

***WA Protocols for
Children and Young People at
Educational Risk***

A Memorandum of Understanding

Established Between

**The Department of Education and
Training**

and

**The Department for Community
Development**

**Protocols for Enrolment and Support Procedures
Relating to
Working With Children and Young People
Residing in Supported Accommodation**

FOREWORD

Research identifies that educational attainment is strongly correlated with quality of life outcomes such as employment, financial security, good health and emotional wellbeing. Services and support for children and young people that seek to maintain each student's engagement with a safe and supportive education system, particularly when they or their family are experiencing stress, trauma or disruption, can significantly reduce the risk of future disadvantage.

Collaborative programs that identify and respond appropriately to children and young people who are at risk of not maximising their educational opportunities ultimately improve the socioeconomic and emotional wellbeing of the whole community.

The Department of Education and Training (DET), the Department for Community Development of Western Australia (DCD) and Supported Accommodation Assisted Program (SAAP) services have a joint responsibility to meet the needs of children and young people who are mutual clients/students. The challenges for achieving better outcomes as well as improved service delivery are increasingly dependent on improved collaboration and communication at and between all levels.

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is intended to embody general principles and statements of intention agreed upon between and among signatories and is not intended to create a legally binding relationship between the parties or between one party and any other person (s).

This, MOU established between the DET and the DCD aims to enhance collaborative services and support for children and young people in supported accommodation. The intention is to optimise educational and life outcomes for children and young people at risk.

This agreement has been developed by the SAAP Protocols Project in consultation with a working party comprising, government and SAAP service providers, DET and DCD. It articulates these agencies' shared principles and protocols for responding to any student who may have a personal or social impediment to optimal learning such as family / domestic violence, parental problems, youth homelessness, insecure or inappropriate care and accommodation.

DET and DCD have given a commitment to disseminate this Memorandum of Understanding and to promote implementation, monitoring and reporting strategies to all stakeholders.

Let's make it happen!

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1. RATIONALE FOR THE PROTOCOL

Strong co-ordination between the Department of Education and Training (DET) and Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) services is necessary for both improving the quality of service provided and maximising outcomes for people using those services.

DET and SAAP services have a shared client group. This includes clients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

It is also acknowledged that DET and the Department for Community Development (DCD) have a substantial shared client group in respect of the SAAP program.

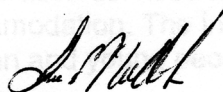
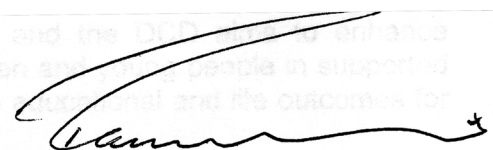
A collaborative relationship between DET and SAAP services will ensure that common issues and any overlap or gaps in agency response can be dealt with effectively to enhance the service received by clients. A commitment to effective collaboration and co-ordination is important at and between all levels including:

- strategic policy and planning;
- program planning and management; and
- service delivery.

This document addresses co-ordination at the levels of strategic policy and planning and program planning and management. It sets a foundation for the development of operational protocols between DET and SAAP services at the service delivery level.

This protocol has been agreed to by senior executive officers of DCD, which is responsible for the joint Commonwealth/State Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) under the SAAP V Multilateral Agreement and DET. It provides a context within which DET staff as the provider of educational services and SAAP services can work together.

This MOU established between the DET and the DCD to provide a collaborative services and support for children and young people in supported accommodation. The purpose is to maximise the educational and life outcomes for these young people.

Signed: 	Signed: 
..... A/ Director General Department for Community Development Director General Department of Education and Training
Date: 9/1/2006	Date: 13/2/06

2. PURPOSE

Homelessness, transience, insecure care and accommodation are significant risk factors for the educational outcomes of students.

In these circumstances for children and young people, this memorandum of understanding is intended to:

- facilitate enrolments in schools, vocational or training programs;
- reduce barriers to entry to educational programs;
- deal with impediments to transfers between educational programs;
- enable referrals and/or assessments for tailored education programs and specialised services; and where possible
- provide continuity of these tailored education programs.

Principles

1. Mutual partnerships of cooperation, professional respect and goodwill between the DET, DCD and SAAP services to facilitate the best educational outcomes for children and young people at educational risk.
2. Improved outcomes will be achieved through collaborative alliances at and between all levels that address:
 - strategic policy and planning;
 - program planning and management;
 - service delivery; and
 - information and communication systems.
3. Effective protocols provide for flexible decision making at the local level to ensure that the needs and interests of individual students, families and educational communities are addressed.
4. Educational communities are a key site for children and young people at risk to establish positive relationships with significant adults, mentors and peers.
5. Government agencies and SAAP services are committed to quality improvement. Focus areas of quality improvement processes include:
 - Ensuring relevant Departmental information and communications are exchanged in a timely manner.
 - Encouraging development and maintenance of collaborative relationships between SAAP services and DET.
 - Encouraging participation and input into the development of new services and strategies at local and/or regional levels.
 - Encouraging service practices based on the presenting needs of young people and incorporating a planned approach to meet those needs
 - Encouraging opportunities for combined learning and professional development to enhance service delivery, this includes service providers, policy officers, planners and program managers.

3. GOVERNMENT AGENCY DESCRIPTIONS

The Department of Education and Training Western Australia

DET is the government organisation responsible for Western Australian public schools and the TAFEWA training sector.

DET is committed to the protection and wellbeing of all students attending public schools and the TAFEWA training sector. This commitment extends beyond the achievement of academic success to intellectual, physical, social and emotional development. It includes the provision of safe, inclusive and supportive learning environments for optimal student learning.

DET recognises that learning and teaching programs are an effective means of supporting students to develop appropriate strategies for personal safety, resilience, confidence, life skills and wellbeing. DET supports public schools and the TAFEWA training sector in working with other government departments and non-government agencies to provide universal preventative programs that teach students self-protective strategies and behaviours.

Legislation and Policy

The *School Education Act 1999* underpins education for students from K–12 this legislated position is interpreted and implemented in schools and districts through DET's Regulatory Framework System. The Regulatory Framework System is available on the DET website. It contains all the policies, procedures and guidelines that affect the decision making of DET staff related to the provision of education in public schools.

Further information can be accessed at: <http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/regframe/index.cfm>

For TAFEWA further information is available on the Training website at: <http://www.training.wa.gov.au/training/content-policies-agreements.asp>

The Department for Community Development

The vision of DCD is to improve social wellbeing for all individuals, families and communities in Western Australia and is guided by the four key principles of engagement, inclusiveness, collaboration and capacity building.

DCD endeavours to work collaboratively with the community to plan and provide services in Western Australia which:

- enhance the wellbeing and development of families, children, individuals and communities
- promote parental care and responsibility
- protect children and young people from harm and provide them with quality care.

An important program for achieving these aims is the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP).

4. SAAP SERVICE DESCRIPTIONS

People become homeless for a variety of reasons such as breakdown of relationships, domestic violence, financial difficulties, eviction or ending of previous accommodation.

People who have become homeless often have more than one issue occurring for them at a time and may require assistance from many other services to overcome their difficulties. SAAP services assist people who are homeless to access these other services.

SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SAAP)

SAAP is a joint Commonwealth/State program administered in Western Australia by DCD.

SAAP Aims

The aim of SAAP is to assist people who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless, and in crisis, to achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance and independence. This includes people who are experiencing long term homelessness and those escaping domestic violence,

Assistance is aimed at the resolution of crisis, re-establishment of family links where appropriate, and reintegration into mainstream society. This is achieved by providing, or actively promoting, access to a range of services including accommodation. The degree to which this is achieved for each person varies.

Program Management

A Commonwealth/State Multilateral and Bilateral Agreements for SAAP set broad parameters and directions for the program. These documents identify goals, priorities and specific gaps that need to be addressed.

DCD purchases SAAP services from the not for profit sector. SAAP funds are used to purchase services through generic service specifications for seven types of service as follows:

- Domestic Violence Supported Accommodation Services (Refuges)
- Domestic Violence Support Services
- Supported Accommodation Services for Young People
- Services for Young People
- Supported Accommodation Services for Families and Single Adults
- Supported Accommodation Assistance Program: Day Centres
- Counselling Services

Currently DCD has 128 Service Agreements for the provision of SAAP services.

A list of the current SAAP agencies and the contact information can be found on the Community Development Website at www.community.wa.gov.au Click on “resources” then “accommodation” then “homelessness” then go to related resources, click on SAAP then go to protocols.

Or: Go to

<http://www.community.wa.gov.au/Resources/Accommodation/Homeless+%28SAAP%29/SAAP.htm>

*For further information on SAAP and SAAP funded agencies please contact the Senior Policy Officer SAAP on (08) 9222 2641
or
the Community Development and Funding Officer at the local Department for Community Development office.*

5. PROTOCOL GUIDELINES

1. Student Centred Practices

Objective	Standard
The best interests of the child or young person are paramount in any decision affecting them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The primary focus of any referral, decision or service intervention is to generate positive education and support outcomes for children and young people. • The intended positive student outcomes can be identified and monitored.
Children and young people will be provided with supports necessary to comply with the options they have chosen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where age appropriate, children and young people will be actively involved in decisions that impact on them including the planning process and the support options offered.

2. Interagency Awareness and Collaboration

Objective	Standard
<p>DET staff will be aware of local agencies and SAAP services.</p> <p>DET staff and SAAP services are encouraged to collaborate with other agencies when approached to negotiate student education issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DET staff will have access to local agencies, knowledge of the services offered and key contact points for discussion and referral. • Contact with other agencies is encouraged as good practice in order to improve collaboration when it is known that a student is also receiving other services.

Objective	Standard
<p>SAAP services will be aware of the local DET facilities and services.</p> <p>SAAP services are encouraged to engage with DET student support staff when a client is also receiving specialist or additional education assistance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAAP services will have access to local schools, TAFEWA programs and knowledge of the services offered to students. • To improve collaboration, consistency and services integration, contact is made with the school vocational or training support services where children or young people may require additional assistance.
<p>Agencies shall endeavour to be collaborative, flexible and responsiveness in peripheral tasks that support educational outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DET student support staff and SAAP services involved with children or young people shall endeavour to respond to enquiries of either party as a matter of priority. • Agencies will negotiate shared responsibility for student educational outcomes. • Agencies will be flexible and responsive, to the degree that resources permit, in negotiating responsibility for performing the practical tasks that support education outcomes e.g. transport to school, meal preparation, loan uniforms and textbooks. • There are a variety of subsidies and other forms of assistance to support access to education and training. The TAFEWA colleges and the managers of district operation in each district are the point of contact for information on State and Commonwealth programs and subsidies.
<p>Reasonable efforts will be made to include the relevant external parties in discussions about a student's programs and services that support educational outcomes, including other agencies involved.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case meetings will include the student, their chosen advocate where appropriate and representatives from SAAP services and other relevant agencies that have a role in supporting the child's educational achievements. • Discussion and decisions will be presented in a way that is understandable to the child or young person. • In cases where children accompany their guardian into a SAAP service the guardian will be involved in all interactions between the SAAP service and DET either in person or through written consent.
<p>Where there are multiple agencies involved with a child or young person, either DCD or SAAP will be identified as the lead agency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If agencies agree a case conference is required, representatives of each service providing assistance to the student will meet to formulate a mutual, collaborative support plan. • The case conference will take into account factors such as:

Objective	Standard
<p>The identified lead agency will be responsible for coordinating interventions and provide a holistic perspective.</p> <p>NOTE: It is not the role of DET to provide case management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The strength of the relationship between the student and each agency - The level of involvement by each agency and depth of knowledge of the students' circumstances - The capacity and workloads of staff from agencies and their potential ability to provide intensive support if required.

3. Enrolment Access and Advocacy

Objective	Standard
<p>DET will facilitate enrolments for young people re entering education and training</p> <p>DET staff will be flexible with enrolment and inclusion in activities if a student is unable to produce required documentation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DET will inform the young person of all options available to them and will assist as appropriate to insure a smooth transition of re entry is achieved. • Discussion and decisions will be presented in a way that is understandable to the child or young person. • When a student is unable to produce the identified formal documentation required for participation or inclusion in school activities, alternative methods to verify information will be considered. <i>Enrolment (K-12)</i> http://www3.eddept.wa.edu.au/regframe/Documents/DO0518623.pdf • Inclusion of the student and delivery of support services in the best interests of the child or young person is paramount.
<p>A manager or senior person of the SAAP service who has written authorisation by the parent or guardian of the student can give permission for the student to undertake school activities.</p> <p>NOTE- This does not apply to children whose care is the responsibility of DCD and therefore require the permission of DCD case managers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is expected that SAAP services will have established policies and procedures for the verification of agency representation. <p>DET staff will accept authentication of the status of a SAAP agency staff member to give permission on behalf of a parent or guardian upon the provision of a copy of the written authorisation by the parent or guardian to DET staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of identification by a SAAP service will be provided to the school or TAFEWA on request. • DCD case managers will provide written notification to the SAAP service if they have given permission for a student in their care to undertake school activities.

Objective	Standard
	<p>Where it is not possible to obtain parental/guardian consent because of the age or living arrangements of a student (K-12), The Principal may exercise his/her discretion to allow the student to agree to the conditions pertaining to the excursion however, the reason for the exercising such discretion must be exceptional. Excursions Off School Site Activities.</p> <p>http://www3eddept.wa.edu.au/regframe/Documents/DO01009379.pdf</p>

4. Delivery of Appropriate Services and Support

Objective	Standard
<p>When concerns are identified regarding a student’s behaviour, DET staff will follow the agreed school procedure for children at risk.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DET will apply their own policies and processes as per the Regulatory Framework and TAFEWA policies and procedures. • Health and wellbeing issues associated with SAAP clients will be taken into consideration with educational planning.
<p>Student behavioural consequences resulting in suspension or exclusion from school to be used only as a last resort after exhausting all other options.</p> <p>SAAP services will be active in ensuring that a student’s well being is not adversely affected by suspension.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequences resulting in suspension or exclusion from educational programs will be used only for the most serious behaviour and will be in consultation with the SAAP service provider as per DET policy. • An appeal process may be considered when a student is suspended or excluded as per DET policy. <p>It is expected that SAAP services will have established policies and procedures to support students (K-12) who are suspended or excluded from school.</p>

5. Adequate Instrumental Provisions

Objective	Standard
<p>Most SAAP service clients fall within the category provisions of “extreme hardship” and may be excluded from fees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies will advocate on behalf of students for exemption from fees and other costs if the student is not able to meet these costs as per DET policy. • Agencies will work with a student and their family where appropriate to budget, or negotiate a payment schedule if this is possible.

Objective	Standard
<p>SAAP service clients who are students will have access to loan curriculum material.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangements can be made between the school or TAFEWA and SAAP services for loan curriculum material.
<p>Negotiation of dress requirements with schools in the in the context of the DET Dress Requirements for Students policy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where a student (K-12) is unable to obtain a suitable school uniform, a reasonable standard of dress will be acceptable. Dress Code for Students http://www3.eddept.wa.edu.au/regframe/Documents/DO01003297.pdf • A young person may negotiate a dress standard between the school or TAFEWA and the SAAP service.

6. Attendance and Participation

Objective	Standard
<p>Reasons for non-attendance are explored.</p> <p>Students are able to engage with other agencies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the process of seeking secure accommodation and accessing required support, clients may have multiple appointments with other agencies that impinge on school attendance. • Proof of attendance at appointments will be an acceptable reason for non-attendance at school. • It is expected that SAAP services will have policies and procedures to ensure that students (K-12) are provided with adequate proof of reasons for non-attendance. <p>Attendance http://www3.eddept.wa.edu.au/regframe/Documents/DO00022815.pdf</p>
<p>Provision of supplementary learning resources where indicated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of supplementary learning resources when a student is not able to attend classes will be explored.

7. Internal and External Information Sharing

Objective	Standard
<p>With consent, background information that is likely to benefit a student's education opportunities will be shared between agencies and Department of Education staff.</p>	<p>Limits to confidentiality include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal reasons (e.g. subpoenas) • Ethical reasons (e.g. the need to protect children) • Obligations of <i>Freedom of Information Act 1992</i> • Where there is clear possibility of self-harm or harm to others. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where appropriate the young person will have the right to consent to or refuse the disclosure of personal information. • Parents or guardians residing in supported accommodation have the right to refuse to disclose personal information in relation to themselves or their children. <p>Other than statutory obligations which apply for the protection of children and young people, personal and sensitive information about a student is to be treated with the strictest confidence.</p>
<p>DET staff will be aware of the need for security of information relating to a refuge or accommodation location.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The whereabouts of students or location of refuges will NOT be divulged to any person including relatives and friends. • Messages from anyone other than those identified by the parent/guardian of a child residing at a women's refuge or a young person if residing at a youth service, will not be accepted by DET staff as it may confirm their location or enrolment and thus place them at risk.

8. Training and Professional Development

Objective	Standard
<p>DET, DCD and SAAP services understand the services provided by each other.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DET, DCD and SAAP services managers will facilitate the communication of working protocols and encourage collaboration between and within agencies.
<p>DET and SAAP services will explore common training opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DET, DCD and SAAP services managers will explore training and professional development opportunities that will increase the skills and knowledge of all sectors in responding effectively and collaboratively to students at risk.

9. Grievance Mechanism

Objective	Standard
<p>Clear processes to resolve differences and deal with disagreements between DET, DCD, SAAP services and the staff of other not for profit agencies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the first instance, staff involved should attempt to resolve differences directly with the parties involved, promptly, and in a professional manner. • If staff are unable to resolve the matter it should be brought to the attention of DET administrators, Service Coordinators and Agency Managers. • If the matter remains unresolved it should be referred to the appropriate Divisional Officer of the sponsoring agency and DET District Managers or TAFEWA Directors.

6. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROTOCOL

Strategies for Implementation to include:

- A formal launch involving the DET, DCD and SAAP services.
- A nominated senior officer/manager from each agency to be responsible for the implementation, promotion and monitoring of the protocol within their agency.
- DET, DCD and relevant SAAP service managers will meet to discuss agency specific arrangements in order to meet the commitments made in this protocol.
- Local forums to be held within three months of the launch of this protocol in order to establish local arrangements.
- A manual is available to assist in the development of local arrangements.
- The provision of relevant training regarding the implementation of this protocol should agencies require.

DCD has established a bi-monthly SAAP Protocols Reference Group and Monitoring Forum in order to monitor and evaluate the implementation and development of protocols and to share information on changes in policy, personnel, training requirements and future directions. The SAAP Protocols Reference Group and Monitoring Forum has broad representation of key government departments and SAAP services.

7. EVALUATION

This Protocol which was established in 2006 will be reviewed within three years of implementation. The review process will involve departmental staff from both DET and DCD as well as representatives from relevant funded SAAP services.

Any proposed amendments and/or additions to this Protocol are to be circulated for comment with a reasonable time period for feedback prior to agreement.

Further reviews are to take place every three years to ensure the arrangements are relevant to the identified needs of the target group and any other significant influencing factors.

Appendix Information SAAP SERVICE DESCRIPTIONS

Domestic Violence Supported Accommodation Services

The domestic violence supported accommodation services provide support and crisis accommodation to women and children escaping domestic violence. Some agencies provide a whole of family approach and use strategies that address family violence. Agencies use a case management approach to service delivery that includes the development of support plans for clients where appropriate.

Domestic Violence Support Services

Domestic violence support services provide a range of support services to victims of domestic violence. Individuals are assisted to assess their circumstances and relationships and make decisions and plans for the future. Community education may also be a component of domestic violence support services.

Supported Accommodation Services for Young People

Supported accommodation services for young people can provide crisis or transitional accommodation to young people aged 15 to 25 years or under 15 years of age in exceptional circumstances. SAAP agencies provide a case management service to their clients where the SAAP service has an ongoing role with the young person.

Services for Young People

Services for young people include centre-based services, mobile services and drop in centres. Services are provided to disadvantaged young people between the ages of 12 and 18 years.

Supported Accommodation Services for Families and Single Adults

The supported accommodation services for families and single adults provide safe accommodation and/or support to people who are homeless or imminent risk of homelessness. People receiving accommodation are provided with a support plan to assist them to move to more stable long term accommodation and reduce the likelihood of future homelessness.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program: Day Centres

Day Centres provide meals and day care support services to people who are homeless or living in inadequate accommodation on a low income or who are socially marginalised. Agencies provide a safe environment and support through the provision of meals, day activities, counselling and assistance to access other agencies e.g. Centrelink, Housing and Works etc.

Counselling Services

Counselling services are funded to help individuals and families assess their circumstances and relationships, make choices, decisions and plans for the future and develop skills and confidence to enable them to put their plans into effect. This occurs in discussion with trained counsellors, and may be in individual and/or group sessions and includes telephone counselling and therapy.

Abbreviations and Terminology

Agencies - Include government departments, commissions, authorities, local government authorities, as well as not for profit organisations such as incorporated associations, businesses, etc.

Collaborative relationship - working together for the benefit of the client/customer.

DCD - The Department for Community Development.

DET - The Department of Education and Training, includes public schools (K-12) and TAFEWA colleges. Educational programs include school, vocational and training programs

Duty of care - 'Duty of care' means a duty imposed by common law to take care to minimise the risk of harm to another. In all instances the agencies working with the child or young person are to act in a spirit of cooperation in the best interests of the child or young person.

Mutual client / student - could be either:

- A SAAP client who is engaged with both parties
- A Department of Education student who requires the services of the other party.

Not for profit agency - is a government funded community agency that provides supported accommodation or other services to children, their parents or young people. This will also include a SAAP service.

Protocol - is an agreement between agencies to enable all parties to gain maximum benefits and outcomes.

Personal information - is information or an opinion about an individual whose identity is apparent, or can be reasonably ascertained, from the information or opinion. Full definition as per section 6 of the Privacy Act 1988.

Sensitive information – is information or an opinion about an individual's:

1. racial or ethnic origin;
2. political opinions;
3. membership of a political association;
4. religious beliefs;
5. membership of a professional or trade association;
6. membership of a trade union;
7. sexual preferences or practices;
8. criminal record; or
9. health information about an individual

Full definition as per section 6 of the Privacy Act 1988.

SAAP - Supported Accommodation Assistance Program.

SAAP services - Service delivery agencies funded under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program.

SAC - SAAP State Advisory Committee.

Relevant Department of Education and Training Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

For DET schools further information can be obtained from the following website.

<http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/regframe/index.cfm>

For TAFEWA further information is available on the Training website:

<http://www.training.wa.gov.au/training/content-policies-agreements.asp>

Relevant DCD/SAAP Documents

- 2.1 SAAP V Multilateral Agreement to 2010
- 2.2 SAAP V Bilateral Agreement to 2010
- 2.3 SAAP Service Agreement – Schedule 2

Interdepartmental Documents

- 3.1 Reciprocal Child Protection Framework and Procedures
- 3.2 W A Protocols for Children and Young People Who's Care is the Responsibility of the Department for Community Development
- 3.3 Interagency Collaborative Framework for Protecting Children

Relevant Commonwealth Acts

- 4.1 Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994
- 4.2 Privacy Act 1988
- 4.3 Freedom of Information Act 1992