

Program requirements for residential care services in Victoria

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Department of Human Services (the department) is responsible for planning, managing, funding and delivering housing and community services for Victorians.

The department funds a range of community-based child and family services to promote the safety, stability and development of children, young people and their families, and to build the capacity and resilience for children, families and communities.

Together with its service partners, the department is responsible for assisting children, young people and families who need support or protection, including:

- children and young people subject to, or at risk of, harm, abuse and neglect
- Aboriginal children subject to, or at risk of, harm, abuse or neglect
- children and young people who need support to remain with their family
- families that need support to ensure an appropriate, safe and stable developmental environment for their children.

1.2 Legislative and policy context

The Children Youth and Families Act

The *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Children, Youth and Families Act) provides the legislative basis for an integrated system of services for vulnerable children, young people and their families. The Children, Youth and Families Act can be found at <www.legislation.vic.gov.au>.

The legislative context promotes the safety, stability and healthy development of children. It also places a strong emphasis on the need to consider the impacts of cumulative harm and to preserve cultural identity.

In accordance with the Children, Youth and Families Act, community service organisations (CSOs) providing residential care must provide their services in a manner that is in the best interests of the child or young person. (Refer to section 1.7 of the Children, Youth and Families Act.)

The decision-making principles of the Children, Youth and Families Act highlight the importance of involving children and families in decision-making processes, and of providing them with assistance and support to do so in a meaningful way.

Additional principles (section 12 of the Children, Youth and Families Act) provide a framework for decision making in relation to Aboriginal children and families. These provide a stronger basis for ensuring Aboriginal children remain within, or connected to, their community and culture.

The Child Wellbeing and Safety Act

The *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* provides an overarching framework for promoting positive outcomes for all children, emphasising that:

- all children should be given the opportunity to reach their full potential and participate in society, irrespective of their family circumstances and background
- while parents are the primary nurturers of a child, society as a whole shares responsibility for children's wellbeing and safety
- planning and delivering services should focus on sustaining and improving children's outcomes, as well as promoting and protecting a child's safety, health, development, learning and wellbeing.

Victoria's vulnerable children: our shared responsibility

Changing the experience and life trajectory of vulnerable children and families is a shared responsibility across community, government, service providers and individuals. The *Victoria's vulnerable children: our shared responsibility* directions paper 2012 highlights the five key action areas for protecting Victoria's vulnerable children:

- building effective and connected services
- enhancing education and building capacity
- making a child-friendly legal system
- providing safe, stable and supportive out-of-home care
- introducing accountability and transparency.

More information about the directions paper is available at <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/news-and-events/news/general-news/victorias-vulnerable-children--our-shared-responsibility>.

Registration under the Children, Youth and Families Act

Services of the highest quality are required to provide children with their right to safety, stability and healthy development. The Children, Youth and Families Act provides a strong framework to ensure the quality of services and care provided to children and families.

The Children, Youth and Families Act requires CSOs providing child and family services and out-of-home care services to be registered and to meet quality standards. From 1 July 2012 these are the *Department of Human Services Standards* and are summarised on pages 3 and 4 below.

Under the Children, Youth and Families Act, registered services may fall within or across any of the three categories listed below:

- out-of-home care services
- community-based child and family services
- prescribed services (NB: there are currently no prescribed services).

At an activity level, organisations delivering services specifically for children and young people requiring care, support, protection or accommodation and of families requiring support are required to be registered as a community service.

For further information refer to the *Policy, procedures and forms for the registration of disability service providers and community services* available from the department's website at www.dhs.vic.gov.au.

Service agreement, monitoring and review

Organisations are required to deliver services in line with their service agreement with the department. Performance reporting and monitoring forms part of the agreement.

Organisations are required to regularly report on their service outputs through data collection and other reporting requirements as detailed in the service agreement. The specific requirements for monitoring, review and reporting are set out in the service agreement.

The *Department of Human Services monitoring framework* is made up of three components:

- ongoing core monitoring
- an annual desktop review
- possible service review, where the desktop review indicates matters or issues requiring further attention.

For further information, the *Service agreement information kit for funded organisations* can be accessed on the department's website at <<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-service-providers/for-funded-agencies/funded-agency-channel/service-agreement-information-kit>>.

Quality assurance standards

Programs and services are expected to have systems in place to maintain quality service delivery and promote positive outcomes for clients.

The *Department of Human Services Standards*, implemented from 1 July 2012, are a single set of service delivery standards for a range of department-funded programs providing services to clients.

Organisations will be externally reviewed against the *Department of Human Services Standards* once every three years by one of a panel of independent review bodies endorsed by the department.

Where a service provider receives funding from the department of \$100,000 or less per annum from the department for activities in scope of independent review, it may, with the approval of the department, undertake a self-assessment rather than an independent review of its compliance with the standards.

More information is available on the department's website at <<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/department-of-human-services-standards>>.

The *Department of Human Services Standards* are summarised as:

- **empowerment:** people's rights are promoted and upheld
- **access and engagement:** people's right to access transparent, equitable and integrated services is promoted and upheld
- **wellbeing:** people's right to wellbeing and safety is promoted and upheld
- **participation:** people's right to choice, decision making and to actively participate as a valued member of their chosen community is promoted and upheld.

A service provider's governance and management systems are also reviewed using the standards of an independent review body.

The *Department of Human Services Standards* enable programs and services to both internally assess strengths and use emerging practice to reflect on and refine the way services are delivered, and to have an external critique of its service delivery that builds community confidence.

The evidence guide for the standards notes that reviewers will examine a service provider's systems, policies and practices to ensure they reflect the program requirements.

1.3 Purpose of the program requirements for residential care services in Victoria

This document sets out the program requirements for delivering residential care services in Victoria. The program requirements are the essential prerequisites for providing a quality service for the children and young people in residential care throughout the state.

The requirements are statements of *what* CSOs providing residential care services need to do in order to meet service expectations. In general, the requirements do not outline *how* – this information can be sourced from the range of program guidelines and other documents as referenced throughout this publication. CSOs will also have their own operations and procedural documentation that outline how the program requirements are implemented.

1.4 Partnership in service delivery

Effective practice requires good working relationships between services, while working in partnership with families wherever possible. The decision to place a child into out-of-home care imposes responsibility on all those involved to ensure that at a minimum, the standard of care provided is significantly better than the care that they would otherwise have received at home.

The department and the CSOs delivering residential care services are expected to work in partnership to deliver an adequate standard of care. This document identifies what is expected of CSOs and their residential care workers who care for children and young people in residential care on behalf of the department.

At a statewide level, the department plays a critical role in specifying the type of services required, the expected service outcomes, the framework under which services are funded, and how service delivery will be monitored.

At a local level, the department undertakes the core monitoring of service delivery and engages with CSOs in relation to service demand and performance issues. The department is also responsible for timely provision of information to CSOs and carers regarding children in residential care, for developing case plans for children and young people based on best interests principles, participating as active members of care teams (see *Care team* in the glossary) and negotiating with CSOs to ensure the best interests of children are met via the delivery of services in accordance with case plan goals.

CSOs are responsible for recruiting, assessing, training, supervising and supporting residential carers.

CSOs support children and young people placed in residential care and take the lead role in the development and implementation of care plans (see *Care plan* in the glossary). In situations where they have contracted case management responsibility, CSOs also act as case managers, and are responsible for implementing statutory case plans (see *Case plan* in the glossary). For voluntary

clients, CSOs are responsible for establishing and monitoring the voluntary agreement (see *Voluntary agreement* in the glossary).

1.5 Residential care

Residential care is an out-of-home care placement option providing temporary, short-term or long-term accommodation and support to children and young people who have been removed from the family home.

Residential care has two funded activity levels: *residential care intermediate* (RP2) for children and young people who display a significant level of challenging behaviour or because they are a part of a large sibling group, and *residential care complex* (RP3) for children and young people who display a significant level of complex behaviour, have multiple and complex needs and engage in high-risk behaviours.

The majority of residential care placements in Victoria are managed by CSOs. These organisations can also provide case management services. (Refer to section 2.15 below.)

1.6 Best interests principles

The Children, Youth and Families Act (section 10) states that the best interests of a child or young person must always be paramount when making a decision. When determining whether a decision or action is in the child's best interests, CSOs must always consider:

- the need to protect the child or young person from harm
- the need to protect the rights of the child or young person
- the need to promote the child or young person's development, taking into account their age, stage of development, culture and gender.

The best interests are a unifying framework for practice across the out-of-home care sector. They guide the development of workplace policies and procedures that promote working in the best interests of a child. CSOs can download the *Best interests case practice model summary guide* at www.office-for-children.vic.gov.au/every-child-every-chance/library/publications/best-interests.

1.7 Child protection, placement and family services outcomes framework

The *Child protection, placement and family services outcomes framework* is a tool that has been developed as a key component of the sector-wide quality system, providing a mechanism to track the effects, and monitor the impact, of system changes on outcomes for children and young people and identify priority areas for action. The framework consists of:

- a 'vision' for children of being safe, healthy and continuing to develop, learn and achieve wellbeing
- the three domains of safety, stability and development through the lens of the child's age, stage of development and gender), as described within the best interests case practice model
- ten outcomes that derive from the best interests framework
 - Children and young people are safe from injury and harm.

- Children and young people are connected to their family and carers.
 - Children and young people are connected to school and community.
 - Children and young people are connected to their culture.
 - Children and young people enjoy optimal physical health.
 - Children and young people achieve optimal education and learning.
 - Children and young people achieve optimal social and emotional development.
 - Children and young people have a positive sense of self.
 - Children and young people display positive behaviour and good mental health.
 - Children and young people display pro-social teenage lifestyles.
- a list of the indicators that, when taken together, will give us an indication as to whether we are contributing effectively to achieving the outcomes
 - a section detailing the quantitative and qualitative measures that inform the indicators and outcomes.

The outcomes framework is informed by both quantitative and qualitative data gathered by service evaluations, research and existing data collected across the sector and is linked to the statewide *Victorian outcomes framework for children*, enabling an evidence-based comparison of outcomes of vulnerable children with all children in Victoria.

1.8 Looking after children

Looking After Children (LAC) is an outcomes-focused approach for collaboratively providing the good care of children placed on out-of-home care. LAC considers the child's needs and outcomes across seven developmental domains (or outcome objectives). Information about LAC is available on the department's website at <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/programs/children,-youth-and-family-services/looking-after-children-in-victoria-lac>.

The LAC domains and their aspirational statements listed below support the purpose of the residential care program requirements, which are to ensure that residential care services contribute positively to each child's safety, enhanced wellbeing and stability.

Health

This area includes: progress towards achieving all the physical developmental milestones from childhood to puberty; injury prevention and immunisation against preventable illnesses; personal hygiene; good dental care; the provision of a healthy diet; and the development and maintenance of a physically active lifestyle.

Emotional and behavioural development

This area focuses on the child's responses to other people and the world around them, as reflected in their feelings and demonstrated through their actions. Positive and nurturing relationships build healthy emotional and behavioural responses that equip children and young people to better deal with stressors and become resilient.

Education

Every child and young person needs to be supported to maximise their educational potential.

Participation in preschool, primary and secondary schooling to vocational training or tertiary studies is very important for developing life skills and the ability to learn.

Family and social relationships

The child or young person has established meaningful, stable, appropriate and affectionate relationships with family and peers and others within their social network.

Identity

This area covers the questions of 'Who am I?' and 'Where do I belong?' The sense of self is influenced by their gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality and physical appearance. Family, community and culture provide significant elements of a child's identity, especially for Aboriginal children. Photos, certificates, mementos, recalling and retelling shared experiences develop the individual child or young person's 'life story' about growing up in a particular time and space.

Social presentation

A child's appearance, social behaviour and personal habits affect how other people perceive and treat them. These reactions will affect a child's self-esteem and self-confidence. Young people need guidance and resources to present themselves in ways that help them to be positively regarded by their peers and adults. Recreation and leisure activities develop self-confidence and skills related to successful interactions with peers.

Self-care skills

All children and young people need to be given the opportunity to care for themselves at a level appropriate to their age and ability, with the goal of eventual independence.

1.9 Charter for children in out-of-home care

The charter provides a framework of principles to promote the wellbeing of children and young people in out-of-home care. Written by the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner, it outlines the rights of children and young people in out-of-home care. More information about the charter is available at <http://www.kids.vic.gov.au/publications/parents_resources.htm>.

1.10 Format of the program requirements for residential care

The residential care program requirements fall into three broad categories as outlined below. Note that 'child' and 'children', used throughout the requirements, refer to all children and young people in residential care. 'Young person' (or young people) is used when a requirement is specific to those aged 15 and above.

Service delivery and client care requirements

Section 2 of this document outlines program requirements addressing the planning and provision of care for children placed in residential care.

Environment and material goods

Section 3 of this document outlines program requirements addressing the physical environment of residential care, and the material goods that children are provided.

Organisational and human resources

Section 4 of this document outlines program requirements addressing organisational and human resources issues that apply to the operations and practices of the CSOs delivering residential care services, including employment processes.

Each overarching program requirement area has three components:

- a principle statement, which identifies why the particular category of requirements is important
- a summary of each requirement's expectation
- the program requirements themselves.

The program requirements are underpinned by the *Department of Human Services Standards*. Where applicable, the program requirements are referenced to the relevant Department of Human Services Standard. More information about the standards is available on the department's website at <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/department-of-human-services-standards>.

Key supporting documents such as policies and guidelines are noted below each program requirement. Residential care organisations and staff should familiarise themselves with these policy documents or guidelines.

As the Children, Youth and Families Act is the foremost legislative foundation for program activity, specific sections are cited when applicable.

2. Service delivery and client care requirements

Principle statement

The safety, wellbeing, development and stability of individual children is the primary focus of residential care services. Individualised planning and service delivery is essential so that children will:

- be safe
- have their developmental needs met
- be provided with opportunities to achieve their full potential.

Summary of expectations

CSOs must work to ensure the planning and delivery of services reflects what is currently known to be most effective. It is essential that CSOs continually review what they are doing, how they are doing it and what the results are. The findings of such reviews can then be used to identify areas of possible improvement in systems, processes and practices.

Residential carers and other CSO staff will play a vital role in contributing to each child's case planning goals being achieved. They will provide appropriate levels of support and supervision to each child through the care and placement planning process and will cooperate and collaborate with all services involved with the child or young person. On a day-to-day basis, they must play a supportive and facilitative role, ensuring that: children and young people are encouraged to reach their full potential; children and young people's individual needs and backgrounds are respected and catered for; and children and young people are prepared as much as possible for the demands they will face when they leave care. The LAC framework must be used to facilitate this role and the involvement of the child and their family in planning for their care.

Program requirements

2.1 Care planning

(This requirement relates to Department of Human Services Standards 3.1 and 3.3)

2.1.1 CSOs will use practice models and guidelines demonstrating consistency with the *Best interests framework*. The *Best interests framework* can be found at <<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-service-providers/children,-youth-and-families/child-protection/specialist-practice-resources-for-child-protection-workers/best-interests-case-practice-model-summary-guide-2010>>.

2.1.2 CSOs will use the LAC framework to support the best interests of a child using a collaborative care team approach.

2.1.3 In line with LAC requirements, within two weeks of a placement commencing, CSOs will initiate an essential information record containing all the important factual pieces of information about the child or young person including who can give authority for medical treatment and any important identification numbers such as health care cards and medicare numbers.

2.1.4 As soon as possible, and within two weeks of the commencement of a placement, CSOs will develop a care and placement plan for the child/young person in conjunction with the child or young person's case manager and other care team members. The care and placement plan identifies the child or young person's needs and documents the strategies in place for the day-to-day management of these needs. It will be guided by the child or young person's case planning goals under the seven LAC domains of health, emotional and behavioural development, education, family and social relationships, identity, social presentation, and self-care skills.

2.1.5 CSOs will ensure each client's care and placement plan is reviewed every six months. Subsequent care and placement plans should be more comprehensive, consider the medium- and long-term placement goals, and integrate with related statutory case planning processes and goals.

2.1.6 CSOs will enter a child or young person's essential information record and care and placement plan (and the review of this plan) onto the Client Relation Information System for Service Providers (CRISSP).

2.1.7 CSOs will provide copies of the child's LAC records to other CSOs when a child/young person moves to a new placement.

2.1.8 CSOs will support the requirement that, for all young people in residential care between the ages of 15 and 18 years, their care team is to utilise the LAC 15+ care and transition plan rather than the care and placement plan to document their aspirations and identified needs, and the actions undertaken to meet these needs.

Supporting documents: [Looking after children \(LAC\) framework; Reference guide for the 'Best interests case practice model – summary guide'](#).

2.2 Participation in decision making

(This requirement relates to Department of Human Services Standards 3.2, 4.1, 4.2)

2.2.1 CSOs will ensure children and their families are encouraged and supported as far as possible to have direct involvement in all planning and decision-making processes that concern them.

2.2.2 CSOs must give consideration to the 'Decision-making principles' that are outlined in part 1.2 division 3 of the Children, Youth and Families Act.

2.2.3 CSOs will follow part 1.2 division 4 of the Children, Youth and Families Act, 'Additional decision-making principles for Aboriginal children' that depicts the consideration given in making a decision or taking action in relation to an Aboriginal child or young person.

2.2.4 In addition, and in recognition of the principles of Aboriginal self-management and self-determination, members of the Aboriginal community to which an Aboriginal child or young person belongs will be consulted in decision-making processes (Children, Youth and Families Act, part 1.2, division 4).

Supporting documents: [Children, Youth and Families Act 2005](#)

2.3 Responding to challenging behaviour by children and young people

(This requirement relates to Department of Human Services Standard 3.1)

2.3.1 CSOs will have written policies and practices in place that outline appropriate trauma-informed intervention and support in response to challenging behaviour by children and young people in residential care.

2.3.2 CSOs will have written policies and procedures in place that are readily accessible by all staff. CSOs will ensure residential carers observe these policies and procedures in their practice with children and young people, including:

- appropriate therapeutic/trauma-informed responses to children and young people at all times and when experiencing a crisis or displaying challenging behaviour
- utilising prevention and de-escalation strategies to diminish the risk of harm to the child or young person, their peers or others
- paying particular attention to de-escalation strategies with children and young people known to have displayed high-risk or challenging behaviours (this is assisted by developing and maintaining a relationship of trust with the child or young person and understanding and responding appropriately to triggers in order to ensure their safety)
- positively supporting self-regulation by children and young people when they are faced with challenging/stressful situations/triggers.

2.3.3 CSOs will ensure staff are made aware of these policies and practices and are supported in accessing and understanding these policies through supervision and training.

2.3.4 Procedures must be planned to avoid using physically intrusive or restrictive practices. Physical intervention may only be used as a last resort and at the least intrusive level to ensure freedom from harm for all involved.

2.3.5 CSOs will have practice guidelines for residential carers about working with children (under ten years of age) who exhibit problem sexual behaviour and with young people displaying sexually abusive behaviour (aged over ten).

Supporting documents: [*Adolescents with sexually abusive behaviours and their families \(Best interests case practice model\)*](#)

2.4 Cooperation, collaboration and communication

(This requirement relates to DHS Standard 3.1)

2.4.1 CSO staff will work collaboratively with Child Protection to provide a service that is in accordance with the child or young person's case planning goals (best interests plan) and assist with fulfilling these goals.

2.4.2 CSO staff will work collaboratively with relevant agencies involved with each child or young person and foster effective linkages between these agencies. Case management provided by other agencies will be recognised and supported by CSOs.

2.4.3 CSO staff will convene regular out-of-home care team meetings for each child or young person and will invite and communicate with the child or young person's child protection worker or case manager and other appropriate care team members.

2.4.5 Information is only disclosed outside of the care team to those who must need to know to maintain the safety and healthy development of the child.

2.4.6 Residential carers will be available for active involvement in planning decisions concerning children and young people.

2.4.7 CSOs will comply with departmental incident reporting requirements (refer to the reference guide under *Incident reporting* and to section 4.5.10 of this document).

2.5 Inclusive practice

(This requirement relates to Department of Human Services Standard 4.3)

2.5.1 Residential care workers will support the development and maintenance of positive family attachments for children and young people, in accordance with the child or young person's safety and wellbeing and their case planning goals. Specific details of any action required in this area will be outlined in each child or young person's care and placement plan.

2.5.2 Residential carers will work with children and young people, parents and other family members to maximise opportunities to achieve the child or young person's case planning goals.

2.5.3 CSOs will develop strategies to support the cultural needs of children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

2.5.4 CSO staff will support and encourage the expression of each child or young person's cultural and religious identity.

2.5.5 Residential carers will support and encourage the maintenance and strengthening of relationships with the significant people in the child or young person's life. The identity of significant others will be specified in each client's placement plan.

2.6 Health

(This requirement relates to Department of Human Services Standard 3.1)

2.6.1 CSOs will support the requirement that children and young people entering care for the first time (or for the first time during the current period of involvement) will undergo a comprehensive health assessment as soon as possible or within three months of admission to the placement, and thereafter on at least an annual basis or as often as required in their treatment plan. (If a child is entering the placement from another placement, CSO staff will confirm the last date the child underwent a health assessment and will arrange any examination and/or treatment that may be required.)

2.6.2 CSOs will promote the health needs of children and young people in residential care. This includes medical, dental, optical, auditory, mental health and specialist needs.

2.6.3 Residential carers will attend to each child and young person's health care needs as they arise. Specific details of any ongoing treatment required in any of the health care areas will be outlined in each child and young person's placement plan.

2.6.4 Residential carers will maintain records detailing the child and young person's health care assessments and treatment plans, including records of any immunisations the child or young person has received.

2.6.5 The CSO will have written policies and procedures in place that all staff are familiar with, that are readily accessible to all staff, and that outline the following:

- the CSO's policy on sexuality education
- the CSO's policy on substance abuse
- infection control procedures.

2.6.6 Under section 597 (3), (4) of the Children, Youth and Families Act, an authorised CSO manager may consent to the treatment, hospital admission, operation or surgery of a child or young person in residential care. This policy can be found at <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/out-of-home-care/health-issues/1471-authority-of-csos-to-give-medical-consent-for-children-in-out-of-home-care/3>.

2.6.7 CSOs and residential carers will comply with relevant guidelines concerning how management responds to inhalant use and comply with relevant alcohol and drug policies (refer to the reference guide under *Inhalant use and alcohol and drugs*). More information can be found at <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/management-response-to-inhalant-use-2002>.

2.6.8 All children in residential care with substance abuse issues must be referred to a drug and alcohol treatment service.

2.6.9 Residential care homes must have the capacity to securely store essential day-to-day items that could be used as inhalants

Supporting documents: [Children, Youth and Families Act 2005](#); [Victorian child protection policy and practice manual](#)

2.7 Education, training and employment

(This requirement relates to Department of Human Services Standard 4.2)

2.7.1 CSO staff will support children to enrol, attend and achieve at school, in a training program or at work and encourage them to maximise their education, training and employment opportunities. Specific details of any assistance required in this area will be outlined in each child and young person's care and placement plan.

2.7.2 Residential carers will comply with the requirements of the *Out-of-home care education commitment* ('the partnering agreement') that outlines responsibilities to support a child or young person in school. The *Out-of-home care education commitment* can be found at http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/stuman/wellbeing/A4_partnering.pdf.

2.7.3 In accordance with the requirements of the partnering agreement, where a child or young person in residential care attends a government, Catholic or independent school, designated case managers or residential carers must be a member of the student support group (SSG) as established by the child's school and also contribute to developing child's individual education plan (IEP).

2.7.4 CSOs must support the departmental requirement for all school-aged children who have been in residential care for three months or longer to have an education assessment regardless of where they attend school and inclusive of children and young people not enrolled in a school or education program.

2.7.5 CSOs will support the requirement that all young people in residential care between the ages of 16 and 18 on custody or guardianship orders and disengaged from education, training or employment be referred to the Springboard program in their region.

2.7.6 CSO staff will systematically record (using CRISSP) the outcomes of any liaisons with the child's school or education program.

2.7.7 CSOs will ensure children are provided with an area where they are able to use a computer, to study and to complete other education-related tasks.

2.7.8 CSO staff will ensure children not in formal education are encouraged to participate in education-based programs that provide meaningful pathways to school, training or employment options.

Supporting documents: Out-of-home care education commitment ('the partnering agreement')

2.8 Recreation

(This requirement relates to Department of Human Services Standard 4.2)

2.8.1 Children will be provided with regular opportunities to engage in age-appropriate forms of recreation and community-based activities in order to develop social confidence and skills in interacting with peers and the community. Specific details of any action required in this area will be outlined in each child and young person's care and placement plan.

2.8.2 CSO staff will encourage children to become involved with their local community and facilitate such involvement where possible.

2.8.3 CSO staff will support and encourage the development of positive relationships between children and their peers. Positive relationships outside the residential care house will be encouraged.

2.9 Responding to the needs of Aboriginal children and young people

(This requirement relates to Department of Human Services Standard 4.4)

2.9.1 CSOs will develop links with Aboriginal services to enable the most effective response to Aboriginal children.

2.9.2 Aboriginal community controlled organisations (ACCO's) will be involved in delivering services to Aboriginal children wherever possible.

2.9.3 In relation to residential placements contracted to CSOs, the Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support Service (ACSASS) will continue to provide consultation to Child Protection regarding non-delegated decisions and actions, in accordance with the *Protocol between Child Protection and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency*.

2.9.4 In accordance with the Children, Youth and Families Act (section 12), CSOs will encourage members of the appropriate Aboriginal communities to be involved in supporting Aboriginal clients.

2.9.5 CSOs will uphold the requirements of the Children, Youth and Families Act (section 13) Aboriginal child placement principle to ensure the cultural identity, family and community connections of Aboriginal children are maintained and strengthened. More information about the Aboriginal child placement principle is available at <<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/aboriginal-child-placement-principle-guide-2002>>.

2.9.6 For Aboriginal children on a Guardianship to Secretary Order or a Long-Term Guardianship to Secretary Order, CSO staff will work in accordance with their individual cultural support plan pursuant to the Children Youth and Families Act (section 176). For Aboriginal children not on a Guardian to Secretary or LTGSO, cultural considerations should occur through formal case planning and care team meetings throughout the life of the placement.

Supporting documents: [Children, Youth and Families Act 2005](#); [Aboriginal cultural competence framework \(2008\)](#); [Child Protection Protocol](#)

2.10 Responding to the needs of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

(This requirement relates to Department of Human Services Standard 4.5)

2.10.1 CSOs will ensure when a child or young person is placed in residential care, that all carers will be informed of specific aspects of the child or young person's culture or religious identity. This may include dietary requirements, religious customs, beliefs and expectations such as appropriate dress and behaviour. At the earliest possible time, carers will receive additional information and training (as required) concerning specific cultural issues.

2.10.2 CSOs will acknowledge the importance of these factors to plan and deliver culturally competent services.

2.10.3 CSOs will involve relevant members of the child's community and extended family as appropriate, and, where necessary, use interpreters in communication with the child and family.

2.10.4 CSOs will develop links with culturally appropriate services as soon as a child is placed in care, or as soon as they become aware of the child's linguistic, cultural or religious identity.

2.10.5 CSOs will ensure the training that residential carers receive provides information on culturally sensitive caring, to make certain a child's cultural values, beliefs and practices are respected and upheld.

2.11 Stability

(This requirement relates to Department of Human Services Standard 3.5)

2.11.1 CSOs will make every effort to minimise the frequency of placement changes for children and young people.

2.11.2 Where there are indications that a placement might be disrupted, CSO staff will meet with the case manager, relevant departmental staff and other relevant parties in order to develop plans aimed at stabilising and securing the existing placement.

2.11.3 Where a decision is made that a placement change is required, the CSO will maintain responsibility for care of the child or young person until an alternative placement is found or a case planning decision is made to terminate the placement.

2.11.4 Where a placement change occurs, CSO staff will work cooperatively with the child/young person's case manager, the child or young person, their family and all other parties concerned, in order to ensure a smooth transition for the child or young person.

2.11.5 Where a placement change occurs, CSO staff will work to ensure the change occurs in a way that is sensitive to the needs of the child or young person, and ensure that he/she is involved in the process wherever possible.

2.11.6 Where a placement change occurs, CSO staff from both placements concerned will ensure all of the client's personal belongings and other materials are safely transferred to the subsequent placement.

2.11.7 Where a placement change occurs, CSO staff will ensure all relevant information concerning the child/young person is passed on to staff/carers and care managers at the new placement, as well as the child/young person's case manager.

2.12 Transitioning to adulthood (leaving care)

(This requirement relates to Department of Human Services Standards 3.4, 4.6)

2.12.1 CSOs and carers will work with young people aged 15 –18 years during their time in placement to develop living skills that are appropriate to their age, developmental level and circumstance. The specific skills required may include:

- budgeting and managing money
- managing family and other relationships
- living with other people and conflict resolution
- cooking, cleaning and personal maintenance
- understanding their rights and responsibilities as an adult.

2.12.2 CSOs will use the LAC 15+ care and transition plan to help the care team to identify the necessary strategies and actions required to assist each individual young person's transition into adulthood. This plan will be developed in collaboration with the young person from when they turn 15 years of age, and involve their family where applicable. The care and transition plan will include a focus on the following areas of need:

- safe and sustainable accommodation
- education or employment arrangements
- sustainable income
- access to health services (medical, dental and other specialist services as required)
- information and referral to relevant post-care support services, health and community services, legal services, Centrelink, alternative housing options and culturally specific services such as Aboriginal organisations required for the young person including their contact details, timeframes and responsibilities
- post-care financial support (brokerage)
- opportunities for young people who have left care to link with others in the same situation, if desired.

2.12.3 CSOs will ensure a young person's personal possessions are safely stored and made available to them in good condition for when they are leaving care.

2.12.4 CSOs and carers will utilise departmental resources developed specifically to assist care and transition planning (see *Transitioning to adulthood* in the reference guide).

2.12.5 CSOs are responsible for providing support to young people in accordance with their care and transition plan, for up to three months after leaving care, unless a shorter timeframe is negotiated with the department.

2.12.6 If young people up to 21 years of age who have left care seek assistance from the CSO, details of post-care support services and other relevant supports will be provided to them. This information is available at <www.cyf.vic.gov.au/leavingcare>.

Supporting documents: [LAC 15+ care and transition plan](#); [Leaving care](#).

2.13 Privacy and confidentiality

(This requirement relates to Department of Human Services Standard 4.3)

2.13.1 CSOs will have written policies and procedures regarding client confidentiality that all staff are familiar with and that are readily accessible. All staff will be aware of their responsibilities to maintain client confidentiality.

2.13.2 Staff will ensure each child and young person's right to privacy is upheld and that this is demonstrated in their contact with them. In practice this means that, where appropriate:

- children are able to dress and bathe in private
- children are able to spend time in private if they choose
- residential carers will conduct personal discussions with a child in private
- children are able to store their personal belongings safely in a private place.

2.13.3 The need for protecting a child's privacy must be balanced against the responsibility to protect the child or young person from harm and to act in their best interests.

2.13.4 CSOs will not disclose a child's personal history and circumstances to any party outside of the care team unless it is required for the good care and safety of the child or young person.

2.13.5 All personal information concerning children or young people and their families will be stored securely so that only authorised employees can access it.

2.13.6 Children and their families will receive information that explains what records the agency keeps in relation to them and how they can access this information.

2.13.7 When required, the CSO will share and manage information sensitively and when reasonably necessary to support children and young people's best interests while protecting the right of children and their families to privacy and confidentiality.

2.13.8 Records relating to children are stored securely and in a format that can be accessed over time by children and young people and their families.

2.13.9 CSOs should ensure carers are aware of restrictions applicable to providing information to a child's parents as stated in the Children, Youth and Families Act (section 178(2)).

2.13.10 CSOs' information management policies and systems must be in accord with the *Public Records Act 1973* and the *Information Privacy Act 2000*. These documents are available at http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/pr1973153/ and <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au>.

2.13.11 CSOs are obliged to comply with the *Information Privacy Act 2000* under the funding and service agreement with the department. This includes an obligation in information privacy principle 1.3 to take reasonable steps when collecting personal information to ensure a person is aware of the purposes for which the information is being collected, and to whom the information may be disclosed, among other requirements.

2.13.12 A collection notice must be included on every form where information is collected about a child or young person in residential care. A collection notice needs to include information about:

- the purposes for which the information is being collected
- the main consequences for the person (if any) if information is not provided

- the types of individuals or organisations to whom the information is likely to be disclosed
- any law that requires the information to be collected
- the identify of the organisation collecting the information and who to contact to access the information.

Supporting documents: [Children, Youth and Families Act](#); [Charter for Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006](#); [The Information Privacy Act.](#); [Public Records Act 1973](#); [Department of Human Services Policy and funding plan](#)

2.14 Records and information management

2.14.1 CSOs will maintain a logbook at each residential care unit. The logbook will detail factual accounts of significant events. This information will be communicated to the child/young person's case manager as appropriate, including through the incident reporting process, and will be made available to the department.

2.14.2 CSOs will ensure records are kept on each child in relation to significant events. This communication will be communicated to the care team as appropriate.

2.14.3 CSOs will ensure that LAC and other personal records of a child are maintained and securely stored by the carer while the child is in their care. Personal records include details of a child's placement, their experiences and achievements, photographs of meaningful and significant events, and the names of significant people involved in the child's life. This information will be available to the child to refer to at all times. CSOs will also ensure this information accompanies them to any new placement, a return home or an independent living arrangement.

Client 2.14.4 CSOs will also ensure a child or young person's records will be maintained and stored in accordance with relevant legislation and departmental guidelines concerning information gathering and privacy.

2.14.5 CRISSP is the electronic client and case record management system used by all CSOs providing out-of-home care (also refer to section 2.1 of this document).

2.14.6 CRIS is the electronic client and case record management system used by the department's Children, Youth and Families division and also by CSO staff who have case-contracting responsibilities.

2.14.7 CSOs must ensure residential care workers are trained in using CRISSP and use CRISSP to record case notes and other information about each child or young person in residential care.

2.14.8 CSOs will accept the referral and create the placement on CRIS or CRISSP within one working day of the placement commencing.

2.14.9 CSOs will have written policies and procedures that are readily accessible and familiar to staff and carers and identify the type of information to be recorded on a carer's file. This information will be gathered and stored in line with relevant legislation and departmental guidelines.

2.14.10 CSOs and carers will ensure records are kept on each child in relation to significant events. This information will be communicated to the child's case manager and care team as appropriate and will be made available to the department.

2.15.11 CSOs will ensure that records, including photographs, school reports and memorabilia, for each child are appropriately maintained and stored to aid preservation. All records, photographs and school reports will be shared with the child's family and significant others, where appropriate.

Note: Section 178 (2) of the Children, Youth and Families Act describes circumstances where information may not be shared with parents.

2.14.12 At the conclusion of a placement, closure of the placement on CRIS or CRISSP will be completed by the CSO within one working day.

2.14.13 Client records and other information are safely and indefinitely stored by the CSO at the conclusion of a placement to enable subsequent retrieval should the child re-enter care or otherwise require access to their records.

2.14.14 The CSO must have policies and systems in place to allow children, families and former clients to appropriately access complete records regarding services provided to them in line with the freedom of information provisions and requirements, *the Health Records Act 2001* and the Information Privacy Act.

2.14.15 CSOs will ensure children and their families are aware of the policies and systems in place to appropriately access records regarding the services provided to them.

Supporting documents: [The Health Records Act](#), [The Information Privacy Act](#).

2.15 Case contracting

2.15.1 CSOs with case management responsibilities will work in partnership with the department and other agencies to achieve outcomes for the child and their family.

2.15.2 The CSO, in undertaking case management or case management tasks and functions, will:

- work in a manner that reflects the fact that the primary client of the agency or professional is the child to whom the best interests plan or case functions relate
- work with the child's family to achieve the goals listed in their best interests plan
- support the child's placement
- operate in a manner that is consistent with the legislation, principles, regulations and standards that govern statutory child protection services
- acknowledge and accept the department's statutory responsibilities
- provide supervision, staff training and accountability mechanisms to staff within the agency
- be party to a written agreement specifying goals, timeliness, monitoring and review requirements
- report any barriers to effective contracting to the nominated child protection practitioner.

Information regarding agency case contracting is available at

<<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/best-interests-case-practice/planning-for-best-interests/1315-case-contracting-processes/3>>.

2.16 Therapeutic residential care

2.16.1 CSOs funded by the department to operate a therapeutic residential care unit must comply with the *Essential service design elements – therapeutic residential care*. These elements are available at <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/587908/national-therapeutic-residential-care-essential-elements.pdf>.

2.16.2 CSOs providing therapeutic residential care will employ a therapeutic specialist who will work across the organisation and in the residential care home to advise and promote the therapeutic approach.

2.16.3 Residential carers working in a therapeutic residential care unit must undergo mandatory staff training in trauma and the theory and practice of working therapeutically.

2.16.4 CSOs delivering therapeutic residential care placements must also comply with broader residential care program requirements.

Supporting documents: [Essential service design elements – therapeutic residential care](#)

2.17 Meeting the needs of children with a disability

2.17.1 Service providers will work in ways that are sensitive to the needs of a child with a disability including:

- Department of Human Services seeking to understand the impact of the disability on the child
- providing a flexible service that recognises the needs of the child
- seeking secondary consultation from disability service providers where required.

3. Environment and material goods requirements

Principle statement

The physical environments where children and young people reside and the material goods they are provided have a significant impact on their physical, emotional and psychological development and wellbeing.

Summary of expectations

The physical living environment will reflect community expectations of a 'home'. It will be a place where children feel safe and supported. Children and young people should not be placed at risk of harm due to the physical environment in which they reside.

Program requirements

3.1 Property and safety issues

3.1.1 Children will reside in 'reasonably clean', hygienic and appropriately furnished premises that comply with reasonable community standards and expectations. (See *Definitions of property terms* in the glossary for a definition of 'reasonably clean' as per the department's *Housing standards policy manual*.)

3.1.2 Premises will be kept in 'good repair' (see glossary).

3.1.3 Children will not be placed at risk of harm due to poor property maintenance. Any property damage that poses a potential threat to the safety and wellbeing of children or staff will be rectified immediately.

3.1.4 CSOs will meet reasonable community standards, and comply with all legal requirements affecting the physical and environmental safety of children. This includes fire safety, motor vehicle safety, water safety, swimming pool safety, and public health requirements. CSOs will implement a regular review process and update their compliance with community standards and legal requirements.

3.1.5 CSOs will comply with the most recent departmental fire risk management guidelines, which outline specific requirements relating to building construction/fabric, furnishings, smoke detection systems, fire extinguishing equipment, means of exit, fire prevention, fire safety management, resident evacuation capability, fire and emergency evacuation plans, emergency procedures and maintenance of essential fire safety services. Residential carers must be trained in relation to these guidelines. (Also refer to *Client bushfire leaving early policy* in section 4.8.3 and to section 4.8 below.)

Supporting documents: [Department's Housing standards policy manual](#)

3.2 Home environment

3.2.1 Each child will be provided with their own bed and linen.

3.2.2 Each child will be provided with accommodation that reflects their need for privacy and space.

3.2.3 Each child will be provided with a space in which they can safely store their personal belongings.

3.2.4 CSOs will provide children with personal items, household provisions and educational items (including books and toys) that are culturally and developmentally appropriate.

3.2.5 Children will be clothed in a manner that complies with reasonable community standards and expectations.

3.2.6 Children will be provided with a diet that promotes good health and complies with reasonable community standards and expectations, as well as with their cultural/religious background. Children and young people will have reasonable access to a variety of food while residing in a placement.

3.2.7 Children not already receiving an income will be provided with a weekly allowance that meets reasonable community standards.

4. Organisational and human resource requirements

Principle statement

The skills and personal attributes of CSO staff have a significant impact on the lives of children and young people in residential care. The support CSO staff receive from their employers will have a direct impact on their ability to fulfil their role, and therefore on the lives of the children and young people in residential care.

The philosophies, practices and organisational structures of the CSOs delivering residential care services will affect the standard of care children and young people receive.

Summary of requirements

Organisations must have philosophies, practices and organisational structures in place that support the achievement of positive outcomes for the children in residential care.

CSOs must ensure that residential care services are delivered by staff and volunteers who have the qualifications, knowledge, values, personal skills, attributes and cultural competence to meet the needs of the children and their families.

CSO staff themselves must be supported by their employers – through professional development opportunities, acceptable work conditions that comply with occupational, health and safety (OHS) and other legal requirements, and through regular supervision and support. Those providing supervision and support must also possess skills and personal qualities that adequately equip them for their role.

Program requirements

4.1 Pre-employment

4.1.1 CSOs will have written policies and procedures in place that ensure all applicants for positions that involve direct contact with clients, or the management/supervision of services to clients, are thoroughly assessed prior to commencing employment. This applies to paid employees, subcontracted workers, volunteers and student placement staff. Assessment includes:

- confirmation of experience and qualifications
- confirmation that the applicant possesses the skills, personal attributes and competencies required to fulfil the role they have applied for
- direct contact (face-to-face or phone) with two referees to confirm the applicant's suitability (including contact with their most recent employer).

4.1.2 CSOs must register all residential carers on the department's Carer Register (section 78 (b) (ii) of the Children, Youth and Families Act) and make sure carers are not disqualified or under investigation.

4.1.3 CSOs will ensure that before commencing work in a residential care unit, a potential residential carer has successfully completed a Working with Children Check and that the currency of this check is maintained. More information on the Working with Children Check is available at <www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren>.

4.1.4 CSOs must not offer employment to a person (as a residential carer) until a completed police record check has been approved.

4.1.5 CSOs will ensure that carers employed through a labour hire agency have been subjected to a police check.

4.1.6 CSOs must comply with the departmental policy *Engaging labour hire residential care staff in out-of-home care services*. These procedures specify roles and responsibilities to be adopted by CSOs and the labour hire agencies they engage in order to implement relevant legislation, regulations, policies and practices in Victoria for recruiting and selecting contract workers, their registration as carers, and their engagement in residential care services.

4.1.7 The department requires that police checks (criminal records checks) be updated every three years.

Supporting documents: Engaging labour hire residential care staff in out-of-home care services

4.2 Skills and attributes of CSO staff

4.2.1 Services will be delivered by CSO staff who have relevant interpersonal skills and attributes and the capacity to support the varying needs of clients.

4.2.2 CSOs should, wherever possible, recruit staff who have a combination of relevant qualifications and the appropriate personal skills and attributes. (The preferred qualification for residential carers in Victoria is the Certificate IV in Child, Youth and Family Intervention (Residential and Out of Home Care).)

4.2.3 CSOs will maintain records concerning all CSO staff that detail academic qualifications and relevant work experience. Non-identifying information concerning CSO staff shall be made available to the department upon request. No other specific details (other than academic qualifications and work experience) will be provided to the department.

4.2.4 CSOs will maintain records detailing the rate of staff turnover and use of labour hire agency staff for direct care positions. This information will be provided to the department upon request.

Supporting documents: [Certificate IV in Child, Youth and Family Intervention \(Residential and Out of Home Care\)](#).

4.3 New employees

4.3.1 When new residential carers commence employment, their introduction to children and young people will be gradual, and will be managed by other residential care staff or CSO staff with whom the child or young person has a relationship.

4.3.2 CSOs will have an induction training program for new residential carers.

4.4 Training, supervision and support

4.4.1 CSOs will have written policies and procedures in place concerning staff supervision. These policies and procedures will require that:

- every residential care worker has an identified supervisor with whom they have regular contact and easy access
- direct care staff are provided with regular supervision and support
- staff providing supervision and support to direct care staff possess the appropriate skills and qualifications for this task
- staff providing support and supervision and support to direct care staff also receive ongoing supervision and support in their role from appropriately qualified and skilled senior staff.

4.4.2 CSOs will have policies and procedures in place to identify the development needs of direct care staff and supervisory staff.

4.4.3 CSOs will have policies and procedures in place to manage critical or stressful incidents and the impact this has on staff and the children. Policies should outline procedures relating to debriefing, defusing and on-call support.

4.4.4 CSOs will provide the opportunities and resources required for the ongoing professional development of staff.

4.4.5 CSOs will have a written code of conduct in place for all CSO staff and management, and ensure all CSO employees are aware of its requirements.

4.5 Concerns, complaints and allegations management

(This requirement relates to Department of Human Services Standard 1.2)

4.5.1 CSOs will have written policies and procedures in place that all staff are familiar with (and that are readily accessible) for resolving complaints and disputes lodged by children/young people and their families. All complaints and disputes will be handled in a manner consistent with privacy and confidentiality standards, and will be resolved within a reasonable timeframe. Children and young people and their families are to be made aware of these processes.

4.5.2 CSOs will have written policies and procedures concerning managing complaints from neighbours, other citizens, community organisations and program stakeholders. These policies and procedures are to be readily available to, and understood by, all CSO staff.

4.5.3 CSOs will have written policies and procedures in place for responding to concerns or allegations related to the conduct and performance of CSO staff. See <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac>.

4.5.4 CSOs and residential carers must follow the mandatory steps outlined within the *Guidelines for responding to quality of care concerns in out-of-home care* when responding to issues regarding the quality of care provided by a carer to a client. See <<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/Guidelines-for-responding-to-quality-of-care-concerns-in-out-of-home-care>>.

4.5.5 When a concern about possible physical or sexual abuse, neglect or the poor-quality care of a child comes to the attention of a residential carer, the CSO program manager must consult with the departmental quality of care coordinator within 24 hours of receiving the reported concern to determine the most appropriate response.

4.5.6 CSOs must clearly document on carer files relevant details of all quality of care concerns including those managed to an outcome by support and supervision or formal care review.

4.5.7 When an allegation of abuse or a quality of care concern is raised in relation to an Aboriginal child, the department and the CSO will ensure a relevant member of the child's Aboriginal community is included in any investigation into the allegation.

4.5.8 CSO staff must follow the departmental management and reporting requirements set out in the departmental instruction *Responding to allegations of physical or sexual assault* (refer to the reference guide under *Quality of care* and <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac>).

4.5.9 CSOs will regularly review the quality of care concerns raised in relation to their carers and the children in their care, and will consider their outcomes to inform policy and practice.

4.5.10 CSO staff must follow the departmental incident reporting requirements (refer to the reference guide under *Incident reporting*). The *Critical client incident management instruction* (2011), as well as other incident reporting forms and information, can be found online through the Department of Human Services Funded Agency Channel at <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac>.

Supporting documents: [Guidelines for responding to quality of care concerns in out-of-home care](#); [Department of Human Services Funded Agency Channel](#); [conduct and performance of CSO staff](#); [Critical client incident management instruction](#)

4.6 Finances and reporting

4.6.1 CSOs will manage their financial resources in a responsible, accountable and prudent manner that maintains financial and organisational viability and maximises the resources available for direct services to clients.

4.6.2 CSOs will comply with financial accountability requirements for the government funding received and submit required financial reports as required and on time.

4.6.3 CSOs will collect, collate and submit minimum datasets and financial monitoring data in compliance with departmental requirements specified in their funding and service agreement.

4.6.4 CSOs will utilise administrative systems and practices that adequately support staff to undertake effective financial management and reporting.

4.7 Occupational health and safety

(This requirement relates to Department of Human Services Standard 3.5)

4.7.1 The CSO will have policies and procedures governing OHS that comply with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*.

4.7.2 CSO will ensure residential carers undergo training in the areas of OHS, fire and evacuation management, manual handling and infection control.

Supporting documents: [Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004](#)

4.8 Fire risk management

4.8.1 Fire risk management applies to both the fire safety measures for a building (such as smoke alarms, fire sprinkler systems, fire extinguishing equipment) and also to the procedures required to ensure the safety of the occupants of the building. CSOs are responsible for ensuring all their residential care workers have been trained in, and understand, the range of measures and responses as explained in the documents referenced in 4.4.2, 4.4.3 and 4.4.4 above.

4.8.2 CSOs must comply with the requirements of *Fire risk management for community-based houses*, which is section 7.7 of the department's *Capital development guidelines*. This policy can

be found at <<http://www.capital.health.vic.gov.au/Assets/Files/7.7%20FRM%20in%20Community-Based%20Houses.pdf>>.

4.8.3 CSOs operating residential care homes located in extreme fire risk areas (listed on the County Fire Authority's (CFA) Victorian Fire Risk Register) must develop and maintain client bushfire leaving early plans and adhere to the requirements of the department's *Bushfire response: clients and services policy*.

4.8.4 Where contingency or temporary residential care placements occur, CSOs must follow the requirements outlined in the department's *Fire risk management policy for temporary 24-hour staffed residential care facilities*.

Supporting documents: [Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004](#); [Bushfire response: clients and services policy](#); [Capital development guideline 7.7 'Fire risk management for community-based houses](#); [Fire risk management policy for temporary 24-hour staffed residential care facilities](#).

5. Glossary

Aboriginal child placement principle	A nationally agreed standard in determining the placement of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care. The principle aims to enhance and preserve Aboriginal children's cultural identity by ensuring they maintain strong connections with family, community and culture.
Best interests plan	The formal plan drafted following a case plan meeting that sets out general and specific goals to be worked towards for that children and young people in the coming year.
Care and placement plan	A Care and placement plan records the detailed day-to-day arrangements for care of the child or young person in out-of-home care. It identifies their long and short-term needs and sets out who must do what and by when in order for these needs to be met. It is developed by the care team.
Care and transition plan	The LAC care and transition plan (used instead of a care and placement plan) is developed and updated by the care team for young people aged 15–18 years. This plan aims to capture the aspirations, individual needs and supports required for young people as they transition into adulthood. It aims to prepare young people to the best of their abilities for leaving care and for the expiry of a Children's Court order.
Care team (out-of-home care team)	In out-of-home care, the care team is defined as the group of people who jointly provide the care for a child or young person while that child or young person is in out-of-home care. The care team has a specific focus on meeting the child's needs – its members have a shared responsibility for the practical 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week care of a vulnerable child/young person. An out-of-home care team should always include the child's case manager, key residential care workers, the child's parents (if appropriate) and any other adults who play a significant role in caring for the child/young person such as a relative or Take Two practitioner.
Case manager and contracted case manager	The person allocated the primary responsibility of overseeing implementation of the best interests plan (case plan). This can be a departmental employee or a CSO employee in the event that case management responsibility for a child or young person has been contracted to a CSO.
Case plan	See <i>Best interests plan</i> above.
Children and young people	Child or young person aged 18 years or younger who is living in a residential care placement. Where 'young person' is used by itself,

	it refers to a young person aged 15 years and above.
Collection notice	A collection notice (privacy statement) informs prospective and current residential carers that the information they provide about themselves may be disclosed to the department if required.
Community service organisation (CSO)	Non-government organisation funded to deliver residential care services on behalf of government.
CRIS/CRISSP	<p>The Client Relationship Information System is the electronic client and case record management system used by Child Protection and Disability Services and by CSO staff with case-contracting responsibilities.</p> <p>The Client Relationship Information System for Service Providers is the electronic client and case record management system used by all CSOs providing out-of-home care.</p>
Custody order	A type of protection order made by the Children's Court in relation to a child that grants custody of the child/young person to the Secretary of the department without affecting guardianship (refer to section. 287 of the Children, Youth and Families Act).
Department/department	Department of Human Services
Direct care staff	Staff employed to care for children and young people in any form of residential setting.
Essential information record	<p>This record holds important reference information such as: Medicare numbers; school details; parents' names and contact information; birth dates; and professionals' contact information. It contains both current and historical information, so, for example, it records both current school details and previous schools attended. In general, this record provides a place to keep the information that will always remain true about the child/young person, although it will need to be added to over time, such as with the birth of a sibling or a period of hospitalisation. It also provides a place to note where some other important reference information is being kept such as the child/young person's birth certificate. It is organised into sections covering each of the LAC life areas in the following consistent order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · health · emotional and behavioural development · education · family and social relationships (also includes contact and access information) · identity · social presentation (also includes interests, leisure and recreation)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> self-care skills. <p>There are also sections to record information about the child/young persons professional involvement (both with Child Protection and with other professionals).</p>
Guardianship order	A type of protection order made by the Children's Court in relation to a child that grants custody and guardianship of the child/young person to the Secretary of the department (refer to section. 289 of the Children, Youth and Families Act).
Incident reporting	The purpose of this policy is to ensure that incidents, or alleged incidents, that involve or impact upon children in residential care, are documented and responded to. A new instruction (2011) focuses incident management and reporting on the most important incidents affecting clients. The incident management and reporting policy change encourages greater responsibility and commitment from staff and management to improve outcomes for children. The department's client incident report forms and supporting materials are available on the Funded Agency Channel < www.dhs.vic.gov.au/funded-agency-channel > and also at http://intranet.dhs.vic.gov.au
Looking after children (LAC)	<i>Looking after children</i> provides a framework for identifying the needs of children and youth and developing plans to meet these needs. At a simple level, the LAC framework attempts to strengthen communication and collaboration between carers, departmental staff, CSO staff, other associated professionals, and clients and their families. It prompts all parties involved to consider the things any good parent would naturally consider when caring for their own children. It also provides CSOs with a common framework for their client records systems that contains all the information they require to look after a child or youth in the care of their organisation.
Police check	A mandatory screening tool required by the department and CSOs prior to employing a residential carer. (Also called a criminal records check.)
Policy	A framework of principles that guide decision making and practice.
Procedure	Written prescription of behaviours.
Residential care services	Services in which children or young people reside at a location where care is provided by direct care staff and authorised by the Minister as an approved community service.
Therapeutic residential care (TRC)	An enhanced response to providing residential care that is based on an understanding of the impact of trauma and is programmatically supported by increased staffing levels and therapeutic specialists.
Stability	Stability is a core dimension for considering a child's best

	<p>interests. A child experiences stability through their positive connections to their parents or other primary carers, family, school, friends, community and culture. These connections are made by developing and maintaining a child's key relationships through opportunities to participate in the normal contexts of school, community and culture. All children need stability to thrive, develop and learn. Research shows that stability is a key factor in building resilience in children. Stability is the concept used to summarise the cluster of considerations referred to in the Children, Youth And Families Act for determining the best interests of the child in addition to the need to protect a child from harm, to protect his or her rights and to promote his or her development.</p>
Staff	A paid worker (full time, part time or casual).
Supervision	Direction, performance monitoring and support, including teaching and accountability functions typically provided by a senior staff member to a less senior staff member.
Voluntary agreement or placement	A placement that results from a 'child care agreement' is commonly referred to as a voluntary placement. Child care agreements can only be negotiated with a registered community service as outlined in Part 3.3 of the Children, Youth and Families Act. Child care agreements can be either short term or long term. Consent is the critical factor: parents or a young person 15+ must agree to the placement. Voluntary placements are normally a short term solution to identified Child Protection concerns or risks to children, which are not immediate or do not warrant legal intervention.
Volunteer	Unpaid person who donates their time to working for a particular CSO.
Working with Children Check	The Working with Children (WWC) Check is administered by the Department of Justice. It helps to protect children from sexual or physical harm by checking a person's criminal history for serious sexual, serious violence or serious drug offences and the person's history with specific professional disciplinary bodies for certain findings. The introduction of the WWC Check creates a mandatory minimum checking standard across Victoria for adults to engage in child-related work.
Definition of property terms	Sourced from the <i>Housing standards policy manual</i> Version 1.4: August 2010
Good repair	Means that the fixtures or fittings are in a satisfactory and safe condition and that the property is at a lettable standard and any required urgent repairs have been completed.
Normal repairs	Means maintenance works that are not urgent or priority in nature, with no health and safety concerns, but which require action within 14 calendar days.

Priority repairs	Means the works, if not actioned within seven calendar days, will significantly decrease the level of service provided by an appliance, fitting or surface, and is likely to become an urgent repair if not attended to.
Urgent repairs	<p>Urgent repairs as defined in the <i>Residential Tenancies Act 1997</i> means any work necessary to repair or remedy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · a burst water service · a blocked or broken lavatory system · a serious roof leak · a gas leak · a dangerous electrical fault · flooding or serious flood damage · serious storm or fire damage · a failure or breakdown of any essential service or appliance provided for hot water, water, cooking, heating or laundering · a failure or breakdown of the gas, electricity or water supply · an appliance, fitting or fixture provided by Housing and Community Building that uses or supplies water and that is malfunctioning in a way that results, or will result, in a substantial amount of water being wasted · any fault or damage that makes the premises unsafe or insecure · a serious fault in a lift or staircase · any damage of a prescribed class. <p>In addition to the above, any fault or damage that makes the property unsafe or insecure is considered an urgent repair.</p>
Reasonably clean condition	Means the property is free from rubbish and refuse and that all internal appliances, fittings and surfaces are free from dust or contaminating matter.
Structurally sound	Means there is no evidence of a noticeable degree of slope in walls, floors and other supports, or of defects such as major rot and decay.

6. Resources and links

The following resources and links provide useful additional documents, websites and resource materials.

Aboriginal children and families

Aboriginal child placement principle guide: for child protection and care workers (November 2002) can be found on the department's website and the Department of Human Services *Victorian child protection policy and practice manual*:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/aboriginal-child-placement-principle-guide-2002>

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/out-of-home-care/placement-of-aboriginal-children-and-young-people/1432-aboriginal-child-placement-principle>

Aboriginal cultural competence framework (November 2008) can be found on the Department of Human Services website:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/plans-and-strategies/children,-youth-and-family-services/aboriginal-cultural-competence-framework-2008>

Caring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care can be found on the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency website:

<http://www.vacca.org/conferences-reports-and-guides>

Department of Human Services, *Victorian Aboriginal kinship care model - program and funding guidelines*, May 2011.

Protocol between the Department of Human Services Child Protection Service and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency can be found on the Department of Human Services website:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/dhs-and-victorian-aboriginal-child-care-agency-protocol-2002>

Working with Aboriginal children and families: a guide for child protection and child and family welfare workers can be found on the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency website:

www.vacca.org/conferences-reports-and-guides

Access

Advice number 1426: *Access* may be accessed via the Department of Human Services *Victorian child protection policy and practice manual*:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/out-of-home-care/the-placement-process/1426-access>

Best interests case practice model

The *Best interests case practice* model – summary guide 2010 and related resources can be found on the department website and via the Department of Human Services Victorian child protection practice manual:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-service-providers/children,-youth-and-families/child-protection/specialist-practice-resources-for-child-protection-workers/best-interests-case-practice-model-summary-guide-2010>

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/best-interests-case-practice/best-interests-case-practice-advice>

Bushfires

The *Department of Human Services 2011–12 bushfire response: clients and services policy* (October 2011) can be found on the Department of Human Services website:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/dhs-2010-11-bushfire-response-clients-and-services-policy>

Case contracting

Advice to CSOs undertaking case management of children or young people in out-of-home care

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/best-interests-case-practice/planning-for-best-interests/1315-case-contracting-processes/3>

Charter for children in out-of-home care

The *Charter for children in out-of-home care* can be found on the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner's website: http://www.kids.vic.gov.au/publications/parents_resources.htm

Child protection policy and practice manual

The Department of Human Services *Victorian child protection policy and practice manual* contains advice accessible to CSOs and may be accessed at:

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual

Children Youth and Families Act

The *Children Youth and Families Act 2005* can be found on the Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary Documents website:

www.legislation.vic.gov.au

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act

The *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* can be found on the Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary Documents website:

www.legislation.vic.gov.au

Department of Human Services standards

The *Department of Human Services standards* (June 2011) and the *Department of Human Services standards evidence guides December 2011* are available for download at:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/department-of-human-services-standards>

Education

The out-of-home care –education commitment – a partnering agreement between the Department of Human Services, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and Independent Schools Victoria can be found on the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development website:

http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/stuman/wellbeing/A4_partnering.pdf

The *18 years and school attending carer reimbursement policy (revised 20 February 2012)* can be found online through the Department of Human Services Funded Agency Channel for registered users within funded organisations:

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac

Fire risk management

Refer to section 7.7 of *Fire risk management for community-based houses*:

<http://www.capital.health.vic.gov.au/Assets/Files/7.7%20FRM%20in%20Community-Based%20Houses.pdf>

Incident reporting

Critical client incident management instruction (2011) as well as other incident reporting forms and information can be found online through the Department of Human Services Funded Agency Channel:

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac

Inhalant use and alcohol and drugs

Management response to inhalant use guidelines for the community care and drug and alcohol sector can be found on the Department of Human Services website:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/management-response-to-inhalant-use-2002>

The *Chroming, alcohol and drug policy* (February 2002) can be found in the Foreword section of the *Management response to inhalant use guidelines for the community care and drug and alcohol sector*.

Kinship care

Advice number 1435: *Kinship care and assessment* may be accessed via the Department of Human Services *Victorian child protection policy and practice manual*:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/out-of-home-care/kinship/1435-kinship-care-and-assessment>

Life story work

New South Wales Department of Community Services *Life story work* – an educational DVD (1999). This DVD is available as a component of the *Shared Stories Shared Lives Victoria* foster carer training material.

Looking after children

Information and documentation for download related to LAC can be found on the Department of Human Services website:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/programs/children,-youth-and-family-services/looking-after-children-in-victoria-lac>

National standards

An outline of national standards for out-of-home care – a priority project under the national framework for protecting Australia's children 2009–2020 (July 2011):

http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/families/pubs/nat_std_4_outofhomecare/Pages/default.aspx

Occupational health and safety

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* can be found on the Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary Documents website:

<http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au>

Department of Human Services occupational health and safety information can be found online through the Department of Human Services Funded Agency Channel within the *Service agreement information kit for funded organisations*:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/facs/bdb/fmu/service-agreement/5.departmental-policies-and-procedures/5.7-occupational-health-and-safety>

Participation in activities

Guidelines for consent for participation of children and young people in out of home care in school excursions, camps and other non-school activities (1 March 2008) are available at the Department of Human Services *Victorian child protection policy and practice manual*:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/out-of-home-care/delegations-and-consents/1469-participation-in-excursions,-activities-and-overnight-stays-with-friends>

Guidelines for overnight stays for children and young people in out of home care (1 November 2007) are available in the Department of Human Services *Victorian child protection policy and practice manual*:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/out-of-home-care/delegations-and-consents/1469-participation-in-excursions,-activities-and-overnight-stays-with-friends>

Peak bodies

Foster Care Association of Victoria is the peak body for Victorian foster carers and foster carers who have converted to permanent care.

www.fcav.org.au

Kinship Carers Victoria is the peak body for all statutory and non-statutory kinship carers in Victoria.

<http://kinshipcarersvictoria.org/>

Create Foundation is the peak body for children in out-of-home care in Victoria.

www.create.org.au/home

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare is the peak body for registered community service organisations providing foster, kinship and residential care in Victoria.

www.cfecfw.asn.au

Police checks (criminal records checks)

The department's *Police records check policy* can be found online through the Department of Human Services Funded Agency Channel within the *Service agreement information kit for funded organisations*:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/facs/bdb/fmu/service-agreement/5.departmental-policies-and-procedures/5.6-police-records-check-policy>

Advice number 1524: *Criminal records check* may be accessed via the Department of Human Services *Victorian child protection policy and practice manual*:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/practice-context/child-protection-program-overview/1524-criminal-records-check>

Policy and funding plan

The *Department of Human Services policy and funding plan 2010–2012* can be found on the Department of Human Services website:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/plans-and-strategies/key-plans-and-strategies/department-of-human-services-policy-and-funding-plan-2010-2012>

Privacy, confidentiality and communication

Advice number 1403: *Information sharing in out-of-home care* may be accessed via the Department of Human Services *Victorian child protection policy and practice manual*:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/out-of-home-care/overview-of-placement-of-children-and-young-people/1403-information-sharing-in-out-of-home-care>

For the Department of Human Services *Privacy policy* please visit the Department of Human services website:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/departments-of-human-services-privacy-policy>

The *Health Act 1958* can be found on the can be found on the Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary Documents website:

www.legislation.vic.gov.au

Note: Information about HIV and AIDS is governed by a specific provision – section 128 of this Act.

The *Health Records Act 2001* applies to health information, which is broadly defined to include information and opinion relating to physical and mental health, disability and aged care services, and can be found on the Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary Documents website:

www.legislation.vic.gov.au

The *Information Privacy Act 2000* can be found on the Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary Documents website:

www.legislation.vic.gov.au

The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* can be found on the can be found on the Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary Documents website:

www.legislation.vic.gov.au

Note: information about the right to privacy can be found in section 13 of this Act.

Quality of care

The *Guidelines for responding to quality of care concerns in out-of-home care* is the primary reference to be used when a quality of care concern is raised. Please find a copy of these guidelines and other reference material on the Department of Human Services website:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/Guidelines-for-responding-to-quality-of-care-concerns-in-out-of-home-care>

Responding to allegations of physical or sexual assault – departmental instruction can be found online through the Department of Human Services Funded Agency Channel:

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac

Service agreement

The *Service agreement information kit for funded organisations* can be downloaded from the Department of Human Services Funded Agency Channel:

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/funded-agency-channel/home

Therapeutic residential care essential service design elements

This document specifies the essential service design elements required for the design and delivery of therapeutic residential care.

http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/587908/national-therapeutic-residential-care-essential-elements.pdf

Transitioning to adulthood (leaving care)

Information related to transitioning to adulthood and leaving care including access to various resources for download can be found on the Department of Human Services website at:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-service-providers/children,-youth-and-families/child-and-youth-placement-and-support/leaving-care>

Advice number 1418: *Planning for leaving care* may be accessed via the Department of Human Services *Victorian child protection policy and practice manual*:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/out-of-home-care/care-and-placement-planning/1418-planning-for-leaving-care>

Voluntary agreements

The administering child care agreements in voluntary out-of-home care handbook is available on the Department of Human Services Funded Agency Channel for registered users within funded organisations in the resource section:

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac

Working with Children Checks

For all information about Working with Children Checks please visit the Department of Justice website:

www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren

Other relevant resources

Victoria's vulnerable children: our shared responsibility directions paper is available on the Department of Human Services website:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/news-and-events/news/general-news/victorias-vulnerable-children--our-shared-responsibility>