

9.2 General Foster Care Assessment Panel and Approval Process

Last Amended: 2/08/2012 9:38 AM

Policy

[Foster Care Partnership Policy 2012](#)

Purpose

To guide child protection workers in the role and processes of the Foster Care Assessment Panel in making recommendations regarding the approval of applicants who wish to become general foster carers with the Department.

Legislative Authority

[Children and Community Services Regulations 2006 - Regulation 4 Approval of carers](#)

Standards

[Better Care, Better Services - Standards for Children and Young People in Protection and Care](#)

Practice Requirements

- A person who applies to become a general foster carer with the Department is recommended for approval by the Foster Care Assessment Panel ("the Panel") and approved by the Director, Fostering and Adoption Services (metropolitan applicant) or the relevant district director (country applicant). The applicant is assessed against the five competencies outlined in the Children and Community Services Regulations 2006. In accordance with the regulations, the CEO must be satisfied that the applicant 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
 - able to provide a safe living environment for a child
 - able to work cooperatively with officers, a child's family and other people when providing care for a child
 - able to take responsibility for the development of his or her competency and skills as a carer
 - a person of good character and repute.
- The Panel must have a minimum of four members, of which at least one member is not an employee of the Department, to conduct business.

Process Map

Child protection workers may refer to the Foster Care Assessment Panel Approval Process flowchart – available in Related Resources.

Procedures

[METROPOLITAN PANEL PROCESS](#)

- [1. Membership of the Panel](#)
- [2. A completed assessment report is provided to the Panel](#)
- [3. The Panel notifies the assessor of the Panel meeting date](#)
- [4. The assessor notifies the applicant of the Panel meeting date](#)
- [5. The Panel process](#)
- [6. The Panel recommendation](#)
- [7. The decision](#)
- [8. Informing the applicant\(s\)](#)
- [9. Recording](#)

[COUNTRY PANEL PROCESS](#)

Procedure - 9.2 General Foster Care Assessment Panel and Approval Process

METROPOLITAN PANEL PROCESS

[top](#)

1. Membership of the Panel

The Panel membership can include up to seven members, comprising of:

- A Panel Chair - this is either a senior department staff member who is not responsible for the

day to day management of those carrying out assessments, or a suitably qualified and experienced independent person. The Panel Chair is appointed by the Director, Fostering Services or relevant district director.

- one or more senior staff members
- a foster carer (with minimum of two years' experience)
- an Aboriginal staff member
- a culturally and linguistically diverse staff member
- a representative from a non-government agency, another government department or other suitably qualified independent person
- a medical practitioner.

Careful consideration should be given to the Panel membership if the applicant is an employee of the Department. To prevent a conflict of interest, Panel members should not have worked closely with or be likely to work with the applicant in the near future.

[top](#)

2. A completed assessment report is provided to the Panel

The assessor will complete a report (General Foster Carer Assessment Report – Form 414) and provide a copy to the Panel.

[top](#)

3. The Panel notifies the assessor of the Panel meeting date

The assessor will be notified of the date, time and venue for each completed assessment report. A copy of each report will be sent to the relevant district's senior child protection worker placement services (SCPWPS) or the relevant representative.

[top](#)

4. The assessor notifies the applicant of the Panel meeting date

The presenting assessor should inform the applicant of the date of the Panel meeting and provide an overview of the Panel procedure and possible outcomes.

[top](#)

5. The Panel process

Members of the Panel will read the report prior to the Panel meeting. Any concerns regarding the applicant's abilities to meet the competencies will be discussed with the other members of the Panel. The Panel Chair will collate these to present to the assessor.

The assessor must attend the Panel meeting at which their assessment is being considered. It is expected that, wherever possible, the receiving district's SCPWPS will also attend.

All questions will be directed to the assessor; the applicant does not usually attend the Panel meeting. Exceptions can be made if this is considered appropriate.

[top](#)

6. The Panel recommendation

After meeting to consider the assessment report, the Panel will make one of three possible recommendations:

- the applicant be approved as a general foster carer. The recommendation will specify the type of care the person should provide including the age range of the children, care type (emergency, respite, short term, long term), maximum capacity of children to be in their care, and whether the person can care for children with physical and/or intellectual disabilities
- additional information or clarification needs to be obtained - referred to as 'held over'. In this instance, unless otherwise determined at the Panel meeting, the decision to recommend or not recommend will be made by the Panel Chair
- the applicant is not recommended.

In cases where additional information needs to be obtained, the matter will be referred back to the assessor by the Panel Chair for follow up.

In circumstances where the assessor has recommended the applicant but the Panel has not, the Panel Chair assumes responsibility for notifying the applicant. The assessor, as the person with a relationship with the applicant, may choose to undertake this; however, the Panel must provide clear written information as to the reasons for the decision not to recommend.

[top](#)

7. The decision

Following the Panel meeting, the recommendation of the Panel is forwarded by the Panel Secretariat to the Director, Fostering and Adoption Services (or equivalent) to decide whether to approve the applicant.

The director will verify that all required checks and documents have been completed before deciding whether the applicant should be approved. If the director has any concerns about the applicant meeting the competencies, further information may be sought.

[top](#)

8. Informing the applicant(s)

The Panel recommendation should be communicated to the applicant by the assessor as soon as practical following the Panel meeting. The applicant should be reminded that decision-making rests with the Director, Foster and Adoption Services, who will communicate this to the applicant in writing once they have received the Panel report and recommendation. If approved, the applicant will receive a Certificate of Approval (Form 293) with the approval letter.

If the applicant wishes to discuss the decision not to approve them as a general foster carer, they will be given the opportunity to meet with their assessor and/or the Director, Fostering and Adoption Services.

If the applicant remains unsatisfied, they can lodge a complaint via the Department's Complaints Management process. The applicant should be advised of this process and provided with the Resolving your Complaints Kit - available as a resource document. Refer to Chapter 2: Complaints Management.

[top](#)

9. Recording

Fostering and Adoption Services will ensure that the decision making process is appropriately completed and recorded in the 'Manage Carer' component in assist.

[top](#)

COUNTRY PANEL PROCESS

The above procedures (Metropolitan Panel Process) will need to be adapted to meet the particular requirements and circumstances of individual country districts. Country districts may opt to use one of the following options or a combination of both. The district director is responsible for selecting the most suitable depending upon their circumstances.

Option 1

The Panel may be conducted at the local district level. Districts opting to use this option may hold a Panel meeting, as required, at their local district office or other suitable venue. The local district office will assume responsibility for recruiting a pool of suitable Panel members, including independent members from the local community.

The Panel will provide their recommendation to the district director, who will make the decision to approve the applicant or not. The district director will inform the applicant of the decision. Refer to the Metropolitan Panel Process - "Informing the applicant(s)" above.

The SCPWPS must ensure that the decision is recorded in the 'Manage Carer' component in assist.

Option 2

The Panel may be held in conjunction with Fostering and Adoption Services via teleconference. The procedure for country districts to book the Panel is as follows:

- The assessor will contact Fostering and Adoption Services to advise they have an assessment to present to the Panel
- Panel members, including a suitable Chair if required, are approached. This may be a combination of members from both the Fostering and Adoption Services pool of Panel members and from suitable people selected by the assessing country district
- A date and time will be scheduled for the Panel meeting
- The assessor will forward the completed assessment report (Form 414) and relevant documentation to Fostering and Adoption Services a minimum of one week prior to the Panel meeting date.

2/11/2015

9.2 General Foster Care Assessment Panel and Approval Process

Following the Panel meeting, the Panel Chair will forward the completed Panel report and recommendation to the SCPWPS to forward on to the district director.

The district director will make the decision to approve the applicant or not, and inform the applicant of the decision. Refer to the Metropolitan Panel Process - "Informing the applicant(s)" above.

The SCPWPS must ensure that the decision is recorded in the 'Manage Carer' component in assist.

[top](#)