



NSW-P-011: Foster Carer Authorisation Procedure

1. PURPOSE

To provide guidance and clarity to staff on the procedure for authorising foster carers

2. SCOPE

This procedure relates to all MacKillop programs providing Foster Care services to children and young people

3. DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Authorisation	The process of formally accepting an application to become a foster carer
Authorisation Panel	A group specifically constituted for the purpose of reviewing foster carer assessments with the responsibility of making formal recommendations regarding authorisation. All applications to become a foster carer must be presented before an Authorisation Panel
Principal Officer	The Principal Officer is defined in the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment Regulation 2014, as the person who has the overall supervision of the arrangements for the provision of out-of-home care. Responsibilities of the Principal Officer may be delegated to the General Manager NSW Services

4. PROCEDURE

4.1 Each foster care program within MacKillop convenes an Authorisation Panel (Panel), with membership based on the particular situation of that service. The base composition (i.e. minimum requirement) for a Panel is:

- Manager or their nominee (chair of the Panel)
- 1 Community Services representative
- 1 external agency representative (either from another NGO or another MacKillop service)
- 1 foster carer

This base composition is also the requirement for a decision-making quorum (see below)

4.2 Other members may be invited onto the panel as appropriate, including additional carers, other program staff, government agency representatives, and relevant external agency representatives.

4.3 Panel members receive a copy of the assessment report prior to the meeting. At the meeting the workers who conducted the interview will present the report and answer any questions the Panel may have about it.

- 4.4 Four outcomes of the panel are possible:
- a. authorisation is recommended
 - b. authorisation is recommended, with conditions (e.g. a trial period with specified boundaries with regard to placement matching) and returned to the panel for review as appropriate
 - c. agreement not to recommend authorisation
 - d. postpone decision to recommend authorisation, pending additional information, which is then presented to a subsequent panel meeting
- 4.5 If the decision is either of the first two outcomes, a) and b) (agreement to authorise, with or without conditions), the panel Chair makes a recommendation to the Principal Officer or Delegate to endorse the panel recommendation and authorise the applicant.
- 4.6 The role of the Principal Officer (or Delegate) is to ensure that MacKillop's carer recruitment, training and authorisation processes have been followed and make a decision about the panel's recommendation to authorise or not authorise. The Principal Officer (or delegate) will be informed about any differences of opinion between panel members and the process of resolving differences. The form *NSW-F-062 Carer Authorisation: Checklist and Principal Officer Endorsement* is to be completed by the Manager and forwarded to the Principal Officer or their delegate for final authorisation.
- 4.7 Once the Principal Officer (or delegate) authorises the applicant, a letter is sent to the applicant from the Program Manager advising of the success of their application. The applicant is then able to be considered for caring for children referred through MacKillop.
- 4.8 Authorisation is for a period of 12 months (carer reviews occur each 12 months leading into re-authorisation)
- 4.9 If the decision is c), agreement not to authorise, the application process will cease and the reasons noted so that feedback can be provided to the applicant. The assessing worker will provide verbal feedback to the applicant with a formal letter also sent in the Manager's name. The letter will inform the applicant of grievance processes available to them
- 4.10 In the first instance, the aim of the Panel is to work toward achieving consensus between all members in the decision about authorisation.
- 4.11 In the event that agreement cannot be reached the Chair may present this outcome to the Principal Officer or delegate, including a summary of why agreement could not be reached. Following consideration of this outcome the Principal Officer (or delegate) has the discretion to authorise/not authorise/request further information or direct a course of action appropriate to the circumstances.
- 4.12 Where carer authorisation responsibility is delegated by the Principal Officer, the delegate will ensure provision of regular reports to the Principal Officer including details of numbers of carer households authorised.