



Residential aged care homes and ACVVS

July 2024

The Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS) commenced on 1 July 2023, replacing the Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) which was a Commonwealth funded program that ran for more than 30 years.

Overview

The ACVVS is a free program for eligible aged care recipients. Visits are available to anyone receiving government-subsidised residential aged care or Home Care Package (HCP) who are socially isolated or lonely. This includes care recipients approved or on the National Priority System and excludes those with a Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP).

The program focuses on the needs of older people from particular linguistic, cultural and complex vulnerability backgrounds who may be at greater risk of social isolation.

The department funds over 140 community organisations nationally to recruit, train and match volunteers to aged care recipients. Roles and responsibilities are detailed in the ACVVS National Guidelines.

The program requires volunteers to make a minimum of 20 ACVVS visits per year to their matched aged care recipient. These occur for approximately an hour a fortnight and can be anything the volunteer and older person feel like doing such as:

- sharing stories over a cup of tea
- working on a joint hobby
- taking a walk.

ACVVS accepts referrals from aged care service providers, health professionals, family members and friends. Older people can also refer themselves.

The preference is that all ACVVS visits are conducted in person, but a virtual visit may occur in exceptional circumstances (e.g. illness or recipient choice). Most visits are one to one, so the recipient and volunteer visitor can get to know each other over time. Occasionally, small group visits are more suitable, where a volunteer is matched with 2 to 3 older people. These are not to replace Lifestyle Programs.

Having an ACVVS volunteer able to visit a recipient in a residential aged care home is essential in reducing the impacts of social isolation on older people. The ACVVS is also an activity which supports aged care home providers meet their requirements under the Aged Care Quality Standards for the provision of person-centred care. This includes meeting the older person's daily living needs and valuing their identity, culture and diversity.

If an ACVVS community organisation is also a home care or residential care provider, they are required to provide 25% or more of their total ACVVS placements to aged care clients outside of their organisation.

Aged care providers:

- Identify and refer eligible care recipients to ACVVS, including creating awareness and consideration for people from diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- Consider ACVVS volunteers in a similar manner to a friend or family member visiting to provide companionship to the recipient on a casual basis.
- Register volunteers as an 'Essential Named Visitor' as per the COTA Industry Sector Code for Visiting in Aged Care Homes if the resident desires.
- Provide a short site induction for volunteer visitors for orientation purposes.
- Ensure visits to recipients by the ACVVS volunteer can occur any day of the week, including weekends and after 5pm on a weekday (as per friends and family visits).
- Liaise with the ACVVS Volunteer Manager and advise when the recipient is unable to receive visits (e.g. in hospital). It is essential to advise the ACVVS volunteer when their recipient passes away, preferably through the Volunteer Manager (Auspice Coordinator).
- Are not required to complete a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or Service Agreement between the ACVVS organisation and the aged care home.

Where a care recipient chooses to receive ACVVS volunteer visits and the provider refuses access, the provider may be in breach of their legislated responsibilities (Aged Care Principles 1997, User Rights Principles 2014, Part 2, Division 2, Section 8 (2)).

ACVVS volunteers:

- Must complete a mandatory National Police Check. The volunteer's organisation will provide confirmation of the check (reference number and expiry date) to the aged care home prior to commencement of visits.
- Are not required to complete a NDIS check, unless matched to a recipient who is a NDIS participant.
- Must adhere to the aged care home conditions of entry requirements and site induction for visitors (as required for family and friends).
- Are not required to undertake aged care home specific training. Volunteers are required to undertake training provided through ACVVS community organisations to ensure they can confidently take on their role and are aware of their obligations, responsibilities and surroundings.
- Are not required to register as a volunteer with the aged care home or enter personnel details into their employee database. The volunteer is registered with their volunteer community organisation.
- Are matched and visit with the same recipient to build a genuine friendship.
- Can make a group visit with a maximum of 3 recipients. The volunteer must be matched with and visit the same recipients each time to ensure genuine friendships and companionship.
- Are instructed NOT to attend the aged care home for visits when unwell.
- Are required to work within their ACVVS organisation's policies, procedures and role description.
- Must not access a recipient's personal or care records. They must not be involved in any aspect of the recipient's financial affairs, perform duties of a paid worker or provide nursing and personal care to the care recipient.

The ACVVS Volunteer Visitor role description is available within the ACVVS National Guidelines (section 5.1).

ACVVS Volunteer Managers (Auspice Coordinators):

- Actively recruit, train and support volunteers to ensure compliance with legislation and procedures.
- Conduct police checks, orientation and other relevant training requirements.
- Promote and raise awareness of all aspects of the ACVVS to residential aged care homes, aged care providers and the broader community.
- Actively seek referrals and match volunteers with a like-minded older person.
- Maintain a high level of communication and positive relationships with residential aged care homes, aged care providers and recipients.
- Address any issues or concerns raised by the ACVVS volunteer or the aged care provider regarding the relationship or the recipient's needs.

The ACVVS Volunteer Manager (Auspice Coordinator) role description is available within the ACVVS National Guidelines (section 5.3).

ACVVS Network Members:

ACVVS Network Members represent and support ACVVS community organisations and managers in each state and territory. The Network Member's role description is available within the ACVVS National Guidelines (section 5.2).

Contacts and links:

- The department's website provides detailed information including the National Guidelines, volunteer visitor stories and referral pathways at health.gov.au/acvvs
- Contact the department's ACVVS team at acvvs@health.gov.au
- Request a volunteer visitor for an aged care recipient in your aged care home at health.gov.au/our-work/aged-care-volunteer-visitors-scheme-acvvs/request
- Find the COTA Sector Code for Visiting at cota.org.au/policy/aged-care-reform/agedcarevisitors



Residential aged care home staff can speak directly to ACVVS Network Members to discover their local community organisation by scanning the QR code or visiting health.gov.au/our-work/aged-care-volunteer-visitors-scheme-acvvs/contacts