

Learner Guide

Unit 1 – Your RSAS Role



RSAS Training Strategy Project 2018

Dear colleague



A message from
our CEO, Sally
Sinclair.

Welcome to the NESAs Remote School Attendance Strategy Training Project. We recognise the importance of the role that you are doing and we are committed to supporting you throughout this role with a range of training offerings.

We appreciate the positive impact of your role within your local community and the opportunities you create every day by supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to engage in school. We also understand that your role will be both rewarding and challenging, and we are confident that the training we are offering will assist you further in your role.

NESAs's RSAS Training Strategy Project will involve a blended training approach that includes the following:

- Face-to-face forums with each forum running for three days in your local community
- Online training that will offer short courses that you are able to select
- Individual coaching and mentoring throughout your training
- The option to complete accredited units that will count towards a formal qualification

Our team are here to support you and we are available if you have any questions about this programme or the training you are completing. Our office number is (02) 9119 3090 and our email address is rsas@nesa.com.au. We are available Monday – Friday between 9.00-5.00pm (Sydney time) - please feel free to give us a call or pop us a line; we are more than happy to discuss any questions you may have.

We wish you all the best in this important role and we look forward to working with you throughout this project.

Yours sincerely

Sally Sinclair
CEO

Your RSAS role

Objective

This Unit aims to help trainers, participants and community members to better understand the RSAS role.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 1

By the end of this unit, participants will be able to:

- Understand their role with the Remote School Attendance Strategy
- Demonstrate an understanding of the Remote School Attendance Strategy
- Identify how their role fits within the broader team approach
- Develop a range of strategies to promote their role within the local community setting

Resources

The resources provided are a Learner Guide, Workbook and Trainer Guide.

This Learner Guide provides a resource to support the activities in the Unit 1 Workbook. It is designed to help trainers, RSAS officers and members of the community better understand the role of RSAS team members.



This icon represents action when an individual task needs to be completed. You will find instructions on how to complete these tasks in the Unit 1 Workbook



This icon represents action when a task is to be completed as a group. You will find instructions on how to complete these tasks in the Unit 1 Workbook

Part 1: Background

“It was education, plain and simple, that changed the way I look at the world.
It probably changed the way the world looks at me.”

Vickie Roach, Aboriginal graduate, Institute of Koori Education,
Deakin University, Melbourne

Source: <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/education/#axzz3yyHbxAGi>

What is the Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS)?

The Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS) works with local providers to employ school attendance supervisors and school attendance officers to help kids get to school. RSAS commenced in Term 1 2014.

Getting kids to school is the Government’s number one priority for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

Many kids in remote communities are not going to school every day. We need to increase attendance rates so all children get a good education and can get jobs and look after themselves when they grow up. A good education means more choices, and better choices, for our kids.

RSAS is being run in partnership with communities and schools in remote areas in New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

It is designed to be run by the community to suit local needs.

The goal is 95% attendance by 2018.



“The Goal is a 95% attendance rate by 2018.”

How does the Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS) work?

The different States and territories around Australia (WA, SA, NSW, QLD and NT), schools and communities work together on RSAS. The idea is that the community, school and parents all work together to make sure it is successful.

RSAS team members have the main role of working with families, the community and schools to make sure kids attend school every day unless they are sick.

- They help solve other problems that might stop kids from attending.
- They work with elders and the community to reduce the impact of family and ceremonial obligations on a student's ability to attend school regularly.
- They support parents in encouraging good attendance and help schools in monitoring and following up attendance.

Getting children to school is a role not just for School Attendance Officers but all members of the community. Local councils, shops, sporting groups and other organisations are all involved and help out.



“Working together for local community solutions”.

What do School Attendance Officers (SAOs) do?

Generally, the role of an SAO and the supervisors is to talk with children and families about the importance of regular school attendance. However each community is different, so RSAS team members need to have a good understanding of what the issues are in their community and the best way to work through them.

An SAO's role may also include:

- Working with families where children are not attending school to find out why and what can be done to improve poor attendance rates
- Walking children to school or making sure they get on the bus
- Providing hands on support like transport to school, assistance with school lunches, uniforms, homework or access to after school care
- Working with the school to monitor attendance and follow up on student absences
- Celebrate and reward improved attendance
- Working with the school to help them keep the children at school
- Working with local community organisations to refer children / families if they need further support in other matters



“Walking children to school & working with the school to help the children get an education.”

Uncle Leon Roughsey's Story



Mornington Island School Attendance Office Leon Roughsey with his grandson Graham

Leon and his team drive a bus around the community each morning to collect students and bring them to school, which has really helped to boost attendance rates.

“The teachers are very pleased that we’re doing this job,” Leon said. “Attendance lately has been very good. I’ve been talking to the principal who said there’s been a lot of change with the kids coming to school.”

The Mornington Island School Attendance Officers also spend time talking to parents and students about the importance of school and finding out what issues may be preventing kids from coming to class each day.

“When we talk to the parents, we see what’s happening,” Leon said.

“If parents are getting involved in major drinking or something like that and then have problems at home, the kids stay at home.

“Sometimes the kids get sick; maybe not enough fruit. But when kids come to school they can get food at the breakfast program. That’s been really good.

“I was talking to some of the kids today in the high school, grade 10 or grade 9, and explained that with a good education, if they attend every day, then they’ll have a door open so they don’t have to depend on other people to look after them.”

Source: <http://www.indigenous.gov.au/helping-kids-get-to-school-a-job-to-be-proud-of>



Activity 1: My Story

“I want my kids to see me getting up and going to work and them going to school.” Isobel, Bogabilla SAO

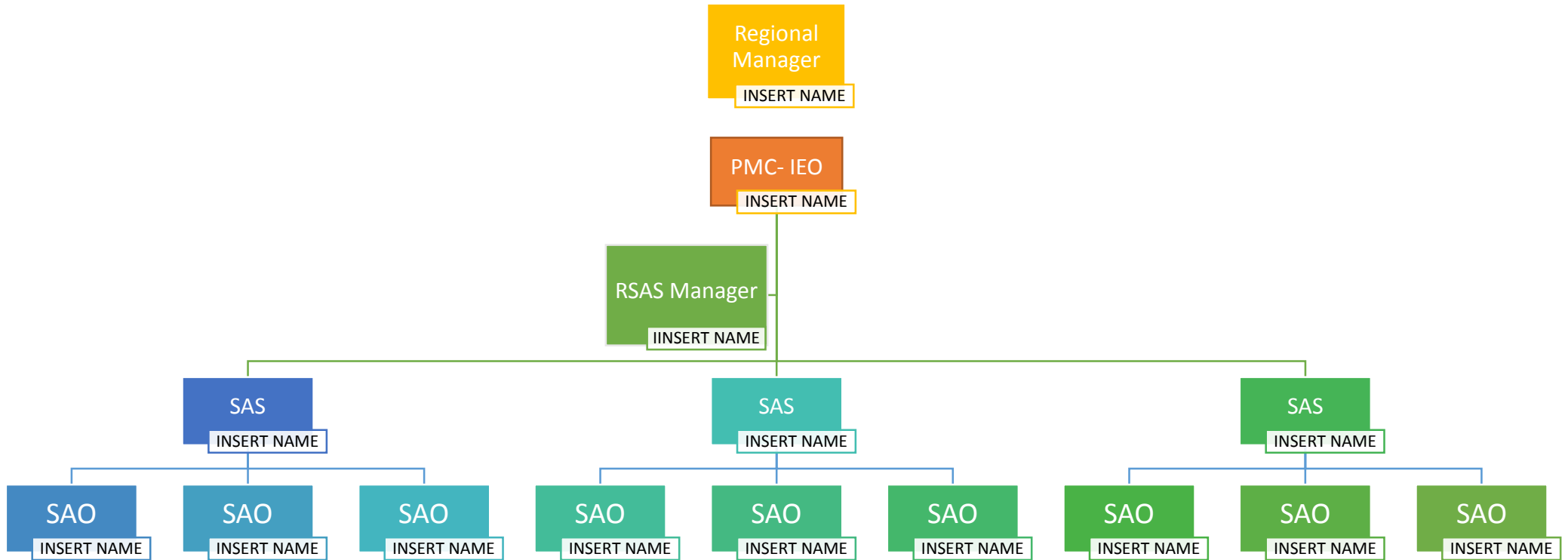
Source: <http://www.indigenous.gov.au/getting-kids-to-school-sharing-ideas-across-nsw>

- Why did you take this role?
- What do you want to achieve?
- What things do you and your community think is important about school?

See Unit 1 Workbook for instructions



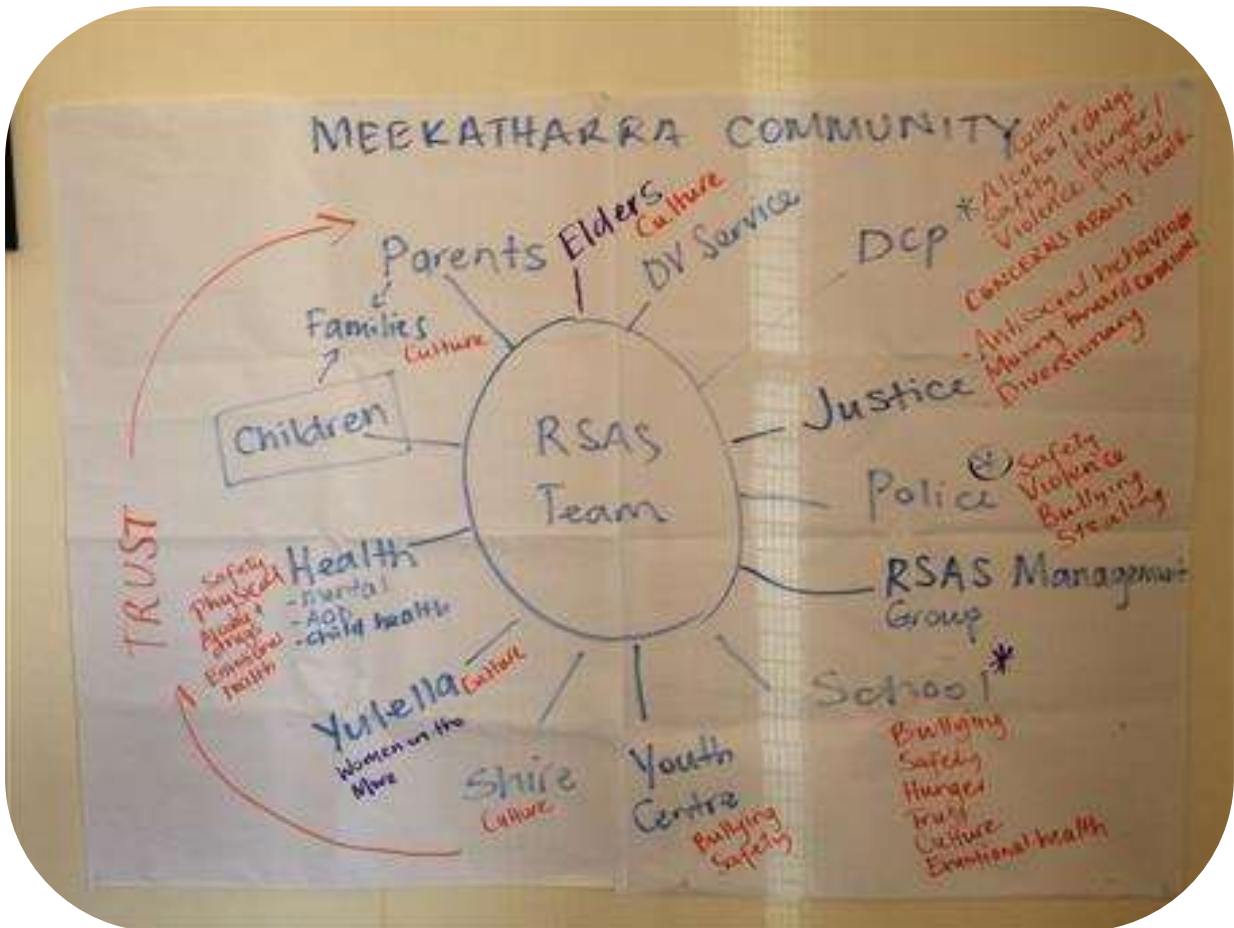
People involved in the RSAS Strategy





Activity 2: Name the people involved in the RSAS in your community.

See Unit 1 Workbook for instructions



Part 2: Understanding the requirements of different roles in the RSAS

There are three main roles in the RSAS:

- School Attendance Officers
- School Attendance Supervisors
- RSAS Mentors

It is important to know that all Supervisors and Attendance Officers (SAOs) have to be approved to work with children. SAOs will obtain working with children checks and are required to participate in work-related learning activities.

Following are the draft job descriptions. These job descriptions are a guide and can be modified by the network and supervisors to suit the needs of the community.



Activity 3

- Read the sample job descriptions on the next pages
- With the assistance of your provider and supervisor, complete your individual job description to suit your community needs.

See Unit 1 Workbook for instructions

Sample Job Description: School Attendance Officer

Job purpose: to support families, parents, carers and children so that school aged children attend school every day; arriving on time and remaining at school for the duration of the school day. (Note: duties are able to be tailored to needs of each school and community).

Report to: usually the School Attendance Supervisor (can vary depending on local arrangements)

Hours of work: may be part-time or full-time; varying depending on local requirements and other individual arrangements

Key Tasks: Under guidance and direction of your supervisor (usually the School Attendance Supervisor):

1. Every school morning, talk to school staff and community members to identify students absent from school
2. Visit the homes of non-attending students and check other places where young people regularly hang out
3. Where students appear to be absent from school without good reason; encourage students to get to school and remind parents of their responsibilities around school attendance and enrolment
4. Collect information and prepare daily reports relevant to the community and school attendance as required
5. Talk with parents and carers to gain an understanding of any difficulties a student, family or household may be facing that may make it hard for children to get to school every day
6. Give practical support to students and families to help improve the student's attendance – such as food, uniforms/clothing, help with school work or after school care. If requested, help students to physically get to school (eg school bus or walking school bus)
7. Alert supervisor about students and/or families dealing with complex problems eg complete disengagement from education/schooling, gambling, substance abuse, chronic

medical conditions or other issues that may consistently impact negatively on the attendance and enrolment of school aged children

8. Undertake other tasks and duties as instructed and appropriate to the level of the position including:
 - talking to community members to promote the importance of daily attendance
 - minimize and assisting with activities to positively engage parents, children and students in learning and schooling
 - helping out on the school grounds or in classrooms (only if agreed between the school and your employer)
9. Display professionalism at all times when undertaking your role and provide leadership and positive role modelling to the community by supporting all school-aged children under your care to attend school every day.



Sample Job Description: School Attendance Supervisor (SAS)

Job purpose: to support families, parents, carers and children so that school aged children attend school every day; arriving on time and remaining at school for the duration of the school day. (Note: duties are able to be tailored to needs of each school and community).

The primary role of the SAS is to supervise, assist and encourage School Attendance Officers (SAOs) to develop work skills, communication skills and confidence to be effective in their roles in working with all key stakeholders to support and sustain improved school attendance and enrolment.

Report to: RSAS Mentor/RSAS Coordinator or Provider (as applicable depending on the team staffing structure)

Hours of work: usually full time but can vary depending on local requirements and/or individual arrangements

Key Tasks: Under guidance and direction from supervisor:

1. Supervise, guide and mentor a team of School Attendance Officers (SAOs)
2. Organise resources to assist SAOs to do their jobs
3. Collect information and data to meet the reporting requirements of RSAS; with support from the RSAS Mentor/Coordinator if applicable
4. Lead and/or assist with the development and implementation of strategies and activities to improve school attendance and enrolment of children of compulsory school age including:
 - work with all key stakeholders to identify and address broader barriers to attendance
 - assist with promotion and engagement of community and families with early childhood services, including creating the link between pre-school and compulsory schooling

- encourage greater connections between school and community, including actively promoting the importance of school attendance and education more broadly
 - work with school staff and other stakeholders to develop and implement flexible strategies to support improved school attendance and engagement for primary aged students, senior students and students with frequent episodes of mobility
5. Notify school staff of the presence in the community of compulsory school-aged children not enrolled in school
 6. Engage with Elders, Traditional Owners and other influential members of the community to develop targeted and sustainable approaches to 15 minimize the impact of non-school obligations (including funerals, cultural activities, going through ceremony, sporting or art festivals, regular travel out of community during school term) on attendance
 7. Case coordination in support of students and/or families dealing with complex issues eg complete disengagement from schooling/education, gambling, substance abuse, chronic medical conditions or other issues that may consistently impact negatively on the attendance or enrolment of school aged children. Activities related to RSAS case coordination may be undertaken with support from the supervisor (eg RSAS Mentor/Coordinator) and include but are not limited to:
 - conducting regular home visits and family follow-ups
 - taking steps to identify and action practical solutions to barriers at attendance
 - linking students/families to appropriate local services
 - maintenance of case coordination forms and records
 8. Organise or participate in governance committee meetings or attendance-related meetings to support the outcomes of the RSAS
 9. Display professionalism at all times when undertaking your role and provide leadership and positive role modelling to the community by supporting all school-aged children under your care to attend school every day
 10. Undertake other duties commensurate to the level of the position that contribute to sustained and improved school attendance and enrolment.

OTHER

[Provider/network to add or delete duties as relevant or agreed based on local needs and arrangements.]

Sample Job Description: RSAS Mentor or RSAS Coordinator

Job purpose: lead the work of an RSAS team to ensure effective and efficient service delivery in accordance with the RSAS Grants Schedule, Operational Framework and Attendance Activity Plan and facilitate communication and collaboration between all key stakeholders.

Report to: RSAS Manager or Employer (as applicable depending on the team staffing structure)

Hours of work: usually full time but can vary depending on local requirements and/or individual arrangements.

Key Tasks: Under direction from your supervisor (eg RSAS Manager or Employer):

1. Guide, mentor and support RSAS team members to develop their work skills and levels of confidence and resilience to undertake their roles effectively
2. Supervise and performance manage RSAS team members to ensure all requirements of their role descriptions are being met
3. Lead or assist with the development of an Attendance Activity Plan
4. Plan, lead and manage the activities of an RSAS team to ensure its operations are effective and in accordance with the RSAS grant Schedule, RSAS Operational Framework and agreed Attendance Activity Plan
5. Provide information and reporting to the Provider and the Department as requested and in accordance with agreed requirements
6. Organise and facilitate meetings between the Provider, school staff and the RSAS team
7. As appropriate to local arrangements; organise or support governance committee meetings of key community stakeholders to develop and implement joined-up approaches that support improved rates of school attendance and enrolment

8. Support and facilitate RSAS team members to undertake RSAS training delivered by NESAs (National Employment Services Association) or other training organisations funded by the Department
9. Collaborate with Elders, Traditional Owners and influential members of the community to develop targeted and sustainable approaches to minimise the impact of non-school obligations (eg funerals, cultural activities, going through ceremony, carnivals/festivals and regular travel out of community during school term travel) on attendance
10. As required, assist RSAS team members to undertake a range of activities in support of RSAS and the agreed Attendance Activity Plan including case coordination for students and/or families dealing with complex issues (eg complete disengagement from schooling/education, gambling, substance abuse, chronic medical conditions) that consistently impact negatively on the attendance of school aged children. Activities related to RSAS case coordination include but are not limited to:
 - undertaking regular home visits and family follow-ups
 - taking steps to find practical solutions to barriers
 - linking the students/families to appropriate local support services
 - maintenance of case coordination forms and records
11. Undertake other duties commensurate to the level of the position that contribute to achieving to sustained and improved school attendance and enrolment.

OTHER:

[Duties to be tailored to needs of each school and community. Provider/network can add or delete duties as relevant or agreed]

Part 3: The ultimate RSAS team member

The following skill sets have been identified as important for the school attendance team members.

- A vision for the community and its kids
- An understanding of the legal requirements for school attendance
- Ability to motivate and engage children
- Working with others
- Managing children
- Leadership
- Communication
- Conflict resolution
- Working as a team
- Problem solving
- Ability to walk in two worlds
- Mandatory Reporting



RSAS team members will be provided with training covering all these areas.



Activity 4:

Talk about what these skill sets are. Explain in your own words what they mean.

Draw a picture showing the skills the Ultimate RSAS Team Member would have.

See Unit 1 Workbook for instructions

Part 4: Making a plan to communicate the RSAS role

The first step in gaining community support for the role of RSAS is letting people in the community know about your job and what the aim of the RSAS is.

This requires an Action Plan.

What is involved in a good Action Plan?

1. Setting a SMART Goal

A SMART goal is one that is:

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Relevant to what you want to do

Has **T**ime limits

An example of a SMART goal might be:

“Visit all the parents in my community group by the end of (Month)and let them know about RSAS and what we are doing to help our kids.”

2. Deciding on actions to achieve the goal

An example might be:

“Visit two families every day after school”

3. Identifying support and resources

Support may come from elders, the school principal, your supervisor or any other area you might identify



Activity 5:

With the support of your trainer and supervisor make an Action Plan to promote your role to parents and the community

See Unit 1 Workbook for instructions

Sources:

Remote School Attendance Strategy: <https://www.dpmc.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/about/children-and-schooling-programme/remote-school-attendance-strategy>

NESA site: <http://www.nesa-rsas.com.au/>

Part 5: Useful websites

Youtube: The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktITxC4QG8g>

TEDxDarwin: Chris Garner – Transforming the Teacher in Indigenous Education

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMfBeotD8gc>

YOUTUBE: Indigenous Education

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bfi_8h57ePU&index=32&list=PLTbYg3x2zliUHXiFhFIRUKAfhCECEZImZ

YOUTUBE: Creating real change for Indigenous Australians

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Xv0eQs_R_A&index=55&list=PLTbYg3x2zliUHXiFhFIRUKAfhCECEZImZ

Part 6: Appendix

Pre-departure Checklist

Date:

SASs on Duty: / /

SAOs on Duty (*Pre populated by Manager*):

NAME	Y/N	NAME	Y/N

1. VEHCILE CHECKLIST

DESCRIPTION	Y/N	COMMENTS
Speedo Reading		
Check Lights/ Horn		
Check Reverse/ Side Mirrors		
Ensure Bus is Full of Petrol		
Check Brake Lights		
Check left/right Indicators		
Check Washers/ Wipers		
Open/ Close Windows		
Ensure Bus is clean		
Make sure seatbelts are functional		
Bus 'OK' for service		

- If any part of the bus is not working, please notify your manager or coordinator on duty

2. SAO PICK UP LOCATIONS

SAO NAME	PICK UP LOCATION
<i>i.e. John Smith</i>	<i>Back Road- By the creek</i>

2. Attendance Record Checklist

2. School Attendance Officer LOCATION	A- Attended	S - Sick	HC- Caring for sick family	DR- Doctors Appointment	F- Funeral/ Sorry Business	V- Visiting another community	SPT- Sports carnival	NB- No Breakfast	CL- Dirty Clothes or No Clothes	B- Bullying at school	DL- Dislikes school	O- Other	<u>Date and Area:</u>		
Name of Students: <i>(Can be pre-populated)</i>													<u>COMMENTS</u>	RATE 1,2,3	RESULT

Follow Up Checklist

SAO Name: Date:

School Contact:

1. Talk with the school and let them know which kids are attending and not attending.

2. If you were provided with a letter from the Parent/ Guardian please give to the school

- 3.

4. Using your Student Attendance Sheet mark the non-attending kids in to level of priority:
 - 1) Most Likely to Attend (*follow up as normal*)
 - 2) Likely to Attend (*follow up as normal*)
 - 3) Not Likely to Attend (*refer to your SAS/coordinator*)

5. Working from your Student Attendance Sheet, go back to your allocated street and talk to the families listed as a 1 & 2.

6. Did you experience any of the following behaviors from the families/ guardians on your student follow ups?

BEHAVIOUR	Y/N	BEHAVIOUR	Y/N
Verbal Abuse		Praise & Thank you	
Disrespectful actions/language		Gifts	
Violence/ Assault		Help from the family	
Threatening to harm others		Politeness	
Dangerous Behavior		Agreed to meet with Teacher	
Sexual Harassment		Child went to school	
Culturally inappropriate behavior		Agreed to Participate	

7. Comments:

.....

Daily Schedule

[Insert Organisation/ School Name]

7.30am

- Start Work
- Complete Time Sheet
- Brief staff meeting to discuss day ahead (*SAS to facilitate*)

7.40am

- Staff provided list of pick up points and students names
- SAOs to collect School Attendance and Follow Up checklists
- List of students who have not attended previous day provided

7:50am

- Complete vehicle checklist
- Start school attendance checklist
- Start bus round or walking activity to collect students

8:30am

- transport students to school
- SAOs to stay outside school ground and watch for students leaving
- SAS/SAO's to talk with school

9:00am

- Start follow up checklist & complete
- Complete all required daily paperwork
- Provide report to SAS / Co-ordinator

9.30am

- Discuss students cases for non-attendance and set forward approach

10.00am

- End of Day





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