

Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc

April 2010 Newsletter

View FCAV / PPSS
Info Sheet online:

- [FCAV / PPSS
Info Sheet:
Quality of Care
Process](#)

This Info Sheet is
also featured on
pages 5, 6 & 7 of
this Newsletter

Quality of Care

Release of the updated Quality of Care Guidelines

The great majority of children and young people in out of home care receive good quality care from dedicated carers who have made a commitment to making a difference in the lives of these young people. From time to time, quality of care concerns may be raised about carers by the child or young person that they are caring for, the child or young person's family or members of the community.

There is a broad range of issues considered to be quality of care concerns which can include minor quality issues through to major issues such as possible physical or sexual abuse and neglect. A quality of care concern is any concern about a child or young person's safety, stability or development within their placement.

As the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, every concern must be taken seriously and thoroughly explored to ensure the safety of the child. When a quality of care concern is raised, it can be unsettling and stressful for a carer. It is important that processes are in place which, whilst ensuring the safety of the child, also ensures that carers are treated in a fair and just manner and are kept informed and supported throughout the process.

The *Guidelines for responding to quality of care concerns in out-of-home care* (the Guidelines) outline procedures for managing quality of care concerns in all out of home care placements including home-based care, residential care and kinship care.

What happens when a quality of care concern is raised about my care?

Given the nature and complexity of some of the concerns raised about the quality of care provided to children and young people, a number

of professionals may be involved at any one time including Child Protection, Community Service Organisation (CSO), Victoria Police (for allegations of physical abuse, sexual abuse or serious neglect) and the *Quality of Care Coordinator* (employed by DHS to ensure that quality of care concerns are effectively and consistently managed).

Screening of concerns

All quality of care concerns are initially screened to determine the exact nature of the concern and the most appropriate response. Different responses are then implemented dependent upon the nature of the concerns. There are four possible responses to quality of care concerns:

Take no further action - where it can be clearly established that the report of the concern is inaccurate or there is no basis for concerns about the safety of the child or the quality of care the child is receiving.

Concerns are managed via support and supervision - it is expected that the majority of quality of care concerns will be managed through support or supervision of the carer.

Formal care review - this response occurs when there are serious or repeated concerns about possible poor quality care provision that has been assessed not to relate to possible abuse or neglect.

Commence an investigation into the concerns - this response, which may or may not involve the police, will be implemented in response to allegations of possible abuse or neglect.

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A Message from the FCAV Office

As everyone knows successful support for a carer can lead to a solid placement and best outcomes for a child or young person in care. Key to successful support for foster carers is open and timely communication with their worker and agency, as well as access to resources as relevant.

We have elected to use this newsletter to focus on understanding the **Quality of Care Process** and highlighting other useful resources for carers and children/ young people in care.

We are also using our **Regional Road Show – carer learning opportunities** as a way of reflecting on the practice of caring and improving understanding between workers and carer.



I would also like to update everyone on some of the work we are undertaking in the office at the moment:

- FCAV & PPSS are asking carers to complete a **survey to gather information on the support needs of carers**. Check out the notice below for details of how to complete this important survey.
- FCAV have completed 4 focus groups and a report regarding **Children's Court Reform**. Thanks to Tracey Cocks for facilitating the focus groups, collating all the input and writing our feedback to the Victorian Law Reform Commission.
- FCAV have submitted a comments document and attended 2 focus groups regarding the **National Standards for Out of Home Care**. FCAV will have ongoing involvement in this project for the next few years – stay tuned for updates.
- The **Specialised in Home Care model** development, addressing reform direction 2: a better choice of placement options for children/ young people across the State is on hold at this stage. Stay tuned for more info when the model development resumes.

Thanks to Beth and Gabbi (in the FCAV office) for another great newsletter and I encourage you to contact us if you need any other info, clarification or updates.

FCAV/PPSS Carer Needs & Satisfaction Survey

FCAV in conjunction with PPSS is conducting a carer needs and satisfaction survey across Victoria. The purpose of the survey is to establish gaps in service and support needs for all carers of children in out of home care and adoption.

To access this survey and have your say please click [here](#) or go to:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ppss_fcav_support_needs_survey

If you do not have access to the internet, call the office on 9489 9770 and we will send you out a hard copy for you to complete and return. Please complete the survey by Friday, 30th April 2010.

So what are you waiting for....tell us how you feel!!

A Day at the 2010 Australian Formula 1 Grand Prix!

Four lucky foster and kinship children, Robert, Bryce, Liam and Jason, won tickets to the Children's Day celebrations on Thursday 25th March at the 2010 Australian Formula One Grand Prix. The boys spent the day in the Victoria Suite with 70 other children invited by the Premier's Office, overlooking the finish line on the main straight. The suite was also positioned above the main F1 pits and beside the presentation podium providing some very exciting viewing and some very noisy action during the pit stops!

The kids were treated like the real hero's of the day by the GP staff and drivers. The kids, along with their carers, were also permitted access to the pit lane to view the garages and meet the drivers, where 2008 Formula One World Champion Lewis Hamilton signed autographs for them. Later back in the Victoria Suite, the kids had a quieter meet and greet with four times Bathurst V8 winner Greg Murphy who had photos taken with the kids, and then stayed on and chatted for nearly an hour. Magicians, karaoke and plenty of yummy food and drinks were served all day. The highlight of the day for a lot of the kids was meeting Big Chris, the chief mechanic from the ABC's *Roary the Racing Car* show, who led them down the pit straight.

FCAV gives thanks to the Department of Premier and Cabinet for facilitating the great event.

Looking After Children (LAC)

New Looking After Children Assessment and Progress Records

The Department of Human Services (DHS) has endorsed a new set of six age related Looking After Children (LAC) Records for use in Victoria with all children in out of home care. These records are the tangible outcome of the LAC Assessment and Action Records Redevelopment Project which Anglicare Victoria undertook on behalf of DHS, and in consultation with the out of home care sector, during 2009. The new records have addressed many of the issues raised by practitioners about the previous records.

Unlike the previous Assessment and Action Records these new Assessment and Progress Records can be completed and stored electronically. Once they have been fully tested in practice via this format it is intended to further revise and refine them in order to eventually fully incorporate them within the CRISSP database. There will be a consultation process after they have been in use for at least six months to collect feedback to assist with this ongoing redevelopment process.

Each out of home care provider has been sent a CD with the new set of records on it. Regional departmental Quality Enhancement workers can arrange access to get another CD for further copying if required. It is expected to take a few months to progressively change over to the new Assessment and Progress Records, and then from 1 July 2010 all out of home care services have been asked to cease using the old Assessment and Action Records to avoid being in breach of copyright and licence agreements.

Training sessions to support the transition from the old Assessment and Action Records to the new Assessment and Progress records are being arranged at the DHS's request by the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (the Centre) in collaboration with DHS Quality Enhancement workers. These sessions will be facilitated by Cathy Argus from Anglicare and Tammy Lovett from DHS's Aboriginal Children Youth and Families unit.

Key staff from each organisation responsible for using LAC are encouraged to attend one of the 24 whole day Assessment and Progress Records transition training sessions being scheduled across the state from early April until late June. The registration process is being managed by the Centre and the subsidised cost for each participant is \$20. More detailed information about these sessions will be provided via the Centre's training unit and via DHS regional Quality Enhancement workers.

The Education Tax Refund

Are you eligible to claim?

If you have eligible education expenses for a child's primary or secondary education during the income year 1 July 2009–30 June 2010, you can claim an education tax refund of up to 50% of those expenses if any of the following circumstances apply:

- you received family tax benefit (FTB) Part A for the child;
- a payment was made for the child that stopped you from receiving FTB Part A;
- the child stopped full-time school during the year and received income over the cut-out amount, which stopped you from receiving FTB Part A.

Payment types that can stop you from receiving FTB Part A include a:

- social security pension or benefit – for example, Youth Allowance;
- labour market program payment;
- prescribed educational scheme – for example, ABSTUDY living allowance.

What education expenses can you claim?

You can claim the cost of buying, establishing, repairing and maintaining any of the following items:

- laptops and home computers;
- computer-related equipment such as printers, USB flash drives, disability computer equipment aids for students with special needs;
- home internet connections;
- computer software for educational use, including word processing, spreadsheet, database and presentation software, internet filters and antivirus software;
- school textbooks and other paper based school learning material, including prescribed textbooks, associated learning materials, study guides and stationery;
- prescribed trade tools.

For further information go to the Australian Taxation Office website www.ato.gov.au or call the Australian Taxation Office on **13 28 61**.

In Brief

Order a free curtain & blind cord safety kit

Young children can strangle themselves with looped curtain and blind cords. At least 15 young children have died this way in Australia since the early 1990s, including two in Victoria in August and September 2009.

You can order a free safety kit to make looped curtain and blind cords safer in your home through the [Consumer Affairs Victoria website](#) or call **1300 55 81 81**. Stocks are limited so be quick!

MoneyHelp

MoneyHelp is funded by the Victorian Government to assist those affected by the global economic downturn. It provides free, confidential and independent financial advice to Victorians experiencing, or concerned about, job loss or reduced working hours.

The MoneyHelp service offers:

- a free phone financial counselling service, including interpreter services - 1800 149 689. Hours of operation are Monday-Friday, 9.30am-5.00pm; and
- a comprehensive information website - www.moneyhelp.org.au.

MoneyHelp phone line and website are available now to the public and for referrals from community service providers. MoneyHelp was officially launched in late September 2009 by the Minister for Consumer Affairs and is being managed by Consumer Action Law Centre.

For more information about MoneyHelp, go to www.moneyhelp.org.au or call **1800 149 689**.

L2P Learner Driver Mentor Program

The L2P program is an exciting new program for young people aged between 16–20 years who live, work or study in Brimbank, and who have difficulty accessing traditional supports (e.g. parent and car) to accrue the mandatory 120 hours of supervised driving experience. The L2P program will train community volunteers to become driver mentors, before matching them with learner drivers to undertake driving practice. There will be three L2P vehicles available, one each located in the Sunshine, St Albans and Keilor areas of Brimbank.

This program is due to launch in April 2010. If you are interested in participating as a Driver Mentor or as a L2P Learner Driver, please contact the Transport Safety Officer on **9249 4942**.

Remember to get your **'Pick Me'** entries in for a chance to attend the National Foster Care Conference in Hobart in August 2010. [Entries close Friday 30 April, 2010](#).



Become a Foster Carer

The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) is looking for prospective Foster Carers. If this is something you and your family would like to explore, we encourage you to bring the family along to one of our information nights, where you can all learn more about fostering indigenous children through VACCA.

For further information and details of upcoming information sessions, please contact Liz Munt or Yolanda Glenn on 8388-1855.



CRABTREE & EVELYN®

2 Mini-Pamper Packs to be won!

Thanks to the generosity of General Manager, Stephen Watt and the fantastic team at **Crabtree & Evelyn®**, FCAV are offering two beautiful mini-pamper packs featuring luxurious **Crabtree & Evelyn®** products.

All you have to do to win one of these great prizes is submit your ideas for our two 'carer inspiration' topics:

Topic #1: Great Family Fun Ideas

What fun (and cheap!!) activities do you do as a family that gets everyone involved, laughing and having a great time?


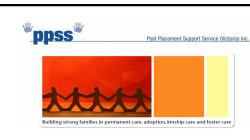
Topic #2: Fussy Eater Recipes

What imaginative recipe ideas have you got tucked away in the pantry to not only satisfy, but nourish the 'fussy-eater' in your family?

Send in your ideas by close of business on Friday 30 April, 2010. We will announce the lucky winners, along with the best ideas for both categories in the June edition of the FCAV Newsletter.

Good Luck!!

Draft Release—FCAV / PPSS Info Sheet

	FCAV/PPSS INFO SHEET: Quality of Care – What to expect when a quality of care concern is raised	
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Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc (FCAV) Position:

The 'Guidelines for Responding to Quality of Care Concerns in Out of Home Care' take into account the expectation that the majority of children and young people in care receive good quality care and that foster carers and CSOs work hard at their relationship to ensure this is prioritised. The FCAV recognises, however, that the Quality of Care process can be an extremely stressful and isolating experience and would encourage foster carers to contact their CSO to gain support. Independent support and assistance can also be sought through the FCAV / PPSS Carer Information and Support Service by calling 9489 9770.

The following information is a summary of what foster carers can expect if they are subject to a Quality of Care concern, including relevant terminology and the possible timelines to be anticipated.

Call FCAV for a full copy of the guidelines or look on our website. Alternatively, a full copy of the [Guidelines for responding to quality of care concerns in out of home care](http://www.cyf.vic.gov.au/placement-support/library/publications/guidelines-responding-to-quality-of-care/guidelines-responding-quality-care-out-of-home-care-2010.pdf) are available at: <http://www.cyf.vic.gov.au/placement-support/library/publications/guidelines-responding-to-quality-of-care/guidelines-responding-quality-care-out-of-home-care-2010.pdf>

Initial questions to ask your CSO

- What is the nature of the allegation/s?
- How will this allegation be managed? i.e. Support & Supervision, Formal Care Review or Investigation
- How long can I anticipate the process will take?
- What is the next step?

Please note, due to the nature of some investigations, answers to these questions may not be immediately available to carers, however open communication between agencies and carers is the first step in ensuring a respectful and open process is maintained.

Ongoing support for Foster Carers

- ↳ The Guidelines suggest that it may be best if the chosen support person be skilled and available to offer support as required. You may choose a CSO representative, trusted friend or relative, colleague, lawyer or possibly the FCAV;
- ↳ The role of the support person may include attending meetings with you, taking notes for you and being present as reassurance during any interviews or meetings;
- ↳ Support following the quality of care process is also available through your CSO. This may include de-briefing, counselling, support groups and contact with the FCAV;

Liaison Person for Foster Carers

You will have a liaison person who will act as the key point of communication between yourself and the Investigation Planning Group (IPG). This person tends to be a professional (ie CSO or Child Protection representative)

Investigation Planning Group (IPG)

When a report is initially received an IPG will be formed consisting of a Child Protection Unit Manager; CSO Manager; Regional Quality of Care Co-ordinator and others as deemed necessary. A carer will not be invited to take part in this process. The IPG will determine appropriate actions and make decisions in accordance with the 'Best Interests Principles' outlined in the *Children Youth & Families Act 2005*.

No Further Action

In a small number of cases, where it is clearly established that the report of concern is inaccurate or there is no basis for any concern, no further action will be taken. The Child Protection Unit Manager, in consultation with the CSO and Regional Quality of Care Coordinator will make this decision.

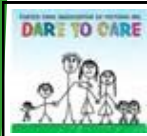
Support and Supervision

The Guidelines state that the majority of Quality of Care concerns are managed via the support and supervision process. Matters that do not relate to physical or sexual abuse but still affect a child or young person's safety or well-being are generally dealt with through this process and managed by your CSO or Child Protection (where there is no CSO). These concerns may relate to neglect, inadequate hygiene, poor diet, inadequate supervision, inappropriate discipline, not meeting required standards or not co-operating with case plan arrangements for the child or young person.

Formal Care Review

When concerns are very serious, are repetitive, or form a pattern, (not including physical or sexual abuse), a Formal Care Review may be required. This is led by the CSO and guided by a Formal Care Review Panel that will determine if an Action Plan can be implemented to address the identified concerns and if it is appropriate for the carer to continue in their role. Review outcomes will be communicated to the carer in person and through a letter from the CSO.

Draft Release—FCAV / PPSS Info Sheet



FCAV/PPSS INFO SHEET: Quality of Care – What to expect when a quality of care concern is raised



Investigation

It may be necessary to respond to a quality of care concern via a formal investigation. **All allegations of physical or sexual abuse will usually require an investigation.** Investigations will include interviews with Child Protection and your CSO, and possibly the police. The CSO will inform the carer of the outcome and continue to provide support.

Right to Appeal and Complaints Process

Foster carers can seek a review of a decision through either the CSO's internal review process or DHS's review processes. To appeal an investigation outcome (substantiation/unsubstantiated) is via Child Protection process, however an appeal regarding recommendations of care status is via CSO process. CSOs are required to have written procedures for the resolution of disputes and complaints including the process for lodging and managing complaints, steps and timeframes in assessing and resolving disputes and the process to appeal decisions such as recommendations made during the course of a Formal Care Review.

Other Useful Documents & Links

Victorian Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities <http://www.equalopportunitycommission.vic.gov.au/pdf/The%20Charter%20of%20Human%20Rights%20and%20Responsibilities%20-%20Protection%20of%20freedoms%20and%20rights%20for%20everyone%20in%20Victoria.pdf>

Charter for Children in Out of Home Care

http://www.cyf.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/96066/charter_for_children_in_out-of-home_care.pdf

Children Youth & Families Act (Vic.) 2005

http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/cyafa2005252/

Best Interest Principles – legislated. Refer CYFA.

Best Interests Framework

http://www.cyf.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/43013/ecec_best_interest_framework_proof.pdf

The Aboriginal Child Placement Principle – legislated. Refer CYFA.

Home Based Care Handbook

http://www.cyf.vic.gov.au/placement-support/library/publications/placement-and-support/home-based_handbook

Registration Standards for CSOs

http://www.cyf.vic.gov.au/family-services/registration-of-community-service-organisations/registration_standards_for_csos

Acronyms

QOC	Quality of Care
ACSASS	Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice & Support Service
ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
CSO	Community Service Organisation
IPG	Investigation Planning Group
C/YP	Child or Young Person
DHS	Department of Human Services
FCAV	Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc.
CYFA	Children Youth & Families Act (Vic.) 2005

***Substantiation – This refers to a decision being made by Child Protection, as a result of the information gathered and consultation with the IPG, about whether the alleged incident, act or omission has occurred or not.**

****Please note, this Info Sheet should be read in conjunction with the Fact Sheet and Carer Guide soon to be provided by the Department of Human Services.**

Independent Investigation and Suitability Panel – is a separate process to Quality of Care

If there is an allegation of physical or sexual abuse, the Secretary of the Department may decide that an Independent Investigation is warranted. An independent investigator will recommend whether the matter will be sent to the Suitability Panel. Foster carers can be disqualified from providing care if the Suitability Panel determines the foster carer poses an unacceptable risk of harm to children. *The Children Youth & Families Act 2005* (s) 81 & 82 prescribes the requirements for these processes. Appeal of Suitability Panel outcome is to VCAT.

Please Note:

All days and hours referred to in this flowchart pertain to working days or working hours, not calendar days.

Support & Supervision

The majority of concerns are re: poor Quality of Care and are managed by your CSO via support & supervision.

Once a concern is raised it will be monitored with a view to getting it right. This monitoring may continue for an extended period of time. Your agency will give you clear actions to assist you in addressing any concerns.

**Formal Care Review
(Lead by Agency)**

Formal Care Review Panel established within 5 days

Immediate outcomes: within 10 days
DHS will inform the C/YP where an interview is required;
Advise the C/YP's parents;

Draft Formal Care Review Outcome Report to be prepared within 15 days

Outcomes determined within 20 days:
Concerns addressed & no further action; **(Day 32 to 51)**
Action Plan implemented over 3 months; **(Day 52 to 81)**

Quality of Care Report Received

An initial screening & consultation process takes place between Regional Quality of Care Coordinator, Child Protection & CSO usually within 24 hrs.

Possible Screening Outcomes

No Further Action
Support & Supervision
Formal Care Review
Investigation

**Investigation
(Lead by Child Protection & DHS Quality
of Care Co-ordinator)**

Investigation Planning Group will meet within 3 days.

If Police make a decision to investigate, the involvement of the CSO or the Department may need to be reviewed.

Investigation Outcome

The investigation must be completed within 28 days & a 2nd IPG held to discuss substantiation, recommendations and any proposed action plan. **(Day 5 to 32)**

Unsubstantiated
No Further Action
Support & Supervision
Formal Care Review

Substantiated
Ongoing placement (Child Protection) & status of carer determined (CSO).

Please Note:

The decision to remove a child or young person from a placement may take place at any time before, during or after an investigation.

It is possible that as more information becomes available, the initial response may need to be changed.

If the child or young person is Aboriginal, ACCASS or ACCSO must be involved in decision making.

Kinship Care Update

19 new kinship care services funded by the Department of Human Services

The Department of Human Services is providing more than \$10 million per year of new funding to establish 19 new kinship care services to improve the supports available for the estimated 10,000 children in Victoria who are growing up in kinship care.

Kinship care is the care provided by relatives or a member of a child's social network when a child cannot live with their parents. Most kinship care arrangements are privately arranged by families but child protection workers are also placing an increasing proportion of children in kinship care rather than in foster care.

Most children in kinship care have suffered considerable upheaval and adversity. Most kinship carers depend solely on their own resources and any available informal supports from their family and friends to manage the unexpected and ongoing demands of kinship care. It is often quite difficult for kinship carers to understand, negotiate and access relevant community services when they need them, even when there may be potentially helpful services available.

"DHS is providing \$10 million per year of new funding to establish 19 new kinship care services to improve the supports available for the estimated 10,000 children in Victoria who are growing up in kinship care".

The new community based services will employ 94 additional social workers to provide a range of additional support services for children in kinship care and their families close to where they live. Specific advice and information about kinship care will be available for children in kinship care, their carers and others involved in supporting them. More assistance will be available to encourage groups of kinship carers to meet together for mutual support. Kinship family service workers will provide time limited counselling to help all types of kinship care families deal with their specific issues and concerns. More intensive support will be provided for the most vulnerable children placed in kinship care as a result of child protection involvement.

The new kinship services are being established in every sub-regional area of the state in two stages. The first eleven Stage 1 services in the metropolitan area and in Hume region will commence operating in March 2010 and the eight Stage 2 services in the remaining rural regions will commence in May 2010.

The table on the following page shows which community service organisations have been funded to provide each of the 19 new kinship services in each area of the state.

In addition, the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner has worked diligently over the last 18 months to provide useful, informative and targeted resource guides to kinship carers in Victoria. The following resources are available free of charge to all parents and carers through the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner website www.ocsc.vic.gov.au or by calling (03) 8601 5884 or 1300 78 29 78:

- [**Financial support for grandparents and other relative carers**](#)
- [**Parenting for grandparents and other relative carers**](#)
- [**Legal issues for grandparents and other relative carers**](#)
- [**Statutory Declaration for Informal Relative Carers Victoria**](#)
- [**From Isolation to Connection—a guide to understanding and working with traumatised children and young people**](#)

Other useful publications targeted to parents, families and carers are:

- [**Information for parents—things to look at when selecting child-safe activities or services for your child**](#)
- [**Great Expectations**](#)
- [**Calmer Classrooms**](#)

Kinship Care Service Providers

Region	Sub-regional area	Local government areas covered	Service provider	Operational commencement date
Barwon South West	Barwon	Greater Geelong, Surf Coast, Queenscliff, Colac-Otway, Corangamite	Bethany Community Support Ph: (03) 5278 8122	1 May 2010
	South West	Moyne, Southern Grampians, Glenelg	Brophy Family and Youth Services Ph: (03) 5561 8888	1 May 2010
Eastern metropolitan	Inner East	Booroondara, Monash, Manningham, Whitehorse	Anglicare Victoria Ph: (03) 9896 6322	1 March 2010
	Outer East	Knox, Maroondah, Yarra Ranges	Anchor Community Care Ph: (03) 9760 6400	1 March 2010
Gippsland	Central and Southern	Latrobe, Baw Baw, South Coast	Berry Street Victoria Ph: (03) 5134 5971	1 May 2010
	East	Wellington, East Gippsland	Berry Street Victoria Ph: (03) 5134 5971	1 May 2010
Grampians	Central Highlands	Ballarat, Golden Plains, Moorabool, Hepburn, Pyranees, Ararat	Child and Family Services, Ballarat Ph: (03) 5337 3333	1 May 2010
	Wimmera	Northern Grampians, West Wimmera, Hindmarsh, Horsham, Yarriamback	Wimmera Uniting Care Ph: (03) 5382 6789	1 May 2010
Hume	West Hume	Greater Shepparton, Moira, Strathbogrie, Mitchell, Murrindindi	Berry Street Victoria Ph: (03) 5822 8100	1 March 2010
	East Hume	Wodonga, Wangaratta, Benalla, Alpine, Indigo, Towong, Mansfield	Upper Murray Family Care Ph: (03) 5720 0000	1 March 2010
Loddon Mallee	Loddon Campaspe	Greater Bendigo, Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Loddon, Macedon Ranges, Mt Alexander	St Luke's Anglicare Ph: (03) 5032 1205	1 May 2010
	Mallee	Mildura, Swan Hill, Gannawarra, Buloke	Centacare Ballarat Ph: (03) 5337 8999	1 May 2010
North and West metropolitan	Brimbank/Melton	Brimbank, Melton	Baptcare Family Services Ph: (03) 9373 3800	1 March 2010
	Hume/Moreland	Hume, Moreland	Orana Family Services Ph: (03) 9302 2700	1 March 2010
	North East	Yarra, Darebin, Banyule, Nillimbuk, Whittlesea	Kildonan Uniting Care Ph: (03) 8401 0100	1 March 2010
	Western	Melbourne, Moonee Valley, Maribyrnong, Hobsons Bay, Wyndham	Anglicare Victoria Ph: (03) 9396 7400	1 March 2010
Southern metropolitan	Outer South	Greater Dandenong, Casey, Cardinia	Wesley Mission Victoria Ph: (03) 9794 3000	1 March 2010
	Inner Middle	Bayside, Glen Eira, Kingston, Port Phillip, Stonnington	Children Australia (Oz Child) Ph: (03) 9212 5600	1 March 2010
	Frankston/Mornington Peninsular	Frankston, Mornington Peninsular	Children Australia (Oz Child) Ph: (03) 9212 5600	1 March 2010

Education Maintenance Allowance

To be eligible for receipt of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA):

1. The student must be below the age of sixteen; **and**
2. The student must be enrolled at a primary or secondary Government or registered school in Victoria on census day, **26 February 2010** for the first instalment and **6 August 2010** for the second instalment; **and**
3. The claimant must on Eligibility Day, **27 January 2010** for the first instalment and **12 July 2010**, for the second instalment:
 - be a parent or legal guardian of the student; **and**
 - be an eligible beneficiary within the meaning of the *State Concessions Act 2004*, that is, a holder of Veterans Affairs Gold Card or be an eligible Health care card (HCC) or Pensioner Concession Card (PCC) holder **or**
 - be a foster parent. (Note: permanent carers are not eligible for EMA)
4. Submit their application to the school by the due date.

The Pension Concession Card (PCC) or Health Care Card (HCC) is subject to electronic confirmation with Centrelink to verify the cardholder's entitlement on eligibility day. The EMA web system will validate the Customer Reference Number (CRN), and the surname and first name that are provided with the CRN. The validation will usually occur within a few seconds .

Carers will need to provide a letter from either their agency or DHS confirming their active carer status for the dates in question in order to claim EMA. Non-statutory (informal) kinship carers can provide a copy of the 'Statutory Declaration for Informal Carers Victoria' to satisfy this requirement, and thus be eligible to claim EMA.

Please refer to your school bursar for more information., or check the [Dept of Education and Early Childhood Development website](#).

Post care support for young people leaving care

Berry Street Victoria, in conjunction with the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) is excited to introduce a new program for young people: **Post Care Support, Information and Referral (PCSIR)**.

What The Program Offers:

PCSIR offers support, information, referral and brokerage for young people aged 16-21 who were on a custody or guardianship order on or after their 16th birthday and who are no longer in care.

PCSIR ensures a culturally appropriate response for Aboriginal young people. PCSIR can provide assistance with case support and information. PCSIR help young people to develop links to their community.

Referrals to specialist services in the areas of: counselling, accommodation, employment and training, education, health, family mediation and reconciliation and living skills.

Brokerage is available to ensure that young people have access to the resources that they need to effectively transition to and/or maintain independence.

Funds can be used for but are not limited to:

- ↳ Accommodation
- ↳ Transport
- ↳ Education
- ↳ Training
- ↳ Health & Well-Being

For further information please call the Post Care Information and Referral team on **(03) 9450 4700**.

A Message from the Department of Human Services

Continued from page 1: Investigation into the concerns

An investigation into a quality of care concern may occur in response to allegations of possible sexual abuse, physical abuse or neglect. The investigation process is led by Child Protection and conducted in partnership with the CSO. In a quality of care investigation, it would be usual for out-of-home-carers to be interviewed by Child Protection together with the CSO.

When a quality of care concern involves an allegation of possible physical or sexual abuse or serious neglect, Child Protection must report the matter to Victoria Police. Child Protection can substantiate the allegation of abuse or neglect even when the police decide not to lay criminal charges.

An investigation should be completed within **28 working days** of receiving a quality of care concern.

Investigation outcomes

There are two possible outcomes of an investigation. The allegation of possible abuse or neglect will either be substantiated or unsubstantiated.

- If an allegation is **unsubstantiated**, it has been determined that on the balance of probabilities, abuse or neglect *is not* likely to have occurred.
- If an allegation is **substantiated**, it has been determined that on the balance of probabilities, abuse or neglect *is likely* to have occurred.

Resolving differences

You are encouraged to initially discuss your concerns and options with your CSO. In the quality of care context, you are able to access two separate review processes regarding an investigation into a quality of care concern:

- The decision to substantiate an allegation of abuse
- Any recommendations made that directly affect you as a carer.

If you wish to request a review of the **substantiation decision regarding an allegation of abuse** that has resulted from a quality of care investigation, you *must request a review of the process in writing to the Community Care Manager*. The review must occur within 28 days of your request for review being received and written advice of the review decision must be provided to you within 2 weeks of the review hearing.

If you wish to request a review of **any recommendation that has come from a quality of care investigation that directly affects you**, you must *request a review of the process in writing to the CSO's Senior Regional Manager*. Any request for review must occur within 28 days of request for review being received and written advice of the review decision must be provided to you within 2 weeks of the review hearing.

Support for carers

A person who becomes a carer never expects that they may one day be subject to allegations or concerns raised about the care they provide. When this happens, it can cause stress and anxiety. Understandably, carers may also feel angry about both the concerns being raised and about the processes that they will be subject to.

When quality of care concerns are raised, you can expect to be treated fairly, honestly and with respect. You will be supported through the process and given as much information as possible without interfering with the relevant quality of care processes.

It is the role of CSOs to provide support and assistance to you. Support can take the form of keeping you up to date with the progress of the investigation, ensuring you are clear on who to call if you require further information and referral for independent counselling if you feel this would be beneficial to help you manage during or after the process.

For more information:

1. [Guidelines for responding to quality of care concerns in out of home care 2010](http://www.cyf.vic.gov.au/placement-support/library/publications/guidelines-responding-to-quality-of-care/guidelines-responding-quality-care-out-of-home-care-2010.pdf) via DHS website: (<http://www.cyf.vic.gov.au/placement-support/library/publications/guidelines-responding-to-quality-of-care/guidelines-responding-quality-care-out-of-home-care-2010.pdf>);
2. [FCAV / PPSS Info Sheet](http://www.fcav.org.au/Files/documents/Information_Sheets/CISS_6_-_Quality_of_Care_Process_1932010.pdf) via FCAV website: (http://www.fcav.org.au/Files/documents/Information_Sheets/CISS_6_-_Quality_of_Care_Process_1932010.pdf)

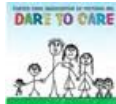
Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc
ABN 30 747 010 099

48 High Street
Northcote, Vic 3070

Ph: (03)9489 9770
Fax: (03)9489 9119
Email: admin@fcav.org

Upcoming Events

FCAV / Prime Focus
Regional Road Show:
"Mad, Bad or Sad—
The Practice of Care"



Look out for these great **free** regional training days coming your way courtesy of Prime Focus Consulting and FCAV. All training will be conducted by Gregory Nicholau, Consulting Psychologist:

Mon, 19 April 2010
Barwon South West Region

Hosted by Community Connections & Brophy in Warrnambool.
 Ph: 1300 361 680

Wed, 21 April 2010
Grampians Region

Hosted by Wimmera Uniting Care, Horsham.
 Ph: 5362 4052

Tue, 11 May 2010
Hume Region

Hosted by Berry Street Victoria and Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-op, Shepparton.
 Ph: 5822 8100

Wed, 12 May 2010
Hume Region

Hosted by Upper Murray Family Care. Wangaratta.
 Ph: (02) 6055 8022

"Grief & Loss—Finding Hope
When all Feels Lost"

Fri, 16 April 2010

9.30am to 12.30pm at
 The Treacy Centre,
 126 The Avenue, Parkville

Cost: \$65 (incl morning tea & lunch)

"Mad, Bad or Sad—Trauma & Attachment—A Refresher"

Thu, 6 May 2010

6.30pm—9.30pm
 The Treacy Centre
 126 The Avenue, Parkville

Cost: \$65 (incl supper & light dinner)

National Foster Carer's
Conference

27-29 August 2010

Wrest Point Casino, Hobart, Tasmania

To register for further information and newsletters contact conference@fctas.org.au

"Nikara's Journey"

An introduction to caring for aboriginal children in out of home care by non-aboriginal carers. (2 day program)

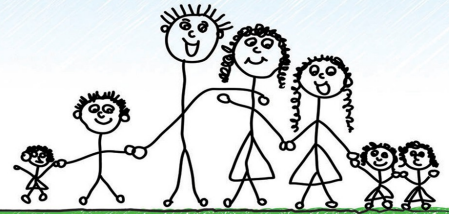
25-26 May 2010

10am—3pm at VACCA Office,
 139 Nicholson St, East Brunswick

Cost: \$395.00 (incl GST. Morning tea & lunch provided)

FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA INC.

DARE TO CARE



FCAV VISION

For all Children in care to be Cherished, Connected and treated with Compassion.

MISSION STATEMENT

To Strengthen foster families and enhance the wellbeing of the children in their care.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Association is established for the public charitable purposes of advancing and promoting the care of children and young people who are fostered or are in other forms of home based care including encouraging contact and exchange of ideas and information between those persons involved in foster care.

Upcoming Indigenous Events

The Long Walk

22 May 2010

Charity day inspired by Michael

Long's walk to

Canberra to get the lives of Indigenous people back on the agenda.



National Sorry Day

26 May 2010

National Sorry Day is held to commemorate the history of forcible removals and its effects, as detailed in the *Bringing them home report*.