

## Carer Renewal Policy

### 1. Purpose

Inala Community House (ICH) is committed to a rigorous carer renewal process and supporting carer suitability reviews where required.

This policy aims to ensure that ICH Out of Home Care (OHC) workers understand ICH's role in accordance with the *Child Protection Act 1999*, *Child Protection Regulation 2023* and the Queensland Out-of-Home Care Outcomes Framework.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all people working within OHC and includes employees, 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 a foster carer and kinship carer.

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

**The Department:** 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.

### 4. Policy

This policy aligns with the Department's procedures guiding the carer renewal process and carer suitability reviews as per the Child Safety Practice Manual.

ICH 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 contributes to a rigorous carer renewal process and carer suitability reviews.

In undertaking these activities, workers must uphold the principles of the *Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)*, *Child Protection Regulation 2023 (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 carer renewal process.

ICH shall meet all legal requirements relating to confidentiality, privacy, access to information and information sharing in accordance with the ICH Privacy Policy.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the ICH OHC Carer Renewal Flowchart.

#### 4.1 Carer renewal

An approved foster or kinship carer is required to renew their approval one year from the date of their initial approval and every three years after that (unless approved for a shorter period).

General foster carers must complete Starting Out Training modules and Hope and Healing for Foster carers prior to their first renewal of approval). All foster and kinship carers must complete Water Awareness Training prior to their first renewal of approval. Refer to ICH OHC Supporting Placement Policy and ICH OHC Supporting Placement Procedure for further guidance.

ICH facilitates the renewal process in coordination with the Department, which shall usually be led by the OHC Caseworker supporting the carer. If required, an external assessor can be engaged to lead the renewal assessment process.

ICH OHC offers comprehensive and individualised support and casework to carers (refer to the ICH OHC Supporting Placement Policy and ICH OHC Supporting Placement Procedure for further guidance). The carer renewal process should be reflective of the placement circumstances and any concerns pertaining to the standards of care should already be proactively identified and managed.

##### 4.1.1 Carer renewal application and assessment

The carer must complete their application for renewal prior to the expiry of their existing certificate of approval. To accommodate this, the renewal assessment process should commence three months prior to the expiry of the carer's certificate of approval.

Carers must firstly lodge the following documentation to ensure their renewal application is properly made:

- A current blue card or exemption card for all carer applicants and adult household members.
- An *Application for Renewal of Approval – Form 3B*.
- The *Carer Applicant Health and Wellbeing Questionnaire*.

The renewal assessment process then involves:

- Personal history and child protection history checks through the department's Central Screening Unit.
- An updated Household Safety Study.
- An assessment of a carer's continued suitability and capacity to provide care
- Referee and medical checks if:
  - Assessed by the assessor as supporting the assessment process; and
  - Approved by the relevant Child Safety Service Centre Manager; and
  - Consented to by the carer applicant

The review must be a collaborative process involving discussion with all parties, including seeking feedback from the Department about the strengths, vulnerabilities, and mitigating factors relating to the assessment domains. Consideration is also given to standards of care matters or other concerns about the carer's capacity to meet the needs of children.

The review will consider what has been undertaken or achieved during the period of the Agreement and consider whether strategies need to be developed to assist the carer to meet the goals. During the review, the carer should be encouraged to raise any issues affecting them, including:

- Their relationship with Child Safety and the foster and kinship care service
- Any positive outcomes or learnings associated with their provision of foster or kinship care
- The effect of the last care arrangement on the carer and their family
- Any difficulties experienced and reasons for these difficulties
- Any supports and training required
- Their readiness for other types of care arrangements
- Any changes to the original agreement in relation to the type of care and age range of children placed.

The assessment is documented on the departments Kinship Carer Renewal of Approval Assessment Report template with the assessor's recommendation to reapprove or not reapprove the carer applicant/s. The assessor may also recommend conditions of approval and strategies to mitigate any identified risks.

#### *4.1.2 Review of the Foster Carer Agreement*

ICH OHC shall also coordinate the review of a general foster carer's Foster Carer Agreement at least one year from the date of initial approval and every three years after that. The Department may request that ICH OHC undertake an early review of the Foster Carer Agreement if there are ongoing concerns relating to the quality of care provided to children.

The carers and the ICH OHC worker shall sign the Foster Carer Agreement, signifying that it is a true and correct record of discussions held and that ICH is supportive of the details of the agreement, prior to providing it to the Department for final acknowledgement and agreement. The Department is responsible for providing the final Agreement to the carer and ICH, which is to be retained on the carer's file.

The Department, ICH OHC, or the carer may request to meet with the other parties to discuss the Foster Care Agreement.

*Note: Foster Carer Agreements can also be reviewed at other times. For example, when there are changes in a carer's circumstances that may impact the children they are able or willing to provide care for.*

#### *4.1.3 Carer renewal approval/refusal*

Following the review process coordinated by ICH OHC, the relevant CSSC Manager is responsible for approving or refusing a carer renewal application, which should be made within three months of when the application was properly made. For complex matters, ICH OHC may be requested to contribute to an assessment panel to inform the approval decision. ICH OHC can advocate on behalf of the carer if there are delays to the renewal process and request an update on progress.

If approved, the Department will issue a new Certificate of Approval and letter of approval to the carer and ICH. A kinship carer requires a separate certificate of approval for each child for whom they are approved. ICH OHC must continue to request this information monthly if it is not forthcoming and record all attempts to retrieve the information on the carer's file.

Alternatively, the Department may decide to amend, suspend or cancel the carer's Certificate of Approval. This may trigger the removal of a child from placement. ICH OHC will work collaboratively with the Department to ensure that the welfare and best interests of the child remain paramount (refer to ICH OHC End of Placement Policy for further guidance).

ICH OHC can help to facilitate support for the applicant, including ensuring they understand their review rights (refer to <https://www.qcat.qld.gov.au/matter-types/children/parents-and-carers>). The applicant 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. Queensland Foster and Kinship Care may also be able to support the applicant through the Foster Care Advocacy and Support Team (FAST) or with a QFKC Case Worker.

## 4.2 Carer resignation

ICH OHC is committed to supporting and training to meet the carer's needs and supporting carers through the renewal process. However, if a carer does not wish to renew their approval, ICH OHC will notify the Department immediately of the carer's decision and request that the carer:

- Provide notice of their decision in writing
- Return their certificate of approval (as required by the Act, s141A)
- Return their Carer Business Discount Card
- Email the completed Advice to Queensland Foster and Kinship Care End of carer approval form to QFKC.

For a foster carer, the requirement to surrender their Certificate of Approval takes effect 21 days after the Department is notified of the decision to cease being a carer, or if a later day is stated in their written notice, on the later day. For a kinship carer or a provisionally approved carer, the surrender takes effect on the day the notice is given, or if a later day is stated in their written notice, on the later day.

## 4.3 Carer Suitability Review

At times, the Department may determine that a comprehensive assessment of the carer's suitability and ability to meet the standards of care is required. This may occur:

- If there are ongoing concerns about the carer's capacity to meet and sustain safe care for the child and meet the standards of care
- Following a Standards of Care Review or Harm Report investigation if the outcome is that the standards were not met and a more detailed review is required
- As a result of a change in carer circumstances.

ICH OHC shall work collaboratively with the Department to help plan the review before it commences. The reviewer nominated by the Department prepares a report recommending what action is required and ICH OHC shall work with the Department and carer to help implement the actions.

If the review identifies that the carer is unable to ensure the safety of the child or to meet the standards of care, the Department will follow due process in responding to concerns about the child's care arrangement (refer to ICH OHC Identifying and Reporting Harm Policy).

## 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 Philosophy of Care  
ICH OHC Supporting Placement Policy  
ICH OHC Supporting Placement Procedure  
ICH OHC Identifying and Reporting Harm (Standards of Care) Policy  
ICH OHC Incident Reporting and Management Policy  
ICH OHC Managing High Risk Behaviour Policy  
ICH OHC Pre-Placement Policy  
ICH OHC Pre-Placement Procedure  
ICH OHC Positive Behaviour Policy  
ICH OHC End of Placement Policy  
ICH OHC Working with First Nations Peoples Procedure  
ICH OHC Incident Reporting Procedure  
ICH Privacy Policy  
ICH Human Rights Policy  
ICH Feedback and Complaints Policy  
ICH Confidentiality Policy

### Other Documents

Application for Renewal of Approval – Form 3B  
Carer Applicant Health and Wellbeing Questionnaire  
Foster Carer Assessment and Recommendation – Form 3B  
Kinship Carer Renewal Assessment Report  
DCSSDS Household Safety Study

### References

*Child Protection Act 1999*  
*Child Protection Regulation 2023*  
Queensland Out-of-Home Care Outcomes Framework:  
<https://www.cyjma.qld.gov.au/resources/campaign/supporting-families/qld-out-of-home-care-outcomes-framework.pdf>  
Child Safety Practice Manual: <https://cspm.csyw.qld.gov.au/>  
Human Services Quality Framework  
Record Keeping Guide for Funded Non-Government Organisations  
Blue Card application process: <https://www.qld.gov.au/law/laws-regulated-industries-and-accountability/queensland-laws-and-regulations/regulated-industries-and-licensing/blue-card/applications/apply>  
Queensland Foster and Kinship Care: <https://www.qfkc.com.au>