

Supporting Placement Policy

1. Purpose

Inala Community House (ICH) is committed to providing best practice support, monitoring and training to carers so that children are provided with quality, stable and nurturing care to help them heal from hurt and trauma.

This policy aims to ensure that ICH OHC workers understand how ICH delivers support, monitoring and training to carers in accordance with the Child Protection Act 1999, Child Protection Regulation 2023 and the Qld Out-of-Home Care Outcomes Framework.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all people working with Out of Home Care (OHC) and includes employees, volunteers, students, trainees and contractors. For the purpose 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 an approved foster carer and an approved kinship carer.

Foster Carer: A general carer approved by the Department to care for a child in out of home care. Foster carers provide care for children in alignment with their Foster Carer Agreement.

Kinship Carer: An approved kinship carer is a person related to the child or a member of a child's community and considered by the child to be family or of significance to them, who is approved by the department to provide an out-of-home care placement for the child. Kinship carers are approved for a specific child or specific children.

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.

Foster Carer Agreement: A written agreement between a foster carer/foster carer entity, Child Safety and the foster and kinship care service. It sets out the terms, conditions and responsibilities between the foster carer/s and the child safety service centre or the foster and kinship care service identifying the types of care the foster carer/s wish to provide and their capacity for providing care, ongoing learning and development requirements and how support needs will be met.

Internal Respite: When an approved ICH foster carer (or kinship carer approved for the child or young person) provides respite care for a child or young person who is in primary placement with ICH.

External Respite: When an approved foster carer (or kinship carer approved for the child or young person) affiliated with another foster and kinship care service provides respite care for a child or young person who is in primary placement with ICH.

SRS: The record management system used by ICH. It is where all case related information is stored.

4. Policy

This policy aligns with the department's policies and procedures regarding family-based care, including but not exclusive to:

- Carer Learning and Support Policy
- Child Related Costs – Placement Support Funding and Foster Carer Training.
- Kinship Care Policy
- Participation of Children and Young People in Decision Making
- Decisions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Policy
- Carer Participation Procedure

ICH OHC is committed to working in partnership with the department and foster and kinship carers as per the Statement of Commitment to Queensland Foster and Kinship Carers.

ICH OHC offers a highly personalised approach to deliver holistic, child-focussed, trauma informed and strengths-based support that meets the individual needs of children and carers. Carer support and training is grounded on a strong evidence base such as: PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy), Attachment Theory, Child Development, Circle of Security, Nurtured Hearts and Positive Behaviour Support.

ICH OHC Case Workers play a pivotal role in working with the department and other stakeholders to assist and support foster and kinship carers to help achieve the agreed goal and outcomes of the child's case plan. The Case Worker's role is to:

- **Monitor** – ensure that carers are meeting the standards of care, placement agreement and all legislative requirements required of approved carers.
- **Support** – provide education/training, facilitate financial support, provide emotional support, coordinate respite and offer practical assistance.
- **Advocate** – work with the department or other stakeholders to help meet the needs of the placement (carer support and child needs), follow-up outstanding issues/requests and receive all required documentation.

Refer to the ICH OHC Case Worker Guide for further information about the ICH OHC Case Worker role. ICH adheres to The Departments Information Sharing Guidelines. As per section 159B(d) of the Child Protection Act 1999, ICH representatives contribute relevant information to the assessment of and meeting the protection and care needs of the child and supporting their families.

ICH OHC delivers a culturally responsive and safe service for children from a culturally and linguistically diverse or indigenous background. The service implements the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle that recognises the importance of connections to family, community, culture and country. Other actions contributing to cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children include:

- Supporting carers to access services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children through culturally safe service providers, such as medical care, therapeutic support and education.
- As delegated authority is implemented, ICH OHC will work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations who hold delegated authority for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children placed with foster or kinship carers affiliated with ICH.

4.1 Carer Training

Carer learning and support needs are documented in the following:

- Foster Care Agreements (foster carers only)
- Placement Agreements
- Case Notes

Carer training is delivered in accordance with the Departments Foster Carer Training Guidelines.

All carer training records are maintained in their SRS profile.

4.1.1 *Getting Ready to Start Training*

As detailed in the ICH OHC Pre-Placement Policy and ICH OHC Pre-Placement Procedure foster carer applicants must achieve the learning outcomes of Getting Ready to Start Training as a prerequisite for initial approval as a foster carer.

Getting Ready to Start training consists of four modules:

- Module 1: Context of foster care
- Module 2: Understanding the past for a child or young person
- Module 3: Early days in a placement.
- Module 4: Quality care – working together

Kinship carers are not required but are encouraged to access Getting Ready to Start modules to support their care of a child or young person.

Refer to the ICH OHC Pre-Placement Policy and ICH OHC Pre-Placement Procedure for further guidance.

4.1.2 *Starting Out Training*

Following initial approval as a foster carer, ICH OHC will ensure that each foster carer has an individualised learning plan recorded as part of their Foster Carer Agreement.

All foster carers must successfully complete Starting Out training modules arranged by ICH within 12 months of initial approval:

- Module 5: Promoting Positive Behaviours
- Module 6: Carer Support, Advocacy and Self-Care

Completion of Starting Out modules is a pre-requisite for a foster carer's renewal of approval at the end of the first 12 months. In exceptional circumstances, such as where a foster carer lives in a remote location or in circumstances of ill health, the Child Safety Service Centre (CSSC) Manager with responsibility for the renewal of approval may approve an extension of up to six months for the completion of all the Starting out modules; that is 18 months from their initial approval date. Any extension and the circumstances of the extension are to be recorded on the Foster carer agreement.

Kinship carers may also access Starting Out modules to support their care of a child or young person.

4.1.3 Water Safety Awareness Training

All Foster and kinship carers are required to complete Water Safety Awareness Training within their first 12 months of approval. Foster carers registered for Hope and Healing through PeakCare can access the training through PeakCare's online training platform. Carers not registered for Hope and Healing can access a PowerPoint link and complete the quiz through Microsoft 365.

4.1.4 Hope and Healing for Foster Care

All foster carers with an initial approval post 31 May 2022 are required to complete The Hope and healing framework - Queensland's trauma-informed framework to support foster carers in their caring work with children, young people and their families within their first 12 months of approval. This training is completed through the PeakCare online training platform.

Those approved prior to the above date were requested to complete the training by 31 May 2023. If a carer with an approval prior to 31 May 2022 has not completed the training prior to their reapproval date, a plan for completion must be documented in the renewal assessment.

ICH can determine if recognition of prior learning (RPL) is appropriate for experienced foster carers.

4.1.5 Continuous Learning

ICH OHC will update each foster carer's learning plan when reviewing the Foster Carer Agreement at each renewal of approval or as carer circumstances and/or preferences change. Foster and kinship carers' learning and support needs will also be documented through case notes as required, and needs related to caring for specific children will be documented in Placement Agreements.

Whilst not a condition of approval or reapproval as a foster or kinship carer, ICH OHC will encourage all foster and kinship carers to engage in continuous learning opportunities. Areas carers may benefit from continuous learning may be identified during reviews of Foster Carer Agreements, development or review of Placement Agreements, standards of care matters or during ongoing support and monitoring activities of ICH OHC Caseworkers.

It is important to note that Placement Meetings are also an opportunity to ensure ICH and the department are meeting their obligations in relation to carer support and learning.

Continuous learning opportunities may be provided by the department, ICH or an external party such as Evolve Therapeutic Services, Parentline cyberbullying training for parents and carers, the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies and attendance at relevant conferences.

4.2 Home visiting and casework

ICH prioritises the health and safety of workers. It is important that all workers undertaking home visits adhere to the requirements of the ICH Working Off Site Policy.

ICH acknowledges that carers differ in what activities they find supportive. ICH OHC Caseworkers therefore determine with each carer how they will feel most supported within their role by ICH within the context of activities ICH OHC is funded to provide.

Casework activities are inclusive of the following:

- Home visits
- Regular check-ins with carers via phone, text or email
- Provision of guidance and education
- Debriefing following an incident or challenging experience
- Communication with the department about the child and/or placement
- Carer reapproval activities
- Following up about essential documentation for the carer and ICH
- Completion of OHC documentation
- Participating in stakeholder meetings and liaising with stakeholders for a carer or child
- Sourcing information for carers
- Supporting carers during meetings about the child or placement
- Advocating regarding meeting placement support or children's needs
- Ongoing carer education

Case Workers shall visit primary foster or kinship carers at home monthly at a minimum. Respite carers or foster carers without a placement shall be visited every second month. The frequency of visits may increase depending on the needs of the placement.

The purpose of the home visits is to primarily support and monitor the placement. This includes exploring and ensuring both the needs of the child and carer are met. Refer to the ICH OHC Caseworker Guide for further detail.

In addition to the home visits, Caseworkers shall also call carers monthly at a minimum and facilitate contact through email and text messages.

Whilst caseworkers have contact and build rapport with children in care, most contact and achievement of outcomes for children occurs through caseworkers' contact with foster and kinship carers. However, to ensure robust support and monitoring of care arrangements, ICH OHC Caseworkers will ensure they see each child at least once every two months. At times, this may require a home visit outside of working hours.

All home visits and communication with carers are to be documented on their SRS profile.

All home visits and case work related to children is to be documented on the child's SRS file.

4.3 Afterhours Support

ICH is required to ensure that all foster and kinship carers affiliated with the service have access to 24/7 support.

4.3.1 ICH Afterhours On-Call Service

ICH OHC provides an on-call service to ensure carers are supported outside of business hours. The on-call service shall operate on weekends and after 5pm each day, finishing at 9am the following business day. It shall be available every day of the year for carers to access in the event of an emergency or critical incident (refer to the ICH OHC Incident Reporting and Management Policy). ICH OHC Caseworkers shall ensure that carers understand how the on-call system operates as part of the carer induction process.

In most cases, the on-call service shall rotate between workers on a weekly basis, with changeover likely to occur every Friday. The on-call worker shall always carry the on-call mobile phone, which is to be always charged, with an audible ring tone.

The on-call worker is responsible for reporting critical incidents to the Child Safety After Hours in alignment with the ICH OHC Incident Reporting and Management Policy.

4.3.2 Foster Carer Support Line

The department provides a support line for foster and kinship carers through the Afterhours Child Safety Service Centre that operates 24 hours per day 7 days per week that can provide the following support:

- Information pertaining to COVID-19 related matters
- Direct phone support to carers who call the line
- Crisis response and support (including urgent medical matters)
- Proactive support to carers households and new provisionally approved carers

CSSC representatives can make a referral to the support line where carers can access support anytime. Although encouraged to contact ICH in the first instance, ICH OHC will ensure carers have this number as an additional support option.

4.3.3 Child Safety Afterhours Service Centre

The Child Safety Afterhours Service Centre provides afterhours support 7 days per week. Carers are encouraged to call ICH in the first instance or Foster and Kinship Carer Support Line rather than the general number as wait times are often lengthy. ICH will however ensure that carers have the general afterhours support number also.

ICH OHC will report matters, such as critical incidents to the Child Safety Afterhours Service Centre as required.

4.4 Supporting vulnerable placements

4.4.1 *Individual Placement Support*

Part of the role of an ICH OHC Case Worker is to identify placements that may be considered vulnerable to a placement breakdown. This may occur through direct advice and feedback from carers, insights gathered through regular casework or feedback provided by other stakeholders such as the department, therapist or school. In instances of a vulnerable placement, ICH OHC will assess the placement needs and may advocate for individual placement support to meet the needs of the child and carer. If an individual placement support package is agreed to, ICH will abide by the terms and conditions of the Individual Placement Support Agreement (IPSA).

4.4.2 *Flexible Support Funding*

As part of ICH OHC's funding arrangement, ICH OHC has access to a small pool of funding (referred to as flexible support funding) that can be used to procure a range of supports for a child or carer. The aim of flexible support funding is to help establish new placements or stabilise existing placements. Requests for funding are assessed against the domains of the Out-of-Home Care Outcomes Framework and approved by the ICH OHC Manager. Refer to the ICH OHC Brokerage Procedure for further guidance.

4.5 Respite Care

ICH OHC has a pool of approved foster carers available for respite care for planned and unplanned placement support. This can be offered on a regular or ad-hoc basis to help promote placement stability and meet the needs of the child and primary foster carer. ICH aims to match the same respite carer with a child to promote continuity of care.

ICH is responsible for sourcing respite for carers internally (i.e. children in placement with ICH access respite care from ICH respite carers); however, at times, there may not be any internal options available, and an external respite option is required to be sourced through another agency. Refer to the ICH OHC Pre-Placement Procedure regarding the process for arranging internal respite and the ICH OHC Supporting Placement Procedure for guidance regarding sourcing external respite.

4.6 Emotional Support and Advocacy

ICH recognises the complexity and emotional investment involved in being a foster or kinship carer. As such foster and kinship carers can access ICH's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for emotional support if required. Other support options include peer mentoring with an experienced ICH foster or kinship carer and connection with Queensland Foster and Kinship Care.

ICH advocates for procedural fairness and that the principles of natural justice are afforded during departmental processes associated with placement provision for carers, these include but are not exclusive to placement decisions and standards of care matters. ICH provides contact details and supports carers' access to the Queensland Civil Administration Tribunal (QCAT), ICH and departmental feedback and complaints processes and the Queensland Human Rights Commission.

4.7 Change in carer circumstances

Carers are responsible for informing their ICH OHC Case Worker if specific changes in their circumstances and/or changes/suspected changes to the circumstances of adult household members. Carers are encouraged to notify ICH in the first instance and ICH will ensure that the department is informed immediately via lodgement of a Change in Carer Circumstances Form. Significant change in carer circumstances are specified below:

Carer Changes	Changes for Household Members
Address or contact number	Involvement/suspected involvement with Child Safety or any interstate/international child protection agency
Spousal relationship (separation, divorce, death or new partner)	Change/suspected change to criminal history (including charges awaiting determination in Queensland, interstate or internationally)
Change in personal circumstances (including health and employment)	Change or suspected change of household member in becoming the aggrieved or respondent in a domestic or family violence matter in Queensland, interstate or internationally
Involvement with Child Safety or any interstate/international child protection agency	
Criminal history (including charges awaiting determination in Queensland, interstate or internationally)	
Traffic history, including fines and/or charges laid awaiting determination in Queensland, interstate or internationally	
Become the aggrieved or respondent in a domestic or family violence matter in Queensland, interstate or internationally	
Change related to intention to provide care to other children (e.g. relatives or family day care)	

A change in household membership (including adults and children not in care leaving or joining the household) also requires lodgement of the Department's Change in Carer Circumstances Form and New Adult Household Member Form for adults joining the household. All household members aged 18 years and over must have an approved Blue Card prior to joining the household (with the exception of an existing child member of the household who has just turned 18 years of age; a provisionally approved carer or adult household member of a provisionally approved carer household; or parent of a child when the child is placed under section 82 (1) of the Child Protection Act 1999.

The carer needs to complete the Change in Carer Circumstances Form (refer to the Department's Child Safety Practice Manual) and provide it to ICH OHC. It is the role of ICH to provide the completed form to the Department for their review and direction.

4.8 Child Induction

ICH is committed to ensuring children understand their rights and ICH OHC's role. This includes ensuring children are aware of the Charter of Rights for a Child in Care as per schedule 1 of the Child Protection Act 1999, how to provide feedback and make a complaint and who their key contact people are. ICH is also committed to ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children know about their right to be supported by an Independent Person for significant decisions.

4.9 Child Participation

ICH is committed to ensuring children have the opportunity to share their views and wishes and participate in decision making that impacts them. This will be achieved through educating carers about children's right to participate. ICH OHC representatives will also advocate and work in partnership with the département regarding consultation with children and their participation in decisions that impact them, as is age and developmentally appropriate.

ICH also supports and advocates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's and family's rights to the support of an independent person during periods of significant decision making. This includes placement and family contact decisions.

5. Review

This policy shall be reviewed every 2 years.

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

6. Related Documents

Policies

- ICH OHC Philosophy of Care
- ICH OHC Supporting Placement Policy
- 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 Supporting Placement Procedure
- ICH OHC Working with First Nations People Procedure
- ICH Privacy Policy
- ICH Human Rights Policy
- ICH Feedback and Complaints Policy
- ICH Confidentiality Policy
- ICH Working Off Site Policy

Other Documents

ICH OHC Caseworker Guide
The Department's Change in Carer Circumstances Form (Child Safety Practice Manual)
The Department's Foster Care Agreement
The Department's Placement Agreement
The Department's Water Safety Awareness Training

References

Qld Child Protection Act 1999
Qld Child Protection Regulation 2023
Human Rights Act 2019
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
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>
The Department's Kinship Care Policy 632-3
The Department's Carer Learning and Support Policy 457-5
The Department's Participation of Children and Young People in Decision Making Policy 369-5
The Department's Decisions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Policy 641-4
The Department's Carer Participation Procedure 460
The Department's Statement of Commitment to Queensland Foster and Kinship Carers