

# Become a foster or kinship carer







All children and young people deserve to be safe, valued and educated, and to live at home with a caring family.

## The role of carers

Foster and kinship carers open their hearts and homes to children and young people who are unable to live at home with their own families because of abuse or neglect.

Anyone who is willing to provide children and young people with a stable, supportive and nurturing home can apply to become a foster or kinship carer.

Foster carers care for children and young people of different ages, and cultural and religious backgrounds. They may provide care for one or two nights, a few months or even years depending on the child or young person's situation and the carers' capacity.

There is a real need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to become foster and kinship carers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care.

This will ensure they are cared for in a way that respects their culture and assists them to maintain their cultural identity.



## What are the types of care?

There are different types of care that you can provide for a child or young person, and you can choose the level of commitment you are able to make based on your own family situation. The types of care:

### 1. Foster care

Foster carers look after a child or young person in their own home for short or long periods of time.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander foster carers enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to be cared for in a way that respects their culture and helps them maintain their cultural identity.

### 2. Kinship care

A kinship carer is a relative of the child or someone who is considered to be part of the family, or a close friend.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care are placed with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and, where possible, in their own community.

### 3. Respite care

Some foster and kinship carers provide respite care for children and young people. This provides full-time foster and kinship carers with a break from caring when they need time for themselves or time to deal with personal matters.

Respite carers provide short periods of care, either through regular, ongoing planned visits or in emergency situations. Respite care is also important for children and young people in care, giving them opportunities to extend their support network.

### 4. Emergency care

Some foster and kinship carers provide short-term emergency care for children and young people.



## Who can be a carer?

Anyone over the age of 18 years can apply to become a foster or kinship carer. We need carers who are male or female, single or a couple, married or defacto same sex couples working full or part-time, and from any cultural background. A variety of people are needed as carers so that we can best match the needs of children and young people.

## Could you be a carer?

Bringing other people's children into your family can be very rewarding but it may not always be easy.

Becoming a foster or kinship carer is a big decision for any family and it is important for you to talk with your family and consider the changes and challenges involved in fostering a child or young person.

Questions to consider when becoming a foster or kinship carer include:

- » What is happening in your family at this time?
- » How would your family adjust with other children in the family?
- » How would you cope with a child or young person returning to the care of their parents?
- » If single, have you considered how life might change for you?
- » Do you have room in your house for another child?



## What is the role of Child Safety?

Child Safety is the lead child protection agency in Queensland and is required by law to ensure that children are safe from abuse, neglect and harm in their homes.

The *Child Protection Act 1999* allows Child Safety to protect children and young people who are at risk of significant harm by finding safe and caring places for these children to live, depending on their needs.

In accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, the department is committed to ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care are placed with members of their family, their community or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



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## How are carers supported?

If you decide to become a foster or kinship carer you will be supported in many ways.

Community-based foster and kinship care services and Child Safety will work with you to meet the needs of children or young people in your care.

Foster and kinship carers can ask for assistance from **Queensland Foster and Kinship Care**, an organisation that represents and supports foster and kinship carers.

Foster and kinship carers can also receive support from local carers, other families and their community.

## What allowances do carers receive?

Foster and kinship carers receive a fortnightly caring allowance to help with the costs of caring for children in their home. Respite carers receive the allowance that is paid in proportion to the number of days or weeks that they care for the child.

This allowance is based on the age of the child and the complexity of their needs. It covers basic household expenses, food, clothing, gifts, pocket money and entertainment for children in care.

An additional allowance is provided for carers who have children with high or complex needs.

Other reimbursements for child related costs are also available to carers. You may also be eligible for Commonwealth Government benefits such as the Family Tax Benefit A and/or B, Child Care Subsidy, Parental Leave Payment or Parenting Payment.



## How do you become a carer?

Once you have decided that you are interested in becoming a foster or kinship carer, there are a number of steps you will go through to become an approved carer.

The aim of this approval process is to make sure you are:

- » suitable to be a foster or kinship carer, and all members of your household are suitable to associate with children and young people on a daily basis
- » able to meet the standards of care in the Statement of Standards, outlined in the *Child Protection Act 1999*
- » able to work towards achieving goals for the safety, care and protection of children and young people.

To become a foster or kinship carer, you need to:

### 1. Complete an Application for Approval form

This will provide important information to the department to help with personal history checks for you and your adult household members. This includes consideration of criminal and child protection history, and where necessary, domestic violence and traffic history.

### 2. Complete a blue card application

This must be completed by applicants and any other adult members of the household. Child Safety can assist with this process.

### 3. Complete a household safety study

This will be completed by the person making the assessment and includes mandatory safety requirements that must be met prior to you being approved as a carer.



#### **4. Complete a health and wellbeing questionnaire**

This questionnaire will be completed with the help of the person making the assessment. Medical assessments may be required as part of the process.

#### **5. Referee checks**

Referee checks are discretionary and may occur at any point during the assessment, including employer referee checks if you are in child-related employment.

#### **6. Participate in interviews**

These will be conducted by the person making the assessment. You, your children (depending on their age), any adult household members and significant others will be interviewed.

#### **7. Complete pre-service training**

This training will provide you with the skills and knowledge you need to commence your role as a carer. Attendance at pre-service training is mandatory for foster carers. Kinship carers are encouraged to attend pre-service training if they wish to.



## Approved applicants

If your application is approved by Child Safety, you will receive a letter confirming that you have been approved as a foster or kinship carer.

You will also receive a Certificate of Approval as a foster or kinship carer. This is for an initial 12 months and requires renewal every two years thereafter, upon application and approval

For approved foster carers, you will work with Child Safety and your non-government foster and kinship care service to develop a Foster Carer Agreement detailing the support available to help you fulfil your role, ongoing training requirements and the types of placements you are willing to consider.

For approved kinship carers, you will work with Child Safety and your non-government foster and kinship care service to develop a Placement Agreement detailing the goals of the placement and the support and training you may need to meet them.

If your application is not approved by Child Safety, you will receive a letter stating the reasons for the decision and your right of review.



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# Legislative requirements for providing care

## The Statement of Standards

The *Child Protection Act 1999* and the Child Protection Regulation 2011 are the key laws that regulate how the government responds to children and young people in need of care and protection.

Foster carers and kinship carers are required to provide a level of care which is consistent with the Statement of Standards outlined in Section 122 of the *Child Protection Act 1999*.

Child Safety non-government foster and kinship care services, and foster and kinship carers are responsible for ensuring that children and young people are cared for in a safe and accountable way.

The statement provides guidelines to ensure that care provided to children and young people meets their immediate and ongoing needs.

The Statement of Standards states that:

- (a) the child's dignity and rights will be respected at all times
- (b) the child's needs for physical care will be met, including adequate food, clothing and shelter
- (c) the child will receive emotional care that allows him or her to experience being cared about and valued, and that contributes to the child's positive self-regard
- (d) the child's needs relating to his or her culture and ethnic grouping will be met
- (e) the child's material needs relating to his or her schooling, physical and mental stimulation, recreation and general living will be met
- (f) the child will receive education, training or employment opportunities relevant to the child's age and ability



- (g) the child will receive positive guidance when necessary to help him or her change inappropriate behaviour. Techniques for managing the child's behaviour must not include corporal punishment or punishment that humiliates, frightens or threatens the child in a way that is likely to cause emotional harm
- (h) the child will receive dental, medical and therapeutic services necessary to meet his or her needs
- (i) the child will be given the opportunity to participate in positive social and recreational activities appropriate to his or her developmental level and age
- (j) the child will be encouraged to maintain family and other significant personal relationships
- (k) if the child has a disability, the child will receive care and help appropriate to the child's special needs.

The application of the standards of care must take into account what is reasonable, with regard to the length of time the child is in the care of the carer or care service, and the child's age and development.

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## The Charter of Rights for a child in care

The Charter of Rights for a child in care, outlined in Schedule 1 of the *Child Protection Act 1999*, describes the fundamental rights that apply to a child who is in the custody or under the guardianship of the Chief Executive of the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women.

Each child or young person who is in the custody or under the guardianship of the Chief Executive must be told and given written information about the Charter of Rights, depending on their age and ability to understand.

The Charter of Rights states that a child or young person has the right:

- (a) to be provided with a safe and stable living environment
- (b) to be placed in care that best meets their needs and is most culturally appropriate
- (c) to maintain relationships with their family and community
- (d) to be consulted about, and to take part in making, decisions affecting the child's life (having regard to the child's age or ability to understand), particularly decisions about where the child is living, contact with the child's family and the child's health and schooling
- (e) to be given information about decisions and plans concerning the child's future and personal history, having regard to the child's age or ability to understand
- (f) to privacy, including, for example, in relation to the child's personal information
- (g) if the child is under the long-term guardianship of the Chief Executive, to regular review of the child's care arrangements
- (h) to have access to dental, medical and therapeutic services, necessary to meet the child's needs



- (i) to have access to education appropriate to the child's age and development
- (j) to have access to job training opportunities and help in finding appropriate employment
- (k) to receive appropriate help with the transition from being a child in care to independence, including, for example, help about housing, access to income support and training and education.

You can find the *Child Protection Act 1999* on the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel website [www.legislation.qld.gov.au](http://www.legislation.qld.gov.au)





## Who do you contact for more information?

Call the Foster Carer Recruitment Line on **1300 550 877**.

Call Foster Care Queensland on **3256 6166**.

Contact your local child safety service centre.

Visit the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women website  
**[www.csyw.qld.gov.au/childsafety](http://www.csyw.qld.gov.au/childsafety)**