

# Carer reference guide: Frequently asked questions

April 2017

## Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Support and advocacy</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Identifying and accessing carer supports .....	2
Key resources for carers.....	2
Resolution of issues and concerns .....	2
<b>Departmental processes and services</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Client contact with family .....	3
Care Team meetings and requirements .....	3
Case planning processes .....	3
Court orders and outcomes .....	3
Permanent Care and Permanent Care conversions.....	4
Disclosed and undisclosed placements.....	4
Pathways to Good Health program .....	4
Targeted Care Packages.....	4
Identification of Aboriginal descent, and accessing Cultural Support Plans .....	4
Reassessment of child's funding level.....	4
<b>General information</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Financial assistance for carers .....	5
Obtaining birth certificates .....	5
Obtaining Centrelink Customer Reference Numbers (CRN).....	5
Obtaining Medicare and Healthcare cards .....	5
Obtaining passports .....	5
Respite and childcare .....	5
Disposal of unused or outgrown belongings.....	6

## Introduction

This reference guide was created by the North Division Carer Advisory Group, to help foster and kinship carers quickly locate information regarding common questions that may arise during their experience caring for children and young people in out-of-home care. The guide utilises internet hyperlinks due to the dynamic nature of the information provided and the consequent possibility that policy changes or new information will be unreflected in hard copy documentation. The guide is current as at March 2017 and will be updated annually to reflect any changes to the information provided. Feedback on content and suggestions for additional inclusions can be directed to [North Division Strategic Planning and Service Development](mailto:northstrategicplanning@dhhs.vic.gov.au) <northstrategicplanning@dhhs.vic.gov.au>.

## Support and advocacy

### Identifying and accessing carer supports

- *Foster Carer Handbook*: Chapter 6 (pp. 57-64): Support for carers
- *Kinship Carer's Handbook*: Section 1 (pp. 1-14): Looking after yourself
- Internet:
  - [Foster Care Association of Victoria](https://www.fcav.org.au/) (FCAV) <https://www.fcav.org.au/>
  - [Kinship Carers Victoria](http://kinshipcarersvictoria.org/) <http://kinshipcarersvictoria.org/>
  - [Permanent Care and Adoptive Families Vic](http://www.pcafamilies.org.au/) <http://www.pcafamilies.org.au/>
  - [DHHS Foster Care website](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/kinship-foster-and-other-care/foster-care) <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/kinship-foster-and-other-care/foster-care>
  - [DHHS Kinship Care website](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/kinship-foster-and-other-care/kinship-care) <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/kinship-foster-and-other-care/kinship-care>
  - [Child Protection Manual: Support for kinship carers](http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/out-home-care/kinship-placement/support-kinship-carers) <http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/out-home-care/kinship-placement/support-kinship-carers>
  - [Roadmap for Reform website](http://strongfamiliesafechildren.vic.gov.au/) < http://strongfamiliesafechildren.vic.gov.au/>

### Key resources for carers

- [Foster Carer Handbook](#)
  - Distributed in hard copy format to all foster carers and available online < <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/kinship-foster-and-other-care/foster-care/information-for-current-victorian-foster-carers>>
- [Kinship Carer's Handbook](#)
  - Kinship Carers Victoria's *Kinship Carer's Handbook* is available online <<http://kinshipcarersvictoria.org/>>
- [Out-of-Home Care toolbox](#)
  - Developed by the Centre for Youth Alcohol and Other Drugs Practice Development. The Toolbox provides information for carers of young people (12-18 years) in out-of-home care. Available online <<http://oohctoolbox.org.au/>>

### Resolution of issues and concerns

- Foster care agencies and the Department of Health and Human Services (the department) are committed to working with carers to resolve issues and concerns. Carers have the right to raise an issue, provide a compliment or make a complaint about a decision or a situation relating to the care of a child or young person in their care.
- Internet:

- *Department Reference Guide: Fostering Support: Knowing your rights and responsibilities and resolving concerns*. Available [online](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/kinship-foster-and-other-care/foster-care/information-for-current-victorian-foster-carers) <<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/kinship-foster-and-other-care/foster-care/information-for-current-victorian-foster-carers>>
- DHHS website: [Making a complaint to the department](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/making-a-complaint-to-the-department) <<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/making-a-complaint-to-the-department>>

## Departmental processes and services

### Client contact with family

- Reconnecting and maintaining contact between siblings in separate out-of-home care placements is determined on a case-by-case basis by the child's Care Team.
- *Foster Carer Handbook*: Chapter 7 (pp. 65-71): Contact with the child or young person's family
- *Kinship Carer's Handbook*: p. 80
- Internet:
  - [Child Protection Manual: Policy on client contact](http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/policies-and-procedures/out-home-care/contact) <<http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/policies-and-procedures/out-home-care/contact>>

### Care Team meetings and requirements

- *Foster Carer Handbook*:
  - pp. 47-48
  - Information Sheet 5 (pp. 165-172): Case planning, case management, roles and responsibilities
- *Kinship Carer's Handbook*: p. 44: Decision-making
- Internet:
  - [Child Protection Manual: Policy on Care Teams](http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/policies-and-procedures/out-home-care/care-teams) <<http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/policies-and-procedures/out-home-care/care-teams>>
  - [Child Protection Manual: Advice on Care Teams](http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/out-home-care/care-teams) <<http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/out-home-care/care-teams>>
  - *FCAV Information Sheet: About Care Teams*. Available [online](https://www.fcav.org.au/images/carer-resources/information-sheets) <<https://www.fcav.org.au/images/carer-resources/information-sheets>>

### Case planning processes

- *Foster Carer Handbook*: pp. 45-46; pp. 52-55
- *Kinship Carer's Handbook*: p. 42: Case planning
- Internet:
  - [Child Protection Manual: Advice on case planning](http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/case-planning/case-planning) <<http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/case-planning/case-planning>>

### Court orders and outcomes

- *Foster Carer Handbook*: Chapter 14 (pp. 133-137): Child Protection and the Children's Court
- *Kinship Carer's Handbook*: Section 5 (pp. 69-83): Legal matters
- Internet:
  - DHHS website: [Child Protection orders](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/child-protection/child-protection-orders) <<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/child-protection/child-protection-orders>>
  - [Child Protection Manual: Advice on court](http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/court) <http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/court>

## Permanent Care and Permanent Care conversions

- Internet:
  - [Child Protection Manual: Advice on Permanent Care](http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/service-descriptions/out-home-care/permanent-care) <http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/service-descriptions/out-home-care/permanent-care>
  - DHHS website: [Permanent Care in Victoria](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/adoption-and-permanent-care/become-a-permanent-care-parent/permanent-care-in-victoria) <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/adoption-and-permanent-care/become-a-permanent-care-parent/permanent-care-in-victoria>
  - [Permanent Care and Adoptive Families Vic](http://www.pcafamilies.org.au/) <http://www.pcafamilies.org.au/>
  - *FCAV Information Sheet: Permanent Care*. Available [online](https://www.fcav.org.au/images/carer-resources/information-sheets) <https://www.fcav.org.au/images/carer-resources/information-sheets>

## Disclosed and undisclosed placements

- Information can be obtained from Community Service Organisation (CSO) or Child Protection case manager.

## Pathways to Good Health program

- Department advice:
  - Publically-published information on Pathways to Good Health is not readily available at this time; however, each department Division has an Health and Education Coordinator and a Pathways to Good Health Coordinator who can provide further information. Contact CSO or Child Protection case manager for details.
- Internet:
  - DHHS website: [Vulnerable children](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/populations/vulnerable-children) <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/populations/vulnerable-children>

## Targeted Care Packages

- Internet:
  - DHHS website: [Targeted Care Packages](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/children,-youth-and-family-services/targeted-care-packages) <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/children,-youth-and-family-services/targeted-care-packages>
- Contact CSO or Child Protection case manager for more information and guidance.

## Identification of Aboriginal descent, and accessing Cultural Support Plans

- *Foster Carer Handbook*:
  - pp. 50-55
  - Chapter 8 (pp. 71-75): Caring for Aboriginal children and young people
- *Kinship Carer's Handbook*: Section 4 (pp. 53-63): Cultural connections
- Internet:
  - *FCAV Information Sheet: Caring for Aboriginal children and young people in Foster Care*. Available [online](https://www.fcav.org.au/images/carer-resources/information-sheets) <https://www.fcav.org.au/images/carer-resources/information-sheets>
- Department advice:
  - Child Protection will advise the carer of the child's Aboriginality at the time of placement.
  - Current Child Protection practice advice requires both the Aboriginal child and their carer to have a copy of the child's Cultural Support Plan, and these should be provided to the carer.
  - Carers without copies of the child's Cultural Support Plan can obtain these from the Care Team.

## Reassessment of child's funding level

- Department advice:
  - Contact CSO or Child Protection case manager with rationale for why the child requires reclassification, based on the referral documentation.
  - If supported, the request will be processed with the Division's Placement Coordination Unit.

## General information

### Financial assistance for carers

- *Foster Carer Handbook*: pp. 57-60
- *Kinship Carer's Handbook*: Section 6 (pp. 87-103): Financial assistance for kinship carers
- Internet:
  - DHHS website: [Support for carers in Victoria](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/kinship-foster-and-other-care/support-for-carers-in-victoria) <<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/kinship-foster-and-other-care/support-for-carers-in-victoria>>

### Obtaining birth certificates

- *Foster Carer Handbook*: p. 35
- Internet:
  - [Child Protection Manual: Advice on birth certificates](http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/node/3591) <<http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/node/3591>>
  - [Child Protection Manual: Procedure for applying for birth certificates](http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/policies-and-procedures/out-home-care/applying-birth-certificate-procedure) <<http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/policies-and-procedures/out-home-care/applying-birth-certificate-procedure>>

### Obtaining Centrelink Customer Reference Numbers (CRN)

- *Foster Carer Handbook*: pp. 21-22
- Details available from CSO or Child Protection case manager.

### Obtaining Medicare and Healthcare cards

- *Foster Carer Handbook*: pp. 21-22; p. 107
- *Kinship Carer's Handbook*: pp. 31-32
- Internet:
  - DHHS website: [Obtaining Medicare cards for children in out-of-home care](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-service-providers/children,-youth-and-families/child-and-youth-placement-and-support/obtaining-medicare-cards-for-children-in-out-of-home-care) <<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-service-providers/children,-youth-and-families/child-and-youth-placement-and-support/obtaining-medicare-cards-for-children-in-out-of-home-care>>

### Obtaining passports

- *Foster Carer Handbook*: p. 35
- Internet:
  - [Child Protection Manual: Advice on passports](http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/out-home-care/travel/passports) <<http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/out-home-care/travel/passports>>
  - [Child Protection Manual: Policy on passports](http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/policies-and-procedures/out-home-care/passports) <<http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/policies-and-procedures/out-home-care/passports>>

### Respite and childcare

- *Foster Carer Handbook*:
  - p. 62
  - Information Sheet 6 (pp. 173-174): The impact of caring and looking after yourself
- *Kinship Carer's Handbook*: p. 10; pp. 112-115
- Internet:
  - *FCAV Information Sheet*: Respite Care payment policy. Available [online](https://www.fcav.org.au/images/carer-resources/information-sheets) <<https://www.fcav.org.au/images/carer-resources/information-sheets>>

## Disposal of unused or outgrown belongings

- This is determined on a case-by-case basis by the client's Care Team.
- Contact CSO or Child Protection case manager for information and guidance.

To receive this publication in an accessible format, email [North Division Strategic Planning and Service Development](mailto:northstrategicplanning@dhhs.vic.gov.au) <northstrategicplanning@dhhs.vic.gov.au>

Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

© State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services, April 2017.

Where the term 'Aboriginal' is used it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Indigenous is retained when it is part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

ISBN 978-0-7311-7192-7 (pdf/online)