

Procedures and guidelines for *Quality Care:* *Foster Care Training*

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1. Introduction

These procedures and guidelines are for conducting *Quality Care: Foster Care Training* as required in the Foster Care Training policy. The aim of training is to equip potential and current foster carers with the necessary skills and knowledge required to undertake this critical role. The training will enable carers to understand their role and responsibilities as a carer and assist them to meet the legislative statement of standards and policy requirements when caring for a child placed in their care. Pre-service and standard training have an assessment component to assist with the assessment of the carer's approval and renewal of approval, including their suitability to be a foster carer.

The *Quality Care: Foster Care Training* resources may be used to provide support to kinship carers and to assist new departmental and licensed care service staff in their orientation of the foster care system. Kinship carers are encouraged to attend *Quality Care: Foster Care Training* sessions to meet their ongoing learning and development needs.

The *Quality Care: Foster Care Training* is to be used in conjunction with the Foster and Kinship Carer Handbook and Carer Information Sheets to enhance the support, learning and development needs of both foster and kinship carers. These resources are available at <http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety/foster-care/resources-and-publications>.

2. Overview of Quality Care: Foster Care Training

The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (the department) is committed to providing pre-service and in-service training for foster carers to support the development of the skills and knowledge required to provide quality care to children and young people in out-of-home care. *Quality Care: Foster Care Training* is a competency based training package and consists of three levels:

- Pre-service
- Standard
- Advanced.

Training resources are available on the departmental web site at <http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety/foster-care/carer-training/foster-carer-training>.

The training resources have been designed to enable flexible and timely delivery, including training in small groups, self paced learning and one-to-one delivery for all or parts of the training.

To ensure quality and consistency in delivery of training content and assessment of competencies, certain qualifications and child protection experience are required as detailed in section 5. It is recognised that in rural and remote communities a departmental officer or

experienced foster carer may assist in providing information and the training resources to a prospective foster carer. However, assessment of competencies for pre-service and standard modules, as demonstrated through attendance at training and the completion of worksheets, must always be completed by a licensed care service staff member or a foster carer who has a Certificate IV *in Training and Assessment*, or equivalent, or an experienced departmental officer.

Regions, in partnership with licensed care services and foster carers, are required to undertake workforce planning to ensure this standard is met.

3. Provision of information prior to training

Prospective carers must be given adequate information about foster care, and have the opportunity to ask questions, prior to making a decision to undertake *Quality Care: Foster Care Training - Pre-Service*. Information sessions for members of the community who enquire about becoming a foster carer are optional. However, these sessions may be a time efficient and effective way to provide information about the roles and responsibilities of a foster carer to assist in decision-making about whether to proceed to training.

A preliminary indication of the suitability and commitment of an applicant should be made prior to inviting them to undertake training. While this may occur during a phone interview with the potential applicant it is recommended that a home visit take place. During the visit the potential applicant will have the opportunity to seek further information and participate in a discussion about the key requirements to be a foster carer, including personal history and Blue Card application exclusions. It is important that this be handled sensitively to allow an applicant to make realistic choices in a positive way. Research indicates that careful attention to this part of the process will assist greater retention in training and longevity as a foster carer.

4. Quality Care: Foster Care Training

Quality Care: Foster Care Training consists of three levels:

- Pre-service
- Standard
- Advanced.

4.1 Pre-service training

Pre-service training consists of four modules of three hours each, totalling 12 hours. If feasible, taking into account the availability of participants and geographical location, training should occur over four weeks to allow for completion of assessment activities after each module and to allow knowledge to be gained in an incremental way.

Participants undertaking the pre-service modules in group training are to be given copies of materials for each module, with the exception of the session plans and worksheet answers. Where one-to-one delivery of all or part of the pre-service modules is necessary, participants can be given copies of all learning materials including session plans, content of power points, handouts, worksheets (without answers), assessment forms and participant evaluation forms for each module.

All participants must complete worksheet questions at the end of each module. Assessment must be completed individually by participants, even where a couple intend to make an application to hold a joint approval as foster carers. Where possible, participants should be assisted to complete written responses to the worksheet questions. However, different learning styles and preferences need to be considered and participants may wish to provide oral responses to the worksheet questions. This can be done in an interview with a staff member from the department or licensed care service, who then records the response. Responses must reflect an understanding of the key concepts of each module. Occasionally, exceptional circumstances may exist for a foster carer and any alternative arrangements for delivery and assessment should be flexible and appropriate to the carers needs.

After the completion of the four pre-service training modules each participant's level of competency in the learning outcomes must be assessed, based on a review of their responses to the worksheet questions and participation in the group training activities, if relevant. Assessment of competencies must be completed by at least one individual who has a Certificate IV in *Training and Assessment*, or equivalent, or an experienced departmental officer.

Where applicable, the training team may meet as a panel to complete the assessment. An overall outcome of competent/not competent must be recorded for each participant on the *Quality Care: Foster Care Training - Pre-service Record of Attendance and Competency Outcome* (form), which is retained on the participant's file and the outcome of competency also recorded in the Integrated Client Management System (ICMS).

When competency is achieved in each of the pre-service training modules participants will receive the *Statement of Achievement in Quality Care: Foster Care Training - Pre-service* certificate signed by the individual with a Certificate IV in *Training and Assessment*, or equivalent, or the experienced departmental officer who completed the assessment of competencies. Foster carer applicants must achieve competency in the learning outcomes of the *Quality Care: Foster Care Training - Pre-service* as a prerequisite for initial approval as a foster carer.

Occasionally, exceptional circumstances may exist for a foster carer couple where one partner is absent from the household for significant periods of time due to a genuine work commitment. This applies to couples where one partner is employed in the defence forces or mining industry

and stationed overseas for a minimum period of six months, or where one partner's work location is based interstate or overseas. In this situation, the child safety service centre manager has the discretion to approve both carer applicants with the condition the carer's partner complete pre-service training when his or her circumstances change. Where this is not a viable option, the manager may, as a last resort, waive the requirement that the partner completes pre-service training. Training requirements may only be waived where flexible delivery, including one-to-one delivery, is not possible.

4.2 Standard training

Quality Care: Foster Care Training - Standard consists of three modules of three to four hours each, totalling approximately 10 hours. Following initial approval as a foster carer, the child safety service centre or licensed care service providing support to the foster carer will ensure that each foster carer has an individualised Development and Support Plan, recorded as part of their *Foster Carer Agreement* and record any mandatory training in ICMS. Ongoing learning, development and support for kinship carers should be recorded in the Placement Agreement and in ICMS, where applicable.

In conjunction with planned support, it is the responsibility of the department or licensed care service, where applicable, to ensure that the foster carer successfully completes the three standard training modules within 12 months of initial approval as a foster carer.

Each foster carer must satisfactorily complete worksheet questions at the end of each module. Where possible, foster carers should be assisted to complete written responses to the worksheet questions. However, oral responses can be provided and recorded in an interview. An assessment of competencies for each foster carer must be conducted after completion of the three modules.

An outcome of competent/not competent will be recorded for each foster carer and when competency is achieved in each of the three standard modules, participants will receive the *Statement of Achievement in Quality Care: Foster Care Training - Standard* certificate signed by the individual with a Certificate IV in *Training and Assessment*, or equivalent, or the experienced departmental officer who completed the assessment of competencies. A copy of the completed assessment of competencies will be retained on the foster carer's departmental file and the outcome of competencies recorded in ICMS.

Each foster carer may also complete a Learning Journal to demonstrate practical application of knowledge and skills gained from the modules and through their experience of providing care to a child or young person placed with them. Learning Journals are discretionary and may be used by carers who prefer a reflective style of learning. Learning Journals may be completed jointly by the foster carer and their support worker from the department or licensed care service, where applicable.

Completion of *Quality Care: Foster Care Training - Standard* is a prerequisite for the renewal of approval of the carers certificate at the end of the 12-month period (please refer to the Child Safety Practice Manual, Chapter 8 for more information).

In exceptional circumstances, such as where a foster carer lives in a remote location or in circumstances of ill health, the child safety service centre manager with responsibility for the renewal of approval may approve an extension of up to six months for the completion of all three standard modules; that is, 18 months from their initial approval date. Any extension and the circumstances of the extension are to be recorded on the *Foster Carer Agreement* or in ICMS. An extension to complete the standard modules does not preclude a carer from applying for and gaining a renewal of authority. However, failure to complete the modules in the period of the extension may result in suspension or cancellation of the certificate of approval.

Exceptional circumstances may also exist for a foster carer couple where one partner is absent from the household for significant periods of time due to a genuine work commitment. This applies to couples where one partner is employed in the defence forces or mining industry and stationed overseas for a minimum period of six months, or where one partner's work location is based interstate or overseas. In this situation, the child safety service centre manager has the discretion to re-approve the carers with the condition the carer's partner complete standard training when his or her circumstances change. Where this is not a viable option, the manager may, as a last resort, waive the requirement that the partner completes standard training. Training requirements may only be waived where flexible delivery, including one-to-one delivery, is not possible.

Carers who have completed Transforming Care training are not required to complete Standard Training Module 5. Refer to [7. Recognition of Prior Learning](#) below.

Kinship carers and long-term guardians may access standard training modules to support their care of a child or young person.

4.3 Advanced training

Quality Care: Foster Care Training - Advanced is flexible and based on the foster carer's specific learning, development and support needs. The department or licensed care service, where applicable, will update the foster carer's Development and Support Plan, as part of the process of regular review of the *Foster Carer Agreement* and record any mandatory training in ICMS. Ongoing learning, development and support needs of a kinship carer should be updated in the Placement Agreement and in ICMS, where applicable.

Completion of advanced training modules totalling a minimum of eight hours is a prerequisite for renewal of approval for the first two years following standard training. Thereafter, training opportunities will be offered to foster carers as part of ongoing skills and knowledge

development. However, the completion of advanced training is not a condition of renewal of approval.

Advanced modules may be provided by the department or licensed care service and may be accessed externally from a range of agencies within the community, for example other government departments and through attendance at a conference.

The criteria for externally accessed advanced modules are as follows:

- the content of the training must be relevant to the foster carer's Development and Support Plan
- the training module must be a minimum of two hours duration
- the training must be developed and delivered by a person with recognised expertise in the content area
- preferably the training will be based on clear competencies, upon which the trainee is assessed and provided with written acknowledgement of completion
- where this is not possible, the carer should be able, upon completion of the training, to identify with the departmental or licensed care service support worker ways in which the training will assist them in their role.

The departmental or licensed care service support worker is to work with carers to identify and record training needs.

The decision about whether an external training session meets the criteria must be made by the foster carer's support worker from the department or licensed care service. Approval of funds for external advanced training is to be given by the manager, child safety service centre. Details of the advanced modules completed, including the number of hours, dates attended and topics covered, are to be recorded in the foster carer's Development and Support Plan, in the *Foster Carer Agreement* or in ICMS.

In exceptional circumstances, such as where a foster carer lives in a remote location or in circumstances of ill health, the child safety service centre manager with responsibility for the renewal of approval may approve an extension of up to six months for the completion of the eight hours of advanced training that is required during the two year period following the carer's initial renewal of approval.

Any extension and the circumstances of the extension are to be recorded on the *Foster Carer Agreement* or in ICMS. An extension to complete the advanced modules does not preclude a carer from applying for and gaining a renewal of authority.

Exceptional circumstances may also exist for a foster carer couple where one partner is absent from the household for significant periods of time due to a genuine work commitment. This applies to couples where one partner is employed in the defence forces or mining industry and

stationed overseas for a minimum period of six months, or where one partner's work location is based interstate or overseas. In this situation, the child safety service centre manager has the discretion to re-approve the carers with the condition the carer's partner complete advanced training when his or her circumstances change. Where this is not a viable option, the manager may, as a last resort, waive the requirement that the partner completes advanced training. Training requirements may only be waived where flexible delivery, including one-to-one delivery, is not possible.

Kinship carers may access advanced training modules and funding for external advanced training to support their care of a child or young person.

Long-term guardians may also access advanced training modules.

5. Requirements for group delivery of Quality Care: Foster Care Training

As far as possible, group delivery of training should be provided as it allows interactive delivery of the content, establishes support networks between foster carers and models the partnerships that are required between staff of the department, licensed care services and foster carers. It is acknowledged however, that in rural and remote communities or in other circumstances that prevent potential foster carers from participating in-group training, that one-to-one delivery for all or parts of the training may be required.

5.1 The training team

Where group delivery of pre-service or standard modules is conducted, a training team must be established with the following roles and meeting the following criteria:

- the key trainer is required to have a Certificate IV in *Training and Assessment* or equivalent as a minimum qualification, or be an experienced departmental officer
- co-trainer (s) will co-present under the direct supervision of the key trainer
- one co-trainer must be a foster carer who has been an active carer for at least three years. In exceptional circumstances, such as in remote areas, there is flexibility around this requirement, with the approval of the child safety service centre manager
- each member of the training team must have completed a *Quality Care: Foster Care Training - Orientation* prior to commencing training and have the *Statement of Attendance in Quality Care: Foster Care Training - Orientation* certificate
- other stakeholders, for example, young people in care, parents of children in care, and members of the Indigenous community, may also be involved in the delivery of *Quality Care: Foster Care Training-Pre-service* to provide a balanced perspective on foster care.

Guest speakers are not required to have completed an *Orientation to Quality Care: Foster Care Training* module.

Advanced modules must be conducted:

- internally, by departmental staff and/or licensed care service staff and foster carer co-trainers (where applicable), or
- externally, by a person with recognised expertise in the training topic (see section 4.3 for more information).

Where the key trainer does not have a Certificate IV in *Training and Assessment*, their line manager is responsible for deciding whether or not the trainer has the equivalent qualifications, or experience as a departmental officer, that enables the trainer to adequately deliver the training and assess competencies. In deciding whether the trainer has suitable equivalent qualifications, the trainer's line manager may give consideration to the individual's prior training and assessment experience and other training and educational qualifications. The trainer should be deemed as also having adequate knowledge of, and experience working in, the child protection sector and should have the skills and knowledge required to deliver training and assessment in the child protection sector.

5.2 Orientation to Quality Care: Foster Care Training

Each member of the training team for pre-service and standard modules must have completed a *Quality Care: Foster Care Training - Orientation* prior to commencing training and have the *Statement of Attendance in Quality Care: Foster Care Training -Orientation* certificate. The *Orientation to Quality Care: Foster Care Training* is a three hour module that must be conducted by a trainer with a Certificate IV in *Training and Assessment*, or equivalent and experience in delivering *Quality Care: Foster Care Training*. The content for this module is contained online with the other training resources.

After completion of the *Quality Care: Foster Care Training – Orientation*, a *Statement of Attendance in Quality Care: Foster Care Training* will be issued to participants and signed by the key trainer.

5.3 Record keeping

The key trainer must ensure that all relevant documents associated with the administration of *Quality Care: Foster Care Training - Pre- Service* are completed. This includes the *Quality Care: Foster Care Training - Pre-service Record of Attendance and Competency Outcome* (form), completed worksheets and copies of certificates, which are to be maintained on the participant's departmental file and/or in ICMS.

It is also the responsibility of the key trainer to maintain information in relation to the pre-service and standard training modules delivered, locations and number of participants for regional planning and monitoring purposes.

5.4 Costs

The following costs will be covered within region, CSSC or licensed care service budgets where applicable:

- venue hire
- catering
- printing of materials for participants
- reimbursements to foster carer co-presenters
- reimbursements to other co-presenters
- reimbursements to approved foster carers for child care and travel to attend *Quality Care: Foster care Training - Orientation, Standard and Advanced modules*
- certificates.

5.4.1 Reimbursement to foster carer co-presenters

Foster carers who are members of the training team (more than one may be involved for large groups) and foster carers who act as guest speakers for particular sessions, or who participate as members of panels or discussion groups will be reimbursed at the rate of \$20 per hour for their presentation in the planning, delivery and follow-up of *Quality Care: Foster Care Training*.

The amount of time claimed for preparation depends on:

- (i) the carer's experience in presenting training and familiarity with the course content
- (ii) whether the trainers have previously worked together as a team
- (iii) whether participants present special training needs or other issues
- (iv) whether changes are being made to the exercises and activities in the program.

A maximum of 10 hours preparation time is payable to foster carers for any course they co-present.

A maximum of 24 hours (including preparation and presentation time) is payable to foster carers for co-presentation for any single training course.

Foster carer co-presenters can claim a maximum of 12 hours child care if required.

5.4.2 Reimbursement to guest speakers

Other stakeholders, for example, young people in care, parents of children in care, and members of the Indigenous community, may also be involved in the delivery of *Quality Care: Foster Care*

Training - Pre-Service to provide a balanced perspective on foster care. The training team is responsible for the invitation, preparation and support of guest speakers.

Reimbursement to guest speakers will be made at the same hourly rate as for foster carer co-trainers.

5.4.3 Reimbursement to foster carers attending training

Participants undertaking Pre-Service training will not be reimbursed for any costs incurred.

Approved foster or kinship carers who attend the *Quality Care: Foster Care Training, Orientation, Standard* and/or *Advanced* training modules may claim costs for child care and travel. Approval of proposed costs must be obtained prior to the expenditure and claims are to be paid by the relevant service delivery area in the region.

6. Roles and responsibilities

Regional Kinship and Foster Care Teams are responsible for:

- coordinating carer training within the region (this should be done in consultation with carers and non-government licensed care services)
- conducting carer training in collaboration with carers and non-government licensed care services
- carer support workers (both departmental and non-government) are responsible for:
 - working with carers to identify learning and development needs, which are recorded in the Foster Carer Agreement (for foster carers) or Placement Agreement (for kinship carers).

Managers of the relevant service delivery area are responsible for:

- approving reimbursements for training participants (see section 5.4)
- approving the costs associated with carers' attendance at external advanced training
- managing the training budget.

7. Recognition of prior learning

Recognition of prior learning will be given to foster care applicants who have completed relevant courses, including foster care training in another jurisdiction. Applicants are required to submit relevant documentation to the key trainer, who can make decisions regarding exemptions for pre-service and standard modules. Information on statutory requirements in Queensland can be flexibly provided on a one-to-one basis. Assessment of competency, using the worksheet questions, will still be required to be undertaken.

If there is an interruption to an individual's progression through pre-service training, there can be recognition of prior learning, provided the individual is assessed as having achieved competency in the modules previously completed.

8. Evaluation of Quality Care: Foster Care Training

The content and structure of *Quality Care: Foster Care Training* will be periodically reviewed and updated. Where evaluation forms are provided in the materials available online the completed forms should be held in the trainers workplace for use in any trainer or training material reviews.

To ensure program integrity and enable an accurate evaluation of the *Quality Care: Foster Care Training* the content and structure is not to be amended or changed in any way. Proposed amendments based on the evaluation feedback will be subject to departmental approval processes.

9. Links

9.1 Related legislation or standards

Child Protection Act 1999

Libraries and Archives Act 1988

Related Government guidelines

9.2 Related departmental policy

Child Safety Practice Manual, Chapters 8

9.3 Certificates

Statement of Attendance Quality Care: Foster Care Training - Orientation

Statement of Achievement Quality Care: Foster Care Training - Pre-service

Statement of Achievement Quality Care: Foster Care Training - Standard

9.4 Forms

Quality Care: Foster Care Training - Pre-service Training Record of Attendance and Competency Outcome

Quality Care: Foster Carer Training - Orientation Record of Attendance