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Service Stream	Families and Young People Services	Category	Foster and Kinship Care
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Purpose

- The welfare and best interests of children and young people residing in foster and kinship care is paramount.
- Children and young people need to be cared for within a healthy family environment that is characterised by 'positive-parenting-practices', including: structure and routine; reasonable rules, expectations and age-appropriate limits; guidance, support and encouragement; positive reinforcement; with fair, consistent, and reasonable discipline, and demonstrating tolerance for normal and/or symptomatic behaviour.
- Foster and kinship care is a partnership embracing parents and children, carers and their families, Department of Child Safety, Seniors, and Disability Services (the Department) staff, and other stakeholders and Mercy Community (MC) Family and Young People Services (FYPS) employees – all planning and working in the best interest of the child.
- Respect for foster carers as partners together with other professionals in the fostering team is critical, as is the provision of ongoing information, training, support and supervision.
- Matching carers with children or young people – each child or young person placed in foster and kinship care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her or his assessed needs and meets foster carer family agreed placement category as documented in carer agreements.
- A safe and positive environment - The foster/kinship care home provides a safe, healthy and nurturing environment for the child or young person, in compliance with the 'Statement of Standards', *Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)*.

Scope

This procedure applies to all employees, volunteers and contractors engaged within Foster and Kinship Care (FKC) programs across MC-FYPS.

This procedure relates to general FKC placements, Intensive Intervention Placement Support (IIPS) and High Plus (HP) programs where the carer is a MC carer.

Procedure

1. Foster Carer Agreements – overview

- 1.1 *Foster Carer Agreements* is a document issued by the Department that articulate the scope of care the foster carer will provide. A *Foster Carer Agreement* is required for all approved foster carers.
- 1.2 The *Foster Carer Agreement* also articulates the way in which the carer/s and family will be supported by MC. MC is responsible for the provision of support and effective monitoring processes to enable carers to meet their legislative responsibilities under the *Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)*, including enabling them to provide a level of care consistent with the Statement of Standards of Care.
- 1.3 *Foster Carer Agreements* will be collaborative and developed between MC, the foster carer/s and the Department (where possible).
- 1.4 *Foster Carer Agreements* are not completed for kinship carers. Placement support needs are specific to the children placed with the carers and are therefore recorded in the Departmental *Placement Agreement*.

2. Developing and reviewing Foster Carer Agreements

Approved By: FKC Regional Directors and FYP Quality Practice Director

Approval Date	02 Jan 2024	Implementation Date	02 Jan 2024	Review Date	02 Jan 2026
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- 2.1 *Foster Carer Agreements* are regularly updated during the foster carer's approval period, which can include:
 - During the initial assessment process (for general foster carers, an initial *Foster Carer Agreement* must accompany the *3A Foster Care Applicant Assessment and Recommendation Form* submitted to the Department);
 - During the renewal of a foster carer's Certificate of Approval (the *Foster Carer Agreement* must be submitted with the renewal documents);
 - Following a Standards of Care matter (if requested or required);
 - When the carer, the Department, or MC initiates a review; or
 - When a change in carer circumstances impacts the *Foster Carer Agreement*.
- 2.2 When a review of a *Foster Carer Agreement* has been initiated, MC, the foster carer/s and the Department will collaborate to actively identify, promote and address the foster carer's support and training needs, as well as the current placement suitability and capacity. The *Foster Carer Agreement* may be developed in a formal meeting or by the allocated Foster and Kinship Care Practitioner (FKCP) obtaining information from the Department and the carer and putting together a draft for review.
- 2.3 The *Foster Carer Agreement* will set out the terms, conditions and responsibilities of the relationship between the foster carer, the relevant Child Safety Service Centre (CSSC), and MC.
- 2.4 The *Foster Carer Agreement* will include a plan for the foster carer/s' ongoing development and support needs.
- 2.5 If changes to the *Foster Carer Agreement* are made, reasoning for this is to be included on the document.
- 2.6 Completed *Foster Carer Agreements* are sent to the CSSC Manager for approval, as the delegate. Final signed copies of the *Foster Carer Agreement* will be supplied to the foster carer/s.
- 2.7 The *Foster Carer Agreement* will be informed by:
 - Knowledge from the carer/s' assessment;
 - Any Standards of Care matters (if there have been any);
 - Information from the Carer File; and
 - Feedback from any training attended.
- 2.8 There may be times when the Department, the foster carer/s and/or the MC allocated FKCP cannot reach an agreement regarding the content of the *Foster Carer Agreement*. Where this is the case, the allocated FKCP will discuss with their Line Manager and will arrange a meeting with the foster carer/s and a relevant representative from the Department to discuss further. MC FKCPs will acknowledge their role in satisfying the various legislative responsibilities under the *Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)* when considering how to resolve these disagreements.
- 2.9 If there are changes to the *Foster Carer Agreement*, these should be updated by the allocated Business Support representative in the carer's *Carer Agreement Summary*, located in the Assessment and Approval Service File.

3. Records management

- 3.1 All *Foster Carer Agreements* and associated documentation will be filed in the carer's Assessment and Approval Services File within a Foster Carer Agreement Service Event. Any changes to the carer's availability for placements and associated matching information will be updated in the *Carer Agreement Summary* by the relevant Business Support representative. Saving emails to Child and Carer

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- files requires workers to copy and clear formatting of emails before pasting them into a *Case Note* within a Service Event. .
- 3.2 All documentation is to be uploaded to the Penelope Client Management System (CMS) within ten (10) working days. Where uploading is anticipated to take longer than this, FKCPs will negotiate this with their Line Manager.
 - 3.3 Refer to the *FS IP FKC Document Filing Guide* for further guidance on CMS recordkeeping requirements and naming conventions.

Definitions

FKC Practitioner

The employee who has been delegated by the Line Manager to undertake specific case management or placement support tasks.

Line Manager

Employees with supervisory and program management responsibilities within the fostering service.

Regional Director

The manager with overall finance and program management responsibilities, who is a member of the leadership team.

References

3A Foster Care Applicant Assessment and Recommendation Form
 Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)
 Departmental Child Safety Practice Manual (CSPM)
 Departmental Statement of Standards of Care
 Foster Carer Agreement (available on the Department's website)
 FS DOC FKC Program Overview
 FS IP FKC Document Filing Guide
 Placement Agreement (available on the Department's website)

Related Documents

Penelope Forms:

Carer Agreement Summary

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