

9.3 Placement of a Child in the Care of the CEO with a Relative or Significant Other

Last Amended: 8/01/2015 9:21 AM

Policy

Foster Care Partnership Policy 2012

Signs of Safety Child Protection Policy

Care Planning Policy 2012

Policy - Management of Swimming Pools and Other Bodies of Water for Foster Carers 2012

Purpose

To inform child protection workers of the processes and practice requirements associated with arranging, supporting and reviewing a relative or significant other placement for a child in the Chief Executive Officer's (CEO's) care.

Legislative Authority

[Children and Community Services Act 2004 - Section 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle](#)

[Children and Community Services Act 2004 - Section 79 Power of the CEO to arrange placement](#)

[Children and Community Services Act 2004 - Section 80 Guidelines for placement of certain children](#)

[Children and Community Services Act 2004 - Section 81 Consultation before placement of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child](#)

[Working with Children \(Criminal Record Checking\) Act 2004](#)

[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

- The district director must approve the placement with a relative or significant other for a child in the CEO's care.
- The relative or significant other must be assessed against the competencies identified in the Children and Community Services Regulations 2006 (the Regulations).
- Child protection workers must not proceed with an assessment or placement if they become aware of any information (such as, from the criminal or department record check) that the person is not suitable to be a carer.
- An Aboriginal practice leader (or other senior Aboriginal officer) must be consulted where a placement arrangement for an Aboriginal child with a relative or significant other is being considered.
- Child protection workers must consider the specific cultural and language needs of a child from a CaLD background in selecting a placement.
- All relatives and significant others caring for a child in the CEO's care must have a Working with Children (WWC) check, unless an urgent placement arrangement is required, where the relative or significant other must lodge an application for a WWC check within five days of the child being placed in their care.
- All adult household members who will be providing care or support to the foster child must have a WWC Check and departmental screening checks.
- A person who receives a negative notice or an interim negative notice under the Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004 must not provide a placement arrangement. Where a child has been placed with a relative or significant other in urgent circumstances and a negative notice is later returned, the child must be removed from the placement.
- Carer review should occur on an ongoing basis during monthly and quarterly visits. This information must then form a consolidated annual review report and be approved by the district director.
- Child protection workers must implement a rolling 11 month planning cycle so that carer reviews are completed within the required timeframe.
- If the Department is aware of any person having been charged with, or convicted of, a Class 1 or Class 2 offence, or any other offence that the Department assesses as inappropriate for them to carry out child-related work, the Department's Screening Unit must be notified.
- A reassessment must occur if there is a change in the relative or significant other's primary relationship, such as a new partner.
- Where the case management for a child in the CEO's care is transferred to another district, the foster carer (and associated files) must also be transferred to the receiving district.

Process Map

Refer to Approval of an Arrangement for the Placement of a Child Under s.79(2)(b) and s.79(2)(a)(i) in related resources.

Procedures

[Introduction](#)

[Identification and engagement](#)

[Assessment and review](#)

[Initial assessment and urgent placement](#)

[Assessment and approval](#)

[Ongoing competency building](#)

[Annual review](#)

[Reassessment of a relative or significant other carer](#)

[Assessment of relative and significant other carers applying to become general carers](#)

[Naming assessment and review forms in Objective](#)

Procedure - 9.3 Placement of a Child in the Care of the CEO with a Relative or Significant Other**Introduction**

Section 3 of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 (the Act) defines 'Relative'.

'Significant other' is not defined in the Act but includes adults who:

- would be included in a child's eco-map
- have known, and demonstrated an active interest in, the child and/or their family for a significant period
- belong to the same cultural and ethnic group.

[top](#)

Identification and engagement

The identification of potential relative and significant other carers should, wherever possible, occur in conjunction with Signs of Safety meetings that assess and plan for the safety of the children. Potential relative and significant other carers will be identified by either the family or Department workers and should be brought into Signs of Safety meetings as soon as appropriate.

Assessment starts at the point of identification of the potential carers and the decision that a child or children could be placed with them. Assessment is an ongoing process which should include building capacity to meet and enhance carer competencies. The opportunity to do this will occur at every contact.

Assessment of the relative and significant other (applicant) is undertaken by the child protection worker, and is different to a general foster carer assessment in that:

- it considers the pre-existing relationship between the child, family and the applicant
- the applicant is being assessed to care for a specific child
- the applicant is usually identified by the child or their family.

[top](#)

Assessment and review

The Signs of Safety three column approach should be used for assessment, during ongoing contact and for the review process. The child's needs must be central. Key questions have been identified which must be asked (see Form 560 Assessing and Reviewing Relatives and Significant Other People as Carers). As every child and applicant's circumstances are different, additional questions should be developed by child protection workers as required. Assessment, support and review should be reflective, inclusive, consultative and culturally sensitive.

[top](#)

Initial assessment and urgent placement

An urgent placement with a relative or significant other can be made under s79(2)(b) as one 'the CEO considers appropriate' and based on an initial assessment.

The initial assessment must focus on the child's needs and safety. The Carer Assessment Checklist and flowchart (in related resources) guide the assessment tasks, which include as a minimum:

2/11/2015

9.3 Placement of a Child in the Care of the CEO with a Relative or Significant Other

- consultation with the senior child protection worker - placement services and if the child is Aboriginal, with the Aboriginal practice leader (or other relevant Aboriginal officer) in the district office. All consultations must be recorded and saved on the case file. Record the:
 - date of the consultation
 - name of staff member(s) including the Aboriginal practice leader or Aboriginal staff involved in the consultation
 - issues discussed and outcomes
 - if there is another document relating to this consultation, for example, Form 457 Notification of After Hours Consultation with an Aboriginal Officer, include the Objective reference number.
- a search of Assist in relation to the relative, significant other and any other adult household members. If the search reveals adverse information which suggests the applicant may be unsuitable to care for the child, further assessment should not proceed unless the district director has considered the information and approves the continuation of the assessment.
- a home visit to undertake a safety assessment, preferably prior to placement. If Crisis Care has arranged the placement after hours and a home visit was not able to be completed, district staff must undertake the home visit the next working day.
- completing relevant sections of Form 560 Assessing and Reviewing Relatives and Significant Other People as Carers (see related resources). This form includes prompt questions and the Signs of Safety three column model to assess safety and begin to assess carer competency.

At the home visit (as part of the safety assessment), a number of forms must be completed and discussed with the applicant:

- Form 562 Statutory Declaration and Form 395 Record Check Consent Form must be signed by the applicant and all adults in the household. Children ten years of age and above who live in the household must be listed in the applicant's Form 395. The signed forms must be sent to the Department's Screening Unit by the next working day. If not all adults in the household are present at the initial visit and a child is being placed, the child protection worker must return the following working day to obtain the completed statutory declaration and record check consent forms.
- an application for a WWC check must be provided if the applicant does not have a current WWC card. This includes a separate WWC application for their spouse or de-facto partner if applicable, and any other adult household member who will be providing a care and/or support role for the child (if they do not already have a WWC Card). Child protection workers must complete part 6 and 7 of the application and assist the applicant (including their spouse or de-facto partner and other adult household members) to complete the other sections. They must be advised to submit this form within five days of the child being placed with them. Refer to Chapter 2: Working with Children Card - Application and Renewal Requirements for Carers.

An Urgent Placement Plan must be developed (in Form 560) that clearly defines any known areas of concern and how they can be managed or minimised to promote safety for the child, as well as any supports required by the applicant (which may include financial or specialist support). This is an opportunity for the child protection worker to assist the applicant to begin to think through what it means to have a child in care live with them, prioritise the child's safety, manage contact and be involved with the Department.

When assessing the child's safety in the proposed urgent placement, the child protection worker should take into account:

- the child's age, development, functioning and behaviour
- the applicant's attitudes, relationship, functioning and parenting capacity
- potential for harm, including access to a person responsible for harm
- networks such as extended family, professional networks, alternative carers and significant others, cultural context.

A copy of the Urgent Placement Plan must be given to the applicant before or at the time of placing the child. The plan is to be implemented and reviewed throughout the assessment process and placement.

The child protection worker must complete the relevant sections of the Form 560 and seek approval from the district director for the urgent placement. If the placement is not approved, the child must not be placed with the applicant and an alternative placement must be sought.

Where the district director has approved the placement and the child is placed with the applicant, the senior child protection worker - placement services must record the applicant's status in the 'Approve and Manage Carer' screen in Assist as 'Approval – s.79(2)(b)'.

Child protection workers must:

- record the details in the 'Living Arrangement' in Assist

- provide the applicant with information and assistance to meet the immediate needs of the child, including the Child Information Form (CIF) and Resources for foster carers file, which should include the Relative and Significant Other Carer Resource Booklet, and
- obtain the applicant's bank account details and record these in the Form 560 and Assist in order for a subsidy to be paid.

A case planning decision about whether to proceed with a carer assessment for ongoing care must be made within five days of the child's urgent placement. This decision will be based on the applicant's willingness to provide ongoing care and a preliminary assessment that this is a viable placement arrangement.

If a decision is made to not continue, an alternative placement option must be identified and the child moved. The details must be updated in Assist and the Department's Screening Unit advised.

If the decision is for the carer assessment to proceed, the child protection worker must confirm within five working days that the relevant WWC checks have been applied for and:

- update Assist with the WWC check application number/s and date lodged
- record the details on the Form 560, and
- discuss and sign the Foster Care Placement Partnership Agreement with the applicant.

[top](#)

Assessment and approval

All applicants must be assessed against the carer competencies of the Act (refer to Form 560).

Assessment of applicants must be an ongoing process and should continue with every conversation the child protection worker has with them. Assessment and capacity building with applicants should occur concurrently. Each conversation should assist applicants to be aware of the things they need to do as a carer and develop the necessary behaviour; and provide the child protection worker with a more complete picture about the extent to which the applicant meets the carer competencies.

The values of respect, compassion, empathy and validation should be integral to these conversations.

Assessment informs support strategies which should be tailored for the child and applicant. The applicant may have assumed the role of carer unexpectedly, in response to an unforeseen crisis, and may require additional support and learning/training opportunities while they adjust to their new role. When required, a learning and development plan should be developed to support the applicant's acquisition of additional skills and to build capacity to meet competencies.

The Checklist - Relative and Significant Other Carer Assessments, flowchart and Form 560 (in related resources) should guide assessment requirements regarding:

- the next steps following an urgent placement
- the beginning steps for an assessment if a child has not yet been placed with the applicant/s as it is a planned placement (for example the completion of Form 395 and the Application for a WWC Check).

If a child is placed in an urgent placement, a final decision regarding the approval of the applicant as a carer must be made within a maximum of six months of the child being placed in their care.

The number and type of contacts the child protection worker has with the applicant during assessment will vary to suit individual needs. The carer competencies must be discussed with the applicant.

Using the prompt questions and the Signs of Safety three columns, the child protection worker should assess the evidence available to support the applicant's abilities against each of the five competencies (see Form 560).

As part of the assessment process, the child protection worker must contact the referees identified in Form 560 and complete Form 563 Referee Report for Relative or Significant Other Carer Applicants. This must be done prior to the carer being approved by the district director.

When an applicant has indicated they have health issues, Form 711 Authority to Release Medical Information must be completed. The child protection worker can then request a medical report and discuss any concerns with the medical practitioner.

If criminal record checking reveals any adverse information, the Department's Screening Unit will request the Authorised Officer named on the applicant's Record Check Consent Form (Form 395) discuss this with the applicant and complete a report for the district director and Executive Director. After considering the report the district director and Executive Director will decide whether the

applicant's assessment should continue.

The child protection worker must prepare an assessment report (Form 560) to assess the applicant against the competencies and to identify learning and support requirements.

The child protection worker must include a recommendation that the applicant:

- be approved as a relative or significant other carer
- not be approved as a relative or significant other carer but for the child to remain in the urgent placement while the applicant undertakes a Learning and Development Plan and for further assessment against the carer competencies to occur, or
- not to be approved as a relative or significant other carer.

This report must be shared with the applicant to discuss any issues and provide clarification where necessary.

The assessment report must be submitted to the district director for approval. The applicant must be advised of the outcome by the child protection worker verbally and then in writing by the district director.

If the district director approves the urgent placement arrangement to continue while the applicant undertakes a Learning and Development Plan to meet competencies, the child protection worker must complete an updated assessment report (Form 560). The child protection worker must continue conversations with the applicant to build their capacity and assess them against the competencies. The report must be endorsed by the district director within six months of the child being placed with the applicant.

If the applicant is approved as a carer, the senior child protection worker placement services must update the applicant's status in the 'Approve and Manage Carer' screen in Assist.

The carer must be provided with ongoing support, learning and development to continue to build or enhance competencies.

Once the applicant has been approved, the senior child protection worker - placement services must:

- update the applicant's status in the 'Approve and Manage Carer' screen in Assist, and
- continue to provide the carer with ongoing support learning and development to build or enhance competencies.

[top](#)

Ongoing competency building

After approval, ongoing contact with approved relative or significant other carers should occur at least on a monthly basis. Information gathered at this contact must be pulled together and inform the annual review process. The focus of the contact should be on the foster care partnership and relationship building with the child and carer. This process should build carer capacity through individually tailored support and learning and development, so that the placement is a safe and positive experience for the child. A Learning and Development Plan (in Form 560) must be developed for each carer.

Conversations with the carer should be documented as case notes or Signs of Safety meeting notes and will inform: assessment of ongoing supports required; learning and development opportunities; who can best provide learning and support; and the annual review process.

The child protection worker should be clear in their role in supporting carers and determine what this will involve for each carer.

[top](#)

Annual review

The annual review of the relative or significant other carer is informed by the continuing conversations that have been occurring monthly and is part of an ongoing process. This involves recording key issues in the Signs of Safety three columns and highlights the areas for further support, capacity building and learning and development (refer to Form 560a Annual Review Relative and Significant Other Carer). A copy is provided to the carer and the original document placed on the carer file.

Information recorded from ongoing contacts in case notes, quarterly reports, Signs of Safety mappings, care plan meetings and the Learning and Development Plan should be brought together to form the basis of the annual review and report.

This review of every carer must be completed, at a minimum at least once every 12 months. To assist forward planning and for reviews of approved carers to be completed within the required timeframe, districts must implement a rolling 11 month planning cycle. This cycle is designed to support a sustainable and systematic approach to all carers having an annual review.

Using this model, all planning requirements are scheduled to occur between January and November of each calendar year. This should be documented in a letter to the carer(s) at the beginning of the cycle, detailing the future meeting date for the annual review.

The carer review provides an opportunity for the carer and their family to give feedback on the experience of providing care, what is working well, what the Department and the carer might be worried about, and what needs to happen.

The annual review formally affirms whether or not the carer is achieving and maintaining their competencies as a carer.

Once the carer review process has been completed, Assist must be updated to reflect the completion of the process.

[top](#)

Reassessment of a relative or significant other carer

If a relative or significant other carer has withdrawn after a child has left their care and the Department is seeking to return that child or place another child with them, the carer will need to be reassessed according to the relative or significant other carer assessment process.

Reassessment must also be undertaken when:

- an allegation concerning the standard of care has been reported and investigated, and the outcome was unsubstantiated but concerns remain
- an allegation has been substantiated
- a number of less serious concerns regarding the standard of care arise
- there is a change in the carer's primary relationship such as a new partner, separation from a partner or death of a partner. If the review identifies that the carer has a spouse or de-facto partner who has moved into the home, the spouse or de-facto partner must be screened and assessed as a carer, and will require a WWC card.
- a carer's situation has changed significantly or affects their ability to provide safe and appropriate care. This may include the death of a relative or close friend.

The extent of assessment required should be determined by the situation that led to the reassessment being required. The reassessment must determine whether the carer meets the competencies, and must be approved by the district director.

[top](#)

Assessment of relative and significant other carers applying to become general carers

If a relative or significant other carer applies to become a general carer, the process should proceed as for any other applicant – for more information refer to Chapter 9: General Foster Carer Assessment.

The relative carer assessment and subsequent reviews will be considered as part of the evidence provided for the general foster carer assessment. The assessment process will include additional assessment considerations regarding their suitability to care for children who are not related to them.

[top](#)

Naming assessment and review forms in Objective

Forms 560 (for the assessment) and 560a (for the review) must be saved in Objective under the following naming conventions.

Form 560 – for the assessment:

- Relative or significant other carer assessment – Urgent placement (list child's surname child's first name)
- Relative or significant other carer assessment – Continuation (list child's surname child's first name)
- Relative or significant other carer assessment – Outcome (list child's surname child's first name).

Form 560a – for the review:

2/11/2015

9.3 Placement of a Child in the Care of the CEO with a Relative or Significant Other

- Relative or significant other carer review (list child's surname child's first name).

[top](#)