

GUIDE 12: PLANNING FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

This guide provides information to assist in planning for successful youth engagement activities. Effective planning helps to create a safe, engaging and positive experience for participants.

Defence recognises its legal duty of care to participants in our youth engagement activities. Under the Work Health Safety Act 2011 (WHS Act), workers must take reasonable care of their own health and safety and ensure that their actions or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of others. To fulfil this legal obligation, all personnel engaging with youth must be aware of and consider the specific needs of youth when planning and delivering a youth engagement activity.

This guide aims to help personnel:

- a. plan and conduct inductions and safety briefs
- b. maintain adequate supervision ratios
- c. provide access to appropriate facilities
- d. consider the requirements of overnight activities.

This guide should be read in conjunction with the Defence [Youth Manual](#).

Activity induction

Defence must ensure parental/guardian consent has been gained prior to a program or activity. An induction should be delivered to confirm that participants have a clear understanding of the activities being offered.

A Defence site-specific induction and safety briefing must also be delivered at the start of the activity and on other occasions as required during the activity. The induction should include:

- a. safety precautions and practices
- b. an overview of hazards
- c. emergency procedures, and
- d. how to report an incident, accident or near miss.

When delivering inductions, and throughout the youth engagement activity, personnel should adapt their language so that it is understood by the target audience. Avoid using acronyms and jargon. Use clear, simple and uplifting language.

Supervision

Youth must be adequately supervised at all times.



Supervisors must regularly note a youth's presence. At a minimum, this must occur at the commencement and conclusion of the activity; and at the commencement and conclusion of any subsequent day/s.

Whenever an adult engages with youth during a youth engagement activity, as far as is reasonably practicable, another youth or adult should be present. If one-on-one interaction is unavoidable, it must take place in a well-lit area, visible to other adults. When transporting only one youth in a vehicle, two adults should be present whenever possible.

Youth must be closely supervised during adventure activities. In cases where restrictions are applicable, special permission may be required from schools and should be considered in planning the activity. Where appropriate, additional supervision requirements must be included in the activity specific risk assessment.

Scenario

Defence youth program participants are taking part in a physical training activity at the fitness centre on base. The training session is being run by Physical Training Instructors (PTI's). The PTIs do not have access to the student's emergency contact details. During the fitness session, supervising staff members from the Defence youth program should remain present. In instances where the supervisor is not present, they must provide a brief to the staff conducting the activity that covers youth safety and youth protection, including the actions to be taken in the event of an emergency or incident.

Supervision Recommendations. A minimum of two supervisors must accompany youth at all times, except for activities involving five or less youth participants. Activities involving five or less youth may occur with one supervisor. For best practise, activities should be conducted in view of other adults and a minimum of two supervisors should be present at all times. Consideration should be given to the context based on the age and size of the cohort.

For example:

- if a day activity includes 6 to 20 youth, it is recommended there be a minimum of two personnel accompanying the group
- if a day activity includes 21 to 40 youth, it is recommended there be a minimum of three personnel accompanying the group. This meets both the 1:20 personnel to youth ratio and the requirement that a minimum of two personnel accompany the group.

The table below outlines minimum recommended supervision ratios by activity type¹.

Type of Activity	Minimum personnel ²	Additional Personnel to Youth Ratio
Day activities between 0600hrs and 1700hrs	2	1:20 This ratio takes effect if

¹ Based on good practice, supervision ratios specified by [Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Student-Teacher Ratio](#); and [Victorian Department of Education and Training Staffing and Supervision Guidelines](#);

² Must include at least one Defence Personnel.



		more than 20 youths are in attendance.
Overnight activities between 1700hrs and 0600hrs the following day	2	1:10 This ratio takes effect if more than 10 youths are in attendance.
Activities involving five or less youth	1	

Scenario

Five youth registered to attend a resilience program. The program organiser selected and tasked two suitable personnel to supervise and run the program. On the day of the program, one of the youth started to feel sick and needed to go home. One personnel continued to run the program, while the other attended to the sick youth and arranged for her guardian to collect her. Both personnel were mindful of staying in view of each other, or other adults, while attending to the youth. Planning for contingencies allowed the program to proceed while maintaining adequate supervision.

For mixed gender groups undertaking overnight placements, there must be at least one supervisor of each gender in attendance in accordance with the prescribed ratio. Guest speakers should not be included in minimum staff/youth ratios.

A visual snapshot of minimum supervision ratios is available at this [link](#).

Supervision ratios may be increased to suit the specific needs of individual programs. Adjustments may be necessary based on factors such as the nature of activities, participants' abilities and environmental risks. Tailored ratios assist in providing, a safe and supportive environment for youth.

Scenario

Jamie is a 15-year-old who has applied to participate in a Defence youth program. Jamie has a medical condition. She has disclosed this information in the youth program enrolment form. The program manager contacts Jamie's parents to understand Jamie's needs and to determine if an individual management plan is required.

The program manager learns that while Jamie is usually confident to manage the medical condition by herself, she may occasionally need support. To ensure Jamie's safety, the program manager decides to roster an additional staff member on the days that Jamie will be attending the program. The increased staff to youth ratio will help to create a safe and inclusive environment for Jamie and the other participants.

Creating an inclusive environment for all gender identities

Defence is committed to a diverse, inclusive, fair and safe work environment for current and prospective personnel. All youth who participate in Defence youth programs should feel supported and valued. Providing respect, understanding and appropriate resources for transgender and gender diverse youth helps to create a safe and inclusive environment. For further information on how to support transgender and gender diverse youth, please contact your Service Diversity and Inclusion team, or reach out to [Defence Diversity](#) and Inclusion team at diversitypolicyandprograms@defence.gov.au

Defence has developed [inclusion guidance](#) that helps commanders, managers and supervisors to support and be inclusive of gender diverse people. This document focuses on a workforce context; however, some of the resources may be helpful for a youth engagement setting. The guidance outlines the principles to be applied for the leadership and support structures for all Defence personnel, to foster an environment of inclusion. It can be read as complimentary to related Defence policy and/or Government legislation.

Bathroom, toilet and shower facilities

Bathroom, shower and toilet facility use must be separated by gender (for example, youth who identify as a woman will only share facilities with other women, and youth who identify as a man will only share facilities with other men). If a youth identifies as non-binary or another gender identity outside of the man/woman binary, their preferences should be considered when planning/prior to the activity to confirm whether their needs can be accommodated, while taking into consideration the needs of all other youths. Unisex facilities may be offered for personal choice.

Non-binary and gender non-conforming youth cannot be excluded or discriminated against based on their gender identity, as per the Sex Discrimination Act 1984.

To support the safety, privacy and wellbeing of all participants, adults should use different facilities to youths. Where separate facilities are not available, adults must wait until youth have vacated the facility before entering. If the program includes both under-18s and over 18-year-old youth and separate facilities are not available, consider using scheduling to ensure age-appropriate separation. Be tactful and respectful to avoid making older youth feel singled out or excluded.

Adults must not be in change rooms, bathrooms or toilets at the same time as youth, whether the youth are under 18 or over 18. For best practice, ensure that expectations are clearly communicated from the start of the activity and display signs so that everyone knows which bathroom to use. Be mindful and clear in your communication so that youth understand that the measures are in place to create a space that's safe and respectful for everyone.

Special considerations for overnight activities

Where possible, youths sleeping arrangements should be separated by gender (for example, youth who identify as a woman should only share a room with another woman/women, and youth who identify as a man should only share a room with another man/men).

Defence must be sensitive to the needs of youth identifying as a non-binary gender identity when planning sleeping arrangements, including appropriate supervisory ratios. Supervisors' overnight accommodation must be in a separate room from youth, but located in the same building to enable effective supervision.

Personnel should set standard lights out and wake up times for the activity which are age-appropriate and considerate of the activity schedule.

If organising leisure activities, such as a movie screening or board games, personnel should consider the youth cohort to make age and culturally appropriate choices.



Further assistance

For further information and assistance contact defence.youth@defence.gov.au