

GUIDELINES

PARTICIPATION OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS, STUDENTS AND VOLUNTEERS IN PRESCHOOL

Responsibility of:	Early Childhood Education and Care Division	DET File: File2016/385
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Target Audience:	Principals, preschool teachers and educators, parents, pre-service teachers, students and volunteers	

1. INTRODUCTION

The department supports providing pre-service teachers, students and volunteers the opportunity, from time to time, to participate in preschool programs and activities in order to observe, experience and/or support the provision of a quality education and care service. This engagement plays an important role in building connections with educational institutions and the community, and genuine partnerships with families.

The [Education and Care Services \(National Uniform Legislation\) Act](#) (the Act) and [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#) (the Regulations) require preschools to have procedures in place, including maintaining accurate records, about the participation of pre-service teachers, students and volunteers, to ensure children's health, safety and wellbeing is maintained at all times.

2. DEFINITIONS

Educator-to-child ratio is the minimum number of educators required to educate and care for preschool age children as prescribed by the Regulations. The ratio is 1 educator to 11 children (1:11). This ratio requirement came into effect in the Northern Territory (NT) on 1 January 2016.

Ochre Card is a photo identification proof that an individual has passed the [Working with Children Screening process](#) and received a Clearance Notice. In the NT, it is a legal requirement for all persons over 15 years of age undertaking paid or voluntary child-related work to hold a current Ochre Card. The Act and Regulations uphold this requirement.

Parents may be exempt from holding an Ochre Card if they:

- are engaged only as a voluntary worker;
- are a parent of at least one of the children with who they have contact with while in this role;
- do not participate in any overnight stays;
- are at all times under the direct supervision of someone who holds a current Ochre Card; and
- are not required by the principal to hold a current Ochre Card.

Parent, for the purpose of these guidelines, refers to a child's father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for the child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal and Torres Strait customary law or tradition.

Pre-service teacher is a person undertaking a practicum placement as part of a recognised teaching qualification. This person will be supported by an educational institution in the completion of his/her placement.

Student, for the purpose of these guidelines and procedures, refers to a school aged child, typically enrolled in secondary school, undertaking work experience as part of their studies.

The department refers to the NT Department of Education.

Volunteer is a person who supports educational programs of preschools through direct contact with students or through school activities, without financial gain or reward.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Principal is responsible for:

- developing procedures, in consultation with the preschool teacher and educators, for accepting applications from pre-service teachers and volunteers to work at the preschool;
- accepting or rejecting potential pre-service teachers or volunteers, in consultation with the preschool teacher, based on the circumstances of the service at the time; and
- ensuring, where required, pre-service teachers and volunteers hold a current Ochre Card.

Preschool teacher and educators are responsible for:

- adhering to the preschool or school's procedures for accepting applications from pre-service teachers, students and volunteers to work at the preschool;
- ensuring adequate supervision and the legislated educator-to-child ratio are complied with at all times;
- ensuring, where required, a current Ochre Card has been sighted and recorded prior to the pre-service teacher or volunteer commencing work at the preschool; and
- ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of children is protected and compliance with the Act, Regulations and service policies and procedures, including the preschool or school's Code of Conduct Policy, is maintained.

Pre-service teachers, students and volunteers are responsible for:

- ensuring, if required, that they hold a current Ochre Card;
- following the directions of preschool teachers and educators at all times to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of children is protected and compliance with the Act, the Regulations and service policies and procedures, including the preschool or school's Code of Conduct Policy, is maintained; and
- maintaining confidentiality of all information relating to educators and families.

4. GUIDELINES

The department values the participation of pre-service teachers, students and volunteers and the contribution they make to the education and care of children. They can expect:

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

Pre-service teachers, students and volunteers may only be engaged to complement, not replace, the work of paid staff and should not be asked to perform tasks:

- they are untrained, unqualified or too inexperienced to undertake;
- that put children or themselves in a vulnerable or potentially unsafe situation; and
- where there is a conflict of interest.

Pre-service teachers, students and volunteers must not work unsupervised, particularly when in the company of children.

Their role at the preschool may include (but not be limited to):

- working with groups of children;
- preparing materials or food;
- assisting with administrative tasks; and
- working one-on-one with individual children.

The principal, in consultation with preschool teachers and educators, should establish a process for confirming the suitability and interest of the pre-service teachers, students or volunteers in the tasks they will be undertaking. This may involve, where appropriate, interviews, reference checks and/or an induction process.

The Act and Regulations require preschools to keep a record of prescribed information about pre-service teachers, students and volunteers including their name, address, date of birth, days and hours of participation, and details of their Ochre Card.

Additional considerations in relation to pre-service teachers and students

Applications from pre-service teachers and students will be accepted at the discretion of the school principal. The principal should oversee any induction processes and the planning of work activities, in consultation with the preschool teacher and educators and the individual's professional experience coordinator at his/her educational institution, prior to and during placement at the preschool.

Pre-service teachers and students may provide their supervising teacher/educator at the preschool with an evaluation form, prescribed by their educational institution, before or upon commencement at the service. This form should be completed at the end of their placement and a copy kept on file at the preschool. Valuable feedback regarding their progress should also be provided regularly during their time at the preschool (i.e. daily or weekly).

Any conflicts or grievances concerning pre-service teachers or students must be reported to their supervising teacher/educator immediately, and if appropriate, the school principal.