible only one work experience student and one tertiary student will be offered a place at any given time. All volunteers and students will be accepted at the discretion of the Educational Leader and taking into account the group dynamics and services events.

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. 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 maintains the volunteers and students record to document the details of all students and volunteers. The record must include the full name, address and date of birth of each student or volunteer who participates at the service. The Approved Provider must also keep a record for each day on which the student or volunteer participates at the service, including the anticipated dates and the hours of participation (the visitor's log and/or staff sign-in record contains an accurate record of days and times attended). In addition to this, volunteers and students should undertake an induction to the service and complete an induction checklist (refer to Attachment 1), which is stored with their volunteer and student record.

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)

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>
- Commonwealth Legislation – ComLaw: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/>

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.

Family Volunteer: A parent/guardian or close family member 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, accompanying excursions, administrative tasks, or preparing materials for the educational program. Typically this would include Kinder Duty, membership of our Committee of Management or participation in the educational program.

Student: A person undertaking a practicum placement as part of a recognised tertiary early childhood qualification or a secondary school student completing a work experience or community service placement. This student will be supported by an educational institution in the completion of their placement.

Volunteer: A person from the general community 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 for the educational program.

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 POLICIES

Sources

- Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA): www.acecqa.gov.au

- National *Early Years Learning Framework* : <http://education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework>
- Working with Children Check Unit, Department of Justice, Victoria:
www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren/

Service policies

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

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- Reviewing the process in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor and educators for accepting applications from volunteers/students to work at the service
- 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).
- ensuring that the Volunteers and Students Record 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)
- ensuring that volunteers/students and parents/guardians (family volunteers) 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 (family volunteers) 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)
- developing a range of strategies to enable and encourage the participation and involvement of parents/guardians (family volunteers) at the service
- providing volunteers/students and parents/guardians with access to all service policies, procedures, and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*
- ensuring that volunteers/students and parents/guardians (family volunteers) comply with the National Regulations and all service policies and procedures, including the *Volunteers and Students Code of Conduct (refer to Attachment 4)*, while attending the service
- developing an induction program for volunteers/students attending the service (refer to Attachment 1 - Volunteers and Students Induction) in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor and educators.
- developing an induction program for family volunteers involved in the Committee of Management and guidelines for family volunteers involved in the program, in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor and educators.

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

- assisting the Approved Provider to develop guidelines for applications from volunteers/students to work at the service
- 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)
- ensuring that, where required, the Working with Children (WWC) Check has been read/sighted prior to the volunteer's commencement at the service, and that details are included on their record
- ensuring that volunteers/students and parents/guardians (family volunteers) 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 (family volunteers) 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 (family volunteers) at the service
- providing volunteers/students and parents/guardians with access to all service policies and procedures, and 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 *Volunteers and Students Code of Conduct (refer to Attachment 4)*, while attending the service
- ensuring that volunteers/students have completed the induction (refer to Attachment 1) and have been provided with a copy of the "Guidelines for Volunteers and Students".

Educators and staff are responsible for:

- assisting the Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor to develop guidelines for applications from volunteers/students to work at the service
- 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
- providing volunteers/students and parents/guardians with access to all service policies and procedures, and 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 *Volunteers and Students Code of Conduct (refer to Attachment 4)*, while attending the service
- complying with the requirement that volunteers/students and parents/guardians (family volunteers) 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 (family volunteers) 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 (family volunteers) 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 Volunteer And Student Record
- undertaking a Working with Children (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 *Volunteers and Students Code of Conduct* (refer to Attachment 4), while at the service
- undertaking the induction process (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 (including family volunteers) 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 *Volunteers and Students Code of Conduct* (refer to Attachment 4), 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.
- (for Members of the Committee of Management) undertaking a committee induction process, including reading the Committee Handbook and signing an agreement (as part of their nomination to join the committee) to abide by the *Volunteers and Students Code of Conduct* (refer to Attachment 4)

EVALUATION

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

- check records regularly 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: Volunteers and Students Induction
- Attachment 2: Volunteers and Students Record
- Attachment 3: Volunteers and Students Guidelines
- Attachment 4: Volunteers and Students Code of Conduct

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Parkdale Preschool on 7th May 2020

REVIEW DATE: MAY 2022