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Service Stream	Families and Young People Services	Category	Foster and Kinship Care
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Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 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', <i>Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)</i>. Safe caring – each child or young person in foster/kinship care is free from physical, sexual, emotional abuse, neglect, or exploitation whilst in a foster care placement.

Scope
<p>This procedure applies to all employees, volunteers, and contractors engaged within Foster and Kinship Care (FKC) programs across Mercy Community's (MC) Families and Young People Services (FYPS).</p> <p>This procedure relates to general FKC placements, Intensive Intervention Placement Support (IIPS), High Plus (HP), and Intensive Foster and Kinship Care (IFKC) programs.</p>

Procedure
<p>1. Carer assessments and approval – overview</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 After potential foster or kinship carers have been recruited and have been considered appropriate through the enquiry process, they must then be approved as foster or kinship carers prior to any consideration of placement. 1.2 Some carers will have a Provisional approval in place where the Department of Child Safety, Seniors, and Disability Services (the Department) has determined this is in the child's best interests (refer to Section 5). 1.3 Carer assessments are guided by the MC Foster and Kinship Care Practitioners (FKCPs) undertaking assessments must be aware of the Department's processes and timeframes and should undertake assessments in partnership with regional Placement Services (PS). 1.4 Central to any Carer assessment is consideration of the applicant's ability to meet the Statement of Standards of Care, as prescribed in the <i>Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)</i>. 1.5 This procedure does not address renewals of current carers (see <i>FS PROC FKC Carer Renewals</i>). 1.6 Reports will be run monthly by the allocated Business Support Officer (BSO) and provided to the Team Manager (TM), Program Manager (PM)/Senior Program Manager (SPM), Regional Director (RD), and allocated FKCPs to anticipate and prepare for the expiry of carer approvals and the tracking of Application for Approval expiry and extension dates. Reports can be found under the worker's My Profile in Penelope, clicking on View My Profile, and Documents. <p>2. Conducting carer assessments</p>

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- 2.1 Following a foster carer recruitment process; identification of a kinship carer, referral from PS, or another avenue, the Line Manager will allocate the assessment of a potential carer to a FKCP or negotiate with an external assessor/organisation and provide a timeframe for completion.
- 2.2 The allocated FKCP will be directed by the Department's *Child Safety Practice Manual* regarding the assessment process, taking note of the type of carer the applicant wishes to become and the relevant process associated. Refer to the *Department's Form 3A Guidelines for completing assessment report (initial approval only)* for further guidance on the assessment process. The 2.3A carer assessment should commence once an APA is lodged, see the *Child Safety Practice Manual* for further information pertaining to this process.
- 2.3 The allocated BSO should lodge the APA with PS and save a copy in the relevant Assessment Service Event. The lodgement date should be noted in the Event *Notes* by clicking on the *Edit* button in the Service Event.
- 2.4 For guidance when completing the initial carer assessment report, refer to the *Department's Guidelines for Completing an Assessment Report – Initial Approval Only* or the *Kinship Carer Initial Assessment Report Guidelines*.
- 2.5 The need for discretionary checks, as per the *Child Safety Practice Manual*, can be considered when additional information is required to inform whether the carer applicant is a suitable person to be reapproved as a foster or kinship carer.
- 2.6 All information gathered during the assessment will be collated in a report (the Department's *Child Safety Practice Manual* will provide a template for this).
- 2.7 Following the initial completion of the report, the allocated FKCP will submit the report to the Line Manager for quality assurance. The Line Manager will not change the assessment of the allocated FKCP, however, if there is a disagreement of opinion or assessment, this should be discussed with the allocated FKCP. Where these differences of opinion cannot be resolved, the PM/SPM may be consulted. The PM/SPM will escalate to the RD, as required.
- 2.8 If, following the completion of the assessment report and after discussions with the Line Manager, the allocated FKCP is recommending that the applicant not be approved as a foster carer, they must meet with the applicant to discuss the recommendation. The reasons for this recommendation will be discussed and the applicant will be advised that they may either:
 - Withdraw from the approval process; or
 - Prepare a written report to be included in the MC assessment report.
- 2.9 If the applicant is being recommended for approval, the allocated FKCP will send the report to the applicant for review, comment, and authorisation prior to this being submitted to the Department.
- 2.10 For general foster carers where approval is being recommended, the allocated FKCP will also develop a proposed *Foster Carer Agreement* in consultation with the applicant, to accompany the submitted assessment in addition to the other standard assessment documents such as the *Household Safety Study* and the *Carer Applicant Health and Wellbeing Questionnaires*.
- 2.11 Once the assessment has been completed, quality assured and signed by the applicant, it will be submitted to the relevant PS along with all other required documentation by the allocated BSO.

3. Outsourcing of assessments

- 3.1 In some circumstances, there may be a requirement to outsource an assessment to an external party. Outsourcing of assessments requires approval from the Line

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- Manager and the appropriate financial delegate in each region (refer to *GOV POL Delegations of Authority*).
- 3.2 MC uses dedicated individuals and organisations, whereby both parties enter a legally binding contract.
 - 3.3 At the commencement of each assessment, a *Schedule 4 – Form of Order* is to be completed and signed by the Line Manager, and then signed by the external assessor/organisations delegate and witnesses.
 - 3.4 A *Schedule 5 – Confidentiality* form needs to be completed by all new assessors.
 - 3.5 The *Schedule 4* and *Schedule 5* are to be emailed through to the MC Contract Officer.
 - 3.6 Details of the assessor completing the assessment should be recorded by the TM or BSO in the *Carer Household Profile*.
 - 3.7 An *FKC Privacy Agreement & Authority to Gain or Release Information Form* should be completed with the carer prior to releasing any personal information to the assessor.

4. Applicant approval

- 4.1 When MC receives the certificate of approval, the Line Manager will allocate the carer/family to an allocated FKCP to commence support and monitoring (see *FS PROC FKC Carer Induction* and *FS PROC FKC Carer Support and Monitoring*).
- 4.2 The allocated FKCP will:
 - Organise an induction for the new carer/s; and
 - Enrol the carer in upcoming training courses.
- 4.3 The BSO will ensure all assessment documentation is on file in an Assessment Service Event on the Carer's Assessment and Approval Service File in Penelope Client Management System (CMS).
- 4.4 Should an addendum be requested by the Child Safety Service Centre (CSSC) Manager or Foster Care Panel members, the *FKC Assessment Addendum Report* will be used as a template, noting regional protocols and local needs.
- 4.5 As per Section 2 of this Procedure, addendums are required to be submitted to the Line Manager for quality assurance.

5. Provisional approval

- 5.1 Most provisional approvals that are received come via PS, where children are placed immediately with kin, or in some cases with a General approved carer, under a single-child-only Provisional approval. In some cases, the provisional approval process has been completed by the CSO, with a full assessment and support required by the program.
- 5.2 Where a foster or kinship care placement is sought by carers whose application for approval is currently pending, provisional approval may be granted. FKCPs will liaise with Line Managers to ensure that the relevant region or PS is willing to consider provisional approval.
- 5.3 Provisional approval assessments will be based around the needs of specific child/ren or young person/s and will not be general in nature.
- 5.4 Where provisional approval is being sought, the allocated FKCP will discuss this with the Line Manager in the first instance. A decision to seek provisional approval for a carer will be based on the best interests of the child as well as potential risks, support and monitoring that will be offered and how far along the applicant is in the assessment and approval process.

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- 5.5 If the Line Manager is satisfied that provisional approval is to be considered, they will liaise with the allocated FKCP to ensure the following documentation is prepared:
- A completed *Departmental Household Safety Study*;
 - A completed *Departmental Carer Applicant Health and Wellbeing Questionnaire*;
 - A sufficiently completed *Departmental Application for Initial Approval – Form 3 A (APA)*;
 - A completed *Departmental Provisional Approval Assessment*;
 - A completed *Blue Card Application* form; and
 - Any other form required by the Department to progress approval.
- 5.6 The documentation is then forwarded to the Line Manager with a recommendation for provisional approval. The Line Manager will review the application and, if satisfied will arrange lodgement with the Department, by the BSO.
- 5.7 Provisional approval must be approved by a CSSC Manager or Departmental RD. If provisional approval is granted, written confirmation must be obtained from the relevant PS or CSSC prior to the placement of any children or young people.
- 5.8 Provisional approval can be granted for sixty (60) days, with an extension of an additional thirty (30) days (request in writing to PS). Therefore, ninety (90) days in total to have the *Initial Assessment* finalised and approved by the Departmental delegate.
- 5.9 After receiving confirmation that a provisional approval has been approved, the allocated FKCP will undertake the following administrative tasks:
- Organise an induction for the new carer/s as soon as practicable; and
 - Enrol the carer in relevant upcoming training courses as appropriate.
- 5.10 All documentation relevant to the provisional approval is stored in the 'Attachments' of the carer's Assessment and Approval Service File. All tracking of APA expiry, provisional approval expiry and extension dates, document signature dates, and certificate of approval dates, should be recorded in the *Kinship Care Approval* or *Foster Care Approval* forms. Whilst provisionally approved, applicants may be supported and monitored more intensively until the final approval is received.
- 5.11 Where an applicant's provisional approval is withdrawn or their carer application is refused by the Department, the allocated FKCP will liaise with the Line Manager and the PS about placement issues.
- 5.12 All provisional approval dates will be added to the *Kinship Carer Approval* or *Foster Carer Approval* form by the allocated BSO upon receiving the *Certificate of Approval*. All *Certificates of Approval* should be uploaded as attachments to a Certificate of Approval Service Event by the allocated BSO.

6. Permanent care assessment

- 6.1 When considering carers to become long-term guardians for children and young people through the application of a Permanency Care Order (PCO) or Child Protection Order granting guardianship to Other, the Department may ask MC for an assessment of the carer/s capacity and suitability to fulfil the requirements of the intended order. The final decision regarding the carer/s suitability is made by the relevant delegated Departmental Officer.
- 6.2 If an assessment of carer/s capacity to provide permanent care for a child or young person is requested by the Department, the allocated FKCP will inform their Line Manager and complete *Permanent Care Assessment*. Assessment will be based upon a review of MC records and the allocated FKCP's experience of supporting and monitoring the carer household.

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- 6.3 Following the initial completion of the assessment, the allocated FKCP will submit the report to their Line Manager for quality assurance. The Line Manager will not change the assessment of the allocated FKCP, however if there is a disagreement of opinion or assessment, this should be discussed with the allocated FKCP. Where these differences of opinion cannot be resolved, the PM/SPM may be consulted. PM/SPM will escalate to the RD, as required.
- 6.4 Once the assessment has been completed and quality assured it will be submitted to the relevant CSSC. A copy of the assessment and lodgement email will be placed a Service Event named *PCO Assessment*.

7. Records management

- 7.1 The Assessment and Approval Service File created at the enquiry stage will be used for any carer assessment, induction, training, and privacy records, whether the applicant is eventually approved or not.
- 7.2 Within this Service File, an Initial Assessment Service Event should be created that contains all assessment documentation.
- 7.3 Where a carer application is withdrawn or not approved by the Department, the Service File will be closed by the allocated BSO at the TM's direction, in line with *GOV WI Archiving Files*. A copy of all documentation is sent to the Department.
- 7.4 When provisional approval or the *Certificate of Approval* has been received from the Department the details of the *Certificate of Approval* to be entered into the *Kinship Carer Approval or Foster Carer Approval* document.
- 7.5 All documentation, including handwritten notes, will be scanned, and filed in the Initial Assessment Service Event by the allocated BSO. Any changes in the *Foster Carer Agreement* should be noted by the allocated BSO in the *Carer Agreement Summary* on the carer/s Service File.
- 7.6 Copies of the carer's Blue Card, or a notice of validation/confirmation of their Blue Card, must also be attached to the Blue Card Service Event on the Carer's Assessment and Approval Service File and updated on the *Carer/AHM Blue Card* document.
- 7.7 Other residents in the Carers household over the age of 18 (adult household members – AHM) must have a *Carer/AHM Blue Card* document completed, including the Blue Card details, and uploading photocopies or documents to the Blue Card Service Event.
- 7.8 Saving emails requires FKCPs to copy and clear the formatting of emails before pasting them into a *Case Note* within a Service Event. All documentation is to be uploaded to the CMS within ten (10) working days. Where uploading is anticipated to take longer than this, FKCPs must negotiate this with their Line Manager.
- 7.9 Refer to the *FS IP FK Document Filing Guide* for further guidance on CMS recordkeeping requirements and naming conventions.

Definitions

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.

Program Manager/Senior Program Manager (PM/SPM)

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The employee tasked with the daily operational management of the program.

Regional Director (RD)

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

References

Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)
Department's Child Safety Practice Manual (CSPM)
Department's Kinship Carer Initial Assessment Report Guidelines
Departmental Form Guidelines for completing assessment report (initial approval only)
Departmental Form Provisional Approval Assessment
FS IP FKC Document Filing Guide
FS PROC FKC Carer Induction
FS PROC FKC Carer Renewals
FS PROC FKC Carer Support and Monitoring
GOV POL Delegations of Authority
Schedule 4 – Form of Order
Schedule 5 – Confidentiality Form

Related Documents

Penelope Forms:

FKC Assessment Addendum Report
FKC Carer Agreement Summary
FKC Carer Household Profile
FKC Carer/AHM Blue Card
FKC Case Note
FKC General Carer Approval
FKC Kinship Carer Approval
FKC Permanent Care Assessment
FKC Privacy Agreement & Authority to Gain or Release Information Form

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