

## **PARTICIPATION OF VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENTS POLICY**

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### **Mandatory – Quality Area 4**

Uniting Victoria and Tasmania Limited is the Approved Provider of children's services known in these policies as Uniting Early Learning.

### **Overarching Policy Statement:**

The *Keeping Children Safe Policy* of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (refer to *Sources*) is the overarching whole of church policy to be implemented by individuals and entities involved with or connected to the Uniting Church. All children who are involved in any of the Church's activities, events or programs have a right to feel and be safe. The Church is committed to provide safe environments where children are cared for, respected, nurtured and sustained.

### **Policy statement:**

Uniting Early Learning 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 provides guidelines for the engagement and participation of volunteers and students at the service, while ensuring that children's health, safety and wellbeing are protected at all times.

### **Summary of Procedures relating to this Policy:**

Prior to commencing work at the service, all 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. 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.

The Approved Provider of a centre-based service must keep details including: the full name, address, date of birth, date and hours of participation for each student or volunteer who participates at the service (Regulation 149). In addition to this students and volunteers should undertake an induction to the service and complete an induction checklist (see Attachment 3).

## Scope:

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents, children and others attending the programs and activities of the service.

The responsibilities of each party listed in the previous paragraph are noted at Attachment 1.

## 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 the service wherever appropriate and possible.

Volunteers and students at a Uniting Early Learning centre can expect:

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

Uniting Early Learning values the participation of parents 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*). Uniting Early Learning 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*).

The role that volunteers play at the service will vary 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.

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 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) (refer to *Staffing Policy*).

It is a requirement under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* that the Approved Provider uses the staff record to document the details of all students and volunteers as listed in Regulation 149.

Attachment 2 contains a list of the legislation and sources relevant to this policy, including Acts and Regulations.

## Evaluation:

In order to assess whether the goals 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 at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

## 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.

**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.

## **Authorisation:**

This policy was adopted by Uniting Victoria and Tasmania Limited on: 1/7/2017

**Review date: December 2017**

## **This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following:**

- *Child Safe Policy*
- *Code of Conduct Policy*
- *Complaints and Grievances 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*

## Attachment 1: Responsibilities relating to the Participation of Volunteers and Students Policy

Action	Approved Provider	Nom'ed Sup'visor	Cert. S'visor, Educators	Students Vol'teers	Parents
Develop guidelines in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor and educators for accepting applications from volunteers/ students to work at the service	x	x	x		
Consult in relation to accepting or rejecting a potential volunteer/student based on the circumstances of the service at the time	x	x			
Ensure children attending the service are adequately supervised, and the legislated educator-to-child ratios are complied with at all times (Regulations:123,355, 360)	x	x	x		
Ensure that, where required, the Working with Children (WWC) Check has been read/sighted prior to the volunteer's commencement at the service	x	x			
Ensure that the staff 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 Check (Regulations: 145, 147, 149)	x				
Ensure that volunteers/students and parents are adequately supervised at all times, and that the health, safety and wellbeing of children at the service is protected	x	x	x		
Ensure that volunteers/students and parents/guardians are not left with sole supervision of individual children or groups of children	x	x	x		
Ensure that parents of a child attending the service can enter the service premises at any time that the child attends, except where this may pose a risk to the safety of children or staff, conflict with any duty of the law or contravene a court order (Regulation: 157)	x	x	x		
Develop a range of strategies to enable and encourage the participation and involvement of parents at the service	x				

*Each Founding Agency Policy, Procedure, Practice Manual or Form continues to have effect on and after the Date of Establishment as Uniting to the extent that it is not inconsistent with a Uniting Level 1 & 2 Policy and until such time as Uniting replaces it.*

Action	Approved Provider	Nom'ed Sup'visor	Cert. S'visor, Educators	Students Vol'teers	Parents
Follow strategies to enable and encourage the participation and involvement of parents at the service		x	x		
Ensure volunteers/students and parents have access to, and comply with, all service policies and the <i>Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011</i>	x	x	x		
In consultation, develop an induction checklist for volunteers/students attending the service (refer to Attachment 3)	x	x	x		
Ensure that volunteers/students have completed the induction checklist (refer to Attachment 3) and have been provided with a copy of the staff handbook, if applicable		x			
Ensure that, where required, the Working with Children Check has been read/sighted prior to the volunteer's commencement at the service (Regulation 358)	x	x	x (Cert. S'visors only)		
Assist volunteers/students to understand the requirements of this policy and the expectations of the service			x		
Ensure they have provided all details required to complete the staff record				x	
Undertake a Working with Children (WWC) Check and present a current WWC Check card or other notification, as applicable				x	
Understand and acknowledge the requirement for confidentiality of all information relating to educators and families within the service				x	
Comply with the requirements of the <i>Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011</i> and with all service policies and procedures while at the service				x	x
Undertake the induction process and complete the induction checklist (refer to Attachment 3) prior to commencement at the service				x	
Follow the directions of staff at the service at all times to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of children is protected				x	x

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## ATTACHMENT 2: LEGISLATION AND SOURCES

### Legislation and standards:

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*: Section 169
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*: Regulations 123, 145, 149, 157, 355, 358, 360
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth)
- *Keeping Children Safe Policy* of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Approved June 2015:  
<http://victasintranet/hr/Documents/Keeping%20Children%20Safe%20Policy.pdf>
- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 4: Staffing Arrangements
  - Standard 4.1: Staffing arrangements enhance children’s learning and development and ensure their safety and wellbeing
- *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/>

### Sources:

- Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA): [www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au)
- *Early Years Learning Framework*: <https://www.education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework>
- Working with Children Check Unit, Department of Justice, Victoria:  
[www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren/](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren/)



### **Attachment 3: Sample induction checklist for volunteers/students**

**Safe Induct – Volunteers and Students** can be downloaded from the SafeCare Resources section of the UCVT Children’s Services website:

<https://www.victas.uca.org.au/communityservices/unitingcare/SafeCare%20Documents/9.%20%20Safe%20Induct%20-%20Volunteers%20and%20Students.pdf>