



Department of
Education and Training

Frequently Asked Questions -

Vacation care arrangements for International boarding students

Possible vacation care options for overseas boarding students are outlined below. Schools are reminded that where a CAAW is in place (as is the case for all boarding students), the school retains full responsibility for welfare of the child and for the approval of his/her accommodation arrangements throughout the vacation period. This responsibility for the approval of welfare applies regardless of any verbal or written permission given by the overseas parents, or the school's level of familiarity with elected homestay carers. In other words, if the welfare and accommodation arrangements do not satisfy your PEO, they must be revised until they are accepted as appropriate.

Homestay with a friend of the child or the child's family

Commonly, overseas students and their parents request that vacation time be spent with a friend who is known to either the student or the family. Under ESOS, this is considered a homestay arrangement.

In this situation, the usual approval processes established for the care of domestic boarders will apply to overseas students e.g. completing an application form; making contact with relevant parties; notifying the parent/s of the school's approval of the arrangement; communicating procedures for safe departure and return to school.

For overseas students, however, the existence of a CAAW means that an additional layer of checking and approval needs to be applied for the requested arrangement. For 'best practice' it is recommended that the school follow a process for ensuring that the requested carers meet specified homestay standards. [Australian Government Schools International](#) (AGSI) has produced a simple guideline that may help your school establish its own standardised homestay approval checklist. Schools must also note that relevant [Blue Card requirements](#) may apply – in particular - that a blue card will be required where the homestay arrangement with a given child is for more than 10 days or the arrangement occurs more than twice in a calendar year. Where it is determined that blue cards are required, all persons over 18 years of age residing in the household must be in possession of a card.

Homestay with a family member (other than a parent/legal guardian)

A 'family member' in this case refers to a grandparent, great grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew or cousin.

Where there is a request for a boarding student to spend vacation time with a *confirmed* family member (as defined above) no blue card will be required. However, any household residents who are not a family member and who are over 18 years of age, will be required to hold a blue card if the arrangement with the given child is for more than 10 days or if the arrangement occurs more than twice in a calendar year.

Vacation time with a family member constitutes a homestay arrangement under ESOS. Therefore, a similar process for checking and approving the suitability of the living arrangements will be required, as described above. The establishment of an appropriate school-based [homestay approval checklist](#) is recommended.

Homestay with community members known to the school

Overseas boarding students may be placed in temporary homestay with families who are known to the school and who have expressed interest in taking overseas students during vacation time. Schools supporting vacation care of this nature are encouraged use resources such as AGSI's [Homestay Standards](#) to establish an approval checklist which supports the creation of a community homestay provider 'register'. Schools must also note the relevant [Blue Card requirements](#) – in particular that any person over 18 years living in the household requires a blue card if the arrangement with a given child will be for more than 10 days or if the arrangement occurs on more than two occasions per calendar year.

Vacation care organised by a commercial homestay provider

Schools might alternatively choose to engage a 3rd party commercial homestay provider who is only accessed when vacation care for boarders is required. Under such an arrangement, the school will need to demonstrate both its *awareness* and *approval* of the commercial provider's homestay family selection process, monitoring practices and risk management processes.

Under Standard 5 of the National Code, the school will remain responsible for the student's welfare throughout the arrangement. A school staff member must therefore maintain appropriate contact with both the commercial provider and the boarding student during the vacation period to ensure the arrangement is suitable.

Vacations onshore with a parent/legal guardian

Where overseas students are released into the direct care of their parents or legal guardians, the welfare provisions under Standard 5 of the National Code do not apply.

The school's welfare responsibility resumes again from the point where the parents have advised that they will no longer be onshore to directly supervise their child.

Clear communication between the parents and school is essential to ensure there is a firm understanding of the parents' arrival and departure dates/times and to ensure that there are no 'gaps' during the vacation period where the child will not be under the care and supervision of the parent.