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Service Stream	Families and Young People Services	Category	Foster and Kinship Care
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To ensure that children and young people in foster care are having all their care needs met, Mercy Community and Child Safety monitor and support carers to meet the statement of standards and the progress of children and young people in meeting the goals in their case plan.

Identification of carer support to safely care for a child is done through the development of a Placement Agreement. This agreement outlines the goals of the care arrangement, provides relevant information about the child and records agreed support and services to be provided to the carer, based on assessed level of need of the child.

Incident Reporting

Occasionally, events occur in a carer's home that have, or are at risk of having, a significant impact to a child's wellbeing or the carer's ability to maintain the statement of standards. As part of the care team and as part of the approval conditions, a foster or kinship carer **must inform Mercy Community and Child Safety** about significant events at the time they occur, so that an appropriate and coordinated response to the incident can be made.

It is mandatory under the *Child Protection Act 1999* for carers to report to Child Safety if they reasonably suspect a child in care has suffered, is suffering, or is at unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse.

The priority is on minimising negative impact to children and young people which includes sharing relevant information about the incident with relevant agencies supporting the child and/or carer.

Examples of significant events that must be reported are:

- Alleged or suspected unmet standards of care or use of prohibited practice or emergency use of restrictive practice.
- Medical situations – hospitalisation or medical support/treatment required.
- Mental health worries, inclusive of expressing or engaging in self-harm/suicidal thoughts.
- Minor assault/injury.
- Criminal activity (alleged or confirmed).
- Blue Card expiry (for approved carer, adult household member).
- Missing or absent from placement.
- Substance misuse.
- Verbal abuse, threats, or intimidating behaviour.
- Unauthorised or unapproved contact (e.g., with a family member).

This list of incidents is not comprehensive, please refer to the Incident Category Definitions resource for further information. Other events may occur that have, or are at risk of having, a significant impact to a child's wellbeing or a carer's ability to maintain the statement of standards. Carers should always seek advice from their Mercy Community team were unsure.

If Child Safety and Mercy Community becomes aware that a foster/kinship carer may not be meeting the standards of care, we all have the responsibility to work together to ensure the child is safe from harm and appropriate action taken to resolve the identified worries. Possible responses include:

- Continue to monitor the standards of care - Requires proactive support to address the issues to prevent them from continuing or escalating into future harm for the child.
- Standard of care review (SOCR) – A review is required to determine if the standards have been met or not. This process can be undertaken by Mercy Community, in consultation with Child Safety.
- Harm report - There is information to suggest that a child has been harmed or it is suspected that they have experienced harm and that a carer's (or Adult Household Member) actions or inactions may have caused or contributed to the harm. Child Safety will conduct an investigation and assessment, in collaboration with Mercy Community, to determine an outcome.

Further information can be found in the Foster and kinship carer handbook, Carer Connect app or by contacting your Mercy Community Practitioner.

Approval Date	2 Nov 2022	Implementation Date	2 Nov 2022	Review Date	24 Aug 2024
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