



Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme

Volunteer Handbook

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Acknowledgement of Country

Wesley Mission Queensland respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work and live. We acknowledge Elders both past and present, whose ongoing effort to protect and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures will leave a lasting legacy for future Elders and leaders.

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A warm **welcome**



Thank you for opening your heart and choosing to share your time with the older members of our community as part of the government-funded Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme. As a volunteer with the scheme, you are becoming part of a generous network of people who believe in the simple power of connection.

Your visits and your presence bring comfort, joy, and a sense of belonging to those who may be experiencing loneliness. What you offer truly matters; the impact of your kindness is both deeply meaningful and long-lasting.

Wesley Mission Queensland has a proud history of walking alongside individuals with dignity and respect. Through this scheme, we continue that mission by fostering genuine, life-enriching relationships built on trust and shared humanity.

This document is designed to be used alongside the Wesley Mission Queensland Volunteer Handbook. It has been prepared to guide you, offer clarity, and ensure your journey with us is as rewarding as it is impactful. Please remember you are never alone in this work. Our team is here to support, encourage, and walk beside you every step of the way.

Foreword

This handbook is a guide to volunteering with Wesley Mission Queensland. Its intention is to provide volunteers with an overview of some of our key policies, guidelines and benefits. Wesley Mission Queensland has comprehensive policies and procedures to ensure we meet our statutory and legal obligations to our volunteers, employees and the people we support.

We know that you will find volunteering with Wesley Mission Queensland a rewarding experience and we thank you for your valuable contribution.



Getting to know the **Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme**

What **is the scheme?**

At Wesley Mission Queensland (WMQ), we believe no one should have to feel lonely. As part of the government-funded Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS), we focus on bringing people together to create a genuine friendship and connection.

We look for kind-hearted volunteers like you (ACVVS volunteers) to match with an older person (ACVVS recipients) who could really use a friend. Whether they are living in a residential aged care home or receiving Support at Home assistance, many of our ACVVS recipients feel a bit disconnected from the world.

Your part in ACVVS is simple, but the impact is life changing. You aren't there to provide personal care or help with chores - you're just there to be a friend. By sharing a chat, a cuppa, or a laugh, you help someone feel truly seen, heard, and valued.

Who **will you be visiting?**

As an ACVVS volunteer, you'll be matched with an ACVVS recipient who is looking for a new friend. Generally, these are people who:

- **Are looking for more connection:** Many of the ACVVS recipients we support feel a bit isolated and are looking for a regular, friendly face to brighten their day.
- **Don't have family nearby:** You might be matched with an ACVVS recipient whose relatives live far away, or perhaps someone who doesn't have anyone nearby who speaks their native language or shares their cultural traditions.
- **Find it hard to get out:** Some of our ACVVS recipients have health or mobility challenges that make it tricky to join in on local social events, so they really value an ACVVS volunteer coming to them.
- **Come from all walks of life:** We have ACVVS recipients from incredibly diverse backgrounds and cultures. If you have a specific language skill or cultural connection, we'd love to match you with someone who shares it!
- **Are already receiving care:** Our ACVVS recipients are living in a residential aged care home or receiving Support at Home assistance, but they are missing that vital "social" piece of the puzzle.
- **Need a social boost:** This scheme is specifically for those ACVVS recipients who aren't already part of other social groups or clubs - you might be their main link to the community!

Why it matters?

At its heart, the ACVVS is all about making sure no one feels like they're navigating their later years alone. When an ACVVS volunteer and an ACVVS recipient team up, some wonderful things happen:

- **A brighter outlook:** It's amazing what a good chat can do for your mood! Most people find they feel more independent and just generally happier.
- **Feeling valued:** Having someone visit just to see you (and not because they're "on the clock") gives a real boost to self-esteem and a sense of purpose.
- **Staying "You":** It helps ACVVS recipients stay connected to their roots, their culture, and the things that make them who they are.
- **Making new social connections:** These visits often act as a "social spark" in residential aged care homes, helping residents connect with one another and build a friendly, supportive community right where they live.
- **Kicking loneliness to the curb:** It's a simple way to wash away those heavy feelings of isolation, anxiety, or "the blues."

Ultimately, the ACVVS is about more than just scheduled visits; it's about the power of genuine human connection. By turning a stranger into a friend, we aren't just filling in time - we are enriching lives, fostering belonging, and ensuring that older individuals feel seen and celebrated. It's a small commitment that makes a world of difference.



The **WMQ** **ACVVS** **Team**

At the centre of WMQ's ACVVS is our dedicated ACVVS team, who manage everything from recruitment and training to the "matchmaking" process. They take great care in pairing ACVVS volunteers with ACVVS recipients based on shared interests and backgrounds, laying the foundation for genuine, long-term friendships.

The team are here to walk alongside you. Whether you have a quick question, need some clarity after a visit, or notice something that concerns you, please reach out to your designated ACVVS team member. No question is too small – they are there to ensure you feel confident and supported every step of the way.





How **to get in touch with us?**

The ACVVS team are available Monday to Friday, 9:00am - 4:00pm.

@ acvvs@wmq.org.au

📞 1800 448 448 (WMQ Call Centre)

Once you join the ACVVS, you will be provided with a direct phone number for your dedicated ACVVS team member.

Your journey as an **ACVVS Volunteer**



Your **position description**

In the world of volunteering, it's easy to think, "I'm just visiting a friend - why do I need a formal document?" Because ACVVS operates within the highly regulated Aged Care sector, your position description is more than just a task list; it is a protective framework designed to support both you and your ACVVS recipient. It ensures that while your connection is heartfelt, your practice is professional and safe.

The primary objective of your position:

Under the guidance of the WMQ ACVVS team, you will provide genuine friendship and companionship to older Australians in residential aged care or those receiving Support at Home assistance. By fostering face-to-face connections, you play a pivotal role in reducing social isolation and measurably enhancing the wellbeing of older persons, generously volunteering your time without expectation of financial reward.

The key responsibilities of your position:

Engagement and visitation

- Commit to regular visits to build trust and stability.
- Foster a genuine friendship and companionship while maintaining healthy personal boundaries.
- Adhere to all residential aged care home or other homes specific rules and conditions of entry.

Compliance and safety

- Work strictly within the policies and guidelines outlined in this handbook, and the WMQ Volunteer Handbook.
- Align your visits with the Statement of Rights under the Aged Care Act 2024.
- Complete mandatory modules to ensure a high-quality experience for everyone.
- Maintain absolute confidentiality and respect the ACVVS recipient's privacy.
- Always wear your identification badge during visits with your ACVVS recipient.

Reporting and communication

- Submit visit activity reports accurately and on time.
- Immediately report any signs of potential abuse, neglect, or unsafe environments.
- Keep the ACVVS team informed of any accidents, challenges, or changes in your availability.

Other unique skills you require for your position

- Genuine empathy and an understanding of the needs of older people.
- Strong listening skills and the ability to hold a conversation.
- A desire to build a lasting relationship and a dedication to the ACVVS.
- A commitment to acting with respect and dignity.
- The ability to use initiative, work independently, and remain flexible.

Understanding what you can't do

In line with your position description, it is important to understand what you can't do in your role. While your friendship is invaluable, the ACVVS has specific guidelines to protect both you and the ACVVS recipient you visit. To ensure a safe and positive experience, ACVVS volunteers must not be involved in the following:

Personal and financial privacy

- Accessing any personal or clinical care records.
- Any involvement in the ACVVS recipient's financial or legal affairs, including any form of money management.

Clinical and professional care

- Providing any form of nursing or personal care (e.g., helping with mobility, feeding, or hygiene).
- Replacing or performing the duties of other staff, example nursing, therapy, cleaning, maintenance, counsellors, or lifestyle staff.

Operations and advocacy

- Getting involved in the day-to-day running of the aged care service.
- Taking on the responsibility of monitoring care standards or investigating complaints.
- Acting as an official advocate for the ACVVS recipient.

Social dynamics

- Displacing established relationships between the ACVVS recipient and staff, other residents, or their existing social networks.
- Removing or taking the ACVVS recipient away from their primary premises.
- Driving the ACVVS recipient in your or any vehicle.
- Socialising with the ACVVS recipient outside of the specified arrangement.
- Establishing a romantic or intimate relationship with the ACVVS recipient.
- Conducting face-to-face visits with ACVVS recipients when you are feeling unwell.

For more detail on these points, please refer to the 'Keeping Everyone Safe and Respected' section of this handbook. Above all, remember that your primary role is to be a friend. If anything occurs during a visit that causes you worry or discomfort, please contact your designated ACVVS team member immediately. We are here to provide guidance and manage any necessary follow-up, allowing you to focus entirely on your friendship with the ACVVS recipient.

Essentials



Security checks

As part of your registration process, you are required to obtain a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Worker Screening Check. This check is free, remains valid for five years, and can be processed online. You must always have a current check on file during your time with us.

A Statutory Declaration is also a mandatory requirement for any ACVVS volunteer who has been a citizen or permanent resident of a country other than Australia after the age of 16.

Your designated ACVVS team member will provide full assistance with these requirements. Whether you are applying for your NDIS check or completing a Statutory Declaration, we will support you through the documentation process to ensure you can start your visits with confidence.

Vaccinations

All ACVVS volunteers are required to present proof of one primary COVID-19 vaccination before they are accepted for the role. You must also comply with Queensland Public Health Orders including influenza vaccinations during your time with us. Your designated ACVVS team member will keep you up to date with any requirements.

Supporting you

Orientation

Before beginning your visits, all ACVVS volunteers complete a 1.5-hour online self-paced orientation. This session defines the core values of the ACVVS volunteer role and provides practical strategies to support both you and your ACVVS recipient during your time together.

Match introduction

Your designated ACVVS team member will accompany you on your first visit to facilitate a “warm handover,” acting as a bridge to break the ice and ease any initial social awkwardness between you and the ACVVS recipient. This joint visit allows your designated ACVVS team member to manage introductions, verify that the environment is safe and suitable for solo visits, and provide a practical orientation to the residential aged care home’s or private home’s specific protocols. By being present, your designated ACVVS team member also helps establish healthy boundaries and ensures the match is a good fit for both parties, providing a supportive foundation before you begin visiting independently.



Education

As an ACVVS volunteer, you have access to a variety of optional educational resources designed to support you in your role. If you have any questions about the training modules available or would like to explore specific topics, please reach out to your designated ACVVS team member.

Online courses through GO1

ACVVS volunteers can access a large variety of online courses through WMQ's GO1 training and education platform, which may assist you both personally and professionally. Your designated ACVVS team member can provide you with information on how to access these courses.

NDIS eLearning

The NDIS Commission's eLearning modules are designed to help you better support people with disability and to understand their obligations under the NDIS Code of Conduct. Courses include the Worker Orientation Module – 'Quality, Safety and You' and Supporting Effective Communication. To access the NDIS courses please visit <https://training.ndiscommission.gov.au>

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing eLearning packages

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing have a list of training that is available at www.health.gov.au/topics/aged-care/volunteers/support-and-training

University of Tasmania Equip aged care learning modules

The University of Tasmania offers 14 entry-level self-paced aged care learning packages. Each module takes only 10 minutes to complete, and a certificate is awarded upon completion of each module. To enrol in the free learning packages, visit: <https://equiplearning.utas.edu.au>

Supervision

Beyond the initial introduction, your designated ACVVS team member serves as a consistent point of contact to ensure you feel supported and valued throughout your ACVVS volunteer journey. They provide ongoing mentorship through regular check-ins, offering a space to discuss your experiences, share successes, or navigate any challenges that may arise during your visits. Additionally, your designated ACVVS team member acts as a vital link to ACVVS, keeping you informed of updated policies, managing administrative requirements, and facilitating access to further resources and training. This continuous support ensures that you never feel isolated in your role and have the guidance needed to maintain a meaningful, long-term connection with your ACVVS recipient.

Insurance

Registered ACVVS volunteers are covered by Voluntary Workers Personal Accident Insurance. This policy provides coverage for specific expenses resulting from injuries sustained while performing organised voluntary work in accordance with your position description.

Quick and easy reporting

Monthly reporting is a vital part of your role. These reports provide the essential data required for government funding and help us measure the scheme's success. More importantly, they serve as a consistent communication loop, allowing you to share "good news" stories, report changes in recipient wellbeing, or highlight any concerns that require the ACVVS team's attention. The ACVVS team will notify you when your report is due.

Keeping everyone safe and respected

Boundaries: setting and maintaining a positive connection

Setting boundaries is the best way to ensure a positive, stress-free experience for both you and your ACVVS recipient. These boundaries are an essential part of your role, designed to protect your wellbeing just as much as the safety of those you visit. By applying these boundaries consistently, you ensure your connection remains healthy, rewarding, and sustainable:

Emotional boundaries

It is natural to care for the person you visit, but remember that you are a companion, not a family member or a counsellor.

- **Be a listener, not a counsellor:** If your ACVVS recipient shares deep trauma, complex family grief, or serious mental health struggles, listen kindly but don't provide therapy or solutions. A friendly approach may be: "I can see that is really weighing on you. Thank you for sharing that with me. Have you had a chance to chat with the staff or your family about this lately?"
- **Share, but don't "lean":** Friendship is a two-way street, but the focus should remain on the older person's wellbeing. Avoid using your visits to vent about your own personal problems (like financial stress, relationship breakdowns, or health issues). A friendly approach may be: Share the "highlights" of your life - your hobbies, your pets, or a nice weekend trip - to keep the conversation light and uplifting.
- **Stay out of the "middle":** Sometimes ACVVS recipients may complain about family, friends, or the staff who support them. Avoid taking sides - being a neutral, positive presence is much more helpful. A friendly approach may be: "It sounds like a difficult situation. I'm just glad I can be here today to spend some nice time with you and take your mind off things for a bit."
- **Manage "The rescue impulse":** It's natural to want to do more when you see someone in need, but you are part of a wider care team. Don't feel you have to be the only person supporting them. If they need more help than you can give, your role is to tell your designated ACVVS team member, not to take it all on yourself. The friendly approach: Remembering that your presence alone is the "gift." You don't need to be their care worker, doctor, lawyer, counsellor, or social worker.
- **Be mindful of dependency:** We want the ACVVS recipient to look forward to your visits, but not to feel they cannot survive without them. Stick to your scheduled times. If you start calling, texting, or visiting more frequently, it can create an intense attachment that is hard to maintain if your life gets busy. A friendly approach is to set a warm expectation: "I've really enjoyed our hour together today. I'm already looking forward to seeing you again next Tuesday!"
- **Dealing with loss and change:** Because you are building a real connection, it is okay to feel sad if your ACVVS recipient's health declines. Recognise that it's okay to feel "human". However, if you find yourself feeling overwhelmed by grief or worry outside of your visits, reach out to your designated ACVVS team member. A friendly approach: Use the Counselling and Wellness Support mentioned in this handbook - we are here to support your heart, too.

Physical and task boundaries

To ensure your safety and the safety of the ACVVS recipient you visit, it's important to remember that your role is strictly social.

- **Hands-off care:** To protect everyone's safety and privacy, ACVVS volunteers do not assist with "hands-on" personal care, such as bathing, dressing, toileting, or administering medication.
- **Safety first (manual handling):** Please avoid lifting, steadying, or helping a person move. If your friend needs physical assistance - even just to stand up - please call a staff member. This prevents accidental falls or injuries to both of you.
- **Companionship, not housework:** Your visits are all about friendship. While it is perfectly fine to share a small activity - like potting a plant together or rinsing your cups - your role isn't to provide cleaning or maintenance. Leaving chores to the professional staff ensures your time is spent on what really matters: your connection.
- **Staying on the premises:** Your visits should only take place within the residential aged care home or the ACVVS recipient's home. Enjoying the garden or common areas together is a great way to get some fresh air while staying within the "safe zone".
- **Transporting:** You must not transport your friend in your own or any other vehicle under any circumstances. If they have an appointment or want to go out, please let the staff or the ACVVS team know so they can arrange the appropriate transport and support with the ACVVS recipient's aged care service.
- **Redirect advocacy:** It is not the role of an ACVVS volunteer to advocate formally. If a ACVVS recipient raises a concern about their care, ask if you can share that concern with your designated ACVVS team member or refer them to the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN). The friendly approach: "I want to make sure your voice is heard. Would you like me to mention this to my designated ACVVS team member so they can help find a solution?"
- **Wear your identification badge:** Wearing your identification badge is a vital safety requirement that verifies your status as an authorised ACVVS volunteer, distinguishing you from staff and unidentified visitors. For ACVVS recipients - especially those with cognitive decline - a visible badge provides a constant, calming reminder of your identity, reducing anxiety and building a foundation of trust. This simple act of accountability ensures an environment where others can feel more confident in your role and presence.

Gifts, finance, and legal boundaries

This is an important area for protecting both you and the ACVVS recipient you visit. By keeping your relationship purely social, you avoid any potential misunderstandings and keep your friendship "worry-free."

- **Keeping finances separate:** To protect your integrity, please never borrow, lend, or manage money for your ACVVS recipient. This includes providing financial advice, paying bills, or accessing their bank statements. If they need help with their finances, please let your designated ACVVS team member know.
- **Neutrality in legal matters:** While you are a trusted friend, you must never sign as a witness for legal documents, such as Wills or Powers of Attorney. Staying neutral in these matters ensures your relationship remains focused solely on companionship.
- **Protecting private information:** To keep your ACVVS recipient's identity safe, please never make calls or fill out documents (including online) that requires sharing their private details (like government IDs, passwords, or account numbers).
- **Receiving gifts:** If an ACVVS recipient offers you a small, heartfelt token - like a flower from the garden or a handmade card - it is usually fine to accept it. However, please politely decline any expensive gifts or items of value. If you're ever unsure, just say, "That is so kind of you, let me just check with my ACVVS supervisor first!"
- **Giving gifts:** Sharing a small treat like chocolates, a cake, flowers, a plant, or a cup of coffee is a lovely gesture! To keep things comfortable:
- **Check first:** Ask your ACVVS recipient if they have any allergies or dietary needs.
- **Check with the residential aged care home:** If your ACVVS recipient lives in residential aged care, it is important to get a quick "thumbs up" from the Leisure and Lifestyle Coordinator or the manager before bringing in food or gifts or contact your designated ACVVS team member.

Confidentiality boundaries including social media

Protecting the privacy of our ACVVS recipients is not just a policy - it is a core commitment to the safety and dignity of the vulnerable seniors we serve. Because these requirements are tied to legal privacy standards, any breach is taken very seriously. A violation of confidentiality may result in the immediate termination of your ACVVS volunteer role and could lead to legal penalties.

- **Confidentiality:** To maintain legal privacy standards and ensure the safety of vulnerable seniors, all ACVVS volunteers must protect the security of any sensitive information encountered during their service. This includes ACVVS recipients' medical, financial, or identifying data and private conversations, as well as WMQ's and the aged care service's operations, records, and organisational data. You are strictly prohibited from disclosing this information to anyone outside the organisation, or to unauthorised individuals within it, without express written permission from your designated ACVVS team member. Please note that this legal and ethical obligation of confidentiality remains in effect even after you have left ACVVS.
- **Social media:** Wesley Mission Queensland strictly prohibits ACVVS volunteers from posting photographs, videos, or any captures of ACVVS recipients on any social media platform or making official comments regarding a ACVVS recipient or the organisation, without express written permission from your designated ACVVS team member.

Boundaries when providing your contact number

To maintain a healthy balance between your personal life and your ACVVS volunteer role, we ask that you consult with your designated ACVVS team member before sharing your personal mobile number with an ACVVS recipient.

- **Residential Aged Care home:** For those visiting an ACVVS recipient in residential aged care, we recommend communicating through the home's administration desk to better protect your personal time and privacy.
- **Support at Home:** If you are visiting an ACVVS recipient in their own home and choose to share your number, we suggest establishing clear boundaries from the outset - such as limiting contact to scheduling updates or visit confirmations - to ensure your connection remains both supportive and sustainable for everyone involved.

Time boundaries

Time is your most valuable gift, but it requires clear structure. Setting expectations early prevents confusion and ensures your visits remain a sustainable part of your life.

- **Be consistent:** Consistency builds trust, but over-commitment can lead to burnout. Stick to your agreed schedule; visiting too often can create a dependency that is difficult to maintain if your circumstances change, while frequent rescheduling can be disruptive to your ACVVS recipient's routine. A friendly approach: If you visit every Tuesday at 10:00 AM, try to keep that window sacred. If you must miss a week, provide as much notice as possible.
- **The "Exit" strategy:** It is perfectly okay - and healthy - to have a "hard stop" time for your visit. Defining the length of your stay upfront helps your ACVVS recipient pace the conversation and manage their expectations. A friendly approach: Set the boundary at the start of the visit: "I'm so happy to see you! I have until 3:00 PM today, so let's make the most of our hour together."

Looking out **for one another**

Duty of care

As an ACVVS volunteer, you have a duty of care to act with reasonable caution and common sense during your visits. This means staying alert to the safety of your environment and the well-being of your ACVVS recipient. Your responsibilities include reporting any visible safety hazards, notifying your designated ACVVS team member of any accidents or incidents, and flagging significant changes in your ACVVS recipient's health, mood, or living conditions. By exercising this 'reasonable care' and staying within the boundaries and requirements of your role, you help ensure that the companionship you provide remains a safe and positive experience for everyone involved.

Missing ACVVS recipient

It can be a bit unsettling to arrive for a visit and find your ACVVS recipient missing, but it's a scenario every ACVVS volunteer should be prepared for. Here is a clear protocol to follow:

If in a residential aged care home

If you arrive and your ACVVS recipient is not in your usual meeting place, please follow these steps:

- **Check with key staff:** Speak with the manager, nurse, or Leisure and Lifestyle Coordinator. Your ACVVS recipient may simply be at the hair salon, attending a group activity, or at an appointment elsewhere in the building.
- **Confirm their status:** Staff can inform you if the resident is temporarily away or has been admitted to the hospital.
- **Don't search the premises:** Avoid wandering through the building. If staff cannot confirm their location within 15 minutes, or if the ACVVS recipient won't be back in time for your visit, leave a message with the staff and depart.
- **Notify the ACVVS team:** Contact your designated ACVVS team member as soon as possible. They will follow up with the residential aged care home on your behalf to ensure everything is okay.

If in a private home

If you arrive for a scheduled home visit and your ACVVS recipient does not answer the door, please follow this protocol:

- **Attempt to contact:** If you have an existing agreement to do so, try calling their phone. They may simply be in the garden or have forgotten the time.
- **Look for obvious signs:** Check for signs of activity, such as a parked car or mail being collected. However, do not enter the property or any buildings if they are not there to greet you.
- **The 15-minute rule:** Wait for 10–15 minutes, as they may be running late. If they do not appear and are not answering, leave a "Sorry I missed you" note or send a text message, then depart.
- **Notify the ACVVS team immediately:** You must contact your designated ACVVS team member as soon as possible. Because a missed appointment in a private home can be a safety concern, our team will follow up with the ACVVS recipient or their key contacts to ensure their wellbeing.

What not to do

- **Don't call the family or key contact:** Leave the "investigating" to the ACVVS team.
- **Don't enter a private home:** Never use a hidden key or enter an unlocked door if the ACVVS recipient does not answer.
- **Don't take it personally:** Life happens! Appointments run late or naps run long!

Emergencies

What to do:

In an emergency, the priority is always the immediate safety of you and your ACVVS recipient. Because ACVVS visits can take place in private homes or residential aged care homes, the response steps differ slightly depending on the setting.

If in a Residential Aged Care home

- **Alert staff:** Immediately use the “nurse call” button in the resident’s room or find the nearest staff member.
- **Follow protocol:** Staff will take over the situation. Move out of the way to allow them to work.
- **Sign out:** Ensure you are accounted for if an evacuation is ordered.
- **Notify the ACVVS team:** You must notify your designated ACVVS team member as soon as possible.

If in a private home

- **Stay with them:** Once you have called 000, stay with your ACVVS recipient until help arrives (provided it is safe for you to do so).
- **Check for hazards:** Ensure the area is safe (e.g., turn off a stove if that caused the emergency).
- **Provide access:** If possible, unlock the front door or clear a path for paramedics.
- **Notify the ACVVS team:** You must notify your designated ACVVS team member as soon as possible.

What not to do

- **Do not try to catch the ACVVS recipient if they fall:** If your ACVVS recipient begins to fall, do not attempt to catch or break their fall. This can cause severe injury to both you and your ACVVS recipient. Instead, try to guide them away from hard objects as they descend and call for help immediately.
- **Do not transport the ACVVS recipient:** Never attempt to drive your ACVVS recipient to a hospital or doctor yourself.
- **Don’t call the family or key contact:** Leave the notification of family or key contact to your designated ACVVS team member, aged care service, or the medical professionals.
- **Do not ignore “Minor” emergencies:** Even if the ACVVS recipient says “I’m fine” after a fall, you must still report it to a staff member (in a residential aged care home) or your designated ACVVS team member (in a home).

Feedback and complaints

Your feedback helps us grow. Whether it’s a suggestion for improvement or a concern about an ACVVS recipient’s wellbeing, we encourage you to speak up. Your input ensures the ACVVS remains safe, effective, and rewarding for everyone involved.

Important resources:

- **Your designated ACVVS team member:** Your primary contact for any feedback or concerns.
- **Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission:** For making confidential or anonymous complaints.
- **The Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN):** For free, independent advocacy and advice for older people.
- **Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS):** A mandatory framework designed to ensure that providers effectively manage, record, and report serious incidents to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.

Unsure of the next step? Contact your designated ACVVS team member. We are here to help you navigate these options and ensure your ACVVS volunteering journey is a positive one.

Making **the most of** **your visits**



Your initial visits: **building a new friendship**

It's completely normal to feel a little nervous about your first visits to your ACVVS recipient. You might wonder, "What will we talk about?" or "How will they react?" Just remember they are people just like you, with a lifetime of stories, joys, and experiences. Your goal is simply to bring a little brightness to their day through your presence.

When you are with your ACVVS recipient, remember to:

- **Follow their lead:** Respect their choice to avoid sensitive or upsetting topics.
- **Listen first:** Keep the conversation general and avoid giving advice.
- **Stay peer-to-peer:** Use a clear, friendly tone; never speak down to others.
- **Speak clearly, not loudly:** Maintain a normal volume. Speak slower - not louder - to assist with hearing or processing.
- **Check biases:** Treat every individual as a person with a rich history, regardless of age or background.

A quick tip on timing: If you're feeling particularly stressed or rushed by a deadline, it's often better to reschedule. To build a genuine connection, both you and your ACVVS recipient should feel relaxed and ready to engage.

Fun activity ideas **to spark friendship**

You don't have to overthink it! Here are a few ways to spend your time together, but always feel free to ask your ACVVS recipient what they enjoy:

- **Share stories:** Look through photo albums, talk about loved ones, or share happy memories.
- **Get moving:** Take a gentle stroll through the garden for some fresh air.
- **Stay entertained:** Listen to music, watch a movie, or read aloud.
- **Have fun:** Play trivia, solve puzzles, or challenge each other to a board game.
- **Relax:** Simply enjoy a cup of tea or coffee and a good chat.
- **Stay connected:** Help them write a letter or keep in touch with people they care about.

Planning **your time together**

As your friendship grows, you'll discover shared interests and skills that make for great activities. To ensure these moments are enjoyable for everyone, keep these tips in mind:

- **Seek input first:** Always ask your ACVVS recipient if they would like to participate in a specific activity.
- **Consult the experts:** Chat with your designated ACVVS team member or the aged care service staff - they can offer great insights into your ACVVS recipients' specific abilities and hobbies.
- **Create a positive space:** Choose a comfortable setting. Being calm, supportive, and well-prepared allows your creativity to shine.
- **Be mindful of limits:** Recognise when to take a break to avoid frustration. The goal is connection, not completion.
- **Join the community:** If you are visiting a residential aged care home, you are often welcome to join in on their scheduled group activities.

Shared activities do more than pass the time; they provide both you and the ACVVS recipient with a wonderful sense of purpose and mutual joy.



wesley
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ACVVS
Volunteer

Navigating **life's changes**

We understand that everyone's life and circumstances change over time, and the ACVVS team is committed to working flexibly with you to ensure your ACVVS volunteering journey remains a sustainable and rewarding part of your life.

When **you can't visit in person**

While the ACVVS program strongly prefers in-person visits to build deep social connections, we understand that life happens. Whether it's due to illness, lockdowns, travel, or geographic distance, you can still provide meaningful companionship from afar. Under the Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme National Guidelines, "virtual visits" are encouraged in these exceptional circumstances to ensure your ACVVS recipient doesn't feel isolated. Here is how you can stay connected:

1. Digital and phone connections

- **Video calls:** Use platforms like FaceTime, Teams, or Zoom to "see" each other. This is great for showing them your garden, a pet, or just sharing a face-to-face chat.
- **Phone calls:** A simple voice call can be a lifeline. Your designated ACVVS team member can help confirm if the ACVVS recipient has a personal phone or if a residential aged care home staff member needs to assist with a cordless handset.

2. Written and creative correspondence

- **Traditional mail:** Sending a handwritten card or letter is a tactile and lasting way to show you care. Many ACVVS recipients treasure these and display them in their rooms.
- **Postcards:** If you are traveling, a postcard is a wonderful way to share your journey and let them know they are in your thoughts.
- **Email:** If your ACVVS recipient is tech-savvy, a regular email with a few photos of your week can be a great conversation starter for your next in-person visit.

3. Remote shared activities

- **Reading aloud:** You can read a book or a newspaper article over the phone or video call.
- **Watching together:** If you both have access to the same TV program or movie, you can watch it "together" while staying on the line to discuss it.
- **Sharing music:** Play a favourite song over the phone or talk about the "song of the day."

To ensure the safety of your ACVVS recipient or others, always refrain from conducting face-to-face visits if you are feeling unwell.

What to do if your ACVVS recipient is unwell

If you are notified before your visit that your ACVVS recipient is unwell your priority is to respect their recovery and follow health protocols.

Here is the standard procedure for an ACVVS volunteer in this situation:

1. Postpone the visit

The most important step is to stay home. If your ACVVS recipient is unwell, their immune system is compromised, and they likely need rest.

- **Cancel or reschedule:** Contact your designated ACVVS team member to let them know the visit won't be going ahead.
- **Don't "pop in":** For infection control purposes, it is best to stay away when your ACVVS recipient is unwell until further notification. Also, some illnesses (like COVID-19 or Gastro) may require the room or residential aged care home to be under lockdown.

2. Communication via the ACVVS Team

To ensure the privacy and wellbeing of everyone involved, please follow these guidelines if your ACVVS recipient is unwell:

- **Respect boundaries:** Avoid contacting the ACVVS recipient's family or key contacts directly. This ensures that communication remains clear and professional during a sensitive time.
- **Stay informed:** Your designated ACVVS team member will provide you with updates on your ACVVS recipient's status as they become available.
- **Send well wishes:** If you would like to send a "Get Well" message, you may send a text (if you have an established relationship) or mail a card. A thoughtful note is a wonderful way to show you are thinking of them.
- **Phone calls:** Your designated ACVVS team member will inquire with the residential aged care home or key contact to see if a phone call is appropriate. Sometimes, a short call to hear a friendly voice can significantly lift an ACVVS recipient's spirits and aid their recovery.

3. Record the change

Even though the visit didn't happen, you should still track this in your monthly records.

- **Log the postponement:** Note in your activity report that the visit was cancelled due to the ACVVS recipient's illness. This helps the ACVVS team track the ACVVS recipient's trends over time.

4. Health and hygiene (for your return)

Once your ACVVS recipient is feeling better and you are cleared to return:

- **Hygiene first:** Ensure you follow strict hand-washing protocols.
- **Wear a mask:** If you are visiting a residential aged care home, check if there are any current requirements for wearing a mask or other PPE, even if the ACVVS recipient is no longer "active" with an illness.



Coping with **the loss of your ACVVS recipient**

The friendship you build as an ACVVS volunteer is unique. When that journey ends, it is natural to feel a sense of loss. We want you to know that your contribution made a significant difference in that person's life, and we are here to support you through this transition.

Allow yourself to grieve

It is common for ACVVS volunteers to feel that because the relationship was “official,” they shouldn’t be as affected by the loss. This is not true. You have shared stories, time, and companionship. It is okay to feel sad, and it is important to acknowledge the value of the bond you shared.

Immediate steps and boundaries

- **Notification:** Your designated ACVVS team member will usually be the one to notify you of an ACVVS recipient's passing, providing as much information as is appropriate while offering you support. We understand that some deaths are sudden, and there may be instances where you become aware of the news before the ACVVS team has been officially notified. If this occurs, please contact your designated ACVVS team member as soon as possible; they will follow up with key staff or contacts on your behalf to confirm the details and provide you with the necessary guidance and support as you navigate this loss.
- **Funeral attendance:** If the family or aged care service invites you to the funeral or memorial, you are welcome to attend. We welcome you to discuss this with your designated ACVVS team member to ensure you feel supported in doing so.
- **Contacting family:** While you may have met the family, please allow them space during this time. The ACVVS team will manage official condolences.

Reach out for support

You do not have to process this alone. We encourage you to:

- **Speak with your designated ACVVS team member:** They can support you and provide a listening ear as you debrief your experience.
- **Peer support:** Sometimes talking to fellow ACVVS volunteers who have experienced a similar loss can be incredibly healing.
- **Professional counselling and support:** Please reach out to your designated ACVVS team member to access free, confidential counselling and wellness resources. These services are available to support you not only through the grieving process but also to maintain your overall wellbeing. We are committed to ensuring you feel supported and cared for throughout your entire ACVVS volunteering journey.

Honouring the memory

Many ACVVS volunteers find comfort in a “closing” activity:

- Writing a final reflection in your ACVVS volunteer log about your favourite memories together.
- Donating a book to the aged care service or community library in their honour.
- Sharing a story about the ACVVS recipient with your designated ACVVS team member during your exit debrief for that match.

What happens next?

When you are ready - and there is no rush - your designated ACVVS team member will talk to you about your future with ACVVS. Some ACVVS volunteers choose to take a break, while others find that beginning a new match helps them move forward. We will follow your lead.

A note of gratitude:

Please remember that by being there, you ensured that your ACVVS recipient felt seen, heard, and valued in their final years. That is a profound gift that stays with them, and with us. Thank you!

Taking a break **or finishing your role**

If you decide to take a break or finish visiting your ACVVS recipient, it is important to manage the transition with care to ensure the ACVVS recipient feels supported and the administrative needs are met.

Here is the protocol for taking leave or resigning:

1. Taking a temporary break

If you are going on holiday, dealing with personal matters, or just need some time away:

- **Give notice:** Ideally, provide at least two to four weeks' notice to your designated ACVVS team member.
- **Inform your ACVVS recipient:** Once cleared by your designated ACVVS team member, let your ACVVS recipient know when you will be away and, importantly, when you plan to return. This prevents them from feeling forgotten. Alternatively, your designated ACVVS team member can advise your ACVVS recipient on your behalf.
- **Set boundaries:** Decide if you want to send a postcard or a text during your break, or if you prefer to disconnect completely.

2. Finishing your role (resigning)

If you decide to move on from the ACVVS:

- **Formal notification:** Contact your designated ACVVS team member in email is fine to provide your formal resignation and your final date.
- **The “good-bye” visit:** If appropriate, schedule a final visit to say goodbye to your ACVVS recipient. Your designated ACVVS team member can help you navigate this conversation to make it a positive “closing” of the chapter. Alternatively, your designated ACVVS team member can advise your ACVVS recipient on your behalf.
- **Return resources:** Return any ID badges, manuals, or equipment provided by the ACVVS team or wider organisation.

3. Professional boundaries after leaving

- **Contact with ACVVS Recipients:** Once your resignation is finalised, your official role as an ACVVS volunteer concludes. To maintain healthy boundaries and ensure the safety of all parties, we strongly advise against continuing private contact. However, we understand that meaningful friendships often form. If you wish to transition to a private visitor or friend, you must discuss this with your ACVVS team member before your departure. This allows us to address insurance and liability changes, notify key contacts of your change in status, and ensure everyone is comfortable with the new arrangement.
- **Ongoing confidentiality:** Your commitment to privacy does not end with your role. You have a lasting legal and ethical duty to protect the ACVVS recipient's personal, financial, and medical information, as well as the internal records, private conversations, and organisational data of both WMQ and the aged care service. This obligation remains in effect indefinitely, even after you have concluded your service with the ACVVS, to ensure the continued safety and dignity of those we support.

A final **note of thanks**



On behalf of WMQ, thank you for making the commitment to become an ACVVS volunteer. Your kindness, time, and genuine care provide more than just companionship; they bring hope, joy, and a vital sense of belonging to older persons who need it most. By choosing to share your life with others, you are making a profound and lasting difference that resonates far beyond a simple visit. We are incredibly grateful for your dedication and the heart you bring to this journey - **thank you for being an essential part of our community.**

Glossary

ACVVS	The Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme is a government-funded initiative that provides companionship to older Australians through regular volunteer visits to reduce social isolation.
ACVVS coordinator	Responsible for the engagement and journey of ACVVS volunteers and recipients. ACVVS coordinators are the first point of call for all WMQ ACVVS volunteers.
ACVVS recipient	An ACVVS recipient is an older person receiving aged care services who is matched with an Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme volunteer to enjoy regular companionship and social connection.
ACVVS team	The WMQ ACVVS team matches volunteers with older people and provides the ongoing support needed to build genuine connections and friendships.
ACVVS team leader	Leads the WMQ ACVVS team.
ACVVS volunteer	An ACVVS volunteer provides companionship to an older person through regular visits, helping to reduce loneliness and build a genuine social connection.
Aged care service	An aged care service provides essential support, clinical care, and social assistance to help older people live safely, comfortably, and with dignity.
Key contact	A key contact is the primary person responsible for providing essential information, making decisions, and maintaining communication.
Lockdown	A formal measure that restricts or prohibits movement and visitation within a residential aged care home to prevent the spread of infectious diseases among vulnerable residents.
Residential aged care home or RACH	A residential aged care home is a supported living community that provides 24-hour care, accommodation, and social services for older people who can no longer live independently. They are often also called a 'facility'.
Statement of Rights under the Aged Care Act 2024	The rights help to ensure that older people and their needs are at the centre of the new aged care system. Please visit https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/workers/state-ment-rights
Support at Home	The Support at Home program delivers government-funded aged care services to help older people to stay at home for longer.
Volunteer	A volunteer is an individual who freely chooses to give their time, skills, and effort to support a cause or organisation without expectation of financial payment.
WMQ	Wesley Mission Queensland is a non-profit community organisation that provides compassionate care and support services to help people of all ages to live life to the fullest.





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Disclaimer: The contents of this publication are correct at the time of publication (April 2026). Information in this publication, and the facilities described, may be altered by Wesley Mission Queensland Limited without notice if there is a change in circumstances.
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