

Marymead Foster Care Assessment

Assessor:

Carer/s name:

DOB:

Address:

Work:

Contact details: H: W: M:

Working with vulnerable people check:

Police check:

Doctor's report:

Referee reports:

Dates of interviews and who interviewed

Motivation and Home Safety completed:

Life Story:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Date Completed:

Training Completed:

Signature:

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Foster Care Assessment Framework

Capacity

1. Demonstrated personal readiness to become a foster carer and ability to provide a continuous stable and safe environment throughout the placement
2. Demonstrated understanding of the importance of a child's biological family and cultural identity/heritage
3. Capacity for reflective parenting
4. Demonstrated understanding of the impact of abuse, neglect and associated trauma on childhood development
5. Demonstrated understanding of the impact of grief and loss issues
6. Ability to work as part of a Care team in an ethical/legal context

Capacity 1

Demonstrated personal readiness to become a foster carer and ability to provide a continuous stable and safe environment throughout the placement

Background / Life Story

Life Story

(Report to be attached)

For Assessors: The Life Story will be the reference for probing and questioning. Acknowledge the applicants life story and discuss with them questions around what it was like for them to write their life story. Did it bring up any issues for them? Clarify these with them in preparation for later questions.

Summary:

Referee Reports

(Written report and follow-up conversation-only if you have any concerns)

- Are there any concerns about the applicants?
- How long has the referee known the applicants and in what capacity?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the applicants?

Motivation

- What is the applicants' motivation to become foster carers?
- When did the applicants begin to think about fostering?

- What knowledge do the applicants already have about foster caring? Do the applicants know anybody who fosters?
- Who in the couple/family brought it up as an option? What was the reaction of the other partner/ others in the home?
- What things do their family anticipate that fostering will give to them? What do they believe that they will get out of it?
- Do the applicants have or have they had fertility issues? Has this impacted on their decision to apply to become foster carers?
- Have the applicants accessed Assisted Reproductive Techniques (ART)?
- When did this occur? How long? When did this stop? Are the applicants having any on-going counselling? Are they thinking of looking at ART techniques in the future?
- Have the applicants considered other options such as adoption or permanent care?

- How would the applicants cope or what would it mean to them if they were unable to become foster carers?

Type of Care

- Are the applicants aware of the different types of care (respite, crisis (short-term), concurrency and long-term)?
- Do the applicants know what each care type entails?
- (A more in depth discussion of the type of care outlining all responsibilities and characteristics need to be given to the applicant(s) by the assessor)
- What type of care is the family considering? Why? Do all family members agree?

Support networks

(Are the support networks informed about the applicants foster care application?)

- Who have the applicants told about their foster care application? What were their thoughts?
- Who would they identify as their support person in their fostering role?
- Why do they feel this person would be a good support in their fostering role?

- Do the people in the applicants support network understand the needs and demands of children in foster care?
- Who is in the applicants current support network in their everyday life?
- What type of support do they receive from these networks?
- How often do they see them/talk to them?
- Do the family have supports from different areas in their life (eg. family, friends, social groups)
- Have the applicants accessed professional supports within their lives?
- Can the applicants talk about how they are supported (eg. practical babysitting, emotional support, etc.)?
- Who do the applicants support and how?
- What would happen if the applicants' major supports were no longer there?
- How will the applicants support and look after themselves during times of uncertainty? Do they have a capacity for change?

- What support will the applicants need from us in difficult times?
- What will the applicants do in order to assist their family to adjust to their fostering role?

Broader family/community commitments

- Are there any family members who need to be cared for?
- What family commitments do the applicants have (i.e. elderly parents or biological children with specific needs)?
- Do the applicants travel interstate often to care for family members?
- Are the applicants volunteering for a particular organisation or group?
- Are the applicants involved with school committees or school events?

Lifestyle

- Describe your general lifestyle.
- What spiritual or cultural interests does the family identify with? What does this look like or involve?
- How will the family incorporate the foster child into their way of life?
- What is your current work?
- What is your current level of job satisfaction?
- Do you intend to change your employment in the near future?
- How many hours a week do the applicants work?
- Are the applicants able to take leave or not work when caring for children under the age of 2 years?
- How flexible is their work?
- Are the applicants entitled to parental or other type of leave?
- Does their work involve interstate or overseas travel?

- How much time do they spend away from home?
- What do the applicants do outside work?
- Do they play sport or belong to a group?
- How much time does this take?
- Do the applicants have specific groups or friends that attend child friendly events, particularly for applicants who do not have biological children?
- How often do the applicants go on holidays and are they in a financial position to pay for extra children when going on holidays?

Flexibility with uncertainty and capacity to change

- Can the applicants give examples of when they have dealt with uncertainty?
- How did they cope with this and how did they feel? What helped them through this time?
- Can the applicants give examples of their ability to be flexible and open to change?
- Can the applicants give examples of how they have coped with change?
- Are the applicants aware that uncertainty is a key feature of foster caring?
- What do they understand about this?

Financial Stability/Capacity

(Awareness of the financial obligations/impact)

(Budget tool to be provided by the applicants)

- Do the applicants understand that the foster care subsidy does not cover the costs of the child?
- Is there capacity to financially provide for a child placed in their care?
- Are the family flexible to financially incorporate another child in their lifestyle if necessary?

- Have the applicants discussed with their children about privacy and confidentiality and how they can ensure this occurs? What plans are in place? (assessor to give applicants scenarios and ask them to role play)
- How will the applicants support and look after their own children during stressful times?

Alcohol, drugs and gambling

- What are the applicants' attitudes towards drugs and alcohol?
- How often and how much do the applicants drink/ Under what circumstances do the applicants drink?
- Do the applicants smoke? If so, how much, and where? (assessors to discuss smoking policies) none under 2.
- Do the applicants use drugs? If so, explain and discuss.
- Have the applicants had prior history of drug use (including illicit drugs and misuse of prescription medication)?
- What are the applicant's attitudes towards gambling?

- Do the applicants gamble? If so, discuss method, frequency, etc.
- How does stress affect or change the consumption of drugs, alcohol, smoking or gambling?
- Have the applicants experienced drugs or alcohol usage or gambling in their family while growing up?
- How will the applicants deal with a child or young person in their care using drugs or alcohol?
- How will the applicants understand families who have drug, alcohol or gambling issues.

Summary:

Competency 2

Demonstrated understanding of the importance of a child's biological family and cultural identity/heritage

- Link back to the applicants' life stories and explore their own experiences of remaining connected with family members when there has been separation (eg, divorce, death, conflict, moving).
- How do the applicants record their own family's life story?
- Discuss with the applicants about their understanding of how identity is formed.
- What is the applicants understanding of some of the issues surrounding identity for a child in out of home care?
(note to assessor: discuss loss of information for a child, birth family contact, an absent family for the child)
- What might be some of the particular challenges related to managing birth family contact?
- How might you manage this for the child? How might you manage this for yourself?

- What might be some of the difficulties that birth families are experiencing in maintaining their connection and links with their children? How might they be feeling?
- Talk with the applicant(s) about their family cultural identity and heritage (explore this: where do these thoughts/attitudes/feelings come from?).
- What engagement and involvement do the applicants have with people from different cultures, ethnicity, backgrounds, environments and heritages?
- Is there any particular lifestyle/culture that the applicants find personally challenging?
- How will the applicants as carers build rapport with and develop and maintain a relationship with a birth parent?

Summary:

Competency 3

Capacity for reflective parenting

Own experience of being parented

- What were your attachment experiences? (i.e. was there an adult attachment figure)
- Did you see much of your grandparents when you were little?
- Did you have brothers and sisters living with you or anybody besides your parents? Are they living nearby now or do they live elsewhere?
- Describe your relationship with your parents as a young child, starting as far back as you can remember.
- Choose 5 adjectives or words that reflect your relationship with your mother, starting as far back as you can remember in early childhood.
- Choose 5 adjectives or words that reflect your childhood relationship with your father, starting as far back as you remember.
- Which parent did you feel the closest, and why?

- What is the first time you remember being separated from your parents?
- How did you respond? Do you remember how your parents responded?
- Are there any other separations that stand out in your mind?
- How was warmth and love expressed?
- How were you cared for when you were hurt and distressed?
- How were you managed when there was conflict?
- What were the family dynamics and relationships in the home?
- What parenting styles did your parents lean towards?

- Why do you think your parents behaved as they did during your childhood?
- To which parent did you feel closest to? Why? Why isn't there this feeling with the other parent?
- Did you experience the loss of a parent or other close loved one while you were a young child, for example, a sibling or a close family member?
- Did you lose any other important person during your childhood?
- Have you lost any other close people, in adult years?
- Has anyone in your family experienced family violence?
(explore applicants attitude towards violence within the family)
- Were your parents ever threatening with you in any way – maybe for discipline or even jokingly?

- Some people have memories of threats or of some kind of behaviour that was abusive. Did anything like this ever happen to you, or in your family? Other than any difficult experiences you've already described, have you had any other experiences which you should regard as potentially traumatic?

- Do you feel this experience affects you now as an adult?

- Does it influence your approach to your own child?

- Have your childhood experiences with your parents have impacted your adult personality? Are there any other aspects of your early experiences that you think might have held your development back, or had a negative effect on the way you turned out?

Relationships

- When do you recall becoming attracted to someone e.g. high school-brief overview? Have you or your partner had any previous marital or de facto relationships? Have there been any significant relationship issues? How have these been managed? Has there been any history of domestic violence?

- As relatives or friends to other children, what have you observed about what helps or hinders children's behaviour?
- How do you respond now, in terms of feelings, when you separate from your child/children/ or a child you are fond of?
- Have your ideas about parenting changed or remained the same over time?
- What do you think would challenge you as a parent? What pushes your buttons about children's behaviour.
- What do you do well emotionally around children?
- If you had three wishes for your foster child twenty years from now, what would they be? What kind of future would you like to see your foster child have?
- What would you hope your foster child might have learned from his/her experiences of being parented by you?
- How do you think you will parent as a team?

- Can you identify any areas where you may need extra learning or education in relation to parenting?

Understanding a child's or young person's impact on you

- How will you handle challenging behaviours and how will you maintain a positive relationship with a child or young person when things are not going well for them.
(Explore applicants reflective capacity for understanding what behaviours are telling us and responding appropriately, proactive parenting behaviours and attitudes etc.)
- What support strategies do you have in place you already have answered this one, so ignore it.

Self care: Understanding the impact of 'self' on parenting children and young people

- Do you currently incorporate self-care into your routine? Why or why not? If so, what and when?

Understanding of the added complexity of non-biological parenting

- How do you believe parenting a non-biological child may be different to parenting a biological child (for example, exploring challenges and rewards to include initial feelings towards the child and feelings of expected reciprocity from the child, including possible conflicts, previous parenting strategies that worked may no longer work and may need to be more flexible, seeing a child grow and feel good about themselves, etc.)?

- How might a child or young person view a new adult or parental figure in their life and how would you respond to this? Strategies in place & support systems.

Conversations with Children in the Family – Current Family Functioning

For Assessors - Explore questions about fostering with children in the applicants family:

- How do the children in the family report on family functioning (i.e what are the family rules, expectations and boundaries and what does the family do for fun, etc.)?
- What does the child think about the possibility of their family fostering?
- What does the child like about their family (younger children can draw the people in their family)?
- What would the child like to change about their family?
- What is it like for the child when they have visitors in their home?
- What is it like for the child when other children visit their home?
- What are the rules in the child's home?
- Who made the rules in the child's home?
- What happens if any of the family doesn't follow the rules of the child's house?
- Does the child want foster children to come to their house? Why?
- What would the child's house be like for foster children to live in? What would other children like or dislike about living in the child's family?
- What would make a child feel safe in the child's home? Is there anything that makes the child feel unsafe in their home?
- Where will foster children sleep?
- What will the child have to share with foster children?
- Are there things that the child does not want to share with foster children?

Summary:

Competency 4

Demonstrated understanding of the impact of abuse, neglect and associated trauma on childhood development

- What do the applicants see would be their emotional/feelings/behavioural triggers? What strategies would be useful so that their emotions/feelings/behaviours would not be triggered?

- What are the applicants understanding of abuse in our community?

From case studies from training- reflect on training

- What do the applicants see as the types of behaviours that might come from a child who has experienced abuse and trauma?

- What do the applicants see would be the impact on a child where the person that they trust the most and who they rely on, abuses or neglects them (i.e. behaviourally, emotionally, socially, physically, etc.)?

- What do the applicants understand about how the child will be feeling when they enter a foster carer's home? What do the applicants understand about what a child who has been abused or neglected need from a foster carer to feel safe?

- Why do the applicants think that parents abuse or neglect their children? How do the applicants feel about this? How will the applicants manage working with these parents?
- What do the applicants feel will be the ongoing issues for children who have experienced trauma through abuse and neglect?
- How would the applicants parent these children differently? What strategies would be used?
- How might the applicants support other family members to understand the child's behaviours (from training resources)?

Questions on child development

- What children do the applicants know and have experience with in personal or professional life? What understanding do the applicants have of children?
- What do the applicants understand about how a child in care expresses their needs and feelings at different ages would be feeling and behaving? (Assessor to add different ages for discussion)
- How do you show children that you care for them? Can you give some examples with children in your life?

Summary:

Competency 5

Demonstrated understanding of the impact of grief and loss issues

Through this competency we are trying to seek whether the potential carers understand the impact that grief and loss has on behaviours, feelings and attachment.

- What are the loss and grief issues that the applicants and their families have experienced?
 - What loss and grief issues would be applicable for the child/young person's family? How can the applicants support the child or young person? (explore how this may affect contact or applicant's interactions with the birth family and how they can support this)
 - What are the applicants understanding of the experience of loss and grief for the child/young person regarding their birth family?
- What issues do the applicants see impacting on a child/young person coming into care?
- How would you support a child/young person managing the transition into care?

Infertility

- Has fertility been an issue in the applicants' family? What assistance did the applicants seek and receive?

- Are the applicants exploring other family options (i.e. other birth children/adoption)?
- What would happen to the applicants foster care application if the circumstances changed (eg. becoming pregnant)?
- What has been the history of the applicants attempts to have children?
- What impact has this had on their relationship? (Include the degree to which the applicants, both individually and as a couple, have acknowledged and faced the loss of their "dream child" and the grief associated with their loss of fertility or childlessness)
- What interventions have there been to work through their loss? (For example, counselling, applicants' views/intentions re future fertility treatment)

Summary:

- How do the applicants manage conflict in a team situation?
- What do they do well or could improve on in relation to conflict resolution.
- What conflicts are likely to be avoided by each applicant? Why?

Statutory Parental Responsibilities

- Do the applicants understand the roles and responsibilities that foster carers have?
- Do the applicants have knowledge about the Children and Young Person legislation?
- Do the applicants understand the roles of the different players in the care team (for example, the agency, department etc.)?
- Do the applicants understand the importance of communication and collaboration?

Summary:

Assessor Recommendations:

Strengths:

Vulnerabilities:

Areas for development:

Assessor's recommendation:

Assessor's signature:

Date: