

BEST PRACTICE – FOSTER CARER SUPPORT & MANAGEMENT

FCAV Position:

This Information Sheet has been developed as a brief guide for Carers and Community Service Organisations (CSOs) to identify opportunities for Carer Support and Management during the different stages of this relationship. A number of resources have been linked that some Carers and CSOs have found helpful and may be adopted or modified for use by CSOs. These opportunities, however, do not override the need for regular communication between all parties and are separate to the support needs of children and young people in care.

Key Stages	Processes	Resources
Pre - Accreditation	<p><u>Training & Assessment</u> All potential home based caregivers are required to undergo assessment and attend pre-service training to provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary to provide high quality care to the children and young people they look after.</p> <p>This process may take 4 to 12 months to complete from initial enquiry to foster care panel accreditation.</p>	<p>DHHS Website – Foster Care</p>
On Accreditation	<p><u>Welcome Packs</u> These will vary across CSOs in terms of complimentary items, however, should include a copy of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victorian Handbook for Foster Carers • FCAV Membership Application/contact details • Information on applying for a Carer Card • FCAV Information Sheets 	<p>Victorian Handbook for Foster Carers</p> <p>FCAV Membership Application</p>
	<p><u>Contract</u> A Contract, Foster Carer Charter, Service agreement or Position Description will be issued on accreditation with your CSO.</p> <p>Whatever the form, it will define the respective responsibilities of both the carer and CSO.</p>	<p>Ask FCAV for examples if you don't have one</p>

	<p><u>Manual</u> The CSO Manual will highlight policies and practices re: caring for children and will be updated as new information becomes available.</p> <p>The DHHS Child Protection Manual reflects relevant legislation, policy, standards, current procedures and practice guidance.</p>	<p><u>DHHS Child Protection Manual</u></p>
<p>During Placement</p>	<p><u>Supervision</u> At the commencement of all supervisory relationships an agreement/contract should be developed to determine how carers and CSOs will work together. It is an opportunity to reflect on the caring experience and carer development.</p> <p>Carers should expect supervision to occur at least once a month. This is a time dedicated to discussion about the carer and family, rather than the child placed with them.</p>	<p><u>FCAV Info Sheet- Building & Maintaining Effective Working Relationships</u></p>
	<p><u>Wellbeing</u> At times foster carers may require additional support to care for their emotional well-being. Some of these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAP • Telephone Support • GP • Respite 	<p><u>Carer Assistance Program</u></p>

	<p><u>Care Team Meetings</u> Every child in out-of-home care should have a Care Team and every foster carer should actively participate in all the Care Team processes that happen around a child in their care.</p> <p>Care Teams are led by the foster care agency and the Care Team processes specifically focus on ensuring that the child's day-to-day care needs are met. Care Teams do not need to have formal meetings, however, they must have regular discussions and communications.</p>	<p><u>FCAV Info Sheet – About Care Teams</u></p> <p><u>Child Protection Manual – Looking After Children</u></p>
	<p><u>Case Planning</u> Care Team processes are a sub-set of the overall Child Protection related Case Planning and Case Management processes (which foster carers should also contribute to).</p> <p>Case planning meetings are chaired by DHHS and generally held every six months. These formal meetings consider the present and future care and wellbeing of the child and make decisions about the “big picture”.</p>	<p><u>DHHS Advice</u></p>
<p>Annual Review</p>	<p><u>Annual Carer Review</u> Foster Carers must be formally reviewed on an annual basis to confirm performance, continuing appropriateness, availability and capacity to care.</p> <p>Many CSOs have developed their own review tool based upon core requirements and competencies included in the <i>Step by Step Assessment</i>.</p>	<p><u>Westcare Review Example</u></p>