

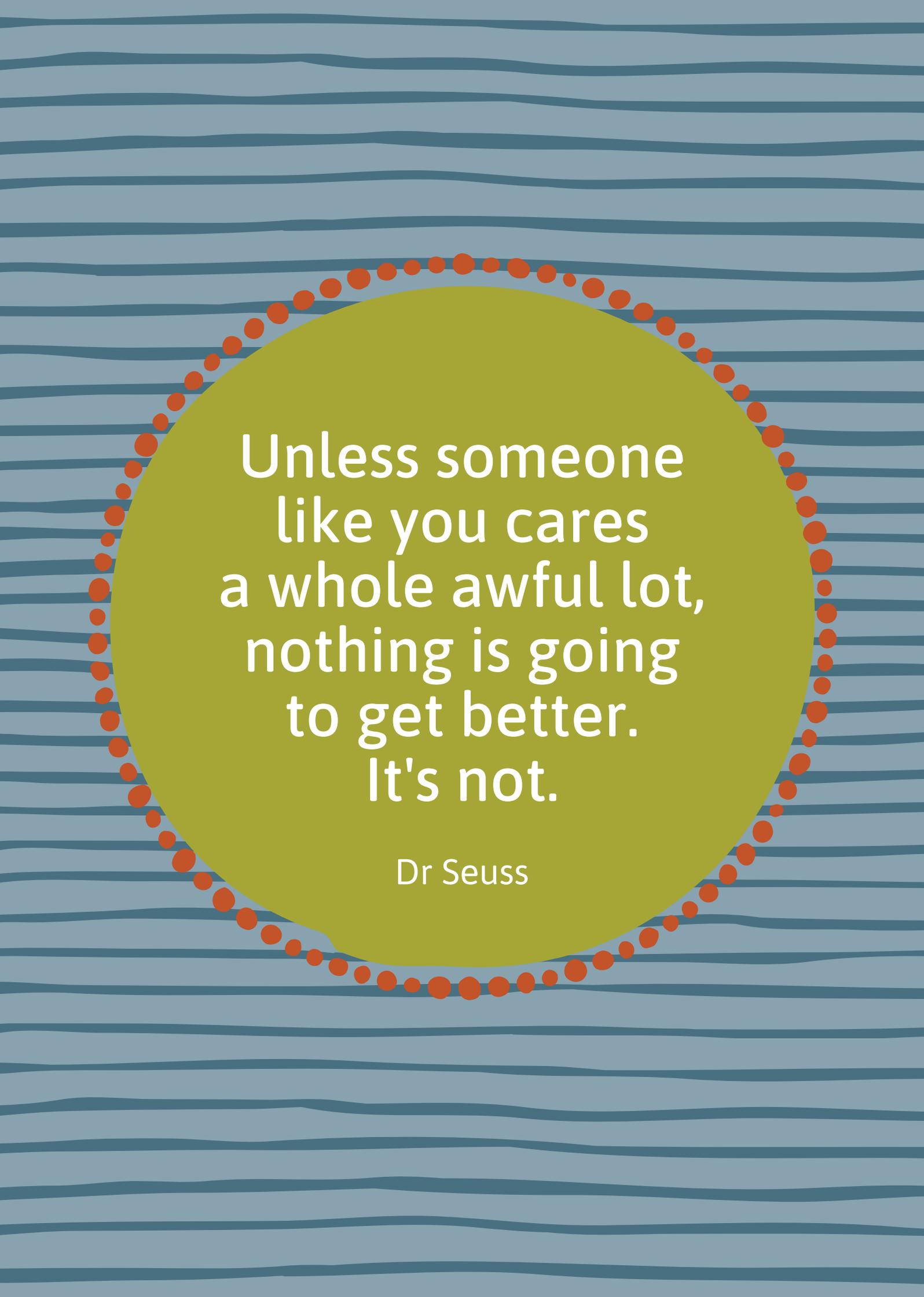


Government of Western Australia
Department of Communities

Information to
help you on your
caring journey

Family Care Handbook





Unless someone
like you cares
a whole awful lot,
nothing is going
to get better.
It's not.

Dr Seuss

Acknowledgement of Country and People

The Department of Communities acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as traditional custodians of this land. It pays respect to their Elders past, present, and future. It recognises the long history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on this land and acknowledges that the past is not just the past. The past, the present and the future are, as they always are, part of each other – bound together.

Foreword

The Family Care Handbook (the Handbook) has been developed by the Department of Communities (the Department) to support you in your important role as a family carer.

Family care is now the most common care arrangement for children in out-of-home care (OOHC) in Western Australia (WA), and this trend is increasing.

We recognise the important role of family and significant others in providing safe and stable care for children when they are unable to live at home. Keeping children connected to their family networks results in much better outcomes for children and their families, and we would not be able to do this without the invaluable contribution made by you and other family members, who step forward at a time of great difficulty to love and care for this child.

The Handbook covers the journey towards becoming an approved family carer, and provides a range of information to assist you in caring for a child. Included are links to a number of information sheets relevant for family carers, and a glossary to explain the terminology used throughout the Handbook.

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people make up a significant percentage of children placed in family care, a section of the Handbook is devoted to their needs. Information is provided about the particular requirements when caring for Aboriginal children, which must be considered to ensure their best interests and cultural needs are met.

If you need information on any matter not covered in the Handbook, or have any questions, speak with the child protection worker or another worker at your district office.

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THE CARER ASSESSMENT STAGE

Your Child Protection Worker will support you to be assessed for approval as a family carer.

You will be provided with a range of resources and learning opportunities to support you in this journey.

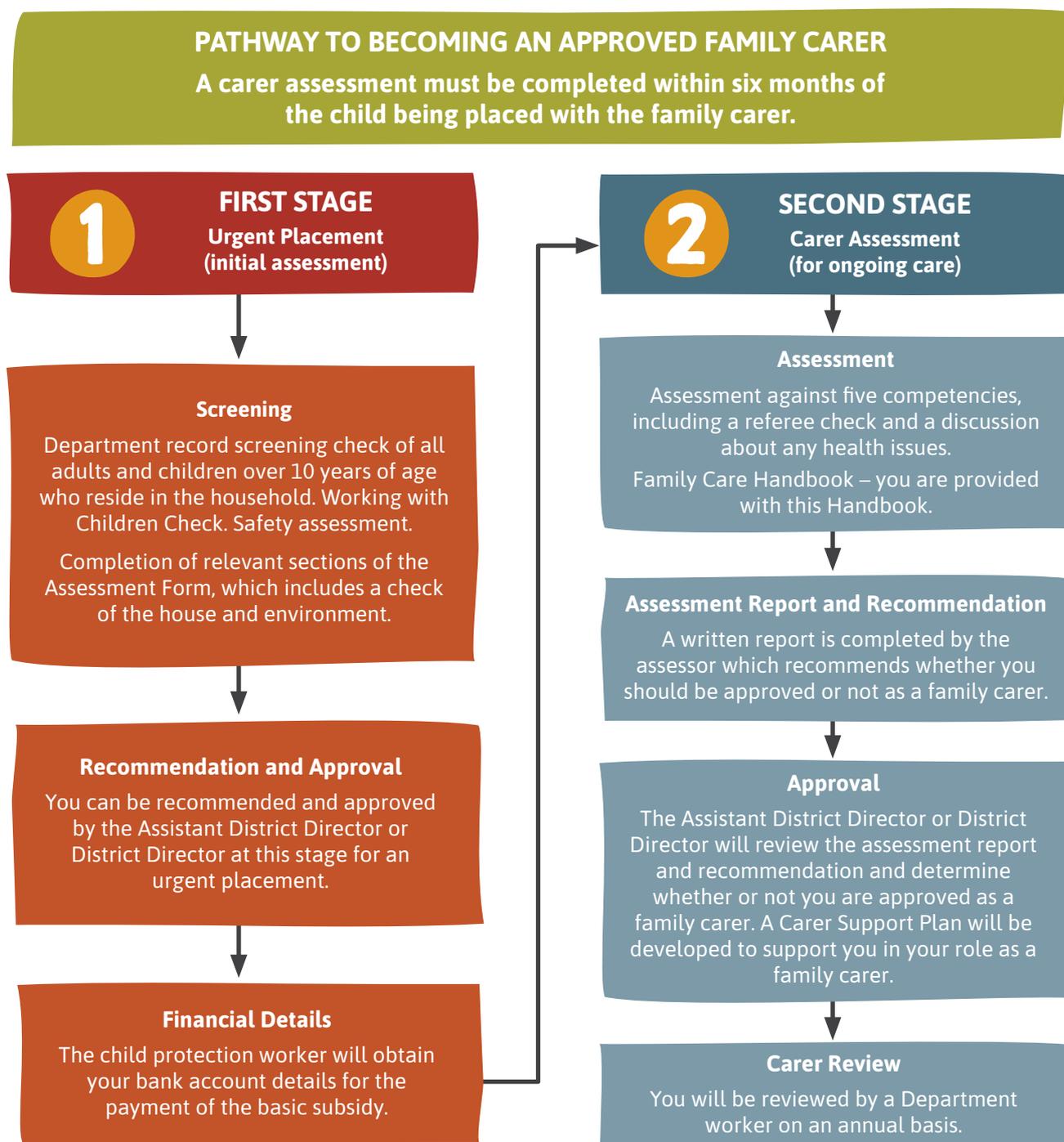
These learning opportunities will primarily take the form of conversations with your case worker.

A Carer Support Plan will also be developed with

you to provide you with the necessary supports to fulfill your role as a family carer.

Once you have achieved formal approval, your caseworker will undertake annual reviews to ensure both you and the child are being adequately supported.

Detailed below is a diagram outlining the pathways to becoming a family carer.



SCREENING

The Department collects your personal information in the Record Check Consent Form in order to obtain a Nationally Coordinated Criminal History Check (Criminal History Check) and conduct a Client and Child Protection Check.

A Criminal History Check and a Client and Child Protection Check are obtained to assist in determining whether you are suitable as a family carer. All adults over the age of 18 are required to fill out and submit their own Record Check Consent Form.

Criminal History Check and Providing Your Consent

All applicants must undergo a Criminal History Check.

By signing the Record Check Consent Form, you are providing your consent for your Criminal History Information to be disclosed to the Department. Criminal History Information may include outstanding charges, warrant information and criminal convictions/findings/pleas of guilt recorded against you.

The information provided by you in the Record Check Consent Form and any information received by the Department in the assessment process will not be used without your prior consent for any reason other than for the assessment of your suitability as a family carer.

Assessment of Criminal History Check Information

The Department undertakes an individual assessment of the outcome of your Criminal History Check.

If there is any adverse information identified, this will normally be disclosed to you and discussed with you as part of your assessment.

A criminal record will not automatically mean you aren't suitable to be a family carer. In making a decision, the Department will consider the offence history and consider:

- Does the criminal conviction relate to you?
- Is the national or overseas record accurate?
- What is the nature and severity of the

offence(s)?

- What is the relevance of the offence(s) to your application to be a family carer?
- How long ago did the offence(s) take place?
- Does your criminal history show a pattern of behaviour?
- What were circumstances surrounding the offence(s) committed?
- Were you a juvenile or an adult when the offence(s) were committed?
- What has your life been like since the offence(s) were committed? e.g. the record of employment and good reports by past employers or your current manager;
- What was the penalty or sentence for the offence(s) committed?

When assessing your offence history, in addition to the above questions, special consideration should be given to how your criminal history affects your ability to meet the competencies.

Such offences that would be considered adverse include:

- Sexual offences;
- Offences of a violent nature (e.g., assault occasioning bodily harm);
- Offences involving the use of firearms or other weapons;
- Drug offences (particularly dealing/trafficking); or
- Any other offence(s) that may impact on the Department's duty of care towards the child; and
- Information about behaviour that may seem less serious but forms a pattern over time and affects your suitability to care for a child will be considered (e.g. perpetration of family/domestic violence).

International criminal record checks are also required if you have not previously resided in Australia and/or have resided in Australia for less than five years.

Client and Child Protection Check

A Client and Child Protection Check is a check of the Department's client and child protection records. You and each household member that is listed on the Record Check Consent Form will have a Client and Child Protection Check completed, including children above the age of 10 and under the age of 18.

This information will also be reviewed as part of the assessment process and your suitability will be determined to provide care for a child in a way that promotes the wellbeing of the child and protects the child from harm.

Certain records are considered adverse and may affect your suitability to care for a child. Adverse information refers to matters where you:

- Have contributed to a child being harmed or neglected; or
- Pose a serious risk of harm to a child; or
- Have evidenced behaviour or acts endangering life or health, e.g., serious drug abuse, assaults of a sexual or violent nature; or
- Information about behaviour that may seem less serious but forms a pattern over time and affect your suitability to care for a child will be considered (e.g., perpetration of family/domestic violence).

Working with Children Check

The Working with Children (WWC) Check is a compulsory criminal record check under the *Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004* (WWC Act). The WWC Check is required for people who work with children under the age of 18 years in WA. This includes self-employed people, paid employees, employers/organisations, volunteers and unpaid people.

All foster, family and significant other carers, including the carer's spouse or defacto partner, require a WWC Check. You cannot be approved as a carer until you have a WWC Card, or have proof of lodgement of an application for a WWC Check. Single carers whose circumstances change (e.g. a new partner moves into the home) must advise the Department of the changes as soon as possible. The new partner must apply for a WWC Card.

Adult household members

It is assumed that all adult household members will provide some care or undertake activities with the foster child. They will therefore require a WWC Check. Examples include looking after the child while the carer is away, transporting the child to school or activities, or assisting the child with activities.

In the exceptional circumstance where an adult household member will not be caring for, supervising or undertaking other activities with the child and does not require a WWC Check, they must still have Criminal and Client and Child Protection checks through the Department's Screening Unit (as described above).

You must advise your child protection worker when a child living in your household turns 18 years of age and becomes an adult household member. The child (now an adult) must apply for a WWC Check.

COMPETENCIES FOR FAMILY CARER ASSESSMENT

“What are competencies and how can I meet them?”

Competencies are skills that cover five main areas required to provide for the safety and wellbeing of the child in your care. Meeting the competencies is important because it tells the Department you are able to provide safe and stable care for the child in your care. One of the aims of the family care assessment period is to support you in developing your ability to meet these competencies.

Competency 1

(The carer is able to provide care for a child in a way that promotes the wellbeing of the child, promotes the child’s family and interpersonal relationships, and protects the child from harm)

Can you provide care for a related child in a way that promotes their wellbeing, including cultural identity, promotes the child’s relationships with family whilst also protecting the child from harm?

- Make sure the many needs of the child in your care are addressed.
- Promote relationships between the child and significant others.
- Keep the child in your care safe.
- Make sure the child is connected to their culture and country.

Competency 2

(The carer is able to provide a safe living environment for a child)

Are you able to provide a safe living environment for the child?

- Maintain a physically and emotionally safe environment for the child.
- Plan to prevent crisis situations and minimise the risk to the child, your family and others.

Competency 3

(The carer is able to work cooperatively with the Department, a child’s family and other people when providing care for a child)

Are you willing to work with Department workers, the child’s family and other people who are involved with the child?

- Establish working relationships with each of the parties in the child’s Care Team (child, child’s family, your family, the Department).

- How will your attitude towards the child’s birth family and their cultural identity impact on the caring role, and ongoing relationship with the child’s parents, extended family and community/cultural practices?

Competency 4

(The carer is able to take responsibility for the development of his or her competency and skills as a carer)

Can you take responsibility for the development of your own knowledge and skills as a carer, with support from the Department?

- Connect with support people (i.e. Aboriginal practice leader, community specialist child protection worker) including other carers, and attend workshops and training on topics you would like to know more about. Ask the child protection worker for a copy of the Foster Carer Workshop Calendar or look on the Department’s website under the heading Fostering and Adoption – Information for current carers.

Competency 5

(The carer is a person of good character and repute)

Are you a person of good character and repute?

- Assessment of this category will include screening checks for any relevant criminal charges or convictions.

Cultural Responsiveness

While this is not a regulated competency, the opportunity to maintain connections with family, culture and country is important for all children, and is an important competency for carers.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY: PROVISIONAL PROTECTION AND CARE AND PROTECTION ORDERS

The child protection system in WA is governed by the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* (the Act). The Act gives child protection workers the authority to investigate matters where it is believed a child is at risk of significant harm from abuse and/or neglect and, when necessary, to apply to the Children's Court (the Court) to remove children from the care of their parents.

Children in family care are regarded as being in the care of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Department. In WA, the CEO is the Director General of the Department. In some situations, the CEO will have parental responsibility for a child, and in other situations, parents will continue to be responsible for the major decisions in the child's life. All children in the CEO's care will have a child protection worker who will act on behalf of the CEO.

It is important to know that a family carer does not have parental responsibility for the child. If a child is in provisional protection and care, the CEO, subject to any interim order in respect of the child, has responsibility for the day-to-day care, welfare and development of the child. This includes responsibility for making decisions about any medical or dental examination, treatment or procedure. The CEO has full parental responsibility for a child under a protection order (time-limited) or protection order (until 18).

Provisional protection and care

A child can be removed from their parents and taken into provisional protection and care by the Department before the case goes to the Court. For the child to be taken into provisional protection and care there must be sufficient grounds for believing the child is at substantial risk. The child may remain in provisional protection and care for a period of time before a protection order is granted. Many children in provisional protection and care are placed in foster or family care.

Protection orders

Where the Court determines that a child is in need of protection, a protection order may be made. The different types of orders are outlined below.

Protection order (time-limited)

This order gives the Department parental responsibility for the child for the period specified in the order. A time-limited order must not exceed two years and must end before the child reaches 18 years of age. The Department can apply to the Court to extend the order for further periods of up to two years. This is subject to approval by the CEO.

Protection order (until 18)

This order gives the Department parental responsibility for the child until they reach 18 years of age. The Court does not make this type of order unless it is satisfied that long-term arrangements should be made for the wellbeing of the child.

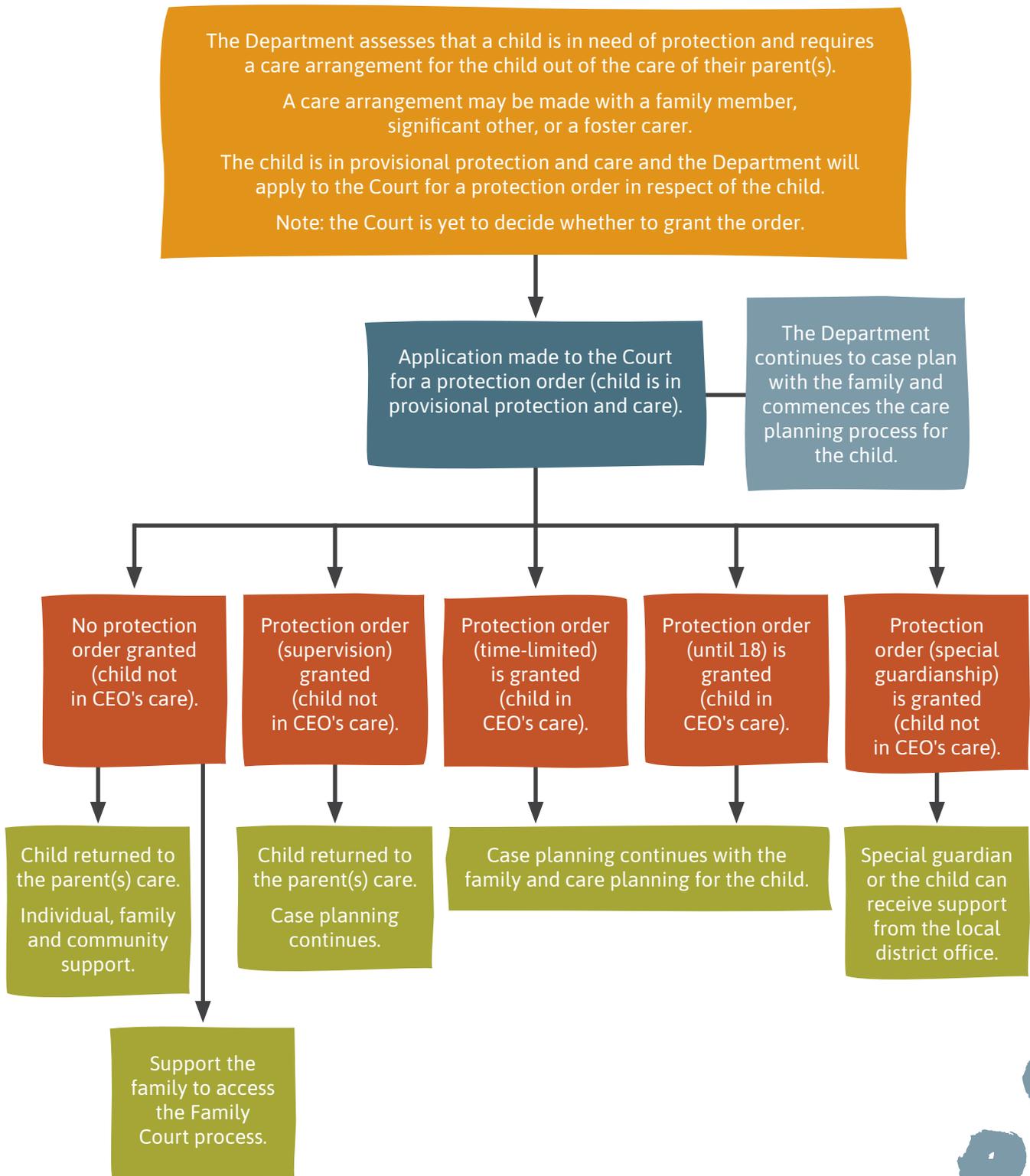
Protection order (supervision)

This type of order is when a child stays with their parents and the parents continue to have parental responsibility for the child, with close supervision by the Department.

Protection order (special guardianship)

A protection order (special guardianship) transfers parental responsibility to the child's carer (special guardian) until the child reaches 18 years of age. The Court will only grant this type of order when it is satisfied that it is in the child's best interests and the proposed special guardian is suitable, willing and able to provide a long-term stable care arrangement. The order may include conditions about contact between the child and their family.

CASE PLANNING - PROVISIONAL PROTECTION AND CARE



MONEY MATTERS

All children in the CEO's care living in an approved care arrangement are eligible for a subsidy payment that is paid to you as the carer. The subsidy payment is provided fortnightly at the end of each fortnight and is paid into your bank account.

The subsidy payment will be calculated from the first day the child was placed in your care, and will cease if the child needs to move to another care arrangement or goes back to live with their parents. The payment is to cover the day-to-day costs of maintaining the child, and is expected to cover the following:

- food and accommodation;
- heating, electricity and gas;
- local transport (20km return trips);
- outings and entertainment;
- haircuts;
- small toys for the child;
- general expenses related to personal hygiene items, basic general medical expenses and pharmaceutical requirements (non-prescription items); and
- incidental expenses for education, leisure and hobby activities which may be reasonably considered to be met by the standard age related subsidy.

The subsidy payment includes **pocket money** for all children up to 16 years of age (the amount is dependent on the child's age). The child protection worker can arrange for this to be paid into the child's bank account.

A **clothing allowance** is also paid for all children in care up to 16 years of age. It is paid three times per year (January, May and September). The payment will be deposited into your bank account or it can be paid into the child's account if you arrange this with the child protection worker. The payment ceases once children turn 16 years of age, as they are usually eligible for Youth Allowance.

The child protection worker will ask you to provide your bank account details so that the subsidy and clothing allowance can be paid into your account.

Additional financial supports

There are additional funds (case support costs) available to support children in care and their carers. These funds cover expenses that are above the general day-to-day costs covered by the subsidy payment and may be one-off or recurrent. Some of these costs include educational expenses, such as school uniforms and tuition, medical and dental expenses, excursions and camps, counselling, and legal costs.

When a child is initially placed with a carer, there may be some essential items that need to be purchased (such as a bed, bedding, clothing, toys etc.). These requirements should be discussed with the child protection worker, who will need to get approval for the expenses before they can be purchased.

Carers are required to discuss the need for additional costs with the child protection worker. The child protection worker will organise for the purchase of any additional items or payment of accounts, either directly with the supplier or by way of providing you with a pre-paid card. Carers are not reimbursed for purchases made outside of these arrangements - unless the expense is due to an emergency and prior approval cannot be obtained.

A **special needs loading subsidy** may be paid in addition to the basic subsidy where the child has extra care needs. This payment recognises the extra care tasks needed to manage the special needs of the child. Requests for special needs loading need to be discussed with the child protection worker.

Government allowances and benefits

Some children in the CEO's care are entitled to assistance from other State and Commonwealth departments. This is especially relevant to children with disability and young people who are eligible for Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY. Discuss this with the child protection worker.

Carers may also be eligible for Commonwealth Government assistance, as they are providing care for the child.

You should contact Services Australia to check your eligibility for any allowances or benefits you may be entitled to while caring for the child. You can contact the Department of Human Services on 13 24 68, check their website – www.humanservices.gov.au – or go to your local Centrelink Customer Service Centre. For carers who are also grandparents, you can contact the Grandparent Adviser Line on 1800 245 965.

Child care

If you need to enrol the child in child care, please discuss this with the child protection worker, as prior approval is required. If approved, the child protection worker will assist you with the enrolment process.

There is Commonwealth Government assistance available to carers to help with the cost of child care. For further details speak to your child protection worker.

MEDICARE CARDS FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

All children in the CEO's care will be issued with their own Medicare card. The child protection worker will apply to Medicare to obtain a card for the child. Young people can apply for their own Medicare card from the age of 15.

Where a child is in your care for less than one month, the child protection worker will provide you with the child's Medicare number only (not a duplicate card). This will be obtained from the child's parents if possible.

Once the Medicare card is received by the Department, the child protection worker will give the card to you to use on behalf of the child. The Medicare card must be returned to the child protection worker if the child moves to another care arrangement or if the child returns to his or her parents' care.

The fortnightly subsidy paid to you incorporates an amount to cover basic general medical treatment and pharmaceutical requirements (non-prescriptive) for a child in care. This includes costs incurred when a child needs to visit a medical practitioner for a short-term illness such as a cold. The child protection worker will give authority for you to sign the claim form where the doctor bulk bills.

Please note - it is not necessary to provide a child's Medicare card number to access medical treatment or to claim reimbursement for a Medicare service.

If a child is taken to a doctor who bulk bills, the doctor can obtain the child's card number directly from Medicare Australia for billing purposes. Alternatively, if you have paid for a Medicare service for a child in your care, you can be paid the Medicare benefit at a Medicare office by advising the officer that you have paid for the service. You will need to provide the child's full name and date of birth so they can be identified on the Medicare database.

If a child requires a medicine on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), it is a requirement that the child's Medicare card number is provided to the pharmacist to determine the child's eligibility. Where it is

not possible for you or the child to provide the Medicare card number (for example, the card has been lost or stolen), a pharmacist can use a pharmacy only 'Special Medicare number'. Alternatively, with the consent of you or the child, the pharmacist can telephone the PBS Information Line on Freecall 1800 020 613 to obtain the child's Medicare card number.

Paying for medical costs not covered by the basic subsidy payment

Health care planning assessments for children in care (see the Health Care Planning Information Sheet on the Department's website), and ongoing medical treatment, diagnostic tests and specialist health services' costs are not covered by the basic subsidy payment to carers. In these instances, the child protection worker will give authority for you to take the child to the health appointment and will provide consent for the service provider to conduct the assessment or provide treatment etc.

If the health care service requires immediate payment, you will need to pay the invoice and claim a rebate through Medicare. If there is a gap, seek reimbursement from the Department using the invoice. You can discuss this further with your caseworker if necessary.

If the medical treatment, diagnostic tests or specialist health services costs are expected to be high, discuss this with the child protection worker. They will arrange to pay the account.

The Medicare logo, featuring the word "medicare" in a stylized, lowercase font with a green-to-yellow gradient, set against a dark green rectangular background.

All children in the CEO's care can have their own Medicare card.
If you need more information, ask the child protection worker.

HEALTH CARE CARDS FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

Having a Health Care Card or Foster Child Health Care Card will give you concessions on health care costs. This means you can get cheaper prescription medicines through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and medical services funded by the Commonwealth government. The card can also give you access to concessions provided by State and local government agencies as well as some private businesses including household, education, and public transport costs. ConcessionsWA is an online resource where you can search and find details on available concessions including eligibility. You can also get information from the Department of Human Services website or directly at a Customer Service Centre.

Health Care Cards

If you are receiving certain Centrelink payments or supplements, or get the maximum rate of Family Tax Benefit Part A, you will automatically receive a Health Care Card. The cardholder's partner and dependent children may be covered by the card and receive concessions.

Health Care Cards for Children in the CEO's Care

If you are not eligible for a Health Care Card, you can claim a Foster Child Health Care Card through the Department of Human Services (Centrelink) on behalf of the child. You do not need to be an approved foster or family carer with the Department to be eligible to claim a Foster Child Health Care Card.

The card is not subject to an income or assets test. It will be issued in the name of the child, but you can use it to access cheaper PBS medications and other concessions and services on behalf of the child. The card is automatically reissued when expired if you are still caring for the child.

The child protection worker will assist you to make the claim. They will give you a signed letter to the Centrelink Processing Team that outlines the child's details and states that he or she is currently in your care. The child protection worker will also provide you with a copy of the child's birth certificate and the Court Order (or the application for the Court Order) to submit with the Centrelink claim form. The child protection worker will help you to complete the claim form if required.



FURTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY LIKE TO ASK



FURTHER INFORMATION YOU MAY NEED

Many family carers know the child very well, while others may have not cared for the child before. Knowing as much as possible will help you to meet the needs of the child in your care. We encourage you to ask your child protection worker for as much detail as is known about the child. Having a familiar and predictable environment will support the child to settle more readily.

WHY IS THE CHILD IN CARE?

- What has resulted in the child needing a care arrangement? What harm has occurred or what is the risk of harm?
- What does the child know about these reasons? Has any explanation been provided, and if so, what was it? Consistent explanations are in the best interests of the child.
- Will the child be going back to their parents?
- What are the plans for longer term care (if any, at this stage)?
- When will you know how long the child will need to live with you?
- When is the next Children's Court hearing and what will this decide? Will you be involved in court proceedings?
- What are the safety issues?
- Is there a safety plan for the child?

HEALTH

- Who is the child's doctor?
- Are there any other health professionals you need to know about (i.e. psychologist, allied health services such as Aboriginal Medical Service, etc)?
- What should you do if the child needs emergency treatment or is sick and needs to see the doctor?
- Does the child have his/her own Medicare card yet? (Refer to Medicare cards for Children in Care section in this Handbook)
- How can you get a Health Care Card for the child? (Refer to Health Care Cards for Children in Care section in this Handbook)
- What if the child needs prescription medication – what should you do?
- Does the child have any special needs/disabilities? Has the child been given a formal diagnosis and do you understand what this is? If so, how has/should the child's care be managed?
- Am I entitled to a Special Needs Loading Subsidy?
- Does the child have any upcoming appointments you need to take them to (medical, dental, therapy)?
- Is there any information on allergies/urgent health issues/current treatments that need to be passed onto you?
- When will you be given the child's Health Passport? (Refer to the Health Care Planning Information Sheet on the Department's website)

SCHOOLING

- Where does the child attend school?
- Who enrolls the child in a school in your area?
- Are there any issues or challenges and if so, what supports are in place?
- Is there an education plan? (Refer to the Documented Education Plans Information Sheet on the Department's website)
- If the child has a school excursion or special activity, who needs to provide consent for them to attend?

CULTURE AND IDENTITY

- Does the child have any cultural or religious practices that I should know about and understand?

- Do I need to connect with organisations and services in my area to help the child stay connected to their culture? How do I find these services?
- Does the child have any food preferences that I should be aware of?
- How can my family help the child to celebrate their culture?
- How can I consult with or talk to in the Department to understand the child's culture and identity better?

EXPECTATIONS OF YOU

- What are the Department's expectations of you as a carer?
- Will you need to attend any meetings? If so, how often?
- Who might attend these meetings?
- What decisions can you make for the child without consulting the Department?
- What do you have to do to become an approved carer?

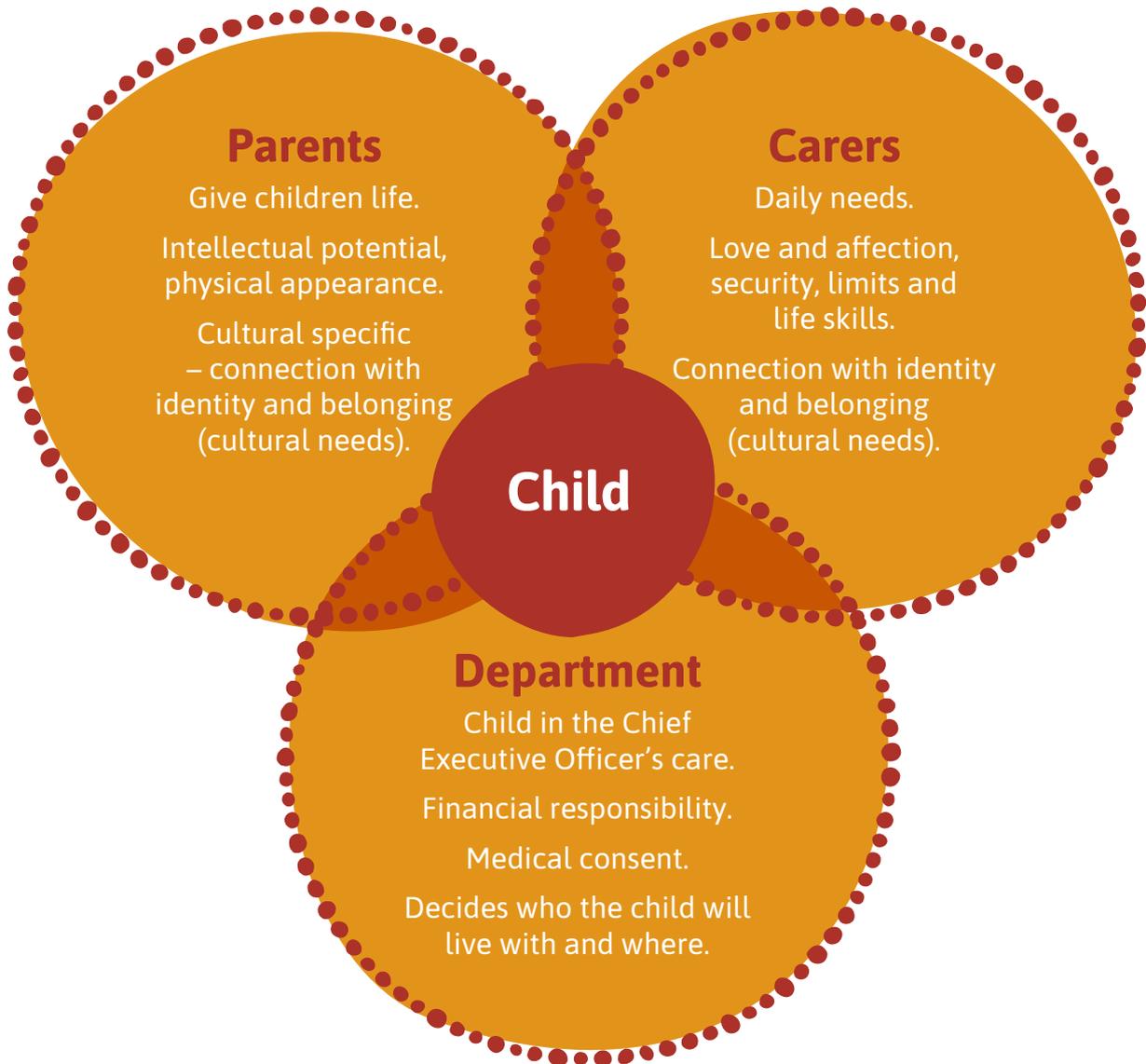
FAMILY CONTACT

- Where are the child's mother, father and siblings now?
- Can the child still see or hear from their mother, father and siblings without any hassles? If so, when and how?
- Will contact be direct or indirect, and what supervision requirements are there? Are you required to do anything during family contact visits?
- Who arranges family contact visits?
- What should you do if the child's parents make contact unexpectedly?

SUPPORTS NEEDED

- Where does the child attend child care? Do you have to enrol the child in a child care centre in your area?
- Is there any additional support you need to care for this child?
- What short break care is available or necessary for you?
- For young children in particular, it is useful to gather and provide information on routines, comfort items etc.
- If you need to speak to someone, who is your main contact within the Department?

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP



Adapted from Vera Fahlberg's model in "A child's journey through placement"

Children in the CEO's care, raised by a family member, significant other or foster carer will experience three different 'parents' (Parents, Carers and the Department).

The three 'parents' must work together to meet the children's needs and make good decisions.

It is up to each of us to make sure the child does not 'slip through gaps' created if/when we are not working together.



YOUR ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Parenting

- Provide day-to-day care for the child.
- Promote/encourage cultural identity.
- Provide a safe, stable and nurturing home for the child.
- Keep the child's best interests (including cultural) in mind at all times.
- Keep the child's experiences confidential – respect their privacy.

Working together

- Keep in regular contact with the child protection worker, and work together to help the child.
- Share information with the Department that will help workers make the best possible decisions for the child's safety and wellbeing.

Yourself

- Take care of yourself and your relationships.
- Seek support from the Department if you are having a difficult time, if things get tough, or you need assistance.
- Join in on learning opportunities offered to assist you to become a better carer, understand some of the challenges the child has experienced, and develop skills to help them heal.

The Foster Carer Association of Western Australia provides a range of support, advocacy and training services. Their contact details are included in the Handbook.

THE NEEDS OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

Where possible, the Department aims to place Aboriginal children within their family or community networks. This allows Aboriginal children to develop a strong sense of individual and community identity, develop a positive self-image and be more resilient.

A culturally safe environment will enable and encourage an Aboriginal child or young person to identify with, and be proud of being Aboriginal, because their carer family recognises and values their Aboriginal identity and culture.

Aboriginal people are a diverse group, with their own languages, protocols and cultural norms. Aboriginal people have their own cultural values, beliefs and traditions, which impact on the way they raise their children and see the world, and this may be different from non-Aboriginal families. As a result, Aboriginal children who are cared for by non-Aboriginal families need to adapt to a new physical and cultural environment, where they may:

- value different things
- behave differently from your family

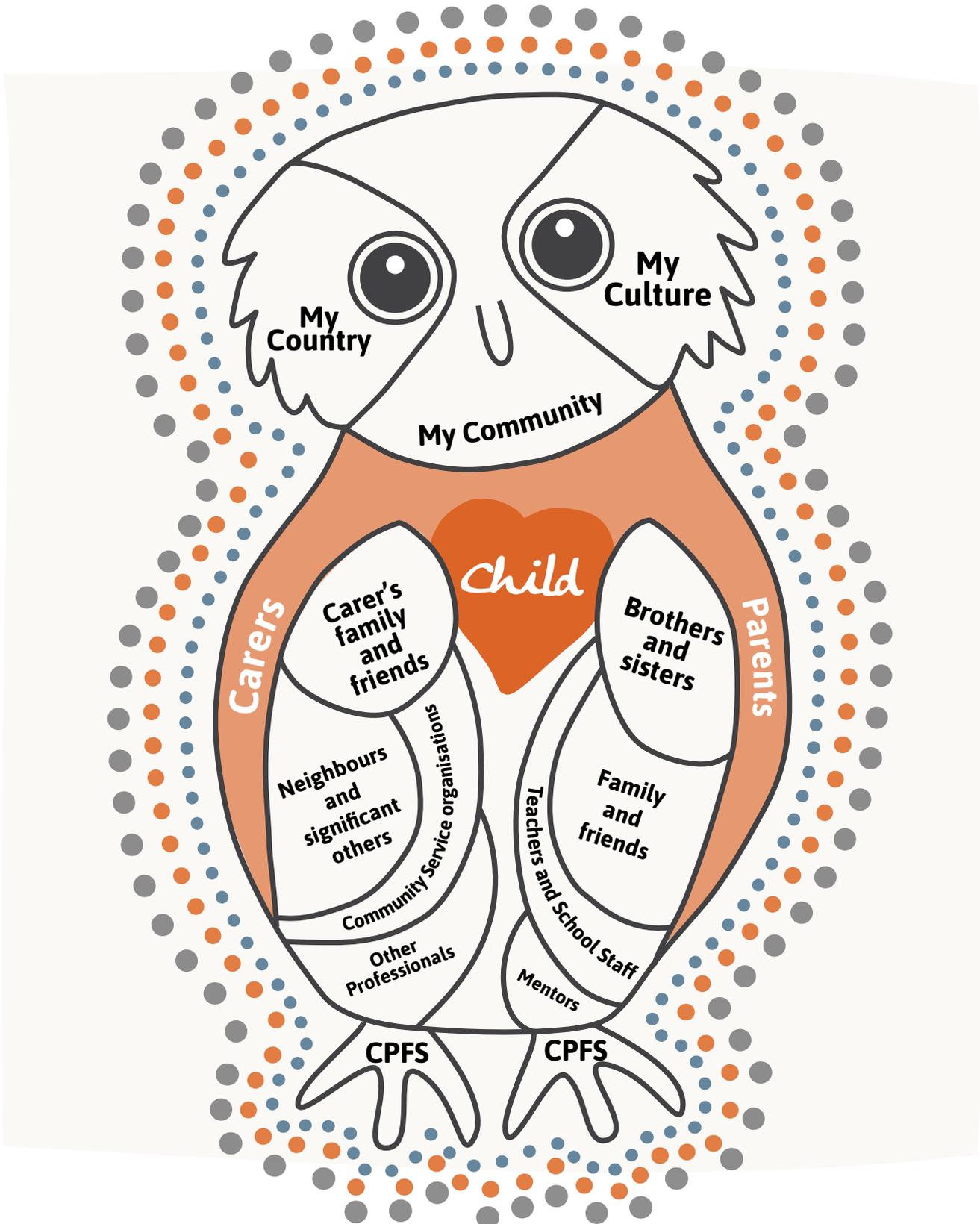
- have different understandings of social expectations
- view the world differently

If you are a non-Aboriginal family carer preparing to care for an Aboriginal child, it is important to reflect on your background, parenting practices, cultural background and values. It may be helpful to speak to your caseworker (and other relevant Aboriginal workers) to determine the key issues that need to be considered in caring for the child.

Your caseworker can help you manage the complexities of caring for children from different cultural backgrounds than your own.

THE CARE TEAM APPROACH

The care team approach highlights the importance of all members working together, with the child in the centre of their thinking and interactions with each other. Each care team member provides invaluable support and participates in meeting the needs of the child to keep them strong, connected and secure.



WHO'S WHO IN THE DISTRICT OFFICE

Assistant District Director (ADD)

The Assistant District Director oversees the day-to-day functioning of the district's operations, and works with other government and non-government agencies to develop improved outcomes for children, families and communities.

The ADD is responsible for the implementation of policies and practices to protect children and improve the quality of care that children in the CEO's care receive.

The ADD's responsibility relating to family care includes approving family and significant others as carers, overseeing casework, and supervising the work of the team leaders.

Team leader (TL)

The team leader is a senior worker who is responsible for the day-to-day supervision of a team of child protection workers. The team leader supervises their case management of children in the CEO's care, and confirms that necessary planning and reviews occur. The team leader chairs planning meetings and is responsible for the distribution of funds allocated to the team.

The team leader can be contacted if you have concerns about the case management of the child.

Child protection worker (CPW)

Each child in the CEO's care has a child protection worker who is responsible for the case management needs of the child. This requires maintaining contact and building relationships with the child, the child's family, the carer and their family, and other significant people in the child's life.

Planning and administrative work for the child is the responsibility of the child protection worker. This includes organising the subsidy payments to the carer, arranging contact and other appointments and care planning around the child's needs.

Senior child protection worker, placement services (SCPWPS)

The SCPWPS' responsibility is to guide and supervise the district care arrangement practices and procedures. Important roles of the SCPWPS include:

- **finding care arrangements for children who are brought into the CEO's care;**
- **providing support to carers;**
- **promoting and building partnerships with carers; and**
- **providing networking and learning opportunities for carers.**

Placement support worker

Some districts have a placement support worker, whose main role is to support carers and the care arrangement.

Aboriginal practice leader (APL)

The Aboriginal Practice Leader provides high level advice to the ADD and leadership team on issues relating to Aboriginal services that are proactive and responsive to the child's needs. There are a number of APLs throughout the state and located within each of the district offices. The APL can assist the district office with cases involving Aboriginal children, including quality of care, supporting Aboriginal carers, or non-Aboriginal carers caring for Aboriginal children, cultural learning opportunities and mentoring and supporting Aboriginal staff.

Psychologist

The district psychologist provides assessments, intervention and consultation. This includes support and training for carers as well as liaising with health and education professionals. If you feel the child in your care needs to see a psychologist, discuss this with your child protection worker.

Education officer (EO)

The education officer is a qualified teacher with specialist knowledge, skills and experience. The education officer provides information and advice to the child protection worker on education issues and supports for the child, their family and carers. This includes preparing a child for school, gaining access to education opportunities, and maintaining the child's participation in school and education.

Family resource employee (FRE)

The family resource employee provides practical support to the child protection worker on request. They may transport the child to appointments, school, etc. and sometimes supervise contact between the child and their parents and other family members. Many district offices have a family resource employee designated to support carers.

Youth and family support worker (YFSW)

The youth and family support worker assists in building relationships with isolated and vulnerable young people and their family who are disengaged from the Department and other services. They work alongside young people and their family, primarily through co-working and mentoring, to establish trusting relationships and provide support to those who are most 'at risk'.

'LOST IN TRANSLATION'

What do all the abbreviations mean?

GENERAL ABBREVIATIONS THAT MAY BE USED BY DEPARTMENT STAFF

CaLD	Culturally and linguistically Diverse
CCU	Crisis Care Unit
CAR	Care Arrangement Referral
DSC	Disability Services Commission
FDV	Family and Domestic Violence
SoS	Signs of Safety

ABBREVIATIONS - POSITIONS WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT

APL	Aboriginal Practice leader
CEO	Chief Executive Officer (also referred to as the Director General)
CPW	Child Protection Worker (also referred as case manager or caseworker)
DG	Director General (is the Chief Executive Officer)
DD	District Director
ADD	Assistant District Director
FRE	Family Resource Employee
SCPWPS	Senior Child Protection Worker Placement Services
SPDO	Senior Practice Development Officer
TL	Team leader

CHARTER OF RIGHTS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE

The Department has put together a list of things to inform how children and young people should be treated when they come into the CEO's care – it's called the 'Charter of Rights'. The list was developed in consultation with children and young people in care.

All the rights in the Charter are important, but children and young people in care said one thing was really important to them – their right to privacy.

Each child must receive a copy of the Charter and have their rights explained to them by their child protection worker.

The graphic is a colorful poster for the Charter of Rights. It features a blue background with white stars and colorful dots. At the top left is the Government of Western Australia logo and the text 'Government of Western Australia Department of Communities'. The title 'Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care' is written in large, bold letters across the top. Below the title are 12 numbered rights, each with a colored circle containing the number. At the bottom right, there is a section titled 'What is the Charter of Rights?' with a short paragraph explaining the charter. The logo for 'create FOUNDATION' is at the bottom right, and the number '004420171' is in the bottom right corner.

Government of Western Australia
Department of Communities

Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care

- 1** You have the right to receive proper health care, including medical and dental, when you need it.
- 2** You have the right to receive guidance and encouragement in your education, and activities such as hobbies, sport, music, dance and art.
- 3** You have the right to be kept informed about your care plan; and your views about the plan considered.
- 4** You have the right to be respected (and to treat others with respect too).
- 5** You have the right to raise an issue with your case worker, foster carer and/or Advocate for Children in Care.
- 6** You have the right to privacy and to have your personal belongings.
- 7** You have the right to have your views and opinions heard (and also listen to other people's views and opinions).
- 8** You have the right to get help and support to go to court regarding your care.
- 9** You have the right to have contact with family members and friends whenever possible.
- 10** You have the right to be encouraged and supported in your religion and culture.
- 11** You have the right to proper planning before leaving care.
- 12** You have the right to be safe.

What is the Charter of Rights?

The Charter is a list of things informing how children and young people should be treated when they come into the care of the Department of Communities in Western Australia. All of these rights are important; however, some might be more important to you than others.

create
FOUNDATION

004420171

Beyond the rights of children in care, the Foster Care Association of Western Australia has developed the following Charter of Rights for both Foster and Family Carers:

1. Carers have the right to be respected and included as significant stakeholders in the decision making process for the best interests of children and young people in their care.
2. Carers have the right to be recognised as having a significant relationship with the children or young people in their care.
3. Carers have a right to timely and readily available support. This will include debriefing following a critical incident, practical assistance and resources to enable them to fulfil their role.
4. Carers have the right to post-care support when children or young people leave their care and opportunities for further contact where the relationship is valuable to the child.
5. Carers have the right to be supported in their continued learning and skills development opportunities to enhance their capacity to provide safe, nurturing and competent care.
6. Carers, in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, have the right to freedom of expression of culture and religion.
7. Carers have a right to be treated in a culturally appropriate manner.
8. Carers have the right to be informed about grievance processes and have their concerns acknowledged with opportunities for resolution.
9. Carers have the right to have their own lives recognised beyond their role in the lives of children and young people in their care.

THE ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

The Advocate for Children in Care (the Advocate) is there especially for children and young people in the care of the CEO. The Advocate can help children have their say and be heard. The Advocate can help them with problems or complaints they can't sort out with the child protection worker, and can make sure they have a say in decisions that affect their life. You should let the child in your care know about this service – refer to the poster below for contact details.

 Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Communities**

Have **YOUR** say! Get **heard!**

If you are a child or young person in care,
the Advocate for Children in Care is just for you.

What can the Advocate for Children in Care do for me?

The Advocate is there to help when you have problems or worries that you can't sort out with your case worker.

Do you want help to have your say, get information, or have a departmental decision reviewed?

Maybe you want to know more about your rights or how you can participate in making decisions about your life.

Maybe you want to make a complaint.

Maybe you have ideas and suggestions about how the Department can do things better for children and young people in care.

Whatever you're concerned about, the Advocate will:

- **Listen** to you, help you say what you want to say and help get adults to listen.
- **Give information & advice** about what you are entitled to, and how you should be treated.
- **Support** you if you want to have a decision reviewed or complain about things you believe are wrong.
- **Speak** to people in authority about what you think works or doesn't work for children and young people in care.

How do I contact the Advocate for Children in Care?

Office hours
(9am - 5pm Monday to Friday)
Freecall* 1800 460 696
0429 086 508 (you can call, text or leave a message).

Email
advocate@communities.wa.gov.au

Other useful numbers:

Crisis Care (08) 9223 1111 or Freecall* 1800 199 008

Kids Helpline 1800 551 800*

Police 131 444 or 000 (emergency only)

*freecall number - charges may apply for some mobile plans.

the Advocate is here especially for you

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INFORMATION SHEETS

A number of Information Sheets (including a copy of this Handbook) are available for carers on the Department's website.

To access the following Information Sheets:

- visit www.communities.wa.gov.au

In the search box type 'information for current foster carers'.

- Child Care Services
- Confidentiality
- Documented Education Plans
- Guidelines on Smoking
- Health Care Planning
- Information from Kidsafe on Child Car Restraints
- Information from Road Safety on Child Car Restraints
- Permanency Planning
- Prospective Special Guardians
- Safe Sleeping (from Department of Health)
- Swimming Pools, Spas and Other Bodies of Water
- Taking Care of Yourself
- Use of Physical Punishment and Other Discipline
- Viewpoint

USEFUL NUMBERS - QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Emergency Services (24-hour services)

Ambulance, Police or Fire Service	000
Crisis Care or	9223 1111 1800 199 088 (country free call)
Poisons Information Centre	13 11 26
Police General	13 14 44
State Emergency Service	13 25 00

Telephone Help Lines (24-hour services)

Acute Response Team (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service)	1800 048 636 (metropolitan service only)
Alcohol and Drug Information Service or	9442 5000 1800 198 024 (country free call)
Family Helpline	1800 643 000 (free call)
Health Direct	1800 022 222 (free call)
Kids Helpline (counselling line)	1800 551 800 (free call)
Lifeline (crisis support line)	13 11 14
Mental Health Emergency Response	9224 8888
Parenting WA Line or	6279 1200 1800 654 432 (country free call)
Relationships Australia	1300 364 277
RuralLink (mental health service - rural)	1800 552 002 (country free call)
Samaritans Crisis Line	13 52 47
Samaritans Youth Line WA	1800 198 313 (free call)
Sexual Assault Resource Centre or	9340 1828 1800 199 888 (country free call)



Metropolitan Hospital Emergency Services

Armadale Health Service	9391 2000
Fiona Stanley Hospital	6152 2222
Joondalup Health Campus	9400 9400
Peel Health Campus	9531 8000
Princess Margaret Hospital	9340 8222
Rockingham General Hospital	9599 4000
Royal Perth Hospital	9224 2244
Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital	9346 3333
St John of God Murdoch	9366 1111
St John of God Midland Public Hospital (formerly Swan Districts Hospital)	9462 4000

Legal Services

Legal Aid WA - InfoLine	1300 650 579
Youth Legal Service or	9202 1688 1800 199 006 (country free call)

Aboriginal Services

Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service	9221 1411
Aboriginal Education Directorate	9264 4660
Aboriginal Legal Service of WA or 1800 019 900 (free call)	9265 6666
Aboriginal Family Law Services or 1800 469 246 (free call)	9355 1502
Aboriginal Workforce Development	1800 441 043 (free call)
Derbarl Yerrigan Aboriginal Health Service	9421 3888
Statewide Indigenous Mental Health Service	9347 6600
Yorgum Aboriginal Corporation	9218 9477

Foster Care Services

Foster Care Association of Western Australia	9242 4222
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OTHER USEFUL WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

ABORIGINAL LEGAL SERVICE OF WA (ALSWA)

ALSWA provides legal representation and support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in WA, including advocating in policy and law reform in submissions, at conferences and in the media. For further information refer to ALSWA's website:

www.als.org.au

Telephone 9265 6666
or free call 1800 019 900

DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES

Grandfamilies: A resource guide for Western Australian grandparents raising grandchildren. This book is on the Department of Local Government and Communities website:

www.dlgc.wa.gov.au

Telephone 6551 8800
or free call 1800 671 233

FAMILY HELPLINE

The Family Helpline is a confidential telephone counselling and information service for families with relationship difficulties. It operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Telephone (08) 9223 1100
or free call 1800 643 000

FAMILY INCLUSION NETWORK OF WA (FINWA)

FinWA provides advocacy and support services to parents and family members who have had their children placed in foster or family care. Their website provides information about the statutory authority and legal processes involved when the Department becomes involved in a family's life.

You can download the following resources on the FinWA website:

- **Finding Your Way With CPFS; and**
- **The Experiences of Parents and Families with Children and Young People in Care – Research Paper.**

www.finwa.org.au

Telephone 9328 6434

FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA (FCAWA)

FCAWA delivers services and support to carers and their families. Their services include a telephone support and referral service; access to videos, books and articles; support at meetings; and liaison with agencies about policies and practice issues. Refer to their website for the details and other information about being a foster or family carer:

www.fcawa.com.au

Telephone 9242 4222
or free call 1800 641 911 (country callers)



LEGAL AID WA

Legal Aid provides information, advice and other legal help. The type and amount of help you will get depends on your finances, your legal problem and the agency's resources. Full information and contact details are available on their website:

www.legalaid.wa.gov.au

Telephone 1300 650 579

NGALA FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE

Ngala is a provider of Early Parenting and Early Childhood services. There is a wealth of information on their website, or you can call their Helpline between 8am and 8pm.

www.ngala.com.au

Telephone 9368 9368

or free call 1800 111 546 (country callers)

SIDS AND KIDS

The SIDS and KIDS website provides information and research on safe sleeping practices. You can read or download the various Safe Sleeping resources on their website:

www.sidsandkids.org

YORGUM ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

Yorgum Aboriginal Corporation is an Aboriginal community based organisation that offers an Indigenous specific, community based, counselling and referral service that acknowledges the impact of colonisation on Indigenous Australians. Full information and contact details are available on the website:

www.yorgum.org.au

Telephone 9218 9477



Government of Western Australia
Department of Communities

Department of Communities

5 Newman Court, Fremantle WA 6160

Postal address: Locked Bag 5000, Fremantle WA 6959

Telephone: 08 6217 6888

Country callers: 1800 176 888

Email: enquiries@communities.wa.gov.au

Website: www.communities.wa.gov.au

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) – Telephone: 13 14 50

If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, contact us through the National Relay Service. For more information visit: Communications.gov.au/accesshub/nrs