

Participation of pre-service teachers/ educators and volunteers in preschool

Procedure

Document title	Participation of pre-service teachers/ educators and volunteers in preschool
Contact details	Early Childhood Education and Care
Approved by	Executive Director Early Years and Education Services
Date approved	January 2022
Document review	Every three years
TRM number	50:D20:79699

Version	Date	Author	Changes made
3.1	23 February 2021	Operational Policy Coordination Unit	Minor updates to terminology and NT Government template. Minor review for readability, accessibility and publishing standards.
3.2	January 2022	Early Childhood Policy and Programs	Improved clarity relating to National Quality Framework requirements.

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1. Policy statement

Under the [Education and Care Services National Regulations \(National Regulations\)](#)¹, preschools must have policies and procedures in place for managing the participation of pre-service teachers/educators and volunteers.

The Department of Education (the department) supports providing pre-service teachers/educators, 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 preschool teacher, responsible person in day-to-day charge and principal must follow the procedures outlined within this document to ensure that pre-service teachers/educators and volunteers are appropriately vetted and supervised while participating in the preschool program.

When accepting and managing work experience students, the department's [Work experience guidelines and procedures](#)² must be followed.

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 National Regulations. The ratio is one educator to 11 children (1:11). Pre-service teachers and volunteers are not included in this ratio.

The educational leader is a person who is delegated by the approved provider or nominated supervisor to be responsible for leading the development and implementation of educational programs in the preschool. The delegation must be accepted in writing.

A fit and proper person refers to a person who has the attributes of good character, diligence, honesty, integrity and judgement. In deciding whether a person is a fit and proper person, the school must take into account:

- the person's criminal history. Have they been convicted of a disqualifying offence as specified in the *Care and Protection of Children Act*
- any behaviour of the person that does not meet the standard of behaviour reasonably expected of a person who works with children or shows that the person is not of good character.

Mandatory reporting refers to a legal requirement to report a belief that a child may have been, or is at risk of being, harmed or exploited.

The nominated supervisor is a person nominated by the approved provider responsible for the day-to-day management of an education and care service. In an NT Government preschool, this is the school principal.

An Ochre Card is photographic identification proof that an individual has passed the [Working with children screening process](#)³ and received a Clearance Notice. In the NT, it is a legal requirement for all persons 15 years of age and older, undertaking paid or voluntary child-related work, to hold a current Ochre Card. The Education and Care Services (the National Law) and National Regulations uphold this requirement.

¹ <https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2011/653>

² <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/work-experience>

³ <https://nt.gov.au/emergency/community-safety/working-with-children-clearance-before-you-apply>

A pre-service teacher/educator, is a person undertaking a practicum placement as part of a recognised teaching, diploma or certificate level qualification. This person will be supported by an educational institution in the completion of their placement.

The responsible person in day-to-day charge, is a person who is delegated by the principal, usually the preschool teacher, and has accepted this responsibility in writing. They must be present at all times that children are being educated and cared for and meet the minimum requirements prescribed under Regulation 117B of the National Regulations. Read the [Responsible person and educational leader in preschool procedure⁴](#) for more information.

A 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.

A 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

Principals hold the responsibilities of the nominated supervisor and are therefore responsible for:

- ensuring their preschool operates in accordance with the National Law, National Regulations and departmental policies, including these procedures
- accessing applications from pre-service teachers/educators and expressions of interest from volunteers to work at the preschool, in consultation with the preschool teacher
- accepting or rejecting potential pre-service teachers/educators and volunteers, in consultation with the preschool teacher, based on the circumstances of the service at the time
- ensuring pre-service teachers/educators and volunteers hold a current Ochre Card which has been sighted and recorded.

Preschool teachers, the responsible person in day-to-day charge and educational leaders are responsible for:

- planning and conducting a comprehensive induction process in line with these procedures
- ensuring adequate supervision and the legislated educator-to-child ratio is complied with at all times
- ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of children is protected and compliance with the National Law, National Regulations and service policies and procedures, including the preschool or school's code of conduct policy, is maintained.

Pre-service teachers/educators and volunteers are responsible for:

- ensuring 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 National Law and National Regulations and service policies and procedures
- maintaining confidentiality of all information relating to educators, children and families.

⁴ <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/preschool-specific-policy>

4. Procedures

4.1. Approval

Applications from pre-service teachers/educators and expressions of interest from volunteers will be accepted at the discretion of the school principal, noting that the principal may delegate this role to the preschool teacher or educational leader.

All pre-service teachers/educators and volunteers must hold a current Ochre Card, unless they are under 15 years of age or have been granted an exemption by the principal. The principal may exempt a parent from holding an Ochre Card where the parent is all of the following:

- engaged only as a volunteer worker
- is not participating in overnight stays
- a parent of at least one of the children with whom the individual may have contact while in the role
- under the direct supervision of someone who holds a current Ochre Card
- not required by their employer to hold a current Ochre Card.

The suitability of pre-service teachers/educators and volunteers must be confirmed prior to commencement. This may involve, where appropriate, interviews and reference checks to confirm that the person is a fit and proper person for the purposes of working with children.

The educational leader should oversee the planning of work activities for pre-service teachers/educators, in consultation with the preschool teacher and the individual's educational institution, prior to and during their pre-service placement.

4.2. Induction

All pre-service teachers/educators and volunteers must undertake an appropriate induction process that includes:

- an introduction to the school and behavioural expectations of working in the school and with children
- mandatory reporting of harm and exploitation of children training, refer to the department's [Mandatory reporting of harm and exploitation of children guidelines](#)⁵
- role specific information and how they apply their existing knowledge, skills and experience
- an overview of the preschool's policies and procedures and where they are located
- workplace health and safety roles, responsibilities and rights, including identification of the trained first aid officers
- identification of their supervisor or mentor while undertaking their placement or volunteering
- how to provide and/or receive feedback and evaluation.

The induction process should be recorded. The [Template – Pre-service teacher/educator and volunteer record](#)⁶ has been developed to record this information and may be modified to meet the specific needs of the preschool if required.

⁵ <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/mandatory-reporting-of-harm-and-exploitation-of-children>

⁶ <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/preschool-specific-policy>

4.3. Communication with children and families

As with the commencement of any new staff at the preschool, children and families must be introduced to preservice teachers/educator and volunteers. The preschool must consider the best methods for this which could include:

- publishing a notice in the preschool/school newsletter, with a photograph and brief biography about the new staff member, how long they will be with the preschool and the role they will be playing
- an ice breaker activity to introduce the children and preservice teacher/educator or volunteer to each other
- having the preservice teacher/educator or volunteer work with a staff member to greet parents and children at sign in and sign out on their first day.

4.4. Managing participation

When pre-service teachers/educators and volunteers are approved to participate in preschool programs and activities, they must be provided with:

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

Pre-service teachers/educators and volunteers may only be engaged to complement, not replace, the work of paid staff and cannot be included towards meeting the educator-to-child ratio requirements. They 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
- where there is an actual or a perceived conflict of interest.

Pre-service teachers/educators and volunteers must not work with children unsupervised. When working directly with children, they must be in an area that is visible and audible to the preschool teacher and/or educator. 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
- working one-on-one with individual children.

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

4.5. Records

In accordance with the requirements of the National Law and National Regulations, the preschool teacher will keep a record of prescribed information about pre-service teachers/educators, students and volunteers including:

- their name, address and date of birth
- details of their Ochre Card
- record of days and hours of participation.

The [Template – Pre-service teacher/educator, student and volunteer record](#)⁷ has been developed to record this information and may be modified to meet the specific needs of the preschool if required.

4.6. Additional considerations in relation to pre-service teachers

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

5. Supporting documents

[Template – Pre-service teacher/educator, student and volunteer record](#)⁸

6. Related legislation, policies and procedures

6.1. Legislation

[Education and Care Services \(National Uniform Legislation\) Act 2011 \(NT\)](#)⁹ is the legislation that adopts the National Law in the NT.

[The Schedule to the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 \(Vic\)](#)¹⁰ sets out the National Law.

- Section 167 – Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards

[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)¹¹

- Regulation 149 – Volunteers and students
- Regulation 168 – Education and care services must have policies and procedures
 - (2)(i) (iii) participation of volunteers and students on practicum placements
- Regulation 170 – Policies and procedures to be followed

[Care and Protection of Children Act](#)¹²

- Part 3.1 - Screening for child-related employment

⁷ <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/preschool-specific-policy>

⁸ <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/preschool-specific-policy>

⁹ <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/education-and-care-services-national-law-act-2010/012>

¹⁰ <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/education-and-care-services-national-law-act-2010/012>

¹¹ <https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2011/653>

¹² <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/CARE-AND-PROTECTION-OF-CHILDREN-ACT-2007>

6.2. Policies and guidelines

The following related policies are located on the department's [school policies website](#)¹³:

- Mandatory reporting of harm and exploitation of children guidelines
- Work experience policy and guidelines

6.3. National Quality Standard

Quality Area 2 – Children’s Health and Safety

- Element 2.2.1 - At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.

Quality Area 7 – Governance and leadership

- Element 7.1.2 – Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.

¹³ <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies>