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2.1 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF AUTHORISED CARERS PROCEDURE

Procedure Relating to Youth Care the Policy No: 2.1

The Recruitment Process

Youth Care UPA is committed to recruiting carers from diverse, cultures and religious backgrounds including those who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and/or Culturally and Linguistically Diverse.

All information will be provided in plain English and if the need arises the information will be translated and will accurately indicate:

- The benefits of becoming an Authorised Carer
- The responsibilities of an Authorised Carer including all legislative and other requirements.
- The challenges an Authorised Carer may encounter
- Potential carers will be informed of and be provided with copies of the following information which will assist them in their decisions regarding becoming a foster carer including:
 - the obligation to uphold the Charter of Rights for Children and Young Persons in out-of-home care
 - the role of Youth Care UPA and the role of the authorised carer and the delegations for decision making
 - the Code of Conduct for Authorised Carers
 - the benefits and challenges of being a carer
 - the Working with Children Check; and
 - the responsibilities of Youth Care UPA regarding the disclosure of placement information

Selection Criteria –Authorised Carer

Essential:

- An understanding of, and empathy with child and adolescent issues specifically in the area of emotional/mental health and alcohol and other drugs;
- A willingness to work with and assist children and young persons to participate in decisions about their lives;
- Ability to work in partnership with families in a non-judgmental way;

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- Ability to understand and meet the needs of a children and young persons;
- Adaptable ad flexible when working with children and young persons;
- Ability to communicate clearly and plainly;
- Does not have a criminal record for violent or abusive behaviour;
- Does not have any substance abuse problems
- Doses not have a physical or mental health problems that limit your capacity to provide out-of-home care for young person;
- Capacity to set and maintain clear limits
- Capacity to develop creative options to resolve difficulties
- Capacity to work as a member of a team including families, significant others and professional organisations
- Capacity to resolve conflict effectively
- Willing to take part in ongoing training
- Have an established support network
- A “Working with Children Check” satisfactorily completed before a child or young person is placed in their care
- Suitable accommodation with a separate and private bedroom for the young person
- Household contents insurance
- Telephone
- Current Drivers licence and vehicle
- Comprehensive vehicle insurance
- Understand Youth Care UPA service and structure and are willing to take direction, support and advice from a case worker;

Desirable:

- Experience in working with children and/or adolescents
- Relevant qualifications, for example youth work, teacher, nurse, childcare, psychologist or social worker, life experience
- Knowledge and understanding of behaviours that may be exhibited by children and young persons who have experienced loss, family breakdown and multiple out-of-home placements.

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- Knowledge of local health and welfare services for children and young persons
- Possession of the qualities of patience, flexibility, tolerance and humour
- Possession of a non-judgmental attitude towards children and young persons

When recruiting prospective carers, advertisements and information packages will be strategically placed to ensure coverage of a diverse potential carer target group. Flyers/brochures will be placed strategically around the local area.

- Advertisements will be placed in:
 - The Northern Rivers Echo;
 - The Daily News
 - The Byron Echo;
 - The Northern Star, and when required
 - Other relevant media outlets – for example, specific locality/radio/television

Information Packages will be sent to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Groups
- Southern Cross University School of Education
- Southern Cross University School of Social and Work Place Development
- Wollongbar TAFE

Where appropriate, Information Evenings will be organised to ensure that specific cultural groups are targeted. These will be informal evenings, which encourages

questioning and will be attended by the Program Manager, Team Leader, Case Workers and an authorised carer.

Initial Enquiry by Prospective Applicant

The first contact is usually a phone call, during which, the Program Manager, Team Leader or Case Worker: -

- Answers initial queries from the prospective carer;
- Completes an “Initial Carer Enquiry”

After the Initial Enquiry form is completed, the “Action Sheet” (CCWT/ACWA Step by Step Assessment Package) is completed by the Administration Officer.

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The Administration Officer offers to send out a non-obligatory "Potential Carers Information Booklet" enquires if the prospective carer would like to be contacted within a week for an initial interview and/or placed on the "Potential Carer List for Shared Stories: Shared Lives" training.

Object of the Initial Interview

The objective of the initial interview is to inform the prospective carer of the philosophy, mission statement, aims and goals of Youth Care UPA. At this time, the prospective carer is provided with information in relation to the reasons that children and young persons enter into out-of-home care.

The Youth Care UPA worker/s also:-

- Answers any questions the prospective carer has about being a carer and working with Youth Care UPA;
- Explores the motivation and reasons the person is considering becoming a carer.
- Ideally the prospective carer will want to work with children and young persons, is ready for a challenge, and feels that he or she has the experience and skills to bring to being an authorised carer.

This interview is an opportunity to:

- Deter people who have a very different view of caring for children and young persons. (e.g. some believe that having a children and young persons in their home will fulfil their needs; for the child they never had; for the child that has gone; someone to love them; for entertainment; for someone to take out to kid's movies or theme parks or to satisfy their own feelings of sorrow or guilt that some children are not cared for properly);
- Explore the implications that being a carer may have on his or her relationship and family;
- Invite the applicant to commence carer training.

Forms to be completed immediately are:

- National Police Criminal Check; (these forms are to be completed by all persons 16 years of age or older who will reside with the child or young person)
- NSW Working with Children Check (these forms are to be completed by all persons 18 years of age or older who will reside with the child or young person)
- Prohibited Persons Employment Declaration',
- Consent Form for the release of information (Chapter 16a).

The following documents (from CCWT/ACWA's Step By Step Assessment Package) are left with the prospective carers for completion, and must be given to Youth Care UPA prior to beginning the assessment. These documents include;

- Registration of interest;
- Application to become a carer;
- Health checklist;

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- Medical questionnaire;
- 2 x Personal reference forms;
- Guidelines for life story work.

Shared Stories: Shared Lives” Initial Carer Training

Youth Care UPA use the Shared Stories: Shared Lives” Initial Carer Training (CCWT/ACWA) to train potential carers.

The training consists of nine (9) modules scheduled over three (3) days [weekends]. This training is an opportunity for professional staff to gain an insight into the attitudes, skills, attributes and experiences of the individuals during the training. Questions raised in relation to specific topics will be responded to throughout the training.

Training is facilitated by the Program Manager, Service Coordinator and Casework Specialist who are all trained by CCWT/ACWA and qualified to deliver the training modules.

A current Youth Care UPA carer is also involved in the delivery of the carer training. This provides an opportunity for prospective carers to gain insight from the carer as to the organisational structure, requirements of carers and the degree of challenges that children and young persons may present to them as a carer.

The modules covered in the Shared Stories: Shared Lives training are:

- Foster Care in Context
- Bonding and Attachment
- Greif and Loss
- Abuse and Trauma
- Identity and Birth Family Contact
- Responding to Challenging Behaviours
- Team Work
- Maintaining Cultural Connection
- The Story Continues

Step-by-Step Carer Assessment Program

The Step-by-Step Program is a Competency Based Assessment and recognises the important work carried out by authorised carers. It allows accredited assessors to explore the skills and experience of potential carers in order to make an informed decision on their competency to undertake the work of an authorised carer.

All applications from potential carers will be comprehensively assessed in a series of interview and information exchange sessions using the CCWT/ACWA Step-by-Step Program. This process allows prospective carers to withdraw at any stage in the process.

The Step-by-Step program contains the following sections:

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Course Outline - A detailed outline for a training course for assessors on how to use Step by Step as a competency based assessment tool.

Information Pack for prospective carers – A resource sent to people after they have made an initial enquiry about being a Carer. It contains a flow Chart of the Assessment process, assessment and training process and a “Registration of Interest” form.

Manual for Assessors – a detailed outline of the assessment activities undertaken with applicants.

Applicant booklet – A collection of handouts and worksheets used by the applicant during the assessment interviews and includes a guide for completing a Life History.

Assessment record –It is commenced when a "Registration of Interest" has been completed and an appointment for an Information Exchange Session has been made. The Assessment Record contains the Assessment Record Checklist and becomes the basis for the decision to approve or decline the prospective carer. The Assessment Record can be used in any appeal process.

Initial Meeting

The Service Coordinator & Casework Specialist are present at the initial meeting with a prospective carer. This meeting is held at the home of the prospective carer or at another nominated venue.

Post Training Assessment:

Post training assessments (Interviews A,B,C,D, E found in the CCWT/ACWA Step by Step Package) are carried out by two of the professional staff members, and takes place over a number of home visits, at least one of which is an opportunity to talk to all family members of the primary carer. Once information is compiled, Competencies A, B, C, D, E (ACWA Step by Step Package) are completed by the Case Workers.

Objectives of Assessment:

The following list of objectives is contained in the “Applicant Booklet” (ACWA’s Step by Step Competency Based Resource Package) may be referred to by the carers during their assessment, as an outline for the interview.

- To explore aspects of your life up till now which may impact on your abilities in this area;
- To look at your family situation as it is now, and its strengths and vulnerabilities regarding another person coming into your family;
- To look at your supports from friends and family and the wider community, and how they may be of best use to you;

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- To flag, at this stage, any problems or issues which may arise in your family because of the presence of a young person;
- To discuss with you, areas which arose during the interviews and training so far which need more attention, discussion, or clarification;
- To explore with you, the areas which you will need least assistance in caring for a child or young person;
- To explore with you, the areas where you will need quite a lot of support, at least in the first stages of a placement;
- To explore your attitudes to parents who have abused and/or neglected their child, especially the child that you will be caring.
- Summary Report and Recommendations

A summary report and recommendations is be completed and signed by the Regional Manager of UPA and the Program Manager of Youth Care UPA.

Authorisation of Carers:

Carers, who have completed the training and have undergone the assessment process successfully, are licensed by Youth Care UPA. Carers may also have specific conditions added to their authorisation; for example, number of children and young persons, or for children and young persons of a specific age range they are licensed to have placed in their care.