

# Carer Advisory Group Quarterly update

May 2017

## May 2017

The Carer Advisory Groups met in May 2017, bringing together carers, carer representatives and staff from community service organisations and the Department of Health and Human Services (the department) to improve communication and identify service improvements in out-of-home care. This meeting concludes the current 18 month term of the Carer Advisory Group and the Department of Health and Human Services would like to take the opportunity to thank all carers, agencies and departmental staff involved for their commitment to making a difference in the kinship and foster carer experience.

All carer members were presented with a gift voucher and Certificate of Appreciation signed by Jenny Mikakos Minister for Families and Children to acknowledge carers' time and expertise in supporting the groups and contribution to improving engagement and support for carers.

The groups also welcomed new carers joining for the next 18 month term.

## North Division

The north division Carer Advisory Group is:

- focusing on increasing the group's input into north division and state-wide initiatives with consultations taking place at the meeting on Carer KaFE, north division health initiatives for children in out-of-home care and the department's foster care audits.
- working through its Group Action Plan, with current work focusing on addressing systemic issues for carers and improving communication channels between carers, Community Service Organisations and the department.

The north division Carer Advisory Group has also developed a *Carer Reference Guide* to help foster and kinship carers quickly locate information regarding common questions that may arise during their experience caring for children and young people in out-of-home care. [Click here to view the Reference Guide.](#) Feedback on content and suggestions for additional inclusions can be directed to [northstrategicplanning@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:northstrategicplanning@dhhs.vic.gov.au).

## South Division

The south division Carer Advisory Group:

- was introduced to the 'Mapping the Carer Journey' to capture stories of carers' experience with a view to increase carer retention. A workshop will be scheduled following consultation with carers.
- members were presented with an Out-of-home care system overview presented by Child Protection and Placement Coordination Unit managers. Agency representatives will present on their contribution to the out-of-Home care system at the next meeting.

## West Division

The west division Carer Advisory Group:

- has developed a standardised care team agenda/record aimed at improving communication with and participation of carers. The standardised care team agenda will be trialled with home-based care providers and child protection. The trial will be conducted over three-months commencing 1 July 2017 with feedback to be provided by 8 October 2017.
- continues to focus on carer input into local and state-wide initiatives through consultation and participation on relevant working groups and out-of-home care forums. The group has participated in a number of carer consultations including the LOOKOUT centre evaluation, Quality of Care Review and proposed home-based care sibling model.
- membership for the second term has been finalised with a balanced representation of metropolitan and regional foster carers, kinship carers, mainstream and Aboriginal organisations, carer representatives and the department. The West group is co-chaired by the Director, Client Outcomes and Service Improvement and a nominated carer.

## East Division

The east division Carer Advisory Group is:

- focussing on ideas to better support kinship carers to access information about available supports as they begin the process of caring for a child and how they could become more involved with the east division Carer Advisory Group.
- discussing carer recruitment including the Fostering Connections campaign and reviewing the local carer snapshot.

## State-wide update – obtaining identification and other documents for children and young people in out-of-home care

The Foster Care Association of Victoria and carer co-chairs of the Carer Advisory Groups met with department representatives of Child Protection and Out-of-Home Care policy teams on Tuesday 13 June. The group discussed actions that have been progressed to date and further options to improve the process for issuing carer authorisations, obtain approval to travel interstate and options to advocate for better support and tailored services from Centrelink and Medicare.

For more information about the groups, to suggest an item for discussion or enquire about joining the groups please contact one of the divisional contacts below.

### Divisional contacts:

East division: Ashley Malpass, 02 6055 7778, [Ashley.Malpass@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:Ashley.Malpass@dhhs.vic.gov.au)

West division: Sandie Mitchell, 03 9275 7145 [sandie.mitchell@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:sandie.mitchell@dhhs.vic.gov.au)

South division: Yong Shan Law, 03 8765 7408 [YongShan.Law@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:YongShan.Law@dhhs.vic.gov.au)

North division: Heather Pearce, 03 9412 5382 [heather.pearce@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:heather.pearce@dhhs.vic.gov.au)