

Volunteer policy

This is a mandated policy under the operational policy framework. Any edits to this page must follow the process outlined on the [creating, updating and deleting operational policies](#) page.

Overview

This information applies to all volunteers working in department educational programs, government children's centres, preschools and schools (including out of school hours care and vacation care services).

Scope

This policy applies to volunteers working in the department, including those who volunteer online (for example e-mentors in schools). These include:

- volunteers in children's centres, play centres, child parent centres, childcare centres, occasional care and learning centres
- volunteers in preschools and schools, including out of school hours care and vacation care services
- parent volunteers whose volunteering directly involves their own child
- volunteers from third-party provider organisations.

This policy applies to education and early childhood leaders and third-party providers:

- education and early childhood leaders must make sure volunteers from third-party provider organisations that help at their service are managed according to this policy and the [volunteer procedure](#)
- education and early childhood leaders must make sure volunteers from organisations that have a deed with the Minister or a memorandum of understanding abide by any volunteer-specific details in the agreement.

Out of Scope

The following are not in scope of this policy:

- Governing councils, school councils or management committees. Members of these councils and committees are considered volunteers of the department. However, these volunteers do not fall within the scope of this policy. For specific information on the management of these volunteers refer to the [governing councils](#) page.
- Work experience and work placement people contributing to the department as part of their work experience or a work placement are not in the scope of this policy. Staff should refer to the department's [workplace learning](#) guidelines for information about students on work experience.

Detail

Volunteers in department education and early childhood services and settings help to achieve South Australian government objectives. The [Volunteering Strategy for South Australia 2014 to 2020](#) is a cross-sector volunteer agreement supporting the development of volunteerism, as well as working to maintain a high volunteering participation rate in South Australia.

Benefits of volunteering

Volunteers play an integral part in supporting the work of the department and enriching the lives of children and young people in public education and child development.

Benefits of volunteers include that they:

- provide education and early childhood services with a broader resource base from which to draw positive opportunities for children and young people
- enhance community participation and parent involvement
- expand the social, cultural and educational outcomes for children and young people
- provide a safer environment for children and young people
- make a positive difference for children and young people.

Benefits to volunteers include:

- a sense of purpose that enhances their feelings of belonging and happiness
- an opportunity to learn new skills.

The department values that volunteers bring differing levels of expertise and life skills and provide a broad knowledge base for children and young people to benefit from. They come from a range of backgrounds that reflect the diversity in the wider community.

The department is committed to reconciliation and our volunteer programs contribute to making a positive difference in the lives of Aboriginal people, their culture and their values.

Requirements for volunteers

The following requirements apply when engaging volunteers in education and early childhood services. These requirements support volunteer participation and aim to ensure their safety and the safety of children, young people, staff and others.

The department's practice of involving volunteers aligns with Volunteering Australia's [national standards for volunteer involvement](#) and the [guideline of the commissioner for public sector employment – volunteers \(PDF 538KB\)](#).

To encourage volunteer participation and enhance the benefits of volunteering, education and early childhood services must make sure that volunteers meet the following requirements.

Recruitment and screening

Education and early childhood leaders must make sure volunteers:

- are recruited using an open and planned approach to attract volunteers with relevant interests, knowledge, skills or attributes, as required by the education and early childhood service
- are selected based on interest, knowledge and skills or attributes relevant to the role
- are not discriminated against and that there is equal opportunity for all
- are given relevant information about the education and early childhood service, their role and the recruitment and selection process
- meet screening and suitability requirements as per the department's [screening and suitability – child safety policy \(PDF 280.0KB\)](#) and [screening and suitability – child safety procedure](#) (refer to the [relevant history screening](#) webpage for more information about screening)
- are advised that if their relevant history changes after their appointment – for example if they are charged or convicted of an offence relevant to risk of harm to children – they let the education and early childhood leader know immediately.

Preparation and training

Education and early childhood leaders must make sure volunteers:

- meet expected requirements as per the department's [child protection in education and early childhood services policy](#) which includes being provided with the Responding to Risks of Harm, Abuse and Neglect – Education and Care (RRHAN-EC) for volunteers as a condition of volunteering (see [organising RRHAN-EC for volunteers](#))
- are given the name of the education and early childhood leader who can provide advice and support to them about any child protection or wellbeing concerns.

All education and early childhood leaders must make sure volunteers are given:

- clearly written role descriptions – if their role changes during the course of their appointment, the education and early childhood leader must take appropriate steps to make sure the volunteer is suitable and able to perform the new duties
- the information, training and resources necessary to enable them to perform their role effectively without creating risks to themselves or to others
- a volunteer agreement with the information needed to make sure they are aware of and understand their obligations to maintain confidentiality and to act in a manner consistent with the principles of conduct for South Australian public sector volunteers (part of the [guideline of the commissioner for public sector employment – volunteers](#))
- an education and early childhood service induction or orientation which includes information about work health and safety requirements relevant to their work.

Volunteers must observe work health and safety requirements and do any training necessary to make sure they will not put their own or anyone else's safety at risk. The principles and practices in the [Work Health and Safety Act 2012](#) are applicable to volunteers.

Management

Education and early childhood leaders must make sure volunteers:

- are introduced to a volunteer contact person at the education and early childhood service or in the volunteer program
- complete and sign the department's volunteer application, declaration and agreement forms
- are given safe, meaningful work in a well-managed workplace
- receive the level of supervision required for them to do their assigned role
- are given ongoing support and feedback about their work
- are given recognition and thanks respectful of cultural values and perspectives
- know they are expected to observe similar ethical, policy and legislative requirements as employees
- are not used where paid employment should be used
- are reimbursed for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred as part of their role.

Education and early childhood leaders must have processes in place that protect the health and safety of volunteers while they carry out their duties.

Education and early childhood leaders must follow the details in the [volunteer procedure](#).

Record keeping

Education and early childhood leaders must:

- keep accurate and up-to-date records for volunteers
- make sure any personal information is securely stored and not misused
- keep a copy of the volunteer application, declaration and agreement forms
- record the impact volunteering activities have had on children and young people
- follow the details in the [volunteer procedure](#) about what type of information to keep and how to do it
- keep records according to the [information and records management policy](#).

The department values the contribution of volunteers and, as part of record keeping requirements, education and early childhood leaders must keep track of the extent of the contribution of the education and early childhood service's volunteer programs. This is also a way to meet the requirements of SAicorp insurance.

Guiding the work of volunteers

To guide their work with volunteers, staff need to refer to the department's volunteer procedure and the volunteer web pages:

- [managing volunteers](#) (staff intranet)
- [volunteers](#) (for public access).

These websites have resources to help make sure required actions are followed when recruiting, screening, inducting, training and managing volunteers.

Education and early childhood leader rights

The education and early childhood leader has the right to:

- decline voluntary work to a person they deem unsuitable to work with children and young people
- require a volunteer to withdraw from volunteering activities at any time if concerns exist about their suitability to be working with children
- exercise their power under the [Education and Children's Services Act 2019](#) (Division 3, Section 93) to issue a notice (a barring notice) to a volunteer when a volunteer's behaviour has negatively impacted on the education or early childhood service and its community.

Volunteer activities

Volunteers do many roles that support the work of department staff to make sure children and young people are cared for in a safe and positive environment. Some of the roles volunteers do include student mentoring, taking part in fundraising committees, helping in the school canteen, providing education support, coaching sports teams and helping on excursions.

Education and early childhood services must make sure volunteer activities positively support the achievement of the program and organisational objectives. The volunteer activity should be meaningful, both to the volunteer and in contributing to the work of the department. Volunteers should not be exploited or expected to perform tasks that employees are reluctant to do.

Volunteers must not be used to replace paid staff.

SAicorp insurance

The department has a responsibility to provide SAicorp, as part of the annual insurance and risk management questionnaire, details of the approximate numbers of volunteers and a brief description of the nature of tasks undertaken by volunteers to make sure that the volunteers are covered by the government insurance arrangements.

To assist the department in completing its annual SAicorp questionnaire, education and early childhood services must record the number of volunteers engaged and the tasks they perform at the education and early childhood service each calendar year.

Roles and responsibilities

Engagement and Wellbeing directorate, Early Years and Child Development

Monitoring and reviewing this policy.

Education and early childhood leader

Ensure that this policy and related documents are implemented.

Delegate some of the responsibilities to other members of their leadership team.

Provide advice and support to volunteers about any child's safety. Volunteers must be advised who their education or early childhood service leader is prior to commencing their volunteering.

Volunteer

Follows direction of the education and early childhood leader.

Meets the responsibilities as set out in their signed volunteer agreement.

Volunteer contact person

A suitably qualified department staff member, selected by the education and early childhood leader to help coordinate, involve, recognise and reward the education and early childhood service's volunteers. They are the key contact person for the education and early childhood service's volunteers.

Definitions

education and early childhood service

A service not limited to schools, preschools, children's centres, early childhood services, out of school hours care facilities, and vacation care.

education and early childhood leader

Any person who has the responsibility, management or control of a department workplace or work unit. This includes, but is not limited to, education directors, directors, principals, and preschool directors.

suitable person

A person who has the required experience and the emotional, physical, intellectual and ethical capacity to be engaged with a particular education and early childhood service from the perspective of child safety.

third-party provider

People or organisations engaged by an education and early childhood service. See definition of third-party provider volunteers below.

volunteer

A suitable individual who has been accepted to willingly engage, share their skills and experiences, without payment (other than reimbursement of approved out-of-pocket expenses). They provide regular or irregular ongoing assistance in an education and early childhood setting. This might involve direct or indirect contact with children and young people or with their records.

Volunteers work in a position designated by the education and early childhood leader as a volunteer position.

They could be a:

- Department volunteer – a volunteer who has been recruited, screened and trained directly by an education and early childhood service relevant to the particular role and function they will be performing. For example, attending an overnight camp, kitchen garden helpers, student mentors, canteen helpers, tutors, a coach of a sport team.

It also includes corporate volunteering – when a business provides employees to volunteer at an education and early childhood service during the employee's work time.

- Parent volunteer – a parent or guardian who is a department volunteer with duties that directly involve their own child or children. Refer to [relevant history screening](#) for screening requirements of parent volunteers.
- Third-party provider volunteer – a volunteer who has been recruited, screened and trained by a third-party provider and who provides a specific role in an education and early childhood service. For example, volunteers from the schools ministry group or a university volunteering program.

SAicorp

The captive insurer for the Government of South Australia.

Supporting information

[Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care](#)

[Child protection policies and guidelines](#)

[Managing volunteers](#)

[National standards for volunteers involvement](#)

[Organising RRHAN-EC for volunteers](#)

[Protective practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people \(PDF 408KB\)](#)

[Putting the volunteer policy into practice– plink online learning module](#) (login required)

[Relevant history screening](#)

[Volunteering Strategy for South Australia](#)

[Volunteers](#)

[Workplace learning](#)

[Governing councils](#)

Related legislation

[Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017](#)

[Children's Protection Law Reform \(Transitional Arrangements and Related Amendments\) Act 2017](#)

[Child Safety \(Prohibited Persons\) Act 2016](#)

[Child Safety \(Prohibited Persons\) Regulations 2019](#)

[Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Commonwealth\)](#)

[Education and Children's Services Act 2019](#)

[Education and Children's Services Regulations 2020](#)

[Education and Early Childhood Services \(Registration and Standards\) Act 2011](#)

[Education and Early Childhood Services \(Registration and Standards\) Regulations 2011](#)

[Education and Care Services National Regulations and National Quality Standards](#)

[Equal Opportunity Act 1984](#)

[Information Privacy Principles 2017 \(PDF, 235KB\)](#)

[Privacy Act 1988 \(Commonwealth\)](#)

[Public sector code of ethics](#)

[Volunteers Protection Act 2001](#)

[Work Health and Safety Act 2012](#)

Related policies

[Camps and excursions policy](#)

[Camps and excursions procedure](#)

[Child protection in schools, early childhood education and care policy](#)

[Duty of care policy](#)

[Guideline of the commissioner for public sector employment – volunteers \(PDF 538KB\)](#)

[Information and records management policy](#)

[Non-department service provider access to preschools and schools procedure](#)

[Out of school hours care policy](#)

[Providing out of school hours care \(OSHC\) services on department sites procedure](#)

[Information management policy – privacy and confidentiality \(PDF 255.9KB\)](#)

[Screening and suitability – child safety policy \(PDF 280.0KB\)](#)

[Screening and suitability – child safety procedure](#)

[Work health and safety policy](#)

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