



Defence Youth Safety Framework

Suitability Screening Guide – ADF and Defence Youth Programs

Introduction

Keeping young people safe requires the adoption of robust youth safety risk management. Effective youth safety risk management requires attention to three key organisational elements – our culture, our people and the environment.

Youth Safe people practices

The focus of the youth safe people practice within Defence and the ADF Cadets is to ensure all adults who interact with young people under the age of 18:

- have been assessed as suitable to do so
- understand the importance of youth safety
- are aware of the Defence Youth Safety Framework (DYSF)
- are trained and actively work to minimise any risk of abuse or neglect and
- agree to undertake their duties in accordance with the relevant Code of Conduct

Defence Suitability Screening

To assist in assessing an adult's suitability to engage with young people, Defence currently conducts two forms of suitability screening. The particular form(s) of screening to be used is determined by the Defence context, the role of the adult, and the nature of the adult/youth interaction. The screening mechanisms are:

- **Screening as defined by state and territory legislation:** variously described as a Working with Vulnerable People Check (WWVPC) or a Working with Children Check (WWCC) depending on the state or territory in which the adult role is based
- **Screening as defined by Defence administrative policy:** using the Defence Youth Safety Self-Declaration for personnel who are working in youth centred positions but do not require screening as defined by state and territory child safe legislation

Defence context

There are currently three contexts in which suitability screening is undertaken:

- **ADF Programs:** all single Service and joint ADF programs/lines of operation that include ADF members who are under the age of 18
- **Defence Youth Programs (DYP):** programs in which Defence personnel interact with civilian young people under the age of 18. Examples of DYP are the Defence Work Experience Program, Defence Information Security Hub outreach program, and the Defence Indigenous Development Program





- **ADF Cadets:** Australian Navy Cadets, Australian Army Cadets and Australian Air Force Cadets

The role of the adult and the nature of the adult/youth interaction

Whatever the context, the role of the adult and the nature of the adult/youth interaction are key determinants of what suitability screening action is required.

Consideration should be given to suitability screening as defined by the relevant state and territory legislation for an adult whose work, whether paid or volunteer, involves adult / youth interaction that meets any of the following criteria:

- includes direct face to face contact
- takes place on a recurring basis
- occurs in isolation
- includes supervision of young people overnight

Minimum Suitability Screening requirements for Defence

Taking into consideration each of the key determinants, the **minimum** suitability screening action for all personnel and contractors working in either an ADF or Defence Youth Program is outlined below.

ADF Programs

- Completion of the **Defence Self-Declaration** is the standard suitability screening action for all Defence personnel and contractors whose **core** role includes interaction with an ADF member under the age of 18
- Completion of **suitability screening as defined by the relevant state and territory legislation**
 - is mandated for all chaplains
 - should be considered as the standard screening action if questions or issues are raised during completion of a Defence Self-Declaration
 - should be considered if the adult/youth interaction includes direct face to face contact, is recurring, occurs in isolation, is of prolonged duration and/or includes supervision of young people overnight

Note:

- An adult who is a supervisor, or work placement supervisor of a young person under the age of 18 is not routinely required to undergo suitability screening. However, Defence requires suitability screening for **all** adults as key to fulfilling the 'special care' requirements for all minors with whom Defence personnel come into contact – both ADF members and civilian young people under the age of 18
- An adult who is a co-worker of a young person under the age of 18, is exempt from suitability screening

Defence youth programs

- Completion of **suitability screening as defined by the relevant state and territory legislation** should be considered as the standard suitability screening action if the adult/youth interaction includes direct face to face contact, is recurring, occurs in isolation, is of prolonged duration and/or includes supervision of young people overnight





- Completion of the **Defence Self-Declaration** should be considered as the standard suitability screening action for all adults (Defence and/or civilian) who are involved in DYP activity from time to time, e.g. involvement in an establishment Open Day

Note: Personnel involved solely in DYP administration and or development activity do not routinely require any form of suitability screening. However, some adults supporting DYP activities on a regular or frequent basis, or who have prolonged contact with young people under the age of 18 may be required to complete suitability screening as defined by the relevant state and territory legislation.

Decisions related to suitability screening

Young people have the right to participate in activities in a safe environment. Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of youth is a Defence and ADF Cadets priority.

Suitability screening may cause the decision-maker (e.g. a Commander / Manager / Supervisor) to consider a person unsuitable to perform duties in a youth facing position. Many of these cases, especially where screening has occurred under state and territory child safe legislation, will be clear cut and require no further discussion.

However, if a decision-maker considers it necessary and/or appropriate, they may give the individual an opportunity to respond to the specific concerns. If so, the individual should be provided with a copy of the information used to inform the decision, and invited to explain in writing why they are suitable to perform youth facing duties. Any explanation provided should be taken into account before making a final decision.

Further information can be obtained by contacting a member of the Defence Youth Team on defence.youth@defence.gov.au.

