



Althea Projects

Foster & Kinship Program

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Be a superhero in a child's life: Become a Foster Carer



Althea
PROJECTS

**Foster & Kinship Program
Information Booklet**

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Foster and Kinship Carer's are everyday people and are highly valued for the role they have in our community.



Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of this land and pay our respects to the Elders both past, present and future for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Australia.

Dotted lines for notes.

Kinship Carer

A Kinship Carer is a person related to the child, or is considered to be part of the family or a close friend, including:

- grandparent
- aunt or uncle
- other relative or close friend

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, kinship care may include another Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander who is a member of, or compatible with the child's community or language group. (for more information refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Placement Principle information on page 6)

Provisional Carer

A person who has applied to become a foster or kinship carer may be provisionally approved as a carer, allowing them to care for a child or young person while their full application to be a foster carer or kinship carer is decided. The application must be finalised within 90 days.

This type of approval is usually given to family members or other people already well known to a child or young person to enable an immediate placement to be made.

Provisional approval is valid for 60 days. It may be extended for a further 30 days but cannot exceed 90 days.

Types of Care

1. Emergency: This involves caring for children who need somewhere safe to stay immediately, usually for a few nights or weeks.
2. Respite: Referred to as short breaks usually involves caring for children for short periods (like a weekend) to give their primary foster or kinship carer a 'short break'.
3. Primary: This involves looking after children full-time for a few months or up to 2 years until difficulties at home are resolved or alternative plans are made for their future. Primary placements could also involve caring for children until they are 18 years of age.

- ⇒ Carer Newsletters
- ⇒ Billabong Sanctuary entry
- ⇒ Carer support meetings
- ⇒ Carer Social and Christmas events
- ⇒ Cultural Advisor support (if required)
- ⇒ Provision of behaviour support and advice
- ⇒ One on one intensive behaviour support (if required)
- ⇒ Support and assistance within meetings with Child Safety ie Placement meetings regarding any children in your care

How long should it take to become a foster carer?

It should generally take 3 to 6 months to become a carer. The length of time will depend upon a number of variables such as your ability to attend training in a timely way, how long it takes for you to complete your training workbooks, the length of time background checks are taking, your availability for interviews or the number of assessments our workers are undertaking at any one time.

Kinship Carers

Where the process differs with a Kinship Carer is that potential Kinship Carers are identified via Child Safety. APFK will only receive kinship applicant referrals from the Department.

Kinship carers do not have to undertake any mandatory training, however they do have to complete all the same paperwork, undertake all the same background checks and participate in the assessment process .

Kinship carers often start as provisional carers first whilst their initial assessment is being completed.

Links to further information:

- <https://www.qfkc.com.au/>
- <https://www.qld.gov.au/community/caring-child/foster-kinship-care>

Once the assessment interviews are completed, the assessment report is written. It is the assessors responsibility to form an overall assessment of your suitability and record that on your assessment report. The assessor is not the final decision maker.

6. Assessment Lodgment & Approval Decision making

The assessment is then lodged with Child Safety's Carer Management Team, who pass on the assessment report and all other accompanying documents ie GP Reports, Referee Reports, Foster Carer Agreement (for general carers) Household Safety Study and training certificates (for general carers) to the Child Safety Service Centre Manager. The manager holds the responsibility for determining suitability for approval.

If approved, you will be issued with an Initial Certificate of Approval. This certificate is valid for 1 year, after which time, you will go through another assessment process for renewal. As part of your first renewal, and during your first year of approval, all general carers are required to complete a further 3 modules of mandatory training. These are:

- ⇒ Promoting Positive Behaviours
- ⇒ Caring for Children and Young People who have experienced sexual abuse
- ⇒ Carer Support - Advocacy and Self-Care

All subsequent renewals thereafter will occur every 2 years.

If not initially approved, you will receive a Letter stating the reason for the decision and your review rights.

7. Allocation of a Case Worker

Once we are advised of your approval and we receive a copy of your certificate, we will allocate you to one of our Foster & Kinship Case Workers. This worker will contact you to introduce themselves and organise a visit to your home to undertake an induction with you.

It is the role of the Foster & Kinship Case Workers to support (and monitor) the Standards of Care for any child or young person placed in your care.

Some of the supports you will have access to are:

- ⇒ Regular home visits by your case worker
- ⇒ Afterhours phone support (if required)
- ⇒ Access to free training for your ongoing development
- ⇒ Closed Facebook Carer Support Group

4. Pre-Adoptive: This is when an adoption consent has been signed and the Carer provides care for the child before they are permanently placed with their adoptive parents.

Many times 'sibling groups' require care. We will always endeavor to place siblings together. This can mean that a carer will need to be found to care for a large number of children, sometimes with varying ages and needs.

APFK requires a wide range of foster and kinship carers so as to ensure children are matched to best suit their needs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

APFK is committed to working to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles which recognise the importance of and requires the provision of safe care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, whilst maintaining connections with their families, communities, culture and country. This commitment requires that in any decisions, actions or practices carried out under section 5C of the Child Protection Act 1999, that the following **five elements** of these **Child Placement Principles** be applied;

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have a right to be brought up within their own family and community (prevention principle)
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons have the right to participate in significant decisions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (partnership principle)
3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children placed in out-of-home care have a right to be placed with a member of their family (placement principle)
4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their parents and family members have a right to participate, and be enabled to participate, in administrative and judicial decision-making processes (participation principle)
5. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have a right to be supported to develop and maintain a connection with the child's family, community, culture, traditions and language, particularly where a child is in the care of a non-Indigenous person (connection principle).

The placement principle for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children include, in order of priority that a child is to be placed with:

- a member of the child's family group
- a member of the child's community or language group
- another Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander person who is compatible with the child's community or language group
- another Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander person
- a person who lives near the child's family, community or language group and has a demonstrated capacity for ensuring the child's continuity of connection to kin, country and culture

APFK follow these principles in the placement of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The Decision to Become a Carer

This is a serious decision. It is important that all members of your household whether children, a partner or non related have discussed it, considered any impacts it may have and, are all in agreement to proceed.

The Rewards and Challenges

Becoming a Foster or Kinship Carer will affect your life and the lives of those around you.

The rewards:

- helping children to reach their potential
- helping to keep children safe
- using your skills and life experiences for the benefit of others
- enhancing your own parenting skills and knowledge
- becoming a highly valued member of a caring team

By completing those forms you are providing your consent to undergo child protection, domestic violence, traffic and criminal history checks. Again, these are a mandatory requirement for becoming a Foster (or Kinship) Carer.

5. Assessment Completion

This involves an assessor meeting with you in your home and interviewing you (your partner if applying with another person) and all household members, including children. The domains of an assessment to be covered within those interviews includes:

- Motivation to foster
- Household members
- Personal background
 - childhood experiences,
 - significant life events
- Social assessment
 - family structure
 - social support
 - time available to provide the level of care required
 - financial support/stability
- Relationships
 - present spousal relationship
 - significant past relationships
 - parental relationships with children
- Health and wellbeing and GP report
- Stress management
- Capacity to provide quality care
 - parenting style
 - providing care to children and young people in out-of-home care
 - developing and/or maintaining a positive sense of identity in a child or young person
 - cultural awareness
 - household safety
 - immunisations
- Ability to work as a member of a team
- Applicants understanding of harm

You will also be required to provide names of personal referees to be contacted and to seek a GP report from your regular doctor. Information about this will be provided to you at the time.

The Steps to Becoming a Foster Carer

1. Register your interest in becoming a Foster Carer with us by calling 4779 3332 or emailing foster@altheaprojects.org.au . At this point we will provide you with some basic information and arrange for us to come and do a home visit with you. We will guide you through all of the following processes.

2. Home Visit

Here is your opportunity to ask any questions. We will also seek more information from you and complete a Household Safety Study.

3. Attend and successfully complete Pre-Service Training

This training is mandatory for general carers. It helps you to understand the foster care system, the types of experiences children in care have, how a child will be matched to you, the placement process itself, and who you will be working with.

The four modules you have to successfully complete before you can apply to become a carer include:

- ⇒ The Context of Foster Care
- ⇒ Understanding the past for a child or young person
- ⇒ Early days in a placement
- ⇒ Quality care - working together

A Certificate of Achievement will be issued once you have completed the required worksheets.

It is not mandatory for Kinship Carers to attend training however we strongly recommend they do.

4. Make an application to become a carer

This will involve the following to be completed:

- ⇒ That you make an application for a Blue Card (if you don't already have one) you can do this online or by paper form
- ⇒ That you complete an Application for Approval Form (APA), and a Health & Wellbeing Questionnaire.

- expanding your social and personal contacts
- providing an important service to your community
- assisting other families in your community

The Challenges

- managing your own children's feelings about sharing you, their home and their lives (if you have children)
- responding to children's behaviours that you may not have previously experienced
- being able to say goodbye to the children when they return to their families
- finding space in your life for yourself when so many demands will be made on your time and energy
- continuing on even when the impact you have on a child's development may not always be immediately visible
- sharing the decision-making for the children placed with you

As a carer you will need to be:

- willing to work as a member of the Child Safety and Support Network
- flexible and non-judgemental
- loving and kind
- open, honest and patient
- willing to learn and grow and develop your knowledge and skills
- understanding and able to respond with empathy
- respectful of the child's biological family and assist or be supportive of the child maintaining their connections whether familial or cultural
- supportive of the child's reunification to family if that is the child's case plan goal

Standards of Care to be provided as a Foster or Kinship Carer

Foster and Kinship Carers share a responsibility alongside other partners in care, to provide a level of care which is consistent with the statement of standards, as outlined in section 122 of the [Child Protection Act 1999](#).

The Act outlines the following 11 standards:

- a. the child's dignity and rights will be respected at all times
- b. the child's needs for physical care will be met, including adequate food, clothing and shelter
- c. the child will receive emotional care that allows him or her to experience being cared about and valued and that contributes to the child's positive self-regard
- d. the child's needs relating to his or her culture and ethnic grouping will be met
- e. the child's material needs relating to his or her schooling, physical and mental stimulation, recreation and general living will be met
- f. the child will receive education, training or employment opportunities relevant to the child's age and ability
- g. the child will receive positive guidance when necessary to help him or her to change inappropriate behaviour
- h. the child will receive dental, medical and therapeutic services necessary to meet his or her needs
- i. the child will be given the opportunity to participate in positive social and recreational activities appropriate to his or her developmental level and age
- j. the child will be encouraged to maintain family and other significant personal relationships
- k. if the child has a disability - the child will receive care and help appropriate to the child's special needs.

For 'g', techniques for managing the child's behaviour must not include corporal punishment or punishment that humiliates, frightens or threatens the child in a way that is likely to cause emotional harm.

For 'j', these requirements will be incorporated into the child's case plan and placement agreement.

*All foster and kinship carers receive an allowance to cover
the cost of caring for children and young people.*

Fostering Allowance

Foster and Kinship Carers receive a fortnightly Foster Care Allowance which contributes towards the real costs of caring for a child or young person in care. It covers items such as food, transport, clothing, household provisions, pocket money, entertainment and other everyday costs associated with caring for a child.

The allowance is not a source of income. It is a reimbursement to help towards the costs of providing care. It is not taxed and should not be cited as income for any purpose.

Respite carers receive the allowance for each night they provide care for a child.

Foster and Kinship Carers may also be eligible for other assistance schemes depending on the care needs of the child or young person.

High Support Allowance

Paid in addition to the fostering allowance to Foster & Kinship Carers who are caring for children and young people with High Support Needs.

Complex Carer Allowance

Paid in addition to the fostering allowance and the High Support Needs Allowance for Foster & Kinship Carers of children and young people who require complex care.