

VOLUNTEERS

POLICY

Policy

The purpose of this policy is to explain the legal rights of volunteer school workers and the responsibilities of schools in managing volunteers.

Summary

- Schools must appropriately assess the suitability of a volunteer and ensure that they comply with any reasonable direction of a principal, including the school's child safety policy and code of conduct.
- Schools must assess and verify the suitability of volunteers, refer to [Working with Children and Other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors](#).
- Volunteers should be inducted, trained and supervised according to the school's policies and procedures.

Details

Schools must develop and implement school level policies and procedures for the recruitment, screening and management of volunteers, consistent with the requirements of [Ministerial Order 870: Child Safe Standards](#).

A [Template Volunteers Policy](#) is available on the School Policy Templates Portal (login required). Schools can modify the template to suit their local circumstances.

Volunteer school and student workers

A volunteer school worker is a person who voluntarily engages in school work, without payment or reward. School work means:

- carrying out of the functions of a school council (whether or not as a member of a school council)
- any activity carried out for the welfare of a school, by the school council — any parents' club or association or any other body organised to promote the welfare of the school
- any activity carried out for the welfare of the school at the request of the principal or school council
- providing any assistance in the work of any school or kindergarten
- attending meetings in relation to government schools convened by any organisation which receives government financial support (note: a volunteer can receive payment for out of pocket expenses, such as travel costs, and can still be classed as a volunteer)

This is a broad definition and means that volunteers who participate in school activities, such as fundraising and assisting with excursions, are well protected from legal action by others.

A volunteer student worker is a person who voluntarily engages in approved community work, without payment or reward. Approved community work means work approved by the principal of the school by a student of the school.

Assessing volunteer suitability

Schools must assess and verify the suitability of volunteers, refer to the [Working with Children and Other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors Policy](#).

The principal has the discretion to determine the ongoing suitability of a volunteer working in their school and may make a decision at any time whether a person is suitable to volunteer at the school.

Managing volunteers

A volunteer is expected to comply with any reasonable direction of a principal (or their nominee). This will include the requirement to agree and abide by the school's child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety and the school's child safety code of conduct. If a volunteer does not follow a reasonable direction from a principal or nominee, the volunteer arrangement can be ended and/or they can be required to leave the school premises.

Volunteers should be inducted, trained and supervised according to the school's procedures for staff or volunteer induction and management. This includes being familiar with school level procedures for identifying and reporting suspected child abuse.

Reportable conduct scheme

Principals should notify the Employee Conduct Branch as soon as possible after becoming aware of a reportable allegation involving a volunteer, so that the Employee Conduct Branch can assess the allegations and report them to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP), if required. Refer to [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#).

Failure to protect

Any staff member in a position of authority (principals, assistant principals and campus principals) who becomes aware that an adult associated with their organisation (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the care, authority or supervision of the organisation, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk. This may include, for example, removing the adult from child-related work pending investigation. If a staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence. Refer to [Protecting Children — Reporting and other Legal Obligations](#).

Compensation for personal injury or property damage

Volunteer school workers are covered by the Department's worker's compensation policy if they suffer personal injury in the course of engaging in school work.

If a volunteer school worker suffers damage to their property in the course of carrying out school work, the Minister may authorise such compensation as the Minister thinks reasonable in the circumstances. Claims of this nature are to be directed to:

Legal Division
People and Executive Services Group
Department of Education and Training
2 Treasury Place
East Melbourne VIC 3002
legal.services@edumail.vic.gov.au

Liability

Volunteer school workers are indemnified for personal injuries or death (and at the discretion of the Minister, for property damage) suffered by volunteer school workers and volunteer student workers arising out of or in the course of engaging in school work or community work respectively.

Centrelink benefit recipients volunteering to work in schools

People who perform unpaid work in schools under the Work for the Dole program and community work programs or equivalent administered by Centrelink have personal accident insurance and public or product liability insurance cover provided by the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business and may perform work in schools.

Other Centrelink benefit recipients involved in voluntary work in order to fulfill their recipient obligations would not be expected to be covered by an Australian Government insurance scheme. Schools may however accept this group of Centrelink benefit recipients to work as volunteers in Victorian government schools, on the basis that they are insured by the Department.

A list of the activities that a Work for the Dole participant can undertake can be found on the [Work for the Dole](#) website.

Definitions

Volunteer school worker

Defined in section 5.6.1 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) as meaning a person who without remuneration or reward voluntarily engages in school work

Volunteer student worker

Defined in section 5.6.1 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) as meaning a person who, without remuneration or reward, voluntarily engages in approved community work

Approved community work

Defined in section 5.6.1 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) as meaning community work engaged in by a student of a registered school and approved by the principal of the school as school community work

Related policies

- [Fundraising Activities \(including fetes\)](#)
- [Legal Claims, Subpoenas, Summonses and Other Legal Documents](#)
- [Personal Liability of School Employees](#)
- [Working with Children and Other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors](#)

Relevant legislation and ministerial order

- [Crimes Act 1958 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Education and Training Reform Act 2006 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Ministerial Order 1038 — Teaching Service \(Employment Conditions, Salaries, Allowances, Selection and Conduct\) Order 2017](#)
- [Summary Offences Act 1966 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Wrongs Act 1958 \(Vic\)](#)

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in....

September 2023

References: