

INVOLVING YOUNG VOLUNTEERS

This information is for volunteer involving organisations who want to involve children and young people under the age of 18 as volunteers in South Australia.

Benefits of young volunteers

Volunteering delivers real benefits to both organisations and young volunteers.

Benefits to organisations

Organisations have the opportunity to:

- learn from young volunteers who see things from a different perspective;
- promote goodwill in the community through closer links with young people;
- develop new skills;
- gain access to different networks;
- raise the organisation's profile within the community;
- provide staff development through interaction and engagement with young volunteers;
- find new volunteers for the organisation;
- actively contribute to the benefits that volunteering brings to children and young people.

Benefits to young volunteers

Children and young people benefit in many ways, such as:

- building their confidence, resilience and empathy;
- developing existing and new skills;
- gaining qualifications that can go on their CV and help get a job;
- meeting new people, making friends and a difference in their community;
- inspiration to be involved in volunteering throughout their lives.

Volunteering age

There is no legislation in South Australia relating to volunteers and age. However, organisations may have their own policy about the age of volunteers depending on the type of role and the activity.

Organisations should be aware of the conditions outlined in the [Education Act 1972](#) such as:

- A child of compulsory school age cannot be employed during the hours at which they are required to attend school or to participate in an approved learning activity.
- Nor are they allowed to work at a time, such as late nights or early in the morning that is likely to render them unfit to attend school or obtain the proper benefit from such attendance.

Parent/guardian consent

Organisations need to get written consent and approval from a parent/guardian before the young volunteer commences. Providing clear information that helps the parent/guardian understand when and where the young person will be volunteering, what they will be doing, who will be supervising the young person and the contact details of who they can call if they have any questions will help make sure the volunteering is successful. Consent from a parent/guardian before photographing, audio taping or filming young volunteers should also be obtained.

Volunteer policies and procedures

Organisations to consider having a volunteer policy and procedure that aligns with Volunteering Australia's [National Standards for Volunteer Involvement](#). They must include details about how they create a [child safe environment](#), the procedure for conducting [relevant history assessments](#) and how they support [mandatory notifiers](#) to report and respond to children and young people at risk of harm.

Child safe environments

Organisations must ensure that all their staff and other volunteers are aware of the special responsibilities associated with working young volunteers. The Department for Education [About child safe environments](#) webpage explains how to create a child safe environment and the legal requirements for certain organisations.

Role descriptions

Young volunteers are likely to have a number of commitments, such as attending school, after school activities, or part time work. They will have different skills and abilities which will vary with age. Organisations need to be flexible when creating role descriptions and should consider:

- flexibility with days and hours required;
- the location of volunteering - can it happen online or at the young volunteer's home?
- can tasks be done in pairs, school groups or with family or friends?
- does the young volunteer have the right skills, experience and desire to perform the role?
- can the organisation fulfil its duty of care to provide a safe workplace for young volunteers with regard to their physical, mental and emotional safety and abilities?
- who will supervise and support the young people during their volunteering?

Insurance

Organisations must make sure that they are appropriately insured for any activities to be undertaken by volunteers. Talk to the insurer to see if there are any exemptions or conditions for those volunteers under the age of 18. If there are, then find an insurer who covers under 18 year olds.

Workplace safety

Under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* organisations must make sure the workplace is as safe as possible, regardless of the age of the volunteer. This includes providing all young volunteers with an induction to the worksite and training them on safe work practices. Young volunteers must be made aware that they are responsible for safety too.

Partnerships with children's centres, preschools and schools

Organisations might consider partnering with education and care sites on projects that offer opportunities for children and students to volunteer and which support their learning. Organisations can make direct contact with children's centres, preschools and schools in their community.

More help available

- [Volunteering SA&NT](#)
- [Northern Volunteering](#)
- [Southern Volunteering](#)
- [Student volunteers](#) (Department for Education)
- [Not-for-profit law training - Youth Volunteers: Key legal issues to be aware of](#)