



Defence Youth Safety Framework

Defence Youth Safety Suitability Screening Guide

Introduction

Effective youth safety risk management requires attention to all three key organisational elements – our culture, our people and the environment.

The focus of people risk management action is to ensure all adults who interact with young people under the age of 18:

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

All Defence personnel and contractors whose **core** role involves interaction with young people under the age of 18, and all Officers and Instructors of Cadets and ADF Cadets adult volunteers must have completed appropriate suitability screening action prior to commencement.

For the purposes of Defence Youth Safety, the terms interaction, contact and involvement are used interchangeably

Suitability Screening Defined by State and Territory Legislation

Current state and territory child protection legislation includes mandatory suitability screening action known either as a Working with Vulnerable People Check (WWVPC) or Working with Children Check (WWCC). This type of suitability screening is routinely required **only** for:

- adults whose **principal** responsibilities include working directly with / supervising young people, e.g. Young Endeavour Youth Scheme staff or Officers and Instructors of Cadets;
- adults whose role includes regular face-to-face contact and/or supervision of young people overnight e.g. Defence Work Experience Program (DWEP) Work Experience Liaison Officers (WELO); and
- individuals engaged in specific occupations as defined by individual state and territory child protection legislation, such as:
 - childcare, child protection, child and family welfare and health;
 - entertainment and recreation;
 - religious instruction;
 - unsupervised providers of transport services such as drivers employed by Defence for youth related activities; and
 - researchers, policy makers and other workers who have access to confidential information of a sensitive nature.

Defence has an obligation to establish a process to determine and then complete the most appropriate screening action for each position that includes interaction with young people.

Determination of Suitability Screening Action

The main determinant of screening action is the type of adult / youth contact. There are two main types of contact – direct and indirect:

- **Direct** contact is when an adult interacts face-to-face or has physical contact with anyone under the age of 18 on a regular basis and/or the interaction includes overnight supervision.
- **Indirect** contact is when an adult comes into incidental contact with a young person.

The risks associated with contact, whether direct or indirect, increase if contact is regular, frequent, over an extended period of time or without other adults being present.

Determining the most appropriate suitability screening action therefore requires consideration of:

- the context;
- the type of contact; and
- the regularity, frequency and duration of the contact.

Confirming the context then determining whether contact is direct or indirect is the start of the process for determining what screening action is required. It is important to remember that indirect contact can still carry risk, depending on the frequency or duration of the contact and whether other adults are present or not.





Table 1 illustrates, by **context** and **type**, the screening action considered **reasonably practicable, proportionate to risk** and **reflective of legislative requirements** for the non-operational Defence contexts in which adults interact with young people under the age of 18:

- ADF Programs (ADF members interacting with ADF members under the age of 18) and
- Defence Youth Programs (DYP) including ADF Cadets (ADFC).

Table 1 – Suitability Screening by Context and Type

ADF Programs (ADF members interacting with ADF members under the age of 18)	Defence Youth Programs including ADF Cadets.
<p>The contact between ADF members and ADF members under the age of 18 is considered essentially INDIRECT.</p> <p>Contact between adult ADF members and ADF members under the age of 18 is based on an employment relationship and is incidental to the adult’s core role.</p> <p>Suitability screening of adult personnel involved in ADF programs such as recruit, new entry officer and initial employment training will most likely be achieved through the use of a self-declaration.</p> <p>A WWVPC/WWCC may be required if the contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is frequent, and/or • is for extended periods of time, and/or • occurs independent of the presence of others, and/or • involves overnight supervision. <p>If information revealed through self-declaration gives cause for concern that is another trigger for a formal WWVPC/WWCC.</p>	<p>The contact between all adults involved in the delivery of Defence Youth Programs including ADF Cadets, and young people under the age of 18 is considered DIRECT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitability screening will therefore routinely require: • Self-declaration and formal WWVPC/WWCC.

Suitability Screening Decision Making

Ensuring informed ethical, evidence-based and defensible decision-making appropriate to context therefore requires a systematic approach that includes:

- formal identification of positions that include interaction with young people under the age of 18 as a core part of the role ('youth-facing positions');
- specifying youth safety suitability screening for the identified youth facing positions;
- completion of a Defence Youth Safety Declaration¹ at the time of:
 - APS employee recruitment or movement into a youth-facing position,
 - ADF member posting to into a youth-facing position
 - ADFC member acceptance
- Inclusion of youth safety related questions at interviews related to specified youth-facing roles
- Formal WWVPC/WWCC action as specified in the position profiles.

¹ Currently under development in consultation with Defence Legal





Suitability Screening in Perspective

Suitability Screening is just one of four key youth safety people risk management actions. Table 2 illustrates the full spectrum of people risk management actions including suitability screening relative to the type of contact, the principal driver for suitability screening that includes WWVPC/WWCC.

Table 2 - People Risk Management including Suitability Screening by Type of Contact

Type of Contact	Description	People Risk Management Action
Direct	<p>Direct contact is when an adult interacts face-to-face or has physical contact with anyone under the age of 18 either as part of their core role, on a regular basis, and/or the interaction includes overnight supervision.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officers and Instructors of ADF Cadets, and ADF Cadets adult volunteers All personnel involved in Defence Youth Programs at the point of adult / young person interface, eg Young Endeavour ship's company Work Experience Liaison Officers supervising overnight activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth safe organisational culture Suitability Screening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal Selection Process including formal interview and referee check Self Declaration WWVPC/WWCC Youth Safety Training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness Practitioner Code of Conduct
Indirect	<p>Indirect contact is when contact is incidental to the adult's core role:</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ADF members interacting with ADF members under the age of 18 Defence personnel who provide presentations to schools and/or host work experience Defence personnel contact with young people under the age of 18 on operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth safe organisational culture Suitability Screening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self Declaration WWVPC/WWCC IF contact is frequent and/or for extended periods of time and/or occurs independent of the presence of others and/or involves overnight supervision Youth Safety Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness Code of Conduct

Decisions in relation to suitability screening following self-declaration

In some situations, a Commander / Supervisor / Manager / chain of Command may form the view that, based on information obtained through the completion of a self-declaration a person is not suitable to perform duties in a position where they would have direct contact with youth.

Prior to making a final decision the Commander / Supervisor / Manager / chain of Command should consider whether it is necessary and/or appropriate to provide the individual with an opportunity to respond to the specific concerns of the Commander / Supervisor / Manager / chain of Command if they have not already done so. This process involves providing the person with:

- a copy of the information used to inform the decision, and
- an invitation to make written representations as to why

the person believes that they are not unsuitable to perform such duties.

The Commander / Supervisor / Manager / chain of Command would then consider the person's written representations before making a final decision.

The development of this guidance is based on the paramount consideration for the safety and protection of young people under 18. These guidelines are informed by national and international research and reports and with reference to Australian legislation and systems for background checking and risk assessment.

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

