



Australian Government

**Department of Health,
Disability and Ageing**

Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme National Guidelines

1 July 2026 to 30 June 2031

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1 PURPOSE & CONTENT MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

1.1 Purpose of the National Guidelines

The Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS) National Guidelines outline the intended outcomes and objectives of the program and the roles and responsibilities of all participating parties in program implementation.

The ACVVS National Guidelines will be reviewed minimum annually or as required and updated in line with the National Guidelines Content Management Framework (refer Section 6.0).

2 OVERVIEW

2.1 History

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

The Royal Commission Aged Care Quality and Safety Final Report was published on 1 March 2021. As part of Recommendation 44c, it was recommended that the Australian Government (the government) provide additional funding to expand the Community Visitors Scheme and change its name to the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme, to provide extended support for older people receiving aged care who are at risk of social isolation.

2.2 Aims and intended participants

The ACVVS aims to improve quality of life

- general feeling of wellbeing with maintained or increased independence
- increased self-esteem and sense of purpose
- a sense of connectedness to the individual's community, culture and identity
- a sense of connectedness to other Commonwealth subsidised aged care recipients in the residential aged care home, and increased interactions between residents
- reduced feelings of loneliness and isolation
- reduced feelings of depression and anxiety.

2.3 Legislation

ACVVS is a grant activity under section 265(2)(d) of the *Aged Care Act 2024*, administered by the System Governor on behalf of the Commonwealth.

The Aged Care Act recognises and defines the role of an ACVVS volunteer visitor as an 'aged care volunteer visitor' (section 7):

[An] aged care volunteer visitor means a person who:

- (a) volunteers for or is otherwise engaged by a person or body that receives financial assistance under section 265 for the purpose mentioned in paragraph 265(2)(d); and
- (b) implements that purpose by visiting individuals accessing funded aged care services to provide companionship, social support or friendship to those individuals who are socially isolated or are at risk of social isolation.

The Aged Care Act defines access for an 'aged care volunteer visitor' under *Access by supporters and independent aged care advocates etc.*, *Access to individuals* (section 156):

- (1) It is a condition of registration that a registered provider of a kind prescribed by the rules must:
 - (a) allow and facilitate access by the following persons to an individual to whom the provider delivers funded aged care services:

- (i) a supporter of the individual;
- (ii) a relevantly qualified person providing legal advice or another legal service to the individual;
- (iii) (an independent aged care advocate;
- (iv) an **aged care volunteer visitor**; and

(b) do so in accordance with any requirements prescribed by the rules.

2.4 Description

ACVVS supports community organisations to recruit and match volunteers who provide friendship and companionship through visits to socially isolated care recipients of Australian Government funded residential aged care and Support at Home services.

ACVVS is a free service available for older people who:

- are on the National Priority System, or have been approved for, or are receiving Australian Government funded aged care residential or Support at Home services
- are socially isolated, including those from diverse, vulnerable and/or cultural groups as outlined in Section 2.4.1, which are considered at higher risk of social isolation
- lack regular and meaningful contact with friends or relatives, such as those who live in residential aged care with limited contact with others from similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds
- feel isolated and lonely
- have frailty, mobility or communication impairments that prevents them from participating in social or leisure opportunities
- do not participate in social support group services funded by a Commonwealth subsidised aged care program.

2.4.1 Diverse, vulnerable and cultural groups

The key objective of ACVVS is to target people who are socially isolated. While not universal, social isolation may be more prevalent among older people from particular linguistic, cultural and vulnerable backgrounds. This may include people who are:

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander persons, including those from stolen generations
- veterans or war widows (Note: Veterans Home Care [VHC or Community Nursing (CN) recipients must also receive Commonwealth funded Support at Home service)
- from culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- financially or socially disadvantaged
- experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness
- parents and children who are separated by forced adoption or removal
- adult survivors of institutional child sexual abuse
- care-leavers, including Forgotten Australians and former child migrants placed in out of home care
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans/transgender, intersex, or other sexual orientations, or are gender diverse or bodily diverse
- an individual with disability or mental ill-health
- neurodivergent
- deaf, deafblind, vision impaired, or hard of hearing
- live in rural, remote, or very remote areas.

It is acknowledged that some people may belong to more than one diverse, vulnerable and/or cultural group. Additionally, some care recipients may not wish to identify as belonging to a diverse, vulnerable and/or cultural group as this may be deemed private and sensitive.

Community organisations can deliver ACVVS to all diversity groups and ideally should be able to accommodate a referral from any cultural or diversity demographic but must ensure that genuine friendship and companionship is achieved.

Community organisations can use their discretion when assessing suitability of referrals, in line with their organisational practices and philosophy.

Community organisations are required to report on the delivery of services to diverse, vulnerable and/or cultural groups. It is acknowledged there may be barriers to obtaining this information.

ACVVS community organisations are encouraged to:

- build strong networks with organisations representing diverse, vulnerable and/or cultural groups
- consider training and educating volunteers in cultural sensitivity, LGBTIQ+ awareness, dementia awareness, and other relevant topics
- network with other community organisations to share information on effective models of service delivery
- liaise with the Network Member (refer section 3.5) when a referred care recipient has needs that are not easily met (for example, language preferences).

2.5 Eligibility to receive ACVVS

The Aged Care Act limits entry to Australian Government-funded aged care services to people with care needs who are either:

- aged 65 years and over
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and aged 50 years or over
- homeless or at risk of homelessness and aged 50 years or over.

ACVVS is available to recipients of Australian Government subsidised residential aged care or Support at Home services. This includes care recipients approved and on a waiting list or National Priority System for these services.

An ACVVS recipient who has been matched with and receives visits from an ACVVS volunteer visitor, and who subsequently ceases to receive an eligible aged care service, is deemed grandfathered and remains eligible for ongoing ACVVS support. This includes former Home Care Package recipients.

Multi-Purpose Service (MPS) recipients are also eligible for ACVVS if they are receiving residential care or Support at Home through MPS. This applies regardless of whether they have been approved for Support at Home or residential care under the Aged Care Act.

Note: The Government pays eligible providers an amount of subsidy for each care recipient, and individual supplements to care recipients to support their care, hence the meaning of subsidised residential aged care services or Support at Home.

2.6 Ineligibility to receive the ACVVS

ACVVS is not available to:

- Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) recipients who have not been approved or waitlisted for residential aged care or Support at Home services
- people who are **not** receiving Australian Government subsidised residential aged care or Support at Home services.

2.7 Visit types

Community organisations recruit and match volunteers with residential aged care recipients or Support at Home recipients to provide the following types of visits:

- Support at Home
 - one-on-one in-person visits to Australian Government subsidised Support at Home recipients
- Residential aged care:
 - one-on-one in-person visits to Australian Government subsidised residential aged care recipients
 - one-on-two in-person visits, known as dual visits, to Australian Government subsidised residential aged care recipients.

Residential aged care providers are responsible for identifying which care recipients, who are not receiving one-on-one visits, could benefit from participating in dual visits. Dual visits are an addition to, and must not replace, existing lifestyle programmed or structured activities.

- Exceptional circumstance placements
 - For ACVVS recipients of either Support at Home or residential aged care, non-face-to-face visiting may occur in exceptional circumstances where zero of the minimum 20 one-on-one in-person visits can occur due to issues including but not limited to:
 - geographical distance (between recipient and volunteer visitor)
 - recipient illness
 - a recipient specifically requesting a non-contact volunteer visitor.
 - ACVVS recipients must agree to these exceptional alternative arrangements.
 - Non-face-to-face visit mediums include, but are not limited to, virtual platforms (such as Facetime Messenger, Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp), telephone, email, and/or letter. All non-face-to-face visit details must be reported via the Community of Practice (CoP) portal. The department may seek additional de-identified information in relation to exceptional circumstance placements.
- Temporary substitution of face-to-face visits
 - A non-face-to-face visit may be supplemented for scheduled in-person (face-to-face) visit/s to ensure the continuation of the genuine friendship. Circumstances for substitution may include the recipient or the volunteer visitor having potential exposure to a cold/virus and being unable to attend the meeting location in-person. This visit should be recorded as virtual in reporting and, as this is one off, it is not considered exceptional circumstances. The department may seek additional de-identified information in relation to temporary substitution visits.

The duration of visits to the ACVVS recipient will be approximately one hour, at least once a fortnight. Each ACVVS recipient must receive a minimum of 20 visits per annum.

If a volunteer visitor brings a guest to a visit, such as a partner or child, it counts as one visit. Any guests or pets attending visits are subject to the community organisations policies/procedures, aged care home conditions of entry and the consent of the ACVVS recipient.

Time spent together will vary dependent on the care recipient's interests and capacity. Activities may include sitting and chatting, working on a hobby, discussing the news, reading a book, listening to music, taking a walk or an outing together. The duration and nature of each visit should be person-centred and tailored to a recipient's preferences.

If an ACVVS recipient wishes to discontinue the visits at any time, they are encouraged to advise their aged care service.

2.8 Placement exemption, flexibility, outside of organisation and complexity placement levy

Minimum placement numbers

- Community organisations must provide a minimum of forty (40) ACVVS visitor placements per annum in either Support at Home services, residential aged care or a combination of both.

Placement flexibility (service type only)

- To permit community organisations to continue supporting clients as their aged care needs change, the ACVVS agreement will permit flexibility in service type allocation (i.e., Support at Home and residential aged care).
- Flexible placements will total 25% of executed agreement placements.

Placements outside of own organisation

- Community organisations that are approved aged care providers (for Support at Home or residential aged care services) must provide at least 50% of ACVVS visitor placements to clients outside of their organisation,
- Community organisations must report the number of ACVVS recipients receiving services outside of their organisation.

Complexity placement levy

- To support the delivery of complex ACVVS visitor placements, the department will provide Complexity Placement Levy (CPL) funding equivalent to an additional 10% for placements approved for CPL.
- Community organisations with CPL funding may report foundational visits for their ACVVS visitor placements with CPL.

2.9 Referral and recipients

Anyone can refer an eligible care recipient to an ACVVS community organisation. Recipients may be identified through a variety of channels, including My Aged Care Assessment, Aged Care Specialist Officers, Care Finders, aged care providers, medical professionals, family members, friends, aged care advocates, or through self-identification as someone who is socially isolated and would benefit from volunteer visits.

An aged care recipient, their family or representative can contact their aged care provider, the ACVVS network member (refer Section 3.5) or the ACVVS website to see if they are eligible to receive visits from a volunteer visitor.

The ACVVS volunteer coordinator (refer Section 3.4.2) will then work with the aged care service provider to match a suitable volunteer to the care recipient.

Personal information about the care recipient is needed to help match them with a suitable aged care volunteer visitor. This information helps identify any preferences the care recipient may have - such as the volunteer's gender, age range, or cultural or other diverse background - to support a meaningful connection.

Aged care recipients and service providers may not wish to disclose sensitive information, such as identification in a diverse, vulnerable and/or cultural group, for privacy reasons. However, when available, this information can help in matching recipients to appropriate aged care volunteer

visitors. It is important to note, that aged care recipients are under no obligation to disclose personal information.

To prevent care recipients from being placed on a waiting list for an extended period, the ACVVS volunteer coordinator should contact the ACVVS network member in their area to identify a suitable match, ensuring visits commence as soon as possible.

Recipient referrals will be advertised by the relevant jurisdictional network member to community organisations within that jurisdiction. If a referral remains unaccepted after 21 days within the Aged Care Planning Region (ACPR), any community organisation within the applicable state or territory may accept the referral as a 'temporary outside of ACPR placement'. Allocation of referrals is on a first-come, first-served basis.

The department provides automatic approval for a community organisation to accept a referral outside of their contracted ACPR if the referral has remained unfilled for 21 days or more. The 'temporary outside of ACPR placement' approval is conditional on the placement automatically reverting to within the organisation's contracted ACPR once the friendship concludes.

To assist the department with tracking of temporary placements, community organisations should report all placements outside of their contracted ACPR in the relevant six-monthly KPI report comments section as follows:

[Insert organisation name] is providing [insert number of placements] temporary 21-day referral/s outside of ACPR placement/s to [insert recipient postcodes] as of [insert last day of the six-monthly reporting period].

2.10 Vaccinations

All personnel engaged under ACVVS grants must adhere to applicable state/territory medical directions with regards to vaccinations including, but not limited to:

- Influenza
- COVID-19.

3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Role of the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

The department funds and administers ACVVS. The Ageing and Aged Care Group, Service Delivery Division, Advocacy and Volunteering Section of the department are responsible for ensuring national consistency of program policy and administration arrangements, and the provision of advice to the Minister for Aged Care and Seniors on all aspects of the program.

The department will provide a departmental representative to attend (in person or virtually) a minimum of one bi-monthly community organisation/network meeting per jurisdiction per annum. The department will further engage with community organisations and their appointed volunteer coordinators, network members and CoP coordinators as required to:

- support consistent implementation and delivery of ACVVS
- discuss program related issues
- disseminate information from the Government
- assist with communication efforts to increase the program's visibility (for example, teleconferences with network members, face-to-face meetings where applicable, forums or workshops)
- respond to queries from network members to ensure consistency in the implementation and operation of the ACVVS program
- facilitate engagement and report on the Diversity Engagement Framework (refer Section 7).

3.2 Role of the Department of Social Services Community Grants Hub

The Department of Social Services Community Grants Hub is responsible for administering the ACVVS grant process and community organisation performance management on behalf of the department. The Community Grants Hub is responsible for:

- liaising with ACVVS community organisations in relation to the day-to-day management of the ACVVS grant agreement
- responding to queries from community organisations to ensure consistency in the implementation and operation of the ACVVS program
- managing ACVVS community organisation funding agreements, including monitoring and assessment of agreement milestones, performance reporting, variations, novation, and mutual deeds of terminations
- escalating ACVVS community organisations' feedback and enquiries to the department for policy advice where appropriate.

3.3 Aged care providers

The relationship between ACVVS community organisations and Australian Government subsidised aged care residential and Support at Home service providers is critical to achieving the program's objectives.

The aged care provider should ensure it has received confirmation that the ACVVS volunteer visitor has met the appropriate screening checks and vaccinations before visits commence.

ACVVS volunteer visitors are defined under the Aged Care Act as an 'aged care volunteer visitor' and should not be considered as part of the aged care provider volunteer workforce. This means they are not obligated to undertake training or enter their personal details into a database.

The residential aged care home should ensure the visitor is familiar with the layout, safety procedures and orientation before a friendship can be formed between the aged care volunteer visitor and the ACVVS recipient.

Community organisations are expected to be proactive in establishing and maintaining strong collaborative partnerships with aged care provider lifestyle coordinators and vice versa.

3.3.1 Accessing residential aged care homes

ACVVS volunteers should be considered by aged care service providers to be a relationship of choice, similar to a friend or family member who visits casually to provide friendship and companionship to the ACVVS recipient. ACVVS volunteers can be registered as an Essential Named Visitor as per the [COTA Industry Code for Visiting Aged Care Homes](#) if the resident desires.

The Aged Care Act recognises and defines the role of an ACVVS volunteer visitor as an 'Aged Care Volunteer Visitor' and defines access for ACVVS volunteer visitors under *Access by supporters and independent aged care advocates etc.*, *Access to individuals* (refer Section 2.3).

Access may be denied in some circumstances for legitimate reasons, such as an aged care service being in lock down due to a gastroenteritis outbreak. In these circumstances, a phone or video call to the care recipient may be a more appropriate way to stay in touch and can be deemed as an actual visit for reporting purposes. It is recommended that aged care service providers include the ACVVS program in their communication strategy to ensure all staff are aware of the need to notify the ACVVS coordinator of changes in access conditions.

3.4 Community organisations, coordinators and network members

3.4.1 Community organisations

All community organisations are required to develop and maintain internal policies and procedures for ACVVS, ensuring that aged care volunteer visitor actions align with the Statement of Rights included in the new Aged Care Act. The Statement of Rights outlines what rights older people have when accessing aged care services to ensure that their needs are at the centre of the aged care system. These policies and procedures must align with the ACVVS National Guidelines and relevant Commonwealth and State legal requirements and be readily accessible to ACVVS staff and volunteers.

The format of the information is at the discretion of the community organisation; however, it must include at a minimum:

- the community organisation's code of conduct
- role and responsibilities for the ACVVS community organisation, coordinator and volunteers
- reflect the diversity, complex vulnerability and cultural groups serviced
- procedures for contact between ACVVS community organisation volunteer coordinators, aged care volunteer visitors and/or aged care service providers
- volunteer visitor selection, matching, orientation and support
- dispute resolution processes
- occupational health and safety protocols
- record management procedures for recording referrals, matches, waiting lists and community visits
- financial management procedures, including eligible grant expenditure and volunteer visitor reimbursement.

3.4.2 ACVVS volunteer coordinator

The term 'volunteer coordinator' encompasses all community organisation front line ACVVS service role titles including but not limited to:

- volunteer manager
- program manager
- program coordinator.

Community organisations must:

- appoint a volunteer coordinator to manage ACVVS service delivery
- facilitate introduction to the network member
- ensure a comprehensive and effective handover process in the event of extended volunteer coordinator leave or the nomination of a new volunteer coordinator
- develop and maintain a Business Continuity Plan for ACVVS delivery
- ensure all volunteer coordinators maintain access and engagement with the CoP portal,
- ensure volunteer coordinators and staff delivering ACVVS have undergone a national criminal history record check (commonly known as a police check) before commencement
- transfer all ACVVS recipients and volunteers to another ACVVS community organisation, as directed by the Community Grants Hub, to ensure that genuine friendship and companionship can continue after the community organisation withdraws from the ACVVS Grant Agreement.

Role descriptions for ACVVS volunteer coordinators are determined by individual community organisations but must include the minimum duties outlined in Section 5.3: 'Role descriptions – ACVVS volunteer coordinator role'.

3.5 Network members

Network members represent and support community organisations within each state and territory. A list of the ACVVS network members is available on the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing ACVVS website.

Role descriptions for network members are determined by the individual organisations that appoint them. Role descriptions must include the minimum duties outlined in Section 5.2: Role Descriptions - Network member.

3.6 ACVVS Volunteer Visitor

ACVVS volunteer visitors provide regular and genuine friendship and companionship to aged care recipients – either in residential aged care or Support at Home - who are socially isolated through regular one-on-one or dual in-person visits.

Role descriptions for ACVVS volunteer visitors are determined by individual community organisations and must include the minimum duties outlined in Section 5.1: Role descriptions - ACVVS volunteer visitor role.

3.6.1 Skills of an ACVVS volunteer visitor

Any person over the age of 18 years who is available to volunteer their time to provide genuine friendship or companionship can be an ACVVS volunteer visitor. ACVVS volunteer visitors from diverse backgrounds are well-suited to provide companionship to older people who may benefit from re-connecting with their culture or background, or becoming more involved in the community. The following skills are highly desirable in a volunteer visitor:

- genuine empathy and understanding of older people
- good communication and listening skills
- bilingual language skills (not essential)
- the ability to work independently
- a commitment to developing a strong and ongoing relationship with an older person
- agreement to act with integrity, respect, confidentiality and dignity at all times
- flexibility and adaptability.

3.6.2 Becoming an ACVVS volunteer visitor

Anyone interested in becoming an ACVVS volunteer visitor should contact a community organisation in their local area. Community organisation contact details can be obtained by contacting the [ACVVS Network Member](#) provided on the department's website under Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme (ACVVS) contacts.

The ACVVS community organisation volunteer coordinator will explain expectations of an ACVVS volunteer visitor, outline administrative procedures, and assess the person's suitability for the role. This includes requirement to undergo a national criminal history record check (refer 3.6.7). Reference checks for screening purposes may also be requested at the community organisation's discretion.

The ACVVS volunteer coordinator may ask the prospective ACVVS volunteer visitor to complete a questionnaire and/or provide information on their interests and background to assist in matching them with an aged care recipient.

Persons from diverse, complex vulnerability or cultural backgrounds are strongly encouraged to become an ACVVS volunteer visitor.

3.6.3 What can't an ACVVS volunteer visitor do?

ACVVS volunteer visitors must not undertake personal care, support and assistance, including but not limited to:

- providing nursing, clinical or personal care to the care recipient
- accessing a care recipient's personal or care records
- involving themselves in any aspect of the care recipient's financial affairs
- displacing personal relationships established between the care recipient and staff, or residents and existing social networks
- monitoring care standards provided by the aged care service
- replacing nursing, activities or therapy staff
- interfering or having any involvement in the day-to-day running of the aged care service
- involving themselves in the investigation or follow up of complaints.

If an ACVVS volunteer visitor becomes concerned about some aspect of a care recipient's care, they should seek advice from their ACVVS community organisation volunteer coordinator.

3.6.4 Maintaining privacy, confidentiality and dignity of aged care recipients

ACVVS volunteer coordinators must support ACVVS volunteer visitors in understanding and applying these concepts and skills:

- Privacy: this includes maintaining confidentiality and respecting the care recipient's personal rights. For example, a volunteer visitor must respect the care recipient's privacy while they are dressing and their right not to disclose personal issues
- Confidentiality: ACVVS volunteer visitors must avoid discussing the personal details of the care recipient with other visitors or members of the wider community
- Maintaining dignity: this includes supporting the care recipient to maintain their self-esteem. For example, a volunteer visitor should ask the care recipient if they would like assistance with a task before helping them.

3.6.5 Receiving or giving gifts

ACVVS volunteer visitors must be aware of relevant policies and potential risks associated with giving or receiving gifts from ACVVS recipients.

Gift giving must be discussed in advance with the ACVVS volunteer coordinator and/or aged care service provider to ensure the gift is appropriate.

ACVVS volunteer visitors should discuss any situations involving the receipt of gifts (particularly if the gift is of monetary or sentimental significance) with their ACVVS community organisation, ACVVS volunteer coordinator and/or the aged care provider. In almost all circumstances, gifts should not be accepted.

3.6.6 What expenses can be reimbursed?

Reimbursement of expenses incurred in the volunteer visitor role is at the discretion of the community organisation and must be clearly documented in the community organisation's policies and procedures.

ACVVS community organisations must clearly explain this policy to volunteer visitors before commencement of ACVVS service.

3.6.7 Security, screening and reference checks

ACVVS volunteer visitors are required to undergo security checks before commencing ACVVS visits to care recipients. Security checks include but are not limited to:

- National criminal history record check which is valid for three years (commonly known as a 'police certificate')
- National Disability Insurance Scheme workers screening.

The ACVVS community organisation is responsible for:

- organising and funding security checks
- providing volunteer visitors with a letter or email confirming that a security check has been undertaken and the volunteer visitor is suitable to participate in ACVVS
- providing documentation to the aged care provider, including but not limited to a copy of the police check 'letter of introduction' (with the dates covered)
- providing a new letter to the ACVVS volunteer visitor and aged care provider when police certificates are renewed every three years
- notifying the aged care provider when a volunteer visitor is no longer connected to the community organisation.

Volunteer visitors holding an existing NDIS worker screening are not required to obtain a police check. Refer to [Should I have a police certificate or a National Disability Insurance Scheme \(NDIS\) worker screening clearance?](#) The volunteer visitor must provide the community organisation with a copy of their NDIS worker screening clearance from the NDIS Worker Screening Unit in the state or territory in which the clearance was issued.

Further information on the police certificate guidelines can be found at: [Screening requirements for the aged care workforce.](#)

ACVVS volunteer visitors cannot visit aged care recipients until the national criminal history check is completed, although they may undertake ACVVS training modules.

Reference checks for ACVVS volunteer visitors can be requested at the community organisation's discretion during volunteer recruitment for screening purposes. However, these checks do not replace the legislative requirements of police and/or NDIS worker checks under the ACVVS program. The department will introduce a new [aged care worker screening check](#) for individuals in risk-assessed roles in the future (will not commence before 2026) at which time these Guidelines will be updated as required.

ACVVS volunteer visitors will not be required to have the new check in place when the new process starts. They can continue to use their existing police check until it expires.

3.6.8 Statutory declaration

Statutory declarations are required **for any staff or volunteer visitors** who have been citizens or permanent residents of a country other than Australia after the age of 16.

In these instances, a volunteer visitor can sign a statutory declaration stating they have never been convicted, in Australia or another country, of murder, sexual assault, or any other form of assault that resulted in imprisonment.

Statutory declarations related to police certificate requirements must be completed in the form prescribed under the *Commonwealth Statutory Declaration Act 1959* (the Declaration Act) as these requirements are connected to Commonwealth law. False statements in a statutory declaration is an offence under the Declaration Act.

A statutory declaration template and more information about statutory declarations are available here: [Statutory-declarations.](#)

3.6.9 Volunteer training

ACVVS community organisations must provide volunteer visitors with training to ensure they can confidently take on their role and are clearly aware of their obligations, responsibilities and surroundings. Training should include awareness and understanding of:

- an overview of the ACVVS program and the aged care system, with reference to the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing website
- the code of conduct, ensuring aged care volunteer visitor actions align with the Statement of Rights and reflect integrity, honesty and transparency
- the rights of the aged care volunteer visitor
- the rights of the ACVVS recipient
- privacy and confidentiality obligations
- duty of care and professional boundaries
- loss and grief
- infection control
- pathways for elder abuse and advocacy support
- education and training in service delivery to diverse, vulnerable and cultural groups, including First Nations, CALD communities, and LGBTIQ+ individuals
- steps for reporting and assisting care recipients suspected of experiencing abuse or neglect
- administration requirements associated with their role
- Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) and Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) requirements including at community organisation facilities and recipient visiting locations.

3.6.10 Care recipient abuse or neglect

According to the World Health Organisation's 2002 Toronto Declaration on the Global Prevention of Elder Abuse:

Elder abuse is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person. It can be of various forms: physical, psychological/emotional, sexual, financial or simply reflect intentional or unintentional neglect. Elder abuse is a violation of human rights and a significant cause of injury, illness, lost productivity, isolation and despair.

ACVVS community organisations must ensure that aged care provider site orientation includes awareness of appropriate procedures to be followed if an ACVVS volunteer visitor is concerned that their matched friend is suffering abuse or neglect. All concerns raised by volunteer visitors (such as the welfare of the care recipient), **should be** immediately reported to the ACVVS community organisation/volunteer coordinator and documented for immediate follow up.

3.6.11 Advocacy

It is not the role of an aged care volunteer visitor to advocate on behalf of the ACVVS recipient. If such a situation arises, the volunteer visitor must notify their ACVVS volunteer coordinator. Volunteer visitors may, however, provide information to the care recipient about available advocacy services.

3.6.12 Illness of care recipients

The aged care service provider should inform the aged care volunteer visitor, preferably through the community organisation volunteer coordinator, when a care recipient in the program is unable to receive a visitor due to illness. If the care recipient is in hospital or transition care and can receive a visitor, visits should continue where appropriate. Should the aged care service provider be unable to contact the community organisation volunteer coordinator, the aged care volunteer visitor should be contacted directly.

Aged care volunteer visitors should be informed of changes to the care recipient's situation as soon as possible, allowing time to consider alternative visit arrangements. Good communication and relationships with aged care providers and their staff are key to ensuring timely notification to community organisations. It is recommended that aged care service providers include the ACVVS program in their communication strategy to ensure all staff understand the importance of notifying the ACVVS coordinator of changes in the care recipient's circumstances.

Note: this situation should be approached with the same sensitivity, respect and kindness as one would use when informing a family member or friend of the illness.

3.6.13 Death of care recipients

The aged care service provider should inform the aged care volunteer visitor, preferably through the ACVVS community organisation volunteer coordinator, when a care recipient in the program has passed.

The ACVVS volunteer coordinator should support the volunteer visitor to deal with the loss of their friend, including through attendance in the funeral service, if appropriate.

The ACVVS volunteer coordinator should advise ACVVS staff members of the recipient's death and update relevant database records accordingly. The ACVVS volunteer coordinator should maintain support and contact with the volunteer visitor, offering the opportunity to be matched with a new visiting friend in the future if they wish.

Good communication and relationships with aged care providers and their staff are essential to ensure the timely notification of such events to community organisations. It is recommended that aged care service providers include the ACVVS program in their communication strategy, ensuring all staff are aware of the need to notify the ACVVS volunteer coordinator of any changes in the care recipient's circumstances.

Note: this situation should be approached with the same sensitivity, respect and kindness as one would use when informing a family member or friend of the illness.

4 ADMINISTRATION

4.1 Service Delivery

The department funds community organisations to recruit, train and support aged care volunteer visitors through a Commonwealth standard grant agreement. Eligible organisations may apply to become a ACVVS community organisation through a competitive funding process conducted towards the end of each funding round, unless extensions are offered prior. Eligible community organisations must monitor the Community Grants Hub GrantConnect website and register for upcoming grant opportunities.

4.1.1 What the grant money can be used for

Organisations can only use grant funds for eligible expenditure incurred in connection with approved grant activities, and within the start and end dates of your grant activity period.

Expenditure must be directly related to ACVVS activity and proportionate to the number of placements awarded to your community organisation.

Eligible expenditure items as per the Grant Opportunity Guidelines GO7752 include:

- wages and salary for approved staff to support the delivery of the program's objectives, specifically including ACVVS volunteer coordinator, network member and/or CoP coordinators
- labour on-costs and administrative overheads

- you may increase eligible salary costs that are directly related to the program by up to an additional 30 per cent allowance to cover on-costs such as employer paid superannuation, payroll tax, workers compensation insurance
- overheads such as office rent and the provision of computers that are directly related to the program
- expenditure should be pro-rata based on the time spent on eligible activities
- you cannot calculate labour costs by estimating the employee's worth. If you have not exchanged money (either by cash or bank transactions) we will not consider the cost eligible
- core to program delivery/directly related to the program
- leasing of buildings, vehicles and/or equipment directly related to the program
- establishment of systems, software, uniforms, personal protective equipment (PPE) and consumable material costs directly related to the program, such as:
 - recruitment of staff and orientation expenses for aged care volunteer visitors, ACVVS volunteer coordinators, network members and CoP coordinators
 - business development expenditure, including external communication, branding, media and marketing expenditure, event displays, event advertising and promotion, which must include the ACVVS logo (refer section 4.3)
 - staff training that directly supports the achievement of program outcomes
- reimbursement of aged care volunteer visitors out of pocket expenses at the discretion of the ACVVS community organisations (example, volunteer visitor travel costs to the visit of the ACVVS recipient)
- ACVVS community organisation policy and procedures must clearly detail which expenses (if applicable) will be reimbursed
- mandatory police, NDIS worker, worker screening and vulnerable people checks/renewals
- expenses directly associated with the promotion, insurance and audit of ACVVS
- general administration costs such as contributions to rent, postage, telephone, electricity and office supplies.

Network member travel allowance is provided where travel is essential to the successful completion of the grant activity within the jurisdiction, including network members visiting community organisations and representation of ACVVS to other relevant bodies.

Network members are encouraged to visit all providers within their jurisdiction on an annual basis. Network members delivering service to:

- Northern Territory must undertake a minimum of one trip (multi destination trip or 2 single trips) to Darwin and Alice Springs per annum
- Australian Capital Territory (ACT) must undertake a minimum of one trip to the ACT per annum.

Eligible travel expenditure may include:

- eligible domestic air travel in Australia limited to the economy class fare for each sector travelled; where non-economy class air transport is used only the equivalent of an economy fare for that sector is eligible expenditure. Where non-economy class air transport is used, the grantee will require evidence showing what an economy airfare costs at the time of travel
- accommodation (room cost only) limited to the reasonable cost of accommodation whilst residing away from their home base overnight
- associated costs such as internet, entertainment and other incidentals are not eligible travel expenditure and cannot be claimed as part of the cost of accommodation
- meal provision for network member only, whilst residing away from their home base, overnight

- transportation required to conduct agreed grant activities may include the cost of local transport at outward destinations (rental car, taxi or rideshare)
- ad hoc ACVVS travel allowance expenditure (pre-approved by the department).

Funded ACVVS community organisations must use this funding solely for ACVVS activities and in accordance with terms outlined in the grant agreement.

Further information on the use of government funds can be found in the financial provisions section of the terms and conditions for standard funding agreement.

4.1.2 What the grant money cannot be used for

The grant money cannot be used to fund any activities not mentioned in Section 5.1.

You cannot use the grant for:

- purchase of land
- paying ransom for ransomware, cyber-attack or any other type of cybercrime
- staff salaries and related costs and administrative support not directly related to the grant activity
- major capital expenditure, major construction/capital works
- the covering of retrospective costs (depreciation)
- costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application, variations or related documentation
- subsidy of general ongoing administration of an organisation such as electricity, phone, rent and staff non directly related to the delivery of the program
- overseas travel
- activities for which other Commonwealth, state, territory or local government bodies have primary responsibility.

Expenditure items that are not eligible are:

- non-program-related staff development and training, office furniture, computer/IT or corporate costs
- domestic travel other than outlined as eligible expenditure
- financing costs, including interest and underwriting deficits
- making donations, gifts and sponsorships, e.g. to aged care volunteer visitors and/or Commonwealth aged care recipients
- the hiring of buses or special vehicles to transport Commonwealth subsidised aged care recipients or aged care volunteer visitors to functions
- entry fees to clubs or events
- subscription and/or memberships to clubs
- promotional and marketing materials that do not include the ACVVS logo
- expenses related to other programs, aged care services of grants monies.

4.1.3 Fundraising

Community organisations may choose to promote their organisation as an ACVVS provider as part of their fundraising activities, in accordance with the ACVVS branding style guidelines.

Any fundraising activities referencing ACVVS should indicate ACVVS is funded by the Australian Government.

Disbursement and expenditure of any fundraising revenue is at the discretion of the community organisations.

4.2 Reporting and performance indicators

Community organisations must submit reports in line with the terms of the grant agreement. Reports will be submitted via the department's CoP portal. Please refer to the 'Reporting your impact' section under *KPI Reporting Information, Instructions - KPI reporting*.

The department will issue reminders on the CoP portal prior to each reporting deadline.

Reporting will include, but is not limited to:

- quarterly:
 - vacant/unallocated placements
- bi-annually:
 - progress against agreed grant activity KPI's
 - ACVVS volunteer details
 - ACVVS recipient details
 - consortia members
 - engaged sub-contractors.
- annually:
 - financial expenditure categories.

Network members and CoP coordinators reporting will include, but is not limited to:

- bi-annually:
 - progress against agreed grant activity KPI's
 - engaged sub-contractors.
- annually:
 - financial expenditure categories.

The level of detail provided in reports should reflect the size, complexity and value of the grant. The department will monitor progress by reviewing submitted reports, conducting site visits or requesting records to verify information provided. Anticipated delays in reporting must be communicated as soon as possible.

4.3 ACVVS logo

The ACVVS logo must be used on all ACVVS related publications and materials, in accordance with the ACVVS branding style guidelines. Please refer to the 'Promoting the program' section in the CoP portal.

Further queries regarding ACVVS branding and/or logo usage should be referred to the department's ACVVS policy team by email at: ACVVS@Health.gov.au.

5 ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 ACVVS volunteer visitor

The role of the ACVVS volunteer visitor is to provide regular genuine friendship and companionship to socially isolated aged care recipients in residential care or Support at Home services.

The aim of ACVVS is to enhance the care recipient's quality of life, to help them feel more connected to their community, and increase their involvement in social activities and community outings, where appropriate. Visits should be conducted at regular intervals throughout the year and be conducted in-person.

Volunteer visitors may be matched with, and visit, more than one recipient at different times. The department may seek additional information to ensure the objective of genuine friendship and companionship is being achieved with each match.

Volunteer visitors engaged by ACVVS community organisations **must be** at least 18 years of age, with consideration given to the maturity required when working with older individuals and the possibility for illness or death.

The full role description of an ACVVS volunteer visitor is determined by individual community organisations, ensuring that the volunteer visitor actions align with the Statement of Rights. However, at a minimum, the role will include:

- adhering to community organisation policies and procedures
- participating in and completing training modules to ensure a safe and happy visiting experience for both the volunteer visitor and the care recipient
- visiting a designated care recipient of aged care services on a regular basis (volunteer visitors cannot be matched to a family member, relative or sibling)
- adhering with the aged care service provider conditions of entry and rules when visiting for ACVVS purposes
- advising the ACVVS volunteer coordinator of visit details (dates and medium)
- respecting the rights of the ACVVS care recipient including to confidentiality and privacy
- informing the ACVVS volunteer coordinator of any difficulties experienced during visits
- informing the ACVVS volunteer coordinator of any intention to temporarily or permanently cease visiting
- exercising a duty of care at all times
- reporting unsafe visiting environments to the ACVVS volunteer coordinator
- notifying the ACVVS volunteer coordinator of any accidents or incidents that occurred whilst visiting
- reporting any concerns regarding abuse or neglect of the care recipient to the ACVVS volunteer coordinator immediately
- complying with public health orders for COVID-19 and influenza vaccination requirements in your state or territory
- being **at least** 18 years of age and undergoing a national criminal history record check (commonly known as a 'police check') before commencing visits.

5.2 Network member

The ACVVS network members represent and support community organisations to deliver the program in each jurisdiction. Some jurisdictions combine a state and a territory. A network member is funded for each of the six (6) state and territory jurisdictions being:

- New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory
- Queensland
- South Australia and Northern Territory
- Tasmania
- Victoria
- Western Australia.

The full role description an ACVVS network member is determined by the individual organisation. However, at a minimum, the role will include:

- responsibility for facilitating links between ACVVS community organisations and the department
- delivering peak body services for the ACVVS community organisations in each state/territory
- providing awareness and considering all diverse, vulnerable and cultural groups (such as First Nations, CALD communities, LGBTQI+ individuals, and so on) in service delivery
- providing support, mentoring and information to volunteer coordinators

- encouraging a consistent approach to ACVVS issues of state or national relevance
- promoting and linking community organisations to ACVVS applicable training modules
- maintaining links between ACVVS community organisations and providing volunteer coordinator support and a forum for information exchange between ACVVS community organisations by facilitating state/territory bi-monthly meetings (minimum 5 per annum)
- managing, referring and allocating potential recipient enquiries from aged care service providers and the public to community organisations
- providing advocacy support to community organisations to ensure volunteer access to RACH
- providing an efficient and effective communication and consultation mechanism between ACVVS community organisations and the department
- attending department meetings (in-person, digitally or by proxy)
- informing the department of systemic program issues
- ensuring all required network member performance data is accurately submitted on the CoP portal before the prescribed closing date
- providing support to community organisations for CoP portal processes
- supporting the summative evaluation of the ACVVS program.

5.3 Volunteer coordinator (community organisations)

The term 'volunteer coordinator' encompasses all community organisation front line ACVVS service role titles including but not limited to:

- volunteer manager
- program manager
- program coordinator.

Community organisations must:

- appoint a volunteer coordinator to manage ACVVS service delivery
- facilitate introduction to the network member
- ensure a comprehensive and effective handover in the event of extended volunteer coordinator leave or the nomination of a new volunteer coordinator
- develop and maintain a Business Continuity Plan for ACVVS delivery
- ensure all volunteer coordinators maintain access and engagement with the CoP portal
- ensure volunteer coordinators and staff delivering ACVVS have undergone a national criminal history record check (commonly known as a 'police check') before commencement
- transfer all ACVVS recipients and volunteer visitors to another ACVVS community organisation, as directed by the Community Grants Hub, to ensure that genuine friendship and companionship can continue after the community organisation withdraws from an ACVVS Grant Agreement.

The full role description of the ACVVS volunteer coordinator is determined by individual community organisations. However, it will include the following duties:

- developing and updating internal policies and procedures for ACVVS service delivery
- promoting, raising and increasing awareness of all aspects of ACVVS to aged care providers and the broader community
- actively seeking referrals
- actively recruiting, training and supporting ACVVS volunteer visitors, ensuring compliance with legislation and procedures such as conduct of police checks, orientation and other relevant training requirements

- ensuring, as necessary, volunteer visitor awareness, education and training delivering ACVVS to all diverse, vulnerable and cultural groups including First Nations, CALD communities, LGBTIQ+ individuals, and so on
- ensuring the compatibility of volunteer visitor and recipient matches (this should involve meeting and assessing the recipient's suitability for ACVVS and participating in initial visits with the volunteer to help establish the relationship)
- attending network member meetings (in-person, digitally or by proxy)
- maintaining high levels of communication and positive relationships with network member/s, aged care providers and recipients
- establishing and maintaining strong collaborative partnerships with fellow ACVVS community organisation volunteer coordinators within their contracted Aged Care Planning Region
- contacting potential ACVVS recipients within seven calendar days of receiving a referral from a network member or other source
- providing regular updates to the network member regarding delays in any volunteer visitors and recipient matches
- addressing any issues or concerns raised by the volunteer visitor or the aged care service provider regarding the relationship or the recipient's needs
- providing an opportunity for an exit interview when the volunteer visitor leaves the program
- information sharing and liaising with relevant state and territory network member/s
- managing ACVVS recipient numbers according to the allocated ACPR and placement types detailed in the funding agreement
- ensuring all ACVVS quarterly, bi-annual and annual data is accurately submitted into the online portal before the prescribed closing date
- participating in learning and development opportunities to enhance and develop skills required for the coordinator role
- complying with Public Health Orders for COVID-19 and influenza vaccination requirements in your state or territory.

A community organisation volunteer coordinator may also choose to be matched to an ACVVS aged care recipient. However, all visits to their matched recipient must be undertaken on a volunteer basis as per Section 5.1.

5.4 Community of Practice (CoP) Coordinator

The CoP coordinator is an additional role undertaken by some network members to support functionality and delivery of the CoP portal via the department's ACVVS SharePoint website to ensure shared knowledge, cultivation of best practice and fostering innovation.

The CoP will focus on sharing solved problems, exchanging knowledge, cultivating best practice and fostering innovation. It aims to advance a domain of professional practice through a web-based collaborative environment that supports communication, connection and community activities.

The functions of the CoP Coordinator will include, but are not limited to:

- identifying suitable ACVVS training for inclusion on the CoP
- reviewing all CoP materials, at least annually, to confirm ongoing suitability
- creating and delivering a minimum of three webinars/workshops per annum per coordinator (topics of the day – information of the day)
- undertaking general management of the CoP portal, including content governance and administration of the Ask a question function
- ensuring all required CoP Coordinator data is accurately submitted into the online portal before the prescribed closing date

- creating and delivering content for the conference (if applicable)
- documenting lessons learned.

5.4.1 Functions excluded from the CoP Coordinator role

The CoP Coordinator is not responsible for:

- access management of the CoP portal
- technical management of the CoP portal.

5.4.2 Membership and operation

The CoP Coordinator role is open to organisations successfully awarded the network member role through the 2026 ACVVS grant round. The successful organisation will appoint individual/s to undertake both roles (i.e., CoP Coordinator *and* network member).

6 ACVVS NATIONAL GUIDELINE CONTENT MANAGEMENT

This content management framework provides information to the community organisations, network members and coordinators about the ACVVS program. It notifies and enables consultation with key stakeholders about amendments to the ACVVS national guidelines.

Amendments to the ACVVS national guidelines will be recorded on the ACVVS national guideline change register and published on the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing ACVVS website.

Drivers for content change can include:

- the department's annual review
- identified opportunities for improvement
- amendments to legislation and/or regulation impacting ACVVS delivery.

The department will, where possible and applicable, engage and consult with the relevant community organisations, network members and coordinators about content changes. An implementation timeframe will be provided during the consultation process, which may be open to negotiation. This may not be possible for mandated changes that are the result of legislative or regulation requirements.

This content management framework applies only to the ACVVS national guidelines.

7 DIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

7.1 Objectives

The objectives of the Diversity Engagement Framework are to:

1. Ensure capability and capacity

- Working in partnership with ACVVS community organisations and diversity peak bodies to ensure older people with lived diversity experience are represented and engaged on issues that impact their ACVVS service delivery.
- Promote appropriate and inclusive diversity language in ACVVS materials and promotion activities.
- Promote diversity specific needs in ACVVS policy and program planning and ensure consultation with ACVVS community organisations with proven diversity service delivery.
- Continue to develop and embed content on diversity on the ACVVS CoP portal.

2. Enhance accessibility and inclusivity

- Support diversity specialist peer community organisations to provide a culturally safe, appropriate and inclusive ACVVS.
- Review and improve service integration and referral pathways to ensure coordination points are responsive to older people with diversity backgrounds.
- Actively encourage approved aged care providers (RACH & SAH) to identify and refer older people from diversity backgrounds who are at greater risk of social isolation.

3. Improve data and evaluation

- Look for opportunities to improve collection, analysis and publication of diversity data.
- Ensure data is used routinely in policy and planning activities to address the prevalence and diverse needs of older people from diversity backgrounds seeking ACVVS service.
- Promote and facilitate evaluation that builds the evidence base and addresses knowledge gaps for diversity and wellbeing in the ACVVS service delivery.

7.2 Roles and responsibilities

The department is responsible for the implementation and delivery of the ACVVS Diversity Engagement Framework and engaging with ACVVS community organisations for collaboration. The department may engage ACVVS community organisations in activities including but not limited to:

- roundtable discussions
- 1 on 1 virtual engagements with community organisations
- site visits
- provision of the annual report detailing the activities, findings and outcomes (published on the ACVVS CoP portal).

ACVVS community organisations are responsible for actively engaging and participating within the ACVVS Diversity Engagement Framework.

8 GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
ACPRs	Aged Care Planning Regions
ACVVS	Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme
ACVVS visitor placement	Each funded ACVVS visitor placement is required to deliver the KPI1 (min. of 20 ACVVS visits per recipient p.a.). If a ACVVS recipient exits the program, the remainder of the minimum annual visits for the funded ACVVS visitor placement must be delivered to a new ACVVS recipient.
ACVVS volunteer visitor	The role of the ACVVS volunteer visitor is to provide regular genuine friendship and companionship to socially isolated aged care recipients in residential care or Support at Home services. ACVVS volunteer visitors are defined under the <i>Aged Care Act 2024</i> as an 'aged care volunteer visitor' and should not be considered as part of the aged care provider volunteer workforce. The ACVVS volunteer visitor role is defined under the ACVVS National Guidelines in Section 5.1.
Community Organisations	Organisations funded by the Department to deliver the ACVVS
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CHSP	Commonwealth Home Support Program
CoP	Community of Practice
CPL	Complexity Placement Levy
DSS	Department of Social Services
Dual visit	dual visit is where a ACVVS volunteer visits with two matched recipients simultaneously (one-on-two) in a residential aged care home. The maximum permitted ratio is one ACVVS volunteer visitor to two ACVVS recipients. A dual visit is funded for one ACVVS Visitor Placement being the same level as a single face to face in-person visit (one volunteer visitor to one recipient).
FAQs	Frequently asked questions
In-person (face-to-face) visits from one or more volunteers	In-person (face-to-face) visit between volunteer visitor/s and recipient/s in the same location.
Face to face	Virtual visits and communications via Facetime, Skype, telephone, email and or letter are not classified as in-person (face-to-face) visits.

	Messaging via SMS is not considered a virtual visit and cannot be counted as an ACVVS visit. SMS is permitted to be used for the arranging and confirmation of visit dates and times etc.
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
NACAP	National Aged Care Advocacy Program
OPAN	Older Persons Advocacy Network
RACH	Residential Aged Care Home
The department	The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing
Volunteer Coordinator	The term 'volunteer coordinator' encompasses all community organisation front line ACVVS service role titles including but not limited to: • volunteer manager • program manager • program coordinator. The ACVVS Volunteer Coordinator role is defined under the ACVVS National Guidelines in Section 5.3.
Year	Financial year

