Introduction

The *Working with Children and Young People – Volunteering – Policy* and *Procedures* provide a framework to protect the rights of students to work and learn in a safe well organised learning environment for students. An integral part of that environment is the involvement of volunteers in educational programs. These documents establish the minimum implementation procedures though schools may develop a school based policy and procedures suited to local conditions and the school environment. The minimum requirements remain those of the departmental policy and procedures.

The aim of these guidelines is to provide clarification for implementation of the policy.

The Role of the School Board

The functions of the school board include representing the parents, students and the community. Some aspects of the implementation of the *Working with Children and Young People – Volunteering – Policy* and *Procedures* may involve the school board through its role in the approval of educational policies. This may be important if the school policy extends the procedures to a wider range of tasks/activities.

The inclusion of volunteers in the decision making or other aspects of the policy will be a matter for school management.

Action Plan

Schools are encouraged to develop a volunteer action plan to better assist the recruitment and use of volunteers to support school programs and students learning.

The action plan may include processes that guide and monitor the use and support of volunteers in school education programs such as:

- Document the range of visitors to schools and the processes to be applied for each group
- Highlighting the value of volunteering in the School Development Plan
- Having a school policy on volunteer involvement in educational programs
- Running discussion groups within the school to establish agreed practice for implementation of the school’s and department’s policy/procedures
- Assessing the appropriate means for distribution of information and support for volunteers including assistance to complete relevant documentation
- Establishing roles and responsibilities for all groups/individuals involved with volunteers
- Ensuring that volunteers are adequately introduced to the school site, trained, supervised and supported
- Giving proper recognition to the contribution of volunteers in the programs of the school
- Checking that tasks undertaken by volunteers are suitable for their individual skills, knowledge and interests
- Supporting teachers to attend departmental training on volunteering
- Conducting surveys of staff and volunteers to assess their satisfaction with
  and ideas on volunteer involvement
- Providing appropriate identification for volunteers.

**Duty of care**

_Duty of care_ is the responsibility imposed on the department to exercise reasonable care to protect the safety of any student under their care against injury that should reasonably have been foreseen. This duty exists whenever a student/teacher relationship exists, while students are on school premises during hours, when the school is open and while on school based activities taking place elsewhere.

The supervision and management of educational programs involving volunteers is an important aspect of the daily function of school staff and is integral to the duty of care responsibilities of staff. With respect to all tasks identified for the volunteer, the supervisor will clearly:

- state the type of activity to be undertaken by the volunteer/s and any limitations relevant to the activity;
- define the location for the tasks to be undertaken and any relevant boundaries; and
- define the role of the volunteer/s and that of the supervisor with relevant contingencies described.

The Principal is primarily responsible for making and administering arrangements for adequate school and student supervision and ensuring that the duty of care is met. The qualifications and experience of staff members combined with their knowledge of the students and their behaviour are important factors to consider when assessing duty of care and reviewing educational programs supported by volunteers.

The involvement of volunteers in educational programs with tasks which require screening is a school management issue. The task, location, duration, contact and level of supervision will impact on whether the duty of care requires the screening of volunteers.

**Review of tasks**

The range of tasks/activities undertaken by volunteers assisting with the educational programs of schools is very broad. In general, all tasks/activities undertaken by volunteers should be reviewed to minimise the need for screening and to maximise the level of safety and welfare for students within the duty of care of the supervising teacher.

This may be as simple as:

- clarifying the roles of supervising staff and volunteers
- opening the adjoining door
- including more than one student in the activity, or
- the volunteer remaining within proximity of the supervising teacher.
The following advice is provided to assist schools interpret the policy and its procedures.

**Transportation of students**

When students are transported on a brief, local trip and the volunteer driver is supervised on departure and arrival at all planned stops by departmental staff and the students travel as small groups at all times, the screening of volunteers is not required.

**Adventure activities, camps**

Adventure activities, camps, interstate excursions and some student transport situations may provide the opportunity for a volunteer to be placed in the situation which would not allow for immediate intervention by a teacher or departmental officer. The screening of volunteers supporting educational programs in these circumstances is required.

**Tutoring and coaching**

The screening of volunteers supporting educational programs through tutoring, coaching and training may be required when the nature of the activity and the type of contact with students is considered.

**Student volunteers**

ACT Government school students who volunteer in educational programs for schools will comply with a modified set of procedures. Staff overseeing such programs will provide each school with details including:

- a summary of the program, the staff and students involved, its objective and the planned locations
- a method for signing in and out which meets the duty of care aspects of the home school and the volunteering policy

*Compliance with the volunteering policy for student volunteers will exclude the Volunteer Nomination Form and screening processes.*

**Screening**

Task modification is encouraged to minimise the number of tasks requiring screening. Some schools may modify volunteer tasks/activities to increase the level of teacher supervision so that no volunteer requires screening. Screening of volunteers does not reduce the need for vigilant supervision of students.

Initially, it is anticipated that approximately 5% of all volunteers will require screening reducing to less than 3% in subsequent years. Principals may request screening for any volunteer who works with students.

The cost of screening for volunteers is to be met by the central office. Principals will have limited involvement in the administration of the checks. They will complete a letter which accompanies the form completed by the volunteer. To maintain privacy of the details, the volunteer may transfer the form in a sealed envelope.

Workforce Management will notify the principal when volunteers are approved through the screening process and forward a departmental identification card to the volunteer. In situations where a negative screening report is received, the
Volunteer will be contacted by Workforce Management and offered the opportunity to discuss the matter. The principal may be included in this process.

Volunteers who have been screened for employment purposes will usually require confirmation screening by the Department. It should be noted that screening reports for working with children and young people are more rigorous than those obtained for other employers or purposes.

Where schools implement educational programs reliant on the involvement of screened volunteers appropriate measures are required to ensure a bank of screened volunteers is available. These educational programs or tasks will need modification if screened volunteers are not available.

Records

The Volunteer Nomination Forms and Daily Sign in Forms assist the school in the management of volunteers and provide data should a volunteer make an insurance claim.

The school’s record keeping policy is to be amended to include the storage of Volunteer Nomination Forms and Daily Sign in Forms for a period of 7 years following the last volunteer contact, for access when required.

Volunteer Nomination Forms

The Volunteer Nomination Form records details of the volunteer and may only be signed by a volunteer

1. who does not have serious charges or convictions that would preclude them from working with children and young people or
2. the volunteer has confirmed with the principal/department that any charges will not preclude them from working with students.

The information sheet provides details on the relevance of charges and convictions and should be read by the volunteer prior to the decision to sign the form. Principals and Workforce Management officers may also provide advice.

In circumstances where the volunteer works across a number of schools, the Volunteer Nomination Form may be completed and copied for use in other schools in the same year. Copied forms cannot be presented in subsequent years.

Daily Sign In Form

The Daily Sign In Form records the date, start and finish time of each volunteer session and gives a brief summary of the task and the location. The form will be located:

• in the front office of each school and preschool,
• at other locations as determined by the principal, and
• with staff supervising off site activities such as excursions, sporting carnivals, camps and other activities which occur away from the school campus.

Training
The department has made an ongoing commitment to provide training for staff with key supervisory roles for volunteers. These staff will be prominent in the school based induction and training provided to other staff and volunteers.

Governance and Legal Liaison will coordinate and provide details of the Department’s training.

**Insurance**

Information for principals and volunteers about insurance arrangements is contained in the policy, procedures and the information sheet *Insurance Arrangements for Volunteers*. Principals should assess whether the qualifications and/or experience of volunteers are sufficient for particular activities including sports coaching.

Professional coaches should be referred to the *Insurance Arrangements for Volunteers* information sheet.

Principals should advise the Governance and Legal Liaison section if any volunteer is to be involved in overseas excursions, adventure activities referred to in the Outdoor Adventure Activities policy, or other potentially hazardous activities as these will require specific prior approval. If in doubt principals should refer the matter to the Governance and Legal Liaison section for advice.

*Inquiries should be directed to the Governance and Legal Liaison section on telephone extension 6205 9151 or by e-mail at det.legal.liaison@act.gov.au.*