

## Transporting Children in Care Procedure

### 1. Purpose

Inala Community House (ICH) Out of Home Care (OHC) works towards establishing a safe environment and takes appropriate action in response to incidents which affect, or have the potential to affect, the health, safety or wellbeing of children, young people, foster and kinship carers and workers or other persons.

This procedure provides guidance about how to safely transport children and/or young people for work related purposes within the ICH OHC Service and should be read in conjunction with the:

- ICH OHC Positive Behaviour Support Policy
- ICH OHC Managing High Risk Behaviour Policy
- ICH OHC Identifying and Reporting Harm Policy
- ICH OHC Incident Reporting & Management Policy
- ICH Risk Management Policy
- ICH Motor Vehicle Policy
- ICH Safe Driving Procedure.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all persons involved with the Inala Community House Out of Home Care (ICH OHC) service, including workers, volunteers, students and external contractors. For the purpose of this procedure these persons shall be referred to as workers.

### 3. Definitions

**Department** refers to the government Department responsible for Child Safety.

**Child/Young Person** refers to an individual under 18 years of age as per the *Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)*.

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

### 4. Procedure

#### 4.1 Principles

- The child or young person must remain safe while being transported.
- Any child/young person must only be transported with the consent of their custodian/guardian.
- Travel arrangements must ideally be planned with regular reviews considering the suitability of any arrangements already in place. Where it is assessed that there is significant risk to either the child or worker, the transport arrangements must be reviewed.

- Transport arrangements must normalise a child or young person's situation, for example the worker and vehicle should not be readily identifiable.
- Travel arrangements should be continually risk assessed on an individual basis, including any safety/vulnerability issues for the child or young person. In addition, consideration should be given to the child or young person's level of development/maturity and capacity to travel safely in a vehicle or independently.
- Transport must not be provided without confirming that all relevant information has been provided by the Department, to ensure that an adequate risk assessment can be undertaken.

## 4.2 Transporting young people

Children and young people living in care may have physical, emotional and behavioural needs related to previous experiences of trauma. Experiences of trauma can influence a child's brain development and attachment behaviour and therefore children/young people may experience varying degrees of distress and heightened emotions while being transported.

In order to maintain safety when transporting children or young people in vehicles, workers should be over 18 years of age and deemed as having the skills/abilities to communicate with and support children and young people who demonstrate challenging or at risk behaviour. The gender of the worker should also be taken into consideration and will be dependent on the individual needs of the child or young person.

When providing transport, workers should also ensure that they:

- Familiarise themselves with the vehicle before embarking on a journey and ensure there is enough petrol in the car to complete the trip
- Drive within their capabilities and with due consideration of prevailing conditions, for example, heavy traffic, bad weather, unfamiliar surroundings
- Ensure that all passengers are wearing a correctly fitted restraint or seat belt
- Do not use handheld mobile phones unless safely parked. It is both unsafe and illegal to do this
- Do not drive with unsecured items in the car as these items can become projectiles if the vehicle is involved in an accident
- Store all personal belongings of the driver or child/young person in the boot. Where a personal item has been used for chroming, this must either be discarded or sealed in a plastic bag in the boot as the smell is powerful and can trigger headaches or asthma
- Where appropriate, workers should speak with their passengers to determine the safest place for them to sit. Sometimes the safest place for them to sit could be in the front seat and sometimes behind the front passenger seat might be more appropriate.

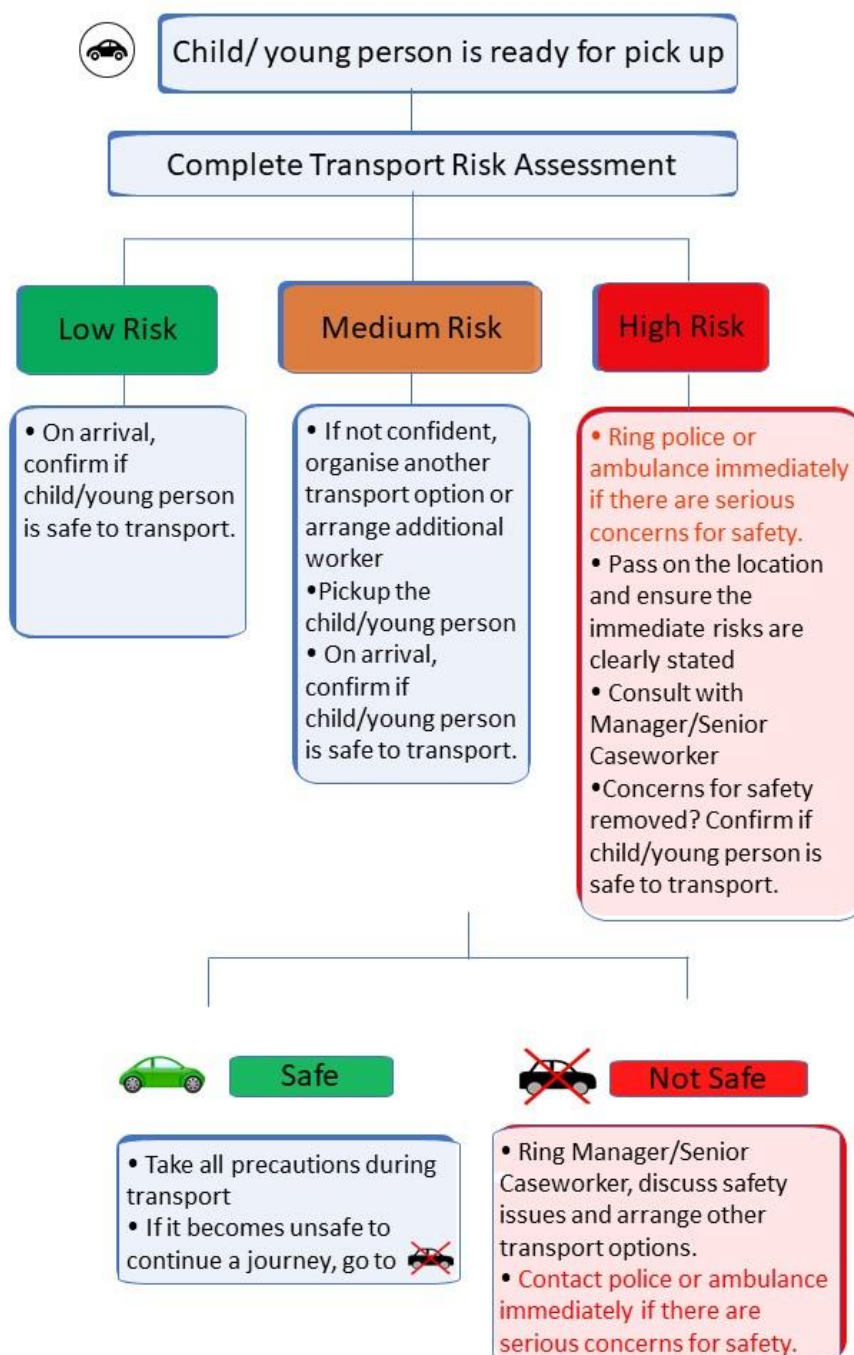
In some situations, a single worker may not be able to provide safe transport for a child/young person. The following list, although not exhaustive, could necessitate a request for an additional worker when transporting a child or young person:

- Vulnerable young person
- Driver protection
- Number of passengers - e.g. not wanting a child or young person to travel alone, or the mix of young people being transported could potentially be an issue
- Length of journey - long journeys may require a stop and facilitation for the child or young person to use a toilet
- Special needs of a child/young person - e.g. medical/behavioural needs/disability

- Age and level of functioning - e.g. the child or young person is very immature for their biological age.

### 4.3 Transport risk assessment and management

The following flow chart explains the process:



The first step in the workflow is to undertake a Transport Risk Assessment, as discussed below.

#### 4.3.1 Transport Risk Assessment

There is always a need to assess risk for the child/young person, other passengers, workers and the community when transporting a child or young person to determine if it is safe for transport to be provided. In addition to how the child or young person is presenting, the worker will need to take into consideration the young person's location along with other relevant factors (for example if there are other people present) when determining the risk level.

Assessing risk is an ongoing process and risk levels may change during the time that a child or young person is being transported. The assessed risk level will determine what if any further action needs to be taken.

The following examples are a general indication of risk level; however, this is not an exhaustive list. If required, consult the Senior Caseworker or Manager for further assistance in completing a risk assessment.

**Low risk:** The situation may be low risk if, for example, the young person sounds calm either on the phone or in person, seems able to manage their emotions, is not escalated or swearing and does not sound intoxicated.

If the risk is assessed as low and the young person is at a place workers are familiar with, they can be picked up from their current location. If the young person has been absent or missing, another option is for the worker to arrange for the young person to walk to a nearby shop or fuel station and meet the worker there. When the worker meets the young person, they must conduct a further risk assessment to determine if the young person is still low risk and can be safely transported.

**Medium risk:** The situation may be a medium risk if, for example, the young person is escalated, swearing either on the phone or in person, but calms down with reassurance. The young person may sound under the influence of alcohol or drugs (e.g. slurring speech), hesitant or confused. The worker may also hear adults or other young people in the background.

If the young person is assessed as medium risk and the worker is not confident, the worker should consult with the Manager (OHC) or Senior Caseworker about managing the risk. Some ways to manage these risks could include:

- ask another worker to accompany the driver
- ask a more experienced worker to pick up the young person

When providing transport for a child/young person after they have been absent from placement, workers should consider:

- scheduling to meet at a nearby address or landmark (shop, fuel station, etc.) and confirm the time. They should not confirm an exact time unless the worker is sure s/he can be there on time.
- parking out of sight (e.g. around the corner) and walking to the street or landmark
- if a young person is in a group, stopping 20 metres away and waiting until the young person comes to the worker.

When the worker meets the child/young person, they must conduct a further risk assessment to determine the risk level and whether the child or young person is safe to be transported. Workers should contact police or an ambulance immediately if there are serious concerns for the safety of the young person, other young people, workers or community.

**High risk:** The situation may be high risk if the young person is threatening workers with violence, or the worker can hear the young person escalating (e.g. punching objects) and does not calm down during the conversation. The young person may say they want to harm themselves and describe how and when, including reporting recent self-injury. Adults or other young people may also be heard in the background being verbally or physically abusive towards the young person or someone else.

If the situation is assessed as high risk and if there are serious concerns for the safety of the young person, other young people, workers or the community, police and/or ambulance should be contacted immediately. Alternatively, the worker must consult with the Manager (OHC) or Senior Caseworker to develop a risk management plan prior to proceeding with any transport.

### Safe to be transported

- ensure a young person is supervised while in the car
- if a young person does not want to talk, consider playing their favourite music, put on the air-conditioning or open the window
- during the drive be calm, speak slowly and clearly while keeping communications short, simple and to the point. If the young person is intoxicated or under the influence remain calm.
- be patient, and repeat information where necessary
- take all precautions during transport. These include staying in the left lane, keeping both hands on the steering wheel, placing the phone in the holder on right-hand side of the driver or in a pocket
- in the event of a young person escalating, causing the driver to be distracted from safely driving, the vehicle must be pulled off the road as quickly as is safely possible - hand brake on - take keys – take the mobile phone - exit the car.
- continue the journey only when it is safe to do so. If there are concerns that it is not safe to continue the journey, refer to 'Not safe to be transported.'
- at any time, contact police or ambulance immediately if there are serious concerns for the child/young person's safety, workers' safety or community.
- For children who have an individual safety plan, this should be referred to for specific guidance.

### Not safe to be transported

When it's not safe to be transported:

- explain that it is unsafe to transport the young person due to the current circumstances, e.g. current behaviour or level of intoxication/influence
- explain that it can be reconsidered as soon as these concerning circumstances change and talk to the young person about how to achieve this

- the young person will most likely become escalated if transport is declined. Remain calm, speak slowly and clearly while keeping communications short, simple and to the point
- be patient and repeat information where necessary
- if the situation becomes unsafe, walk away and stay at a safe distance, but retain line of sight
- ring Manager (OHC) or Senior Caseworker to discuss safety issues and review other transport options
- follow the young person on foot from a safe distance if they walk away. If a second worker is present, ask them to follow by car at a safe distance
- if the young person has calmed down, confirm if they are safe to transport. If so, go to 'Safe to be transported.'
- at any time, contact police or ambulance immediately if there are serious concerns for the child or young person's safety, workers' safety or community.

## 5. Review

This procedure shall be reviewed in conjunction with the ICH Motor Vehicle Policy or after a significant incident occurs.

## 6. Related Documents

### **Policies**

ICH OHC Philosophy of Care  
ICH Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy  
ICH Motor Vehicle Policy  
ICH Risk Management Policy  
ICH OHC Positive Behaviour Support Policy  
ICH OHC Managing High Risk Behaviour Policy  
ICH OHC Identifying and Reporting Harm Policy  
ICH OHC Incident Reporting and Management Policy

### **Procedures**

ICH Safe Driving Procedure

### **Other Documents**

ICH OHC Incident Reporting Form