# Good practice in billeting

This document provides support material for your consideration and use when planning an activity that involves students being billeted.

In order to support teachers and principals the following documents are provided below:

* Good practice in billeting
* Acknowledgement of billeting conditions by billeting families
* Undertaking to provide a billet

Parents or caregivers agreeing to billet students should complete the Undertaking to provide a billet (found at the end of this document). Schools must retain a copy of the signed acknowledgement.

Billeting relies on the goodwill of host families offering to accommodate visiting students, usually without financial compensation. The majority of parents will appreciate the obligation that the department has in relation to the welfare of students and the measures that need to be in place to fulfil that obligation.

If the wellbeing or safety of a student is at risk, or there is a suspicion that this could be so, the student must be relocated to another approved accommodation arrangement and the student’s parents informed that this has occurred.

Principals must ensure that all staff have received training in child protection and are aware of the need to be vigilant in all matters relating to the safety and welfare of students involved in billeting.

# Good practice for billeting

* Determine whether billeting is the preferred option for the proposed activity.
* Commence planning as far in advance as possible.
* Appoint a coordinator at both the visiting school and the host school. Schools visiting from overseas usually use an agent to arrange visits. The agent would undertake the role of coordinator. Coordinators must establish mechanisms for collaboration and regular communication.
* Discuss the department’s child protection requirements with the host school, including the need for a [Working with Children Check](https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/working-children-check/who-needs-check) or a local equivalent from the host families. For further information on host families checks requirements, refer to section 8.1.1 of the [Excursion planning and management](https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/policy-library/public/implementation-documents/pd-2004-0010-01.pdf) document.
* Determine how many staff supervisors will be required for the particular activity. Other policies may also apply, such as those relating to emergency care procedures. An important requirement is that each billeted student has ready access to a supervisor.
* Establish a clear timeline for the billeting process.
* Billet the group of students, where possible, at one school or neighbouring schools so that they can travel together.
* Billet two or more students of the same sex together, where possible. This allows for increased comfort and safety of students and often requires little extra organisation for the host family.
* Ensure that consent forms are signed and medical information forms completed by the parents or caregivers of students to be billeted.
* Provide the names and ages of students to be billeted to the host school as early as possible. Suggested groupings for multiple billets and individual issues such as special needs should be included. Communication between coordinators can enhance the effectiveness of matching students to host families. Ensure that appropriate information about students is provided to host families. In cases of visiting overseas schools this information will usually be forwarded by the agent.
* Provide details of billeting families and allocated students to the coordinator of the visiting school at least seven days before the commencement of the activity. This information is usually required at least four weeks in advance for visiting overseas schools.
* Ensure that an adult from each family hosting a billet has signed an acknowledgement of the billeting conditions (use the pro-forma provided).
* Ensure contact between coordinators to discuss any final arrangements at least seven days before the activity.
* Provide for alternate suitable accommodation, should there not be enough families volunteering to host the visiting students.
* Ensure that non-government agencies or school personnel from interstate or overseas are aware of departmental requirements in relation to child protection.
* Provide a program to all participants in the billeting activity prior to the commencement of the activity. Include:
  + the agenda
  + venues
  + meeting times, places and addresses
  + group travel arrangements.
* Ensure that requirements and expectations about transporting students to and from group meeting places are made clear to the adults in billeting families. Consider establishing a meeting time each day for billeted students so that they can raise issues.
* Provide students to be billeted with information on things that can go wrong and strategies for keeping themselves safe.
* Ensure that lines of communication, including contact phone numbers, are known to all students and their families for contact with the coordinator.
* Communicate to all participants that no unplanned alterations to billeting arrangements may be made without the approval of the coordinator.
* Concerns about a student’s safety must be taken seriously and appropriate action taken to protect the student.

**Acknowledgement of billeting conditions by billeting families**

Dear parent or caregiver

The school has received an indication that you may be willing to provide accommodation for a

student who is participating in the\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

This activity will involve the provision of accommodation for visiting students

from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The school is very grateful for your offer to billet visiting students.

You would be aware that the NSW Department of Education has policies and procedures relating to child protection. The department, as an agency responsible for the care and welfare of students in schools, has a charter to protect the young people in its care from all forms of abuse. In order to formalise the billet, please sign and return the undertaking below. All adults and adolescents residing in your home must be aware of this undertaking.

We hope that you will enjoy having the billeted student in your home and anticipate that the student will benefit from the experience of staying with you.

Please retain this section for future reference.

Yours sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Principal Date

--------------✂----**Return the completed slip below**----✂--------------

**Undertaking to provide a billet**

In support of the commitment of the NSW Department of Education to provide a safe environment for students, I agree to provide appropriate accommodation for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ student(s) during

the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

I advise that there is nothing in my history, or the history of the people in this household that would preclude our hosting the student(s) during this visit.

I undertake to provide a safe and secure home environment for the student(s) and to do my utmost to ensure that the student(s) is/are not exposed to harm.

All adults and adolescents in this household have read and are aware of this undertaking.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to student \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_