

## Pre-Placement Policy

### 1. Purpose

Inala Community House (ICH) is committed to a rigorous pre-placement process to uphold the *Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)* and *Child Protection Regulation 2011 (Qld)*.

This policy aims to ensure that ICH OHC workers understand the policy principles guiding all pre-placement activities.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all persons involved with Out of Home Care Service including workers, volunteers, students, trainees and contractors. For the purposes of this policy, these persons shall be referred to as workers.

### 3. Definitions

**Child:** A child is an individual under 18 years as per the *Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)*.

**Carer:** A carer refers to both foster carer and kinship carer.

**The Act:** The Act refers to the *Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)*

**The Department:** Refers to the government Department responsible for Child Safety.

**Child Safety Practice Manual:** The Manual provides the principles, values, procedures, approaches, and systems that inform the delivery of Qld child protection services by the Department.

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (s5c of the Act):** This principle recognises the importance of connections to family, community, culture, and country. It guides our policy and practice. The five elements of the Child Placement Principle include:

- **Prevention** - that a child has the right to be brought up within the child's own family and community.
- **Participation** - that a child and the child's parents and family members have the right to participate in an administrative or judicial process for making a significant decision about a child.
- **Partnership** - that Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to participate in significant decisions under the Child Protection Act 1999 about Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children, including the design and delivery of programs and services.

- **Placement** - that if a child is to be placed in care, the child has a right to be placed with a member of the child's family group.
- **Connection** - that a child has a right to be supported to develop and maintain a connection with the child's family, community, culture, traditions and language.

## 4. Policy

ICH Out of Home Care (OHC) aims to help achieve the best possible outcomes for children in care by supporting carers to provide a stable, supportive, and nurturing home. To help achieve this objective, ICH ensures the rigorous delivery of the following pre-placement activities:

- Carer intake, training, and assessment
- Carer induction
- Placement matching (between a carer/s and a child/ren to be placed in their care).

In undertaking these activities, workers must uphold the principles of the *Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)*, *Child Protection Regulation 2011 (Qld)* and ensure compliance with the standards of care (Statement of Standards, s122 of the Act).

ICH works in partnership with the Department and implements all standardised processes and templates to support the pre-placement activities.

ICH shall meet all legal requirements relating to confidentiality, privacy, access to information and information sharing in accordance with the ICH Privacy Policy. ICH shall ensure that all pre-placement activities relating to children are recorded as per the Record Keeping Guide for Funded Non-Government Organisations.

ICH complies with the legislative framework when sharing information to meet the protection and care needs of children and to promote their wellbeing. Refer to *Chapter 5A of the Act* and the Department's *Information Sharing Guidelines – To meet the protection and care needs and promote the wellbeing of children*.

### 4.1 Carer Intake, Assessment and Approval

ICH values diversity in all forms and welcomes general foster carers and kinship carers from all cultural and religious backgrounds regardless of their gender, sexuality, or marital status.

#### 4.1.1 Provisionally Approved Carers

In most circumstances, the Department undertakes the provisional assessment process and refers provisionally approved carers to ICH for affiliation and ongoing support. There may however be instances when ICH initiates a provisionally approved carer process for example to facilitate urgent respite care.

*Provisionally approved carers are approved to provide care to a specific child for a time-limited period of 60 days, with one possible extension for a further 30 days. This type of approval is usually considered for family members or other people already well known to the child, to enable the child to be immediately placed in their care. The carer's application to be a foster or kinship carer (the substantive application) must be decided within the 60–90-day period of provisional approval (Child Safety Practice Manual).*

#### 4.1.2 Kinship carers

It is likely that the Department will identify prospective kinship carers and undertake a referral to ICH for affiliation and ongoing support. If the prospective kinship carers are not already approved or provisionally approved to provide care, ICH shall help the prospective carers to understand their obligations and guide them through the assessment process.

ICH has a responsibility to discuss any concerns about a person's suitability to be a kinship carer as they arise. However, ICH cannot prevent a prospective kinship carer proceeding with their application to be assessed as a kinship carer.

Applications to become a kinship carer are approved by the Child Safety Service Centre (CSSC) Manager. A foster carer agreement is not completed for a kinship carer, as their support needs are specific to the child placed in their care and are recorded in the placement agreement.

An applicant who is refused approval may seek a review of the decision through the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT), unless the approval was refused on blue card or exemption grounds.

Kinship carers may also be provisionally approved to facilitate an urgent placement for a child. Refer to 4.1.1

#### 4.1.3 General foster carers

ICH welcomes individuals, or two individuals to apply to become a general foster carer/s if they are:

- Over 18 years of age
- Eligible for Working with Children Check (Blue Card)
- Permanent resident of Australia
- Willing to provide a safe and loving home.

Applicants may be male, female, single, married or partnered, a same sex couple, working full or part time, a full-time homemaker or retired, and from any cultural background (Child Safety Practice Manual).

An initial carer application must be decided within a 90-day period, or within the period of extension as agreed in writing.

ICH is accountable for developing a Foster Carer Agreement which is endorsed by all parties.

The ICH OHC Manager and the assessor participate in a carer assessment panel convened by the Placement and Support Services (PSS) to assist in deciding on carer applications and their capacity to meet all legislative requirements.

The CSSC Manager is accountable for the approval decision. If approved, the Department provides all approval documentation to the approved carer. ICH receives a copy of the certificate of approval and letter of approval which is placed on the carer's file.

An applicant who is refused approval may seek a review of the decision through the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT), unless the approval was refused on blue card or exemption grounds.

#### *4.1.4 Existing approved carers*

The Department coordinates approved carer transfers between licensed care services to ensure that the best interests of a child remain paramount and best meets the needs of the carer/s. The ICH OHC Manager is accountable for facilitating this process on behalf of ICH. ICH will follow the regional protocol for transfers where an agreed protocol exists.

#### 4.4 Carer Induction

ICH is committed to undertaking a comprehensive induction process that supports new carers to provide a stable, supportive and nurturing home for a child in their care.

Wherever possible primary and respite carers are allocated to the same Case Worker to promote continuity of care and integrated service delivery.

Case Workers follow a standardised induction process that is customised to meet the needs of the carer. Information about carers rights and responsibilities is included in the carer's induction booklet and resource folder.

#### 4.5 Placement matching

In the process of matching a child with a foster carer, the child's safety, belonging, wellbeing and best interests are paramount, and the focus is on the carer's circumstances, capacity and capability to meet the child's needs (Foster Care Matching: A Partnership Approach Policy 639). ICH shall comprehensively assess the capacity of a carer to meet the needs of a potential placement using the Department's guidance on general placement matching, ICH service agreement scope.

ICH is committed to upholding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle that recognises the importance of connections to family, community, culture and country. This Principle guides our policy and practice.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle aims to:

- Ensure an understanding that culture underpins and is integral to safety and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and is embedded in policy and practice
- Recognise and protect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, family members and communities in child safety matters
- Increase the level of self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in child safety matters
- Reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection and out-of-home care systems. (SNAICC, 2019).

The Unify Care Arrangements Portal plays an important role by providing improved access to information to support better decision-making when matching and responding to proposed care arrangements.

When a placement is made, each child receives information about their rights and responsibilities, including the Charter of Rights for a Child in Care, in a welcome pack provided by the ICH OHC team.

ICH OHC shall liaise with the Department to ensure that the carer is provided with:

- The Authority to Care form
- Written information about the child, including an up-to-date Child Information Form (section A and B only for a kinship carer) and an End of Care Arrangement Form from the child's previous care arrangement
- Other information about the child, such as:
  - Medicare card
  - A copy of the child's birth certificate (for primary carer arrangements)
  - Case plan
  - Health passport
  - Education support plan (if developed).

## 5. Review

This policy shall be reviewed every 2 years.

This policy remains in effect unless otherwise determined by resolution of the Board of Directors.

## 6. Related Documents

### **Policies**

ICH OHC Pre-Placement Procedure

ICH OHC Philosophy of Care

ICH OHC Supporting Placement Policy

ICH OHC Identifying and Reporting Harm (Standards of Care) Policy

ICH OHC Carer Renewal Policy

ICH OHC End of Placement Policy  
ICH OHC Incident Reporting and Management Policy  
ICH Privacy Policy  
ICH Human Rights Policy  
ICH Feedback and Complaints Policy  
ICH Confidentiality Policy

### **Other Documents**

ICH OHC Welcome Pack 'Become a Foster Carer, The Journey Starts Here'  
ICH OHC Caseworker Guide  
ICH OHC Carer Induction Booklet and Resource Folder  
ICH OHC Welcome to Care

### **References**

*Qld Child Protection Act 1999*  
*Qld Child Protection Regulation 2011*  
Qld Out-of-Home Care Outcomes Framework:  
<https://www.cyjma.qld.gov.au/resources/campaign/supporting-families/qld-out-of-home-care-outcomes-framework.pdf>  
Qld Child Safety Practice Manual: <https://cspm.csyw.qld.gov.au/>  
Qld Human Services Quality Framework  
Foster Care Matching: A Partnership Approach Policy 639  
Record Keeping Guide for Funded Non-Government Organisations  
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: A Guide to Support Implementation: [https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/928\\_SNAICC-ATSICPP-resource-June2019.pdf](https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/928_SNAICC-ATSICPP-resource-June2019.pdf)