

PARTICIPATION OF VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENTS POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 4

1.0 Purpose

1.1 This policy will provide guidelines for engagement and participation of volunteers and students at a Bethany Kindergarten Services (BKS) Service while ensuring children's health, safety and wellbeing is protected at all times.

2.0 Values

2.1 BKS is committed to:

- a) Supporting connections with educational institutions to provide opportunities for students to undertake practicum placements as part of their studies.
- b) 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.

3.0 Scope

3.1 This policy applies to BKS as the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Persons in day-to-day Charge, educators, other BKS staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of a BKS Service.

4.0 Background

4.1 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 the service wherever appropriate and possible.

4.2 BKS 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).

4.3 The service aims to provide a range of opportunities for family members 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*).

4.4 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.

4.5 Volunteers must not be asked to perform tasks:

- a) That they are untrained, unqualified or too inexperienced to undertake.
- b) That put the children or themselves in a vulnerable or potentially unsafe situation.
- c) Where there is a conflict of interest.

4.6 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.

4.7 Parents/guardians whose children usually attend the service are exempt from needing a WWC Check.

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4.8 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.

5.0 Definitions

5.1 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.

5.2 **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.

5.3 **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.

5.4 **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/>

5.5 **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.

5.6 **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, administrative tasks, or preparing materials or food.

5.7 **Working with Children (WWC) Check:** the clearance is a legal requirement under the Working 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.

5.8 **Working with Children (WWC) Clearance:** A WWC Clearance is granted to a person under Worker Screening legislation if:

- a) they have been assessed as suitable to work with children
- b) there has been no information that, if the person worked with children, they would pose a risk to those children
- c) they are not prohibited from attempting to obtain, undertake or remain in child-related employment.

6.0 Procedure

6.1 **BKS as the Approved Provider is responsible for:**

- a) 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

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- b) accepting or rejecting a potential volunteer/student based on the circumstances of the service at the time, in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor
- c) 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)
- d) 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
- e) ensuring that the staff record contains the name, address and date of birth of volunteers and students attending the service (Regulations 145, 149(1))
- f) keeping a record for each day on which each student or volunteer participates with the date and the hours of participation (Regulation 149(2))
- g) 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
- h) ensuring that volunteers, students and parents/guardians are not left with sole supervision of individual children or groups of children
- i) 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)
- j) 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 BKS as the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor or educators under the law (Regulation 157)
- k) developing a range of strategies to enable and encourage the participation and involvement of parents/guardians at the service
- l) 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
- m) 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
- n) developing an induction checklist for volunteers and students attending the service (refer to Attachment 1 –induction checklist for volunteers/students) in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor and educators.

6.2 The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- a) assisting BKS as the Approved Provider to develop guidelines for applications from volunteers/students to work at the service and which are aligned with the Child Safe Environment Policy
- b) assisting BKS as 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
- c) 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)
- d) 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

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- e) ensuring that volunteers, students and parents/guardians are adequately supervised at all times when participating in the service, and that the health, safety and wellbeing of children at the service is protected
- f) ensuring that volunteers/students and parents/guardians are not left with sole supervision of individual children or groups of children
- g) 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)
- h) ensuring strategies are in place to enable and encourage the participation and involvement of parents/guardians at the service
- i) 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
- j) 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
- k) assisting BKS as the Approved Provider to develop an induction checklist for volunteers and students at the service (refer to Attachment 1 – Sample induction checklist for volunteers and students)
- l) ensuring that volunteers/students have completed the induction checklist (refer to Attachment 1) and have been provided with a copy of the staff handbook, if applicable.

6.3 Educators are responsible for:

- a) assisting BKS as the Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor to develop guidelines for applications from volunteers/students to work at the service and are aligned with the Child Safe Environment Policy
- b) 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)
- c) 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
- d) 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
- e) 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
- f) ensuring that volunteers, students and parents/guardians are not left with sole supervision of individual children or groups of children
- g) 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
- h) encouraging the participation and involvement of parents/guardians at the service
- i) assisting BKS as the Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor to develop an induction checklist for volunteers and students at the service (refer to Attachment 1 – induction checklist for volunteers/students)
- j) assisting volunteers and students to understand the requirements of this policy and the expectations of the service.

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

- a) ensuring they have provided all details required to complete the staff record
- b) undertaking a Working with Children (WWC) Check
- c) understanding and acknowledging the requirement for confidentiality of all information relating to educators and families within the service (refer to Privacy and Confidentiality Policy)
- d) 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
- e) undertaking the induction process and completing the induction checklist (refer to Attachment 1) prior to commencement at the service
- f) following the directions of staff at the service at all times to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of children is protected.

6.5 Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- a) 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
- b) following the directions of staff at the service at all times to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of children is protected.

7.0 Evaluation

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

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

8.0 Attachments

8.1 Attachment 1: Induction checklist for volunteers/students

9.0 Related Bethany policies and procedures

9.1 Bethany Group:

- a) Duty of Care Policy
- b) Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- c) Pre-Employment Safety Screening Procedure
- d) Recruitment, Selection and Appointment Procedure
- e) Responding to Disclosures, Allegations and Suspicions of Abuse

9.2 Bethany Kindergarten Services Ltd.:

- a) Child Safe Environment Policy
- b) Code of Conduct Policy
- c) Delivery and Collection of Children Policy
- d) Determining Responsible Person Policy
- e) Inclusion and Equity Policy

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- f) Interactions with Children Policy
- g) Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- h) Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- i) Staffing Policy
- j) Supervision of Children Policy

10.0 Relevant legislation and standards

10.1 Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- a) Child Safe Standards
- b) Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- c) Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- d) Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- e) Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- f) National Quality Standard, Quality Area 4: Staffing Arrangements
- g) Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)
- h) Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)
- i) Worker Screening Regulations 2021 (Vic)

11.0 Sources

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

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ATTACHMENT 1

Induction checklist for volunteers/students

Name: _____ Date: _____

To be completed by all volunteers and students participating at a BKS Service and returned to the Nominated Supervisor prior to commencing at the service.

	Please tick
I have been given access to all the policies and procedures at the service as listed on the BKS website	
I understand the content of service policies and procedures, including those relating to:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conduct while at the service (<i>Code of Conduct Policy</i>) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergency, evacuation, fire and safety, including locations of fire extinguishers and emergency exits (<i>Emergency and Evacuation Policy</i>) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accidents at the service (<i>Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy</i>) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dealing with medical conditions (<i>Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy, Asthma Policy, Anaphylaxis Policy, Diabetes Policy, Epilepsy Policy and Administration of Medication Policy</i>) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good hygiene practices (<i>Hygiene Policy</i>) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dealing with infectious diseases (<i>Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy</i>) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first aid arrangements for children and adults, including the location of the nearest first aid kit (<i>Administration of First Aid Policy</i>) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • daily routines 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the importance of OHS and following safe work practices (<i>Occupational Health and Safety Policy</i>) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interacting appropriately with children (<i>Interactions with Children Policy</i>) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reporting of serious incidents and notifiable incidents at the service (<i>Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy, Complaints and Grievances Policy and Occupational Health and Safety Policy</i>) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reporting hazards in the workplace (<i>Occupational Health and Safety Policy</i>) 	

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	Please tick
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> handling complaints and grievances (Complaints and Grievances Policy) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> child safety and wellbeing and child protection including how to respond to concerns (Child Safe Environment Policy, Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy, Responding to Disclosures, Allegations and Suspicions of Abuse) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> privacy and confidentiality of information (Privacy and Confidentiality Policy) 	
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	

Volunteer or student name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Nominated Supervisor's name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____