

Volunteers can make a very significant contribution in the boarding residence. They can be a great support for busy supervisors, doing such things as assisting students with homework, preparing activities and equipment, waiting with sick students to see a doctor, helping with sport, outings and other activities, and lots of other tasks. Volunteers can be an 'extra pair of hands' enabling the supervisors to provide a full and effective boarding program.

Volunteers can also enrich the boarding experience for boarders in many different ways. Many of the volunteers are international visitors and they expose students to different cultures and lifestyles. Volunteers are often young people who are enthusiastic, have lots of energy and can be great role models

What are the guidelines when using volunteers and how can I get volunteers? [Click Here](#)

Using Volunteers in the Boarding Program

There are numerous benefits of using volunteers in the boarding program: volunteers can enrich boarding programs and enhance the boarding experience for boarding students, however there are some guidelines that should be observed when using volunteers.

Volunteers are not supervisors. They have not gone through the rigorous selection process to ensure they have the skills, knowledge and disposition to be an effective boarding supervisor and they have not been involved in training. In most circumstances volunteers should not carry out the role of the boarding supervisor but should have a supporting role.

The number of volunteers in a residence is important. This will depend on the size of

your residence, the number of students, and the volunteer accommodation facilities available. If a residence accepts too many volunteers, it can take too much supervisor time and energy to manage the volunteers. If you have the facilities though, it is probably better to have at least two so that they don't feel isolated in a foreign context.

Volunteers need to have the same 'working with children' and police clearances as other staff members. If a volunteer organisation is involved it may arrange this before volunteers arrive, but sometimes it is left to the host residence to facilitate and pay for clearances.

Boarding providers are responsible for the workplace health and safety of volunteers in the same way that they are responsible for their own staff. Boarding managers should ensure a safe working environment for volunteers.

Boarding managers need to have a clear code of conduct for volunteers, particularly with respect to interpersonal boundaries and appropriate behaviour in the residence. Volunteers need to be inducted and 'walked through' this code of conduct so they understand exactly what it means.

Language can sometimes be an issue and a volunteer with limited English will not be as effective in the residence. This would be particularly difficult for boarding students for whom English is a second language. Students who already struggle to readily understand English will have more difficulty if a volunteer has limited English or a very strong accent. Most volunteers have a very good level of English language competence.

If the volunteer is very close to the age of the boarding students, this can be a complication. If the volunteers are gap students then they may only be a year older than your oldest boarders, and may not have the level of maturity needed to be effective and maintain boundaries.

If you are hosting volunteers it is good practice to have a very clear plan of what they will be doing, what you expect from the volunteers and a program for their activities on a daily basis. They also need to know clearly who is their primary point of reference, and how to respond in emergencies or difficult situations. The residence also needs an emergency plan and also an exit plan to transition people at completion or if something occurs to necessitate an early exit of a volunteer.

Where can you find volunteers?

You may find volunteers in your local community or from interstate, but most volunteers in Boarding programs come from organisations that are set up specifically for that purpose and these volunteers generally come from overseas. The two programs below are currently being used effectively by boarding residences in Australia:

International Cultural Youth Exchange Program (ICJA)

Contact: David Smart: Email smart.david50@gmail.com M 0427900609

Latitude Global volunteering for 17 to 25 year olds

<http://www.lattitude.org.au>