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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.
- Quality foster care services should have respect for and recognition of the importance of ethnic and cultural heritage, religious beliefs and language of children and young people, their families.
- Quality foster and kinship care is 'needs-based, trauma-sensitive, and attachment-focused'. Carers and staff clearly identify, empathetically understand, and respond to the needs of each child/young person, are sensitive to the effects of the trauma they have experienced and seek to develop caring and nurturing relationships to facilitate the healing process.
- Continuity in the lives of children and young people in foster and kinship care is critical for psychosocial wellbeing. All efforts are taken to maintain continuity of relationships with family, friends, schools, and communities that the child/young person has previous links to.

Scope

This procedure applies to all employees, volunteers and contractors engaged within Foster and Kinship Care programs across Mercy Community's (MC) – Families and Young People Services (FYPS).

This procedure relates to general Foster and Kinship Care (FKC) placements, Intensive Intervention Placement Support (IIPS) including IIPS Therapeutic Supports, High Plus support (HP) programs, and Intensive Foster and Kinship Care (IFKC) programs (where relevant).

Procedure

1. Child exit and placement closure – overview

- 1.1 The transition of a child or young person out of a foster care placement can be both a joyful and difficult time. MC commits to supporting children, young people, and carers through these complex times.
- 1.2 Transitions can be planned and unplanned. At all times, it is important for MC workers to work collaboratively with the Department Child Safety, Seniors, and Disability Services (the Department), the carer and prospective future carers or agencies.
- 1.3 The Department must be notified of placement changes as soon as these become known to ensure that children and young people are supported adequately, and carer finances are rectified.
- 1.4 Positive placement transitions should be celebrated. MC FKC Practitioners (FKCPs) will liaise with carer/s and children or young people regarding how best to remember their time in placement.
- 1.5 The processes outlined in this procedure apply to all placement transitions, including where the child or young person is transferring from one MC carer to another and if a permanency order is granted.

2. Planned transition and exit

- 2.1 Wherever possible, the transition of children and young people out of foster care placements will be planned. This may be due to:

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- The child or young person transitioning to a longer-term carer;
 - The child or young person transitioning to a kinship carer;
 - The child or young person reunifying with a parent; or
 - The child or young person transitioning to independence or a supported independent living program.
- 2.2 Where it is identified that a child or young person is transitioning out of the placement, the allocated FKCP will request that a transition plan is developed within the Department's *Placement Agreement*. Planned exits may be documented in the Department's *Case Plan*, the Department's *Placement Agreement* and/or the *Assessment and Intervention Plan*.
- 2.3 If the transition is planned but is to occur within a short timeframe, or no plan (as outlined in section 2.2 of this procedure) is developed, the plan will be documented in the Penelope as a *Case Note* under an Exit Service Event
- 2.4 Transition plans will be developed in consultation with the Department, the carer, the allocated FKCP and, if age appropriate, the child or young person.
- 2.5 The allocated FKCP will provide the support outlined in this plan, including logistical issues such as the transferring of personal items to the new placements and ensuring that emotional support is provided to the carer during this time.
- 2.6 Where possible or appropriate, the allocated worker will request that the carer complete a Departmental *Conclusion of Placement Form* in preparation for the transition to the new placement. The allocated FKCP may provide support to the carer in completing this form. The form will be attached to the Exit Service Event.
- 2.7 The child or young person's placement end date is to be entered on *Placement Information and Respite Log* by the allocated Business Support Officer (BSO). Any attachments related to the placement closure should be uploaded to the Exit Service Event
- 2.8 A 'File Closure' *Case Note* will be completed to specifically explain the reason for closure.
- 2.9 The allocated BSO should close the child's Service File, entering the exit date and reason as per advice from the FKCP or Team Manager (TM).
- 2.10 The allocated BSO will ensure that 'Case Relationships' are updated on the Child's Case Level to reflect that the carers are 'Former Carers'. If the child is to be placed with another MC carer, the allocated BSO will update the child's Case Relationships with their new carers. The BSO will then create a new Service File for the new placement, along with a new *Placement Information and Respite Log*, and enter the new start date and placement type. Refer to *FS PROC FKC Referral Matching and Placement* for further information around this process.
- 2.11 If the child is transitioning to an IIPS program, another MC team, or program, the Service File will remain open, and the *Placement Information* document updated to reflect the placement closure date in the general program and the placement opening date in the IIPS program (unless there is a new carer; where 2.1 applies).

3. Unplanned transition and exit

- 3.1 There may be times when a child or young person's transition out of a placement is unplanned. This may be due to:
- Emergent behavioural or safety issues;
 - Issues with the carer family;
 - Standard of Care concerns; and/or

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- At the direction of the Court or the Department.
- 3.2 Where the allocated FKCP becomes aware of an unplanned placement end they will attempt to organise a meeting with the carer/s, the Department and, if appropriate, the child or young person to discuss how best to support the carer/s and/or child or young person. Where this meeting is not able to occur in person, the allocated FKCP will consider whether this could happen via teleconference.
- 3.3 The allocated FKCP will liaise with the carer regarding the transfer of personal belongings and any other logistical tasks that must be completed.
- 3.4 Sections 2.6 to 2.11 above apply to unplanned transition and exit.

4. Granting of Permanency Orders

- 4.1 Guardianship can be granted to a foster or kinship carers through the following Orders:
 - Child Protection Order granting long-term guardianship to Other;
 - Permanency Care Order (grants guardianship of a child to a suitable person – other than the parent of a child or the Chief Executive).
- 4.2 If this occurs, the carer household is no longer supported by a foster care agency.
- 4.3 The allocated FKCP will request confirmation from the Department that the Order has been properly made and record this correspondence under a PCO or LTGO Service Event. Refer to section 6.5 for additional required confirmation in relation to kinship carers.
- 4.4 Sections 2.6 to 2.11 above apply to the granting of permanency orders.
- 4.5 Where the carer is a kinship carer who is not approved to care for any other children (and who meet the eligibility criteria for foster care agency support), the carer's Service File will be closed. The carer's resignation and/or closure of their approval should be contained in a Carer Exit Service Event, along with all relevant documentation.

5. IIPS, HP, or IFKC closure

- 5.1 Placements receiving support through the IIPS, HP or IFKC services may close for various reasons, including:
 - The support is no longer required;
 - The placement may end; or
 - Another support avenue is being considered.
- 5.2 Wherever possible, IIPS, HP, or IFKC support will be withdrawn in a planned way. This is to be documented in a *Case Note* under an Intensive Support Service Event.
- 5.3 Closure of IIPS, HP, or IFKC placements will occur as per sections 2 or 3 of this procedure. Additionally, within five (5) business days of the closure of an IIPS, HP, or IFKC placement, the allocated FKCP will complete the *Intensive Program Exit Report*. Upon completion, this is to be sent to the Department and, if requested, the carer/s, child/young person, and/or Placement Services (PS).
- 5.4 Upon completion of these tasks, all information is finalised in Penelope CMS and the end date recorded on the child's *Placement Information and Respite Log*.
- 5.5 If the child is returning to a general placement, the service file should not be closed, rather the *Placement Information* document should be updated to reflect the closure date in the Intensive program and the opening placement date in the general program.

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6. IIPS Therapeutic Supports closure

- 6.1 Following the conclusion of Counselling or Occupational Therapy (OT) intervention, the Counsellor/Caseworker will prepare a Final Report (*IIPS Progress/Final Report*) that summarises the interventions and provides recommendations for future actions.
- 6.2 In consultation with the MC Privacy Officer, the Team Manager (TM) or Program Manager (PM)/Senior Program Manager (SPM) has discretion to provide the family with a copy of any exit or closure reports. When determining whether to provide these reports, they should consider:
 - Whether the information in the report might harm, or cause distress to, the family;
 - Whether information is contained in the report that may not be known to the family (e.g. information obtained from Departmental file reviews); or
 - Whether provision of the report might breach the privacy of an individual.
- 6.3 Exit or closure reports should be reviewed by the TM or PM/SPM to ensure consistency and best practice. The TM or PM/SPM will sign the report. Where the TM has conducted the sessions and prepared the report, the PM/SPM must sign-off.
- 6.4 Where the referral has been provided by a Child Safety Service Centre (CSSC), any closure/exit report should be provided back to the referring individual or the current Child Safety Officer (CSO).

7. Records management

- 7.1 All documentation regarding a child/young person's exit is filed in the relevant Service Event of the child's file and, where appropriate, linked to the carer's file.
- 7.2 The allocated Business Support Coordinator/Officer is responsible for organising the transfer of child/young person records to the Department through the secure Axway Portal, in line with *GOV WI FS Archiving Files*.
- 7.3 A 'File Closure' *Case Note* is completed in the Exit Service Event to specify the reason for closure.
- 7.4 The *Placement Information and Respite Log* is used to track placements for one carer. Should a child move into a new placement, the Service File must be closed, and a new *Placement Information* document completed for the new carer. However, if the child and family move from the general program to the intensive program, only the dates of the move between programs should be updated on the *Placement Information* document.
- 7.5 Saving emails to client and carer files requires FKCPs to paste an unformatted copy into a *Case Note*.
- 7.6 All documentation is to be uploaded to Penelope within ten (10) working days. Where uploading is anticipated to take longer than this, FKCPs must negotiate this with their Line Manager. At the Line Manager's discretion an additional five (5) working days can be provided. Where this decision is made, the Line Manager must record a *Case Note* in the relevant client/carers file.
- 7.7 The allocated BSO is responsible for adding any dates to the *Placement Information* document, and for the opening and closing of service files.
- 7.8 Refer to the *FS IP FKC Document Filing Guide* for further guidance on CMS recordkeeping requirements and naming conventions.

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Definitions

Business Support Officer (BSO)

The allocated employee who has been delegated to undertake specific administrative tasks.

Foster and Kinship Care Practitioner (FKCP)

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 (RD)

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

Working Days

At work, in the office (does not include leave/days off etc.).

References

Departmental Case Plan
 Departmental Child Safety Practice Manual (CSPM)
 Departmental Conclusion of Placement Form
 Departmental Placement Agreement
 FS DOC FKC Program Overview
 FS IP FKC Document Filing Guide
 FS PROC FKC Records Management
 FS PROC FKC Referral Matching and Placement
 GOV WI FS Archiving Files

Related Documents

Penelope Forms:

Assessment and Intervention Plan
 Case Note
 Placement Information and Respite Log
 Intensive Program Exit Report
 IIPS Progress/Final Report
 Placement Information

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