

KINSHIP AND FOSTER CARER HANDBOOK

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A day to day guide for Kinship and Foster Carers, caring for children and young people in care in the Northern Territory.

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*To become a Kinship or Foster Carer,
is to join a partnership of people acting
together to support a child in care*



Acknowledgement of Aboriginal Northern Territory

Reference to Aboriginal people in this guide is inclusive of Torres Strait Islander people.

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intro

Territory Families Team

Congratulations on your decision to welcome and care for a child in care and thank you.

Every child deserves the opportunity to grow up in a safe and supportive environment where they have every opportunity to thrive.

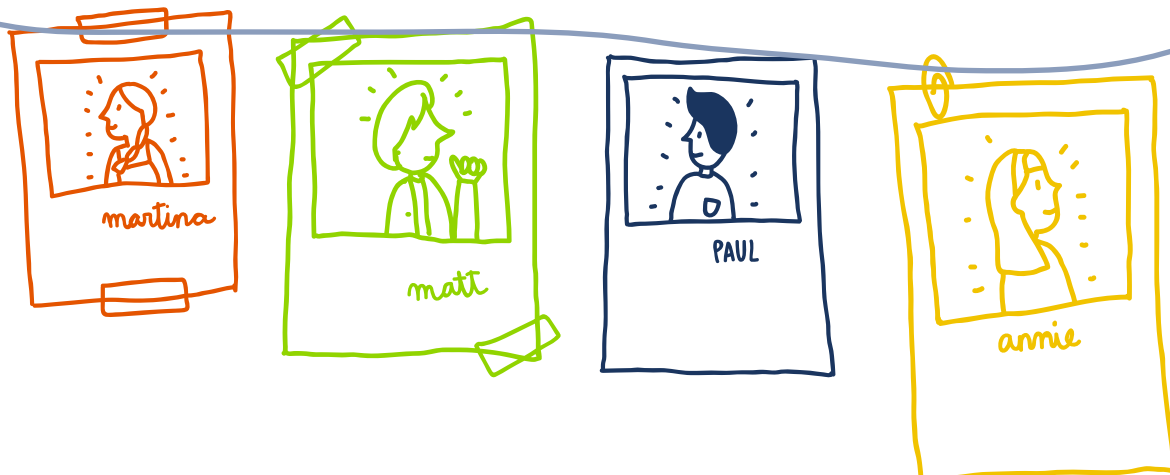
Yet sometimes, this is not a child's experience and as a community, we need to lend a helping hand. The role of a Kinship or Foster Carer is an incredibly important one. You and your family, are stepping in to make a difference in the life of a young Territorian.

This handbook has been developed to provide you with a day-to-day guide for this journey that you are beginning as a Carer. It covers a range of important and useful information from your rights as a carer through to decision making advice, cultural information and reunification.

At Territory Families, the overarching vision is to empower communities for a safe and better future. Our end goal is to support and strengthen families to keep children in their family where it is safe to do so. Our people work intensively with families to this end as we know that children are best placed to succeed when they have a strong sense of identity and community.

When a child comes into care, regardless of circumstance, it is a difficult time. The love and care that our Kinship and Foster Carers provide is undoubtedly the most valuable support that a child can receive at this time and with your commitment we can provide this.

Thank you again, for taking on this important role.



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becoming a **kinship or foster carer**

To become a Kinship or Foster Carer, is to join a partnership of people acting together to support a child in care.



becoming a kinship or foster carer



Partnering with Territory Families

To become a Kinship or Foster Carer is to join a partnership of people acting together to support a child in care.

Territory Families Case Managers, specialist support staff, Kinship and Foster Carers, Non-Government Organisations and the community as a whole come together as a team, focused on the child or young person in care.

The child or young person's needs are best met when the different roles and responsibilities of all parties are undertaken together.

A Care Team approach forms the foundation for Territory Families approach to caring for children and young people. The following principles underpin the approach:

- **Territory Families and partners work together in the best interests of the child or young person;**
- **the Care Team rests on commitment to mutually respectful communication to work together through challenges.**

The Care Team approach provides support for Carers and aims to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people in care. This works best when there is good communication, consistency, cooperation, and a common understanding of the support Carers should receive while they provide day-to-day care to children and young people in need.



The Care Team

The Carer is a critical component of the care team and will be supported by a range of Territory Families staff to understand the child or young person's behaviours, the child or young person's underlying emotional and physical needs, and how best to respond to promote the child or young person's healing and development.

An effective care team is characterised by:

- **everyone on the care team being informed about trauma and its impact on children and young people;**
- **a shared understanding of the child or young person's experiences;**
- **a commitment to work together; and**
- **working collaboratively and respectfully to understand the child or young person's needs.**

Mutual responsibility and respect

Territory Families and Carers can forge strong, open and honest relationships by:

- **always placing the child's best interests at the centre;**
- **listening and giving weight to the views of Carers and their families;**
- **respecting the Carer's knowledge and experience;**
- **being prepared to modify views to reach compromise where appropriate;**
- **being prepared to admit when we are wrong;**
- **supporting the Carer to formally participate as a team member in assessment, planning and review of the child's Care Plan and to participate in other child-centred decision making that occurs outside of formal planning and review processes;**
- **explaining in full the reasons for a decision where the decision made is not that which the Carer believes appropriate;**
- **working in partnership can be difficult. To work together successfully is to work with mutual responsibility and respect.**

Territory Families staff and Carers will not always agree and some matters may create challenges to be overcome together. Territory Families staff and carers should be aware of and prepare for the tensions that can arise and maintain the partnership framework delivery to progress through these to a solution.



The Rights of Children

All people have human rights, including children.

Rights are things that every person needs to survive, to be treated fairly and to reach their full potential. Rights are important because they describe specific things that we all should have and need to live with dignity and be treated with respect. Human rights are an important part of our everyday lives and they matter for everyone no matter where you come from, your age, culture, religion or any other status. Rights come with responsibility. We all have a responsibility to respect other people's rights.

Just like adults, children have rights. Children have special rights because children are growing, learning and sometimes need extra protection because of their age and vulnerability.

There is a Charter of Rights for all children and young people in out of home care in the Northern Territory.

The Charter contains a list of 12 rights that every child in out of home care can expect to have, things they should be able to do and what they can expect from the people who care for them. The Charter will help children in out of home care to know their rights, understand them and have their rights promoted by the people that care for them. Please refer to the following link to find out more about the charter and refer to the 'information for Carers' and other resources about the Charter:

www.territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au/publications-and-policies/charter-of-rights

Children's rights are written down in a special document called the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Almost every country in the world has agreed to recognize and protect these rights, including Australia.

All the rights are connected to each other, and all are equally important. Sometimes, we have to think about rights in terms of what is best for a child in a situation, and what is critical to their life and protection from harm.

Some of the rights of children in the Convention are:

- **The right to live and grow up healthy;**
- **The right to be treated fairly no matter what;**
- **The right to know who they are and where they came from;**
- **The right to have people do what is best for them;**
- **The right to be cared for and have a home;**
- **The right to food, clothing, a safe place to live and to have their basic needs met;**
- **The right to express their opinion and for adults to listen and take it seriously;**
- **The right to a good quality education and to be encouraged to go to school to the highest level they can;**
- **The right to play and have fun;**
- **The right to practice their own culture, language and religion;**
- **The right to choose their own religion and beliefs;**
- **The right to be protected from cruel treatment or harm and be safe no matter where they are;**

- The right to make a complaint when their rights are not being protected and to have their complaints heard (for example, by making a complaint to the Children's Commissioner - phone 1800 259 256);
- The right to the best health care possible, safe water to drink, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment and information to help them stay well.

For more information about the rights of children, see:

Australian Human Rights Commission www.humanrights.gov.au/

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

www.unicef.org.au/Upload/UNICEF/Media/Our%20work/childfriendlycrc.pdf

Foster and Kinship Carers Charter of Rights

Territory Families works collaboratively with the Foster and Kinship Carers Association of the NT to support carers. The association developed a Charter of Rights for Foster and Kinship Carers which provides guidance on what you can expect as a Carer.

Foster and Kinship Carers
Charter of Rights
You have the Right to:

- 1. Be informed**
 - ▶ To have clarity around your role as a Carer
 - ▶ Information regarding the child in your care to assist you in your carer role
 - ▶ Be provided with Territory Families Policy and Procedures
- 2. Be consulted**
 - ▶ Value given to your input around the children in your care
 - ▶ Be involved in care planning for the children in your care
 - ▶ Be consulted around decisions that impact on you and your family
- 3. Be respected**
 - ▶ Timely responses to carer communication
 - ▶ Respectful, courteous, and consultative communication
 - ▶ Clarity around meeting agendas and goals prior to attending
- 4. Be supported**
 - ▶ Access to respite and support to enable a sustainable placement
 - ▶ Financial and physical resources to maintain the placement
 - ▶ Access to relevant training, practical advice, resources and tools
 - ▶ Access to independent advocacy to support carers in meetings with Territory Families
- 5. Feel Safe**
 - ▶ To receive information identifying risks to carers and families
 - ▶ Policies and Procedures that support carer's safety and well-being
 - ▶ Prompt and targeted response where carers recognise and raise a risk or concern regarding a child or placement
- 6. Be valued**
 - ▶ The right to say 'No'
 - ▶ To be treated with respect and dignity
 - ▶ To be valued as a member of the Care Team
 - ▶ Respectful interactions with Territory Families with consideration of culture, religion, personal values.
 - ▶ The right to respond
- 7. Be treated fairly**
 - ▶ The right to consistency and fairness in the provision of information and service delivery
 - ▶ To speak without fear of reprisal
 - ▶ To appeal or raise complaints in line with procedural fairness
- 8. Privacy and confidentiality**
 - ▶ Privacy and confidentiality of your personal information
 - ▶ To know that your personal information is treated respectfully and sensitively
 - ▶ Not to be the subject of gossip
 - ▶ The right to be protected from external risks



Territory Families support for the Foster and Kinship Carers Charter of Rights

In all Territory Families' interactions with you, the Charter of Rights is valued. Territory Families delivers on this through a range of supports including:

Territory Families provides Carers placement support by:

- Case Managers providing Carers with relevant information as soon as it becomes available;
- Case Managers and Carers working together to meet children and young people's support needs and Care Plan goals;
- helping children and young people to understand their identity and supporting contact with their family and community;
- telling one another about concerns and asking for help when needed; and
- participating in training to continually expand knowledge and skills in looking after children and young people in care.

Territory Families Carers' input is recognised by:

- recognising the importance of the views of Carers in decision-making concerning children and young people, and including them in care-planning processes;
- giving clear reasons why decisions are made;
- respecting and celebrating diversity of culture and beliefs; and
- consulting with Carers and families, taking their needs and those of any other child or young person in the placement into consideration when making arrangements for a child or young person in care.

Territory Families' Carers are supported by:

- providing access to written policies and information online;
- telling Carers about Territory Families' processes and how to follow them;
- having accessible complaints and Carer feedback processes;
- making Carer Allowance payments promptly and accurately; and
- linking Carers with services that can support the placement arrangement.

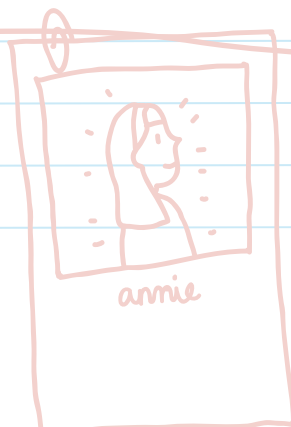
A little tip!

Children and young people in care will need to adjust to a new environment such as new places, people, routines and boundaries.

These adjustments require time and patience.

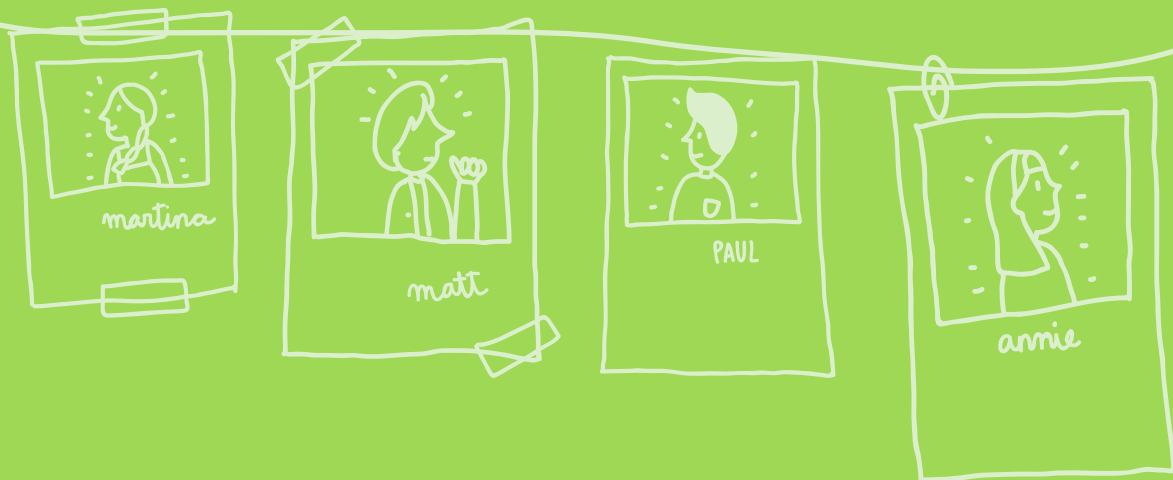
notes

Lined area for notes.



when a child or young person comes into care

There are several ways you can prepare yourself and your family so that you can make a child and young person coming to live with you feel as welcome as possible.



when a child or young person comes into care



Preparing to welcome a child or young person

Territory Families will try to arrange for the child or young person to meet the Carer before they come to stay, although sometimes this is not possible. Even if a child/young person has met the Carer before they arrive they will still be nervous and anxious. They may feel unsure of themselves and not sure what the Carer and their family may expect of them. They may be anxious about behaving properly so that they will be allowed to stay.

A Carer can help a child/young person adjust to their new surroundings by reassuring them with a warm, gentle welcome, introducing them to family members and giving them a tour of their home. They can show the child/young person their room and where they can put their belongings, tell them about family routines and ask the child/young person about their likes and dislikes.

Prepare yourself and your family for the child or young person's arrival

There are several ways you can prepare yourself and your family so that you can make a child and young person coming to live with you feel as welcome as possible.

Talk to your extended family members about the child or young person coming to stay with you and joining you at family events and gatherings. Discuss with your immediate family about your role and expectations of caring for a child or young person. For example, you may want to talk about how you might need to divide your time between the child or young person and the rest of your family members, because the child or young person may have special needs and requirements.

It's a good idea to have the following items on hand for the first night, in case they're needed:

- disposable nappies and formula if caring for a baby;
- toothbrush and hairbrush;
- oversized T-shirt in case they didn't bring pyjamas;
- night light; and
- age-appropriate toys and books.

Items to have prepared

Usually, a child or young person will bring their personal belongings with them when they come to live with you.

Be patient

Children and young people in care will need to adjust to a new environment and new places, people, routines and boundaries.

These adjustments require time and patience.

Find out as much as you can about the child or young person

The more you know about the child or young person, their history and background, the easier it will be for you to understand their behaviour. Territory Families will support you with as much information as possible, but some information may not be available right away.

What to expect

A child or young person may come into your home feeling angry, sad, or maybe even responsible for what has happened at home. They may appear indifferent or be eager to please, withdrawn, angry or upset. These are all reactions to great personal loss, separation and change. Their sense of loss may be for parents, siblings, friendships, their home, pets, familiar places or routines – all the things that have made up their world and have given it meaning. You can talk to the child or young person's Case Manager about strategies to address the challenges or issues that may occur.

Children and young people will behave in different ways in any new situation. They may cry or withdraw, act as though they are much older, seem vague, act uninterested and tough or show little emotion. They may be very good and try to please, especially early on.



Helping the child or young person to settle in

There are a few practical things that you can do to help a child or young person settle in to your home.

Tips for their arrival

- Reassure them with a warm, gentle welcome;
- Ask permission before hugging or touching them;
- If they don't know what to call you, give them permission to call you by your first name;
- Introduce them to other members of the household, including pets;
- Give them a tour of the home and yard;
- Talk a little about their surroundings so they can gain a sense of you and what it's going to be like living there;
- Show them their room and where they can put their belongings;
- Let them know they can personalise their bedroom;
- Offer to help them unpack or let them unpack in their own time;
- Ask them if there are certain foods they really like or dislike before preparing meals;
- Talk about your household routine, e.g. bath time, dinner time, bed time, what snack they might have after school, what activities take place and when;
- Remember to give them time to observe, learn and practice the routine.

Family Rules

Explain to them what the family guides are, "the way we do things here". Give them tasks to do within their abilities and let them know how much you appreciate their help. Notice and praise the little things.

If you have children of your own, let them spend time together and plan an activity. Show them around the neighbourhood and take them to places like the park, library, swimming pool and shops so they become familiar with the area.

Privacy

Be careful not to pry into their past, criticise their parents or make negative comments about them. Don't talk about them when they're there as though they're not present, including in conversations with the Case Manager. Respect their right to privacy and their need to have some time alone.

What will Territory Families do when you are welcoming a child or young person?

For all placements, including respite and emergency care, the Case Manager will provide a signed copy of the Placement Agreement. This contains specific information about the Carer's roles, responsibilities, and what needs to be done to provide the child or young person with a standard of care in line with Territory Families obligations.

In a crisis, a child or young person may arrive with just the clothes they are wearing. At the beginning of a new placement (not including respite placements), you will

receive a one-off Establishment payment of \$200 that must be used to purchase items that the child/young person may need of a personal nature. If the \$200 payment does not meet the expenses of the child/young person's immediate needs, this can be discussed with your Case Manager.

The standard age Carer Allowance is calculated to cover the everyday expenses associated with looking after the child/young person. The Allowance rate is dependent on the age of the child/ young person, your location and the level of care being provided. The Allowance is paid a fortnight in arrears direct to your bank account by electronic funds transfer.

Information that we will give you (Essential Information Records)

When a child or young person is placed with you they will receive an Essential Information Record (EIR) within three days of the placement. Sometimes the information provided may be limited due to the circumstances which led to the child or young person entering care.

During the time of caring for the child or young person, you may have recorded additional information in their Essential Information Record. When a child or young person leaves the care placement the Essential Information Record should go with the child or young person, for the next placement.

The record contains the essential information that Carers need to care for the child or young person, such as:

- **reason for placement;**
- **the child or young person's legal status;**
- **previous care history;**
- **family contact arrangements;**
- **culture and language;**
- **health information;**
- **routines;**
- **any disability;**
- **challenging behaviours;**
- **relevant contact details for family, services and supports; and**
- **Placement Agreement.**



Developing a Care Plan

Each child or young person in care must have a Care Plan that documents what needs to be done to meet their care and protection needs. Case Managers will develop Care Plans by talking to you, the child or young person's family, the child or young person's support network and other important people who are involved in providing for the child or young person's needs. Generally, the Case Manager will give you information about the Care Plan when the child or young person is first placed with you and must give you a copy as soon as it is completed.

If you have accepted an emergency placement, the Care Plan is developed up to six weeks after the placement is made

If you have accepted an emergency placement, the Care Plan is developed up to six weeks after the placement is made.

Care Planning helps to:

- **identify strategies to achieve stability for the child or young person and address their physical, emotional, educational, social and cultural needs identified through ongoing assessment;**
- **provide a clear guide for the Case Manager, you and the child or young person's family about what conditions are required for the child or young person to return home if reunification is the goal;**
- **provide an opportunity to review the child or young person's progress;**
- **assist in casework decision-making;**
- **plan for the child or young person's immediate, short term and long term needs;**
- **a copy of the approved Care Plan will be given to you; and**
- **you will be consulted and told about any decision in the Care Plan that has an impact on you and your care of the child or young person.**

Areas of the Care Plan that may be reviewed:

- **Care Plan goal;**
- **placement's stability and other permanency planning issues;**
- **child or young person's needs and plans;**
- **your needs, such as if you are receiving the right type of allowance, or require additional financial assistance, training or other forms of support; and**
- **complexity assessment;**
- **additional financial assistance, training or other forms of support. Review of Complexity assessment.**





day to day care

Helping children and young people to put together information about their cultural and religious heritage is a key part of life story work.



Day-to-Day Care



Life story book

Children and young people in care may have experienced many changes of home, family and school. They may become confused about who they are and what has happened to them. Making a life story book is a way of gathering and maintaining accurate information about a child or young person.

This helps the child or young person to understand who they are and where they have come from.

It also assists them to develop socially and emotionally. A life story book can be important for the child or young person when they become an adult, as it provides information about childhood experiences and achievements.

Territory Families has a commitment to supporting young people develop a strong sense of identity. One way this can be done, is to ensure the child or young person has access to memories and materials from across their life. Carers should talk with the child or young person's Case Manager about a life story book, photo album and other material that can assist them to collect memories, and maintain connections to family and community.

The Life Story Book can include:

- photos;
- drawings;
- report cards, awards and certificates;
- letters from parents and Carers;
- maps, postcards or pictures of significant places where the child or young person has lived or visited;
- photos of past and present family, Carers, friends, pets, etc;
- genogram or family tree; and
- religious and cultural information.



Most importantly, the Life Story Book needs to include a written history of the child or young person's life from birth to the present time. Any information included in the Life Story Book will depend on the information available and the child or young person's wishes.

Helping children and young people to put together information about their cultural and religious heritage is a key part of life story work. This includes details about their birth parents' culture, ethnicity, religion, language and life in their country of origin. The life story book will also be important for the child or young person when they become an adult, providing information about childhood experiences and achievements.

You can gather information for life story work from:

- **the child or young person;**
- **parents and relatives;**
- **Case Manager;**
- **Cultural and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Carer support groups;**
- **teachers;**
- **religious leaders and institutions;**
- **ethnic and cultural organisations and services;**
- **Community Services multicultural case workers; and**
- **libraries and the internet.**

Documenting important information

Keeping a diary or other written notes from the start of a placement saves having to rely on memory. Examples of events and activities to record include:

- **achievements, milestones, happy events, celebrations and friends;**
- **hobbies and interests;**
- **things about the child or young person that make them special such as their smile, sense of humour, talents or general nature;**
- **accidents and injuries, including how they happened and the treatment received;**
- **major and minor illnesses and visits to the doctor;**
- **child or young person's reactions to various situations, such as contact with family, members of your household, daily routines, school and pets;**
- **damage to property or belongings; and**
- **incidents, including what happened in the child or young person's own words.**

These records need to be as clear, accurate and fair as you can make them because they may be used to:

- **provide reliable information to the courts;**
- **help inform Care Planning, placement meetings and reviews;**
- **help the child or young person with their life story work;**

- **report back to the Case Manager for further action or noting on the child or young person's file;**
- **assist with health assessments, and**
- **help a young person who has left care understand their experiences and recognise their achievements if they choose to access their file in the future.**

Looking over a diary can help you remember the highs of caring and how you dealt with the lows. It can also help you identify what worked, what didn't work and any area that you may wish to develop through training.

When a child or young person leaves the care placement the diary should go with the child or young person, for the next placement.

Siblings

Siblings placed together

Sibling groups in care may have some special needs that require different types of support from Territory Families and carers. Children or young people from the same family who are placed in your home will often have some of the following attributes:

- **strong group loyalty;**
- **an emotional bond;**
- **a leader who may not always be the eldest; and**
- **one child or young person who acts as a parent (this may not always be the eldest sibling. Be patient in this case and don't expect a child or young person who has undertaken the parenting role to dismiss this role immediately; give them time to adjust.**

Try to respond to each child or young person's individual needs while allowing them to retain family loyalties.

Separated siblings

Territory Families makes efforts to place separated siblings close to each other unless there are health or safety reasons for not doing so. Placing a child or young person in the same general area gives them more opportunity for informal and frequent contact.

This can be through:

- **going to the same child care centre or school;**
- **joining the same youth group, such as Scouts or Girl Guides;**
- **playing for the same sports team;**
- **doing an activity they enjoy such as art, music or dance lessons; and**
- **participating in local community events and activities.**

Separated siblings often need extra support to deal with the effects of separation. Things the Case Manager will do include:

- **explaining to the child or young person why the decision was made to separate them;**
- **seeking their views and feelings about the placement of their siblings and involving them in placement decisions;**

- listening to their anxieties and fears;
- giving them information about where their siblings are and who is caring for them;
- involving them in planning how, when and where they will have contact; and
- arranging counselling if needed.

Ways a carer may be able to help the child or young person maintain relationships with their siblings include:

- talking to the Case Manager if you need help understanding or managing the effects of separation on the child or young person you're caring for;
- recording and photographing events and activities that the siblings jointly attend for the child or young person to include in their Life Story Book;
- encouraging the child or young person to maintain sibling contact through visits, phone calls, letters and emails, providing this is not discouraged in the child or young person's Care Plan;
- offering to provide transport or allowing visits to take place in your home if needed, to enable siblings to see each other;
- helping the child or young person cope with their disappointment if a planned visit is cancelled;
- getting the Case Manager involved early to help resolve any issues around contact that may be causing conflict.

The types of chores you give to a child or young person should:

- be appropriate for their age and level of physical and intellectual development
- consist of simple tasks the child/ young person can do successfully that increase in complexity as their skills increase
- be rotated to provide a variety of experiences that help develop a range of skills
- provide an opportunity for you to work with the child/ young person and praise them for a job well done
- not require too much time to complete; and
- not interfere with school, , play, and other activities.

Payment of pocket money should not be linked to the child or young person performing unreasonable duties

Day-to-day life

This section provides detailed information about a range of day-to-day issues you may face during a placement.

Babysitting and sleepovers

As a carer it's your decision whether to use a babysitter occasionally or if the child or young person can sleep over at a friend's house. Carers should take the same steps as they would for their own children, i.e. meet the parents, check household sleeping arrangements and ensure they have knowledge of the adults in the house. When asking where the child or young person will sleep while at a sleepover, it is important to ensure that there is one bed/mattress or other culturally and age-appropriate bedding for the child or young person.

Let Territory Families know if a child or young person in your care is going to be away for more than one night, as they need to know where children or young people in care are at all times

Body modification

Territory Families consent is required if a child or young person under the age of 18 wishes to get a tattoo on any part of their body. This includes procedures known as scarification, branding and beading. Territory Families consent is also required for a child or young person to pierce non-intimate parts of their body, including their ears and nose. It's against the law for anyone to allow a child or young person under the age of 16 to pierce their intimate body parts.

Child care

Children and young people in out of home care living with you may require registered child care services or other child care programs, including after school or vacation care.

The decision to utilise child care services is based on a Territory Families assessment to determine if child care will be beneficial to the child or young person, or necessary to meet specific, identified Care Plan needs. Child care may also be proposed for children in care because you are employed.

Child care services must be planned by Territory Families Case Managers and any funding for services must be pre-approved by a Territory Families financial delegate.

The Carer allowance has been calculated to include provision for irregular or casual child care and babysitting fees. It does not include provision for payment of full-time, registered child care.

The Australian Government provides subsidies for registered child care services, called the Child Care Subsidy and the Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing).

You play an integral role in the application process for Child Care Subsidy and the Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing) for children 'at risk' and children in care. Refer to page 96 for additional details.



Chores

Giving a child or young person chores helps them to gain life skills and a sense of responsibility.

Clothing

Part of the Carer Allowance you receive for the child or young person in your care is to buy clothes and shoes for them. Their basic wardrobe should consist of clothes and shoes for different types of weather and occasions, such as for play, school and special outings. Taking the child or young person shopping for clothes is a good way to model budgeting and appropriate choices. Older young people may have strong views about what they like and don't like and should be involved in making clothing decisions.

Dating

Dating is a normal part of adolescence. It's one of the ways we start to learn the skills needed to form and maintain intimate relationships later in life. You can provide the guidance and boundaries a teenager needs to safely learn and practice these life skills.

Model what a good relationship looks like, i.e. respectful, supportive and loving. Talk about what really matters in a relationship, such as shared values and interests, things that strengthen it and signs that it's not working.

Set the ground rules for a date. A common rule is getting to know their date, giving them a choice of acceptable activities and setting a curfew. Whatever ground rules you set, stick to them.

Other suggestions include:

- **encourage dates that involve a group of friends or family activities, rather than solo dates;**
- **don't leave them unsupervised for hours;**
- **always know where they are, who they're with, where they're going and when they'll be home; and**
- **be aware of any changes in their mood or behaviour that may indicate they're depressed or involved in an abusive relationship.**

Talk to the Case Manager if you have any concerns.



Disclosures of harm or exploitation'

If a child or young person discloses information about experiences of abuse and neglect, listen calmly without judgement. Be careful not to let them see reactions of shock, disbelief, disgust, or fear. Reassure the child or young person it's not their fault, that you believe them, they did the right thing by telling you and you're there to support them. Don't make promises you may not be able to keep like you're going to make sure nobody ever hurts them again.

If a young person makes a disclosure of past, current or the likelihood of future harm or exploitation to you, let them know you must tell Territory Families because it's their job to do what needs to be done to keep them safe. You must then make a mandatory report to Territory Families' Central Intake Team (CIT) at 1800 700 250. Central Intake will inform the child or young person's Case Manager about your report.

Definitions of harm and exploitation are found at sections 15 and 16 of the Care and Protection of Children Act 2007. If you have any questions about your mandatory obligation to report harm or exploitation, you can talk to the Case Manager or call Central Intake at 1800 700 250. Reporting obligations are found at section 26 of the Care and Protection of Children Act 2007. Refer to the following link for more information - <https://nt.gov.au/law/crime/report-child-abuse>

Gifts

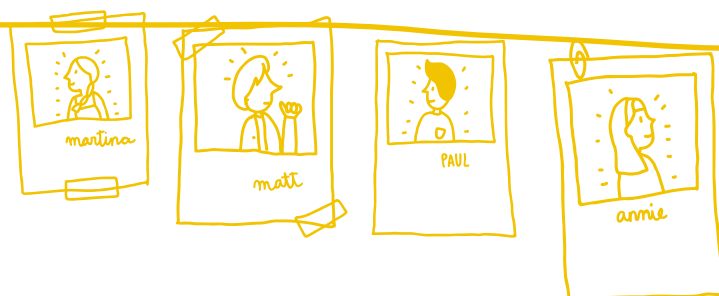
Territory Families will make an annual contribution towards the cost of purchasing special occasion gifts for the child or young person. You can discuss this payment with the Case Manager in advance of the child or young person's birthday each year. Special occasions include birthdays, Christmas, or other celebrations of cultural or religious importance to the child or young person. All gifts remain the property of the child or young person.

Hair cuts

Cultural and religious considerations need to be considered before a Carer may make a decision about cutting a child or young person's hair.

For children and young people that have cultural or religious beliefs around changing their appearances, please refer to their Care Plan, the Case Manager or child / young person's parents if possible.

Children and young people who don't have cultural or religious beliefs about changing appearances and haircuts, can be guided by the Decision Making tool in this document.



Internet

The internet has become an essential tool for all of us, and can be a fun, educational and useful tool for children and young people.

Many children or young people use the internet to help with school work, stream programs and music, play games and text with friends.

Children and young people can be vulnerable to many of the risks of using apps and other internet based programs, which includes:

- **meeting predatory adults online posing as potential friends;**
- **giving out personal information, such as their phone number, address and photos; and visiting inappropriate apps or websites that contain pornography, racism or depictions of violence.**

There are ways you can monitor and limit apps and websites that the child or young person in your care accesses on mobile or Wi-Fi accessible devices. Discuss any concerns you might have with the child or young person's Case Manager.

There are ways you can monitor and limit websites that the young people in your care access on computers.

Go to www.esafety.gov.au for more information.

Jobs

Children and young people in care may be able to have a part-time job, if it doesn't interfere with their education. The Case Manager will consider several things before allowing a child or young person to get a job. This includes laws about employing children, transport to and from the job, the child or young person's maturity, and their behaviour.

A school-age child or young person requires both your and the Case Manager's permission to work. Young people under the age of 17 who wish to leave school to work also need permission from NT Department of Education.

For more information go to www.education.nt.gov.au.

Learner drivers

As part of a leaving Care Plan, Territory Families may pay for driving lessons as this may improve a young person's employment prospects. In cases where the young person doesn't have access to a car, Territory Families may also consider paying for additional lessons.

For young people in remote areas

DriveSafe NT Remote provides assistance to people living in remote areas to learn the road rules to pass their driver theory test.

For more information contact: drivesafentremote@nt.gov.au or call (08) 8924 7011.

Please speak to your insurance office to confirm policy cover prior to allowing a learner driver use of your car.

Mobiles

If a child or young person in your care wants a mobile phone, talk to the Case Manager first to make sure there are no safety concerns around contact that may prevent them from having one. If there aren't any safety concerns, consider if you think they're old enough and responsible enough to have a mobile phone. Also consider the advantages and disadvantages of allowing them to have their own phone. If you decide to let them have a phone, the cost may be covered by Territory Families if pre-approved. Pre-paid is recommended as it allows control over the bill.

Nutrition

You are responsible for making sure the child or young person receives a good quality, balanced and adequate diet. If you have any concerns about the child or young person being overweight or underweight, speak to the Case Manager. They may arrange for the child or young person to see a medical specialist or a dietician if this is in the Care Plan.

For information about healthy eating, refer to Australian Guide to Healthy Eating: www.eatforhealth.gov.au

Personal Property

What a child or young person brings with them to your home may be particularly important to them. The personal property of children and young people in care should be respected. This includes:

- **ensuring they have some space of their own to put their belongings;**
- **recognising they have the right to refuse to share their belongings;**
- **insisting other people living in or visiting your home respect their belongings.**

Gifts, savings, earnings and any items that are bought for the child/ young person while they're living with you, are their personal property. Please make sure they take all their belongings with them when they leave your care.



Pocket money

Getting pocket money helps a child or young person learn the value of money, how to use it and how to save it to buy something they really want. It helps promote a sense of independence and through experience; it teaches a child or young person how to make responsible decisions. Pocket money guidelines by age:

- **Under 4 years \$6.00 p/week;**
- **5 - 7 years \$8.00 p/week;**
- **8 - 11 years \$12.00 p/week;**
- **12 - 14 years \$16.00 p/week;**
- **15 - 17 years \$25.00 p/week**

These amounts may be updated annually, you can ask the Case Manager for the most up to date figures.

The Carer Allowance includes provision for pocket money. Pocket money is not to be used by the child or young person to cover the cost of meeting their basic needs.

A little tip!

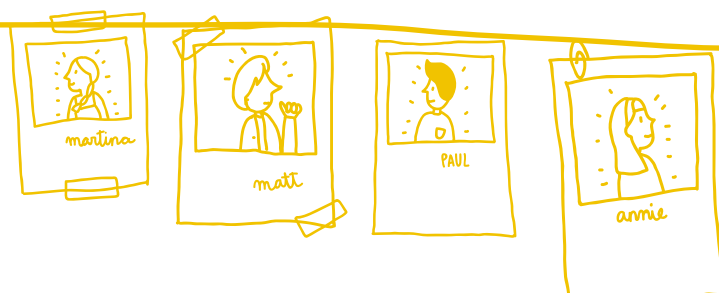
There are a few practical things that you can do to help a child or young person settle in to your home.

- Ask them if there are certain foods they really like or dislike before preparing meals.

Privacy for children and young people

A number of factors will need to be taken into consideration when establishing privacy levels. This includes:

- **their age and developmental capacity;**
- **your living arrangements;**
- **whether the safety, welfare and wellbeing of the child/ young person's or another person's is at risk; and**
- **any conditions placed on contact by a court order or the child/ young person's Care Plan, such as screening phone calls, emails or letters between the child/ young person and a specific person.**



Public performances and media

Children and young people in care should be encouraged and supported to participate in positive experiences and activities, including those that may be covered by the media. In most circumstances you can give permission for a child or young person to participate in these types of activities unless the school or other organisation, e.g. cadets or girl guides requires the parent or guardian to sign a permission form/sheet. However, you must be sure that a public performance or media appearance doesn't identify the child or young person as being in care. For example, a sporting photo in the local paper or dancing at a community event doesn't usually identify the child or young person as being in care.

In all situations, consider the safety, welfare and wellbeing of the child or young person's needs first. Be careful not to give out information that discloses the whereabouts of a child or young person if this information is protected. In situations of severe harm or exploitation, the publication of identifying information may alert inappropriate people to the whereabouts of the child or young person. If you're in any doubt, talk to the Case Manager.

Talk to the Case Manager about any request to publish or broadcast photographs, film or anything that identifies a child or young person as being in care, including publishing the names of their parents.

Consent is not required for a child or young person to appear in a school photo, sports team photo or home video if it's for personal use, however the child or young person cannot be identified as a 'child in care'.

Religion and spirituality

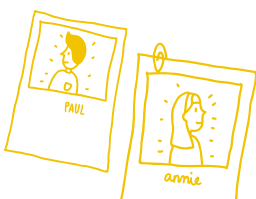
Help the child or young person practice their religion and spirituality. For example, arrange for the child or young person to attend religious services in their own faith and allow them to participate in religious activities unless their parents expressly request otherwise.

Revenge porn

Children and young people can become victims of revenge porn. Revenge porn is also known as non-consensual pornography, where explicit sexual images of someone are distributed without their knowledge or consent. This can occur when someone has sent or is distributing nude, intimate, or sexually explicit images of someone, without the consent of the individual pictured.

In some cases, photos or videos are legally obtained, and are then shared following a relationship breakdown. Other perpetrators hack the images and videos from electronic devices.

After the images are obtained they are used to control, abuse and humiliate people. The images are distributed between groups of friends through email and social media, or are posted on websites that allow such content to be posted and shared. It is important to have discussions with young people to ensure they understand this and what impacts this could have on them emotionally and potentially legally.



Savings

Encourage the child or young person to deposit a portion of their pocket money or earnings from a part-time job into a savings account. The child or young person's Case Manager sets up a bank account with them, their savings belong to them and their savings account should be in their own name. Let them choose if they want to spend their money or save it for later.

School and vacation camps

School or vacation camps can offer children and young people a school holiday break full of adventure and fun. The Case Managers prior approval is needed if the child or young person would like to attend camp. In considering your request, the Case Manager will look at if the child or young person's behaviour may pose a serious risk to others or themselves. Generally, a child or young person won't be able to attend camp unless these risks are dealt with.

Sexual Health and Development

You can support young people by giving them opportunities to positively express the feelings they are experiencing as they grow. Young people need support to understand and talk about feelings that may be new, embarrassing or confusing, which might be related to changes in their bodies when entering puberty or feelings about their identity, which might include feelings about their gender or sexual orientation. You can talk to the young person's Case Manager while discussing their Care Plan and seek advice online about ways you and other others can share information, support and normalise the young person's feelings. The following Northern Territory Government websites may be of assistance to you:

- <https://nt.gov.au/community/parents-and-families/young-people-who-are-gay-lesbian-or-bisexual>
- <https://nt.gov.au/community/parents-and-families/children-and-learning-about-sexuality>
- <https://nt.gov.au/community/parents-and-families/children-and-learning-about-sexuality/when-to-be-concerned-about-a-childs-sexual-behaviour>
- <https://nt.gov.au/community/parents-and-families/children-and-learning-about-sexuality/why-talk-with-your-child-about-sexuality>

Sexting

Sexting is when a young person sends a highly suggestive or sexually explicit photo of themselves via their mobile phone. It's a growing trend among young people and can cause public humiliation, cyberbullying and dangerous behaviours.

Warn the young person in your care about the potential risks of sexting and sexual predators. Give them clear rules about what they can and can't do with their mobile phone and remind them to think before they act. Explain that they have no control over who sees their photos, where they may appear or how they're used after they're sent. Make sure they understand that it's illegal to send or pass on sexual photos of children or young people, including themselves.

For more information, refer to the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner: www.esafety.gov.au

Do not disseminate inappropriate material.

Social Media

Posting information on social networking websites (such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Instagram and TikTok). These sites can jeopardise both your own privacy and the privacy of the child or young person in your care.

As a user, you can give out too much personal information on your profile. Your profile lists identifying information like your real name, photos, birth date and home town. Without realising it, you may also post identifying or personal information about the child or young person in your care. A child or young person should not be identified as a 'child in care'. Every 'friend' you invite is a third party with access to your information. You have little control over who sees your information.

Social networking sites can be beneficial for children or young people to maintain connections with others, including siblings, friends, birth parents and extended family members. However, warn them to be careful about posting personal or identifying information on their profile. Speak with the child or young person's Case Manager to determine if contact with others through social networking is suitable, as there may be restrictions with whom the child or young person is able to have contact.

For educational resources and information about cyberbullying and social networking etiquette, refer to the Australian Communications and Media Authority website: www.esafety.gov.au

to have contact.

For educational resources and information about cyberbullying and social networking etiquette, refer to the Australian Communications and Media Authority website: www.esafety.gov.au

Transport

You're expected to organise and pay for, or provide, day-to-day transport for the child or young person. This includes transport to school, activities, general medical appointments and dental visits.

Travel Within NT

You do not need approval if travelling within the NT as long as it doesn't interfere with schooling or planned family contact. You should advise the Case Manager if you're going to be away overnight as they need to be aware of the child or young person's whereabouts at all times.

Travel Interstate and Overseas

You will need approval from Territory Families before taking a child or young person interstate or overseas.

If it is determined that the proposed travel is in the best interests of the child, the Case Manager will prepare a submission on your behalf that includes reasons for the travel, views and consent of the child/ young person and their parents, the impact on the child or young person's routine, supervision of the child or young person, financial arrangements and any other relevant matters.

Once a decision is made, the Case Manager will contact you to inform you whether approval has been obtained or not, and any conditions/restrictions on the travel arrangements and required documents. If the request is approved, you'll then receive a letter of authority from us to travel with the child or young person.

Applying for a passport

The Case Manager will apply for a passport on behalf of the child or young person. To avoid delays and disappointment, let the Case Manager know well in advance if you're planning to travel overseas. It can take up to 12 months to get a passport for a child or young person in care. This is because the Case Manager must get the consent of each person who holds parental responsibility for the child or young person or with a right to contact under a court order, before a passport can be issued.

Safety

Safe sleeping

Safe sleeping practices are vital to protect children, especially infants. Even the most experienced Carers need to keep up to date with information about the safest way for infants to sleep and how to reduce the risks of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

All children and young people need a safe sleeping environment, particularly infants under 12 months. Removing dangers and creating a safe cot for infants can reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related deaths.

To provide a safe sleeping environment, make sure the baby sleeps alone in a cot that meets Australian Standards for Cots (AS 2172) see

www.productsafety.gov.au

For support or further information on safe sleeping, contact:

- **a local Territory Families office**
- **your local doctor or early childhood nurse**
- **SIDS and Kids - 1300 308 307 or www.sidsandkids.org**
<https://rednose.org.au/>

Home safety

All NT residents must have at least one working smoke alarm on each level of their home.

This includes any residential building where people sleep. Smoke alarms must be kept in working order. Check your home for potential hazards, for more information, refer to Territory Families' 7 Steps to Safety:

www.territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au

Pool safety

Children and young people should always be supervised by an adult in and around swimming pools. Fencing and other approved child-resistant barriers must be installed around all swimming pools and spa pools in the NT. Different fencing requirements apply depending on the date the pool was installed, the area you live in and the type of property you have. Contact your local council if you're not sure whether your pool fully meets these requirements.

For more information on pool fencing and barrier safety standards, please refer to: www.territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au

Car safety

When travelling in a vehicle a child or young person must be properly restrained at all times to reduce the chance of serious injury or death if involved in a car crash. A child restraint will protect the child from being ejected from the vehicle.

All children under seven must be secured in an approved child restraint or booster seat when travelling in a vehicle in the Northern Territory and seatbelts are to be used when children outgrow child seats per Territory and National standards/laws.

All child restraints must be properly installed.

www.nt.gov.au

www.kidsafent.com.au

Talk to your Case Manager if you do not have the appropriate car restraints for the child in your care. Territory Families will assist in purchasing this for you.

Families will assist in purchasing this for you.

Sun safety

Adopting sun safety practices can help reduce the risk of skin cancer in later life and protect children and young people from other common sun and heat related injuries such as sunburn, heat stroke, heat rash, dehydration, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and eye damage.

Sun safety practices:

- be a role model by wearing a hat, sunscreen and sunglasses;
- encourage the child or young person to wear clothing that covers their skin;
- apply broad spectrum SPF50+ water-resistant sunscreen on areas not protected by clothing 20 minutes before going outside;
- stay in the shade between 11am and 3pm whenever possible;
- take more care when the child or young person is near highly reflective surfaces, such as water and snow;
- encourage the child or young person to drink regularly and avoid vigorous activity in hot weather;
- make sure a sick baby/child or young person drinks extra fluids in hot weather;
- avoid exposing a baby to direct sunlight and provide shade when travelling in a car;
- never leave a baby/child or young person alone in a car; and
- seek urgent medical attention if a child or young person in your care shows signs of heat stroke.



Smoking

A child or young person shouldn't be exposed to passive smoke in the home, car or any confined space. In the NT, smoking in a car with a child or young person under the age of 16 is against the law. Anyone who smokes, including visitors, should do so in an area well away from the child or young person.

It's illegal for a child or young person under the age of 18 to purchase tobacco products. It's also irresponsible for any adult to give cigarettes to a child or young person or to buy cigarettes for them. Discourage children or young people from starting or continuing smoking. If you can't prevent it, you have the right to forbid them from smoking in your home.

Public smoking laws vary depending on location. Information regarding this can be found: www.nt.gov.au

Missing child/ young person

You should know the whereabouts of a child or young person in your care at all times. If you're concerned that the child or young person may be missing, contact the last people who may have seen them.

Call the Case Manager or the Child Protection Helpline (1800 700 250, 24 hours/7 days a week) if you haven't been able to locate the child or young person within a short time.

You'll get advice about what to do next, which may include calling the police for assistance.

Behaviour

From time to time, children and young people in care may behave in ways that are difficult to manage. A small number may have particularly challenging behaviour that requires specialist intervention and support to help them learn better ways to meet their needs. As young people become older, many challenge their independence upon their Carers, the community and the law.

The effects of past harm, exploitation and trauma often shape the behaviour of children and young people in care. Other factors that commonly influence behaviour include:

- **being exposed to violence and extreme aggression early in life;**
- **health and developmental issues;**
- **inconsistent parenting;**
- **not being taught a positive way of getting what they need, learning that being disruptive gets attention;**
- **trying to cope with grief, loss and separation;**
- **repeated rejections by loved ones and feelings of abandonment;**
- **lack of a stable home, family and school life due to moving in and out of care**
- **adjusting to new environments with different rules and expectations.**

Positive discipline

Discipline is one of the ways we learn the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Positive discipline is based on teaching rather than punishment. It's an ongoing process that takes time, effort, patience, thought and compassion. What works best depends on the individual child or young person and their age.

The goal of positive discipline is to help the child or young person change their behaviour for the long term by focusing on what they're allowed to do, encouraging them to think before they act and reinforcing what they are learning with reminders and praise. It's about teaching them self-control and how to make better choices while still being firm when necessary.

Babies

Babies don't need discipline, they cry because they're hungry, wet, tired, in pain or need to be held. You can't spoil a baby by tending to their needs. When they start crawling, they tend to get into everything. Baby proof your home to keep them safe while exploring. If they are getting into things they shouldn't, distract or offer alternative activities.

Pre-schoolers

Preschoolers have learnt the basic rules and they'll understand if you explain things. Use distraction and rewards, such as extra praise and hugs, whenever you can.

Older children and young people:

- **as children and young people get older their needs for discipline often change and can become more complex.**
- **lead by example and model new/desirable behaviour, such as respecting people;**
- **keep your cool, focus on addressing the behaviour, set clear limits and be consistent;**
- **make sure they understand why they're being disciplined;**
- **be firm by speaking in a tone that lets them know you mean what you say and expect them to do it;**
- **plan ahead by preventing situations that often lead to misbehaviour, such as making sure they're not over-tired before going out;**
- **help them discover their strengths so they feel good about themselves;**
- **talk to them about their choices and possible consequences. Teach them that rights and responsibilities go together;**
- **involve them in discussions about setting rules and establishing consequences for breaking them; and**
- **take every opportunity to reinforce and reward positive behaviour with warmth and praise.**

Use privileges like watching a favourite TV show or participating in a fun activity to promote positive behaviour. Make sure consequences for unwanted behaviour are fair and age appropriate and that the child or young person understands what they've done wrong and give them a chance to correct their behaviour.

Older children and young people need you to help them discover their strengths so they feel good about themselves.

For more tips and advice visit the Australian Parenting website:

raisingchildren.net.au

Use privileges like watching a favourite TV show or participating in a fun activity to promote positive behaviour. Make sure consequences for unwanted behaviour are fair and age appropriate and that the child or young person understands what they've done wrong and give them a chance to correct their behaviour.

Older children and young people need you to help them discover their strengths so they feel good about themselves.

For more tips and advice visit the Australian Parenting website:

raisingchildren.net.au

Punishment

A Carer cannot use any form of discipline that involves spanking, slapping, shouting blaming, shaming or ridiculing or excluding a child or young person. If you're unsure of the best approach surrounding discipline, contact the Case Manager.

Challenging behaviour

Challenging behaviour can potentially put the child or young person, you, your family or other people in danger. It is different to behaviour that may be difficult to manage at times. Challenging behaviour includes:

- **verbal and physical abuse, threats and assaults;**
- **sexual offences, such as indecent exposure, sexually explicit behaviour, sexual harassment and sexual assault;**
- **running away;**
- **antisocial behaviour, such as damaging property, stealing and picking fights; and**
- **serious offending, such as burglary, robbery, serious assaults.**

Challenging behaviour may also include a child or young person seeming unable to control their actions, and certain behaviours that occur frequently or continue for extended periods of time.

Talk to the Case Manager if you're concerned about the child or young person's behaviour or need extra support to manage their behaviour.

Behaviour management plans

Behaviour management plans aim to help a child or young person with challenging behaviour learn better ways of behaving. They also help you to learn how to redirect the child or young person or respond to their challenging behaviour with understanding. Most children and young people in care don't need a behaviour management plan even if their behaviour can be difficult.

Behaviour management plans are developed with you by the Case Manager and either a psychologist or casework specialist. Plans consider the circumstances of each child or young person and the different ways you've tried to manage their behaviour.

When developing the plan, the Case Manager will look at what the child or young person is doing, thinking and feeling to identify what may be causing them and others distress. They'll also help you to develop realistic strategies for preventing the challenging behaviour by identifying the triggers.

Family contact

It is important for children and young people in care to maintain contact with family members.

Children and young people in care may have contact with their parents, siblings, grandparents, other family members and even close friends. Contact can involve planned face-to-face visits, telephone conversations, email; and exchanging letters, gifts or photos.

Why contact is important

Contact can support the parent-child relationship and reassure the child or young person while they are in care. It's also one of the main ways of maintaining relationships between siblings not living together.

- **Contact is also important for helping the child or young person develop their sense of identity.**
- **Contact also provides an opportunity for parents to work on areas of parenting they may be struggling with.**

Well-planned contact can:

- **maintain and strengthen the child or young person's relationships and connection with family, significant others and community;**
- **promote the child or young person's cultural identity;**
- **ease the pain of separation and loss for both the child or young person and their family;**
- **reduce a child or young person's sense of abandonment;**
- **reassure the child or young person of the parents' wellbeing;**
- **keep the birth parents updated with their child or young person's development and activities;**
- **provide an opportunity to share news and information; and**
- **help the child or young person adjust to their placement.**

Your role in maintaining contact

The Case Manager will talk to you about your role and participation in contact. You can encourage contact by preparing the child or young person for contact visits, keeping a record of the child or young person's experiences and providing information about the child or young person's time in care.

You don't have to be present during visits unless it's in the child or young person's best interests for you to be there. In some circumstances, such as when a child or young person is in long-term care, you may be the best person to take the child or young person to and from visits and to supervise contact. Alternatively, the Case Manager may do this. Your role may also change over time, depending on the child or young person's needs.

If you need to make a change to contact arrangements, you should tell the Case Manager as soon as possible before a planned visit.

If you're a relative/kinship Carer, you may share a close relationship with the child or young person's parents. This can make it easier to organise contact and involve the parents in daily decisions. If there's conflict between you and the child or young person's parents, these conflicts need to be managed to prevent contact becoming difficult. You should talk to Territory Families if you need help.

How you can support contact

You can best support family contact by talking to the child or young person's Case Manager about the types of contact arrangements that are suitable for the child or young person in your care.

As a Carer, you significantly influence the child or young person's view of the world. Try not to express anger or anxiety about contact arrangements that the child or young person will notice and avoid blaming or criticising the child or young person's family.

Children and young people often experience anxiety about contact with their birth families and this may cause their behaviour to change before and after the visit. It's important to understand possible anxieties the child or young person may have and don't pressure them for information about visits. Help manage the child or young person's fears and frustrations so they can face visits with greater confidence and benefit from contact.

It is also important not to:

- **have unsupervised meetings unless this is part of an approved Care Plan;**
- **take out your frustration, anger or anxiety on the child or young person or place yourself in a position where you feel unsafe;**
- **make promises you can't keep, such as supervising contact if you're not comfortable; and**
- **take on the role of counsellor for the child or young person or their family**

Making contact decisions

Decisions about contact are made by a court (through a court order) or by Territory Families. These decisions always consider the safety and best interests of the child or young person. Contact decisions identify who should have contact, the type of contact, how often contact should occur and whether contact needs to be supervised. A court order may also prevent contact with certain people.

Contact arrangements are tailored to meet the child or young person's needs. The child or young person's age and whether they're likely to return to their parents care are key factors in these decisions. Face-to-face contact is generally more frequent for a child or young person who is likely to return home. If a child or young person is in long-term care, face-to-face contact may be less frequent and it may involve exchanging letters and phone calls.

Where a contact order exists, an application must be made to the court to change it. Decisions relating to contact will be made during the Care Planning process. Contact arrangements are part of a child or young person's Care Plan and are reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to meet the child or young person's needs.

What to do if contact is difficult

Sometimes family contact can be difficult for Carers. There may be conflict about the amount of time required for contact or the behaviour of the child or young person before or after contact. Ask the Case Manager for help if you can't manage the contact arrangements, have concerns about contact or are worried about its effect on the child or young person's behaviour.

It's important to raise any serious concerns with the Case Manager as soon as possible.

If the Case Manager is unavailable and you suspect the child or young person is at risk of being neglected or physically, sexually or emotionally abused, you should make a report to the child abuse and protection hotline on 1800 700 250.

Managing contact with parents who use drugs or alcohol

Dealing with a parent under the influence of drugs or alcohol can be hard for children and young people.

The child or young person may feel rejected and blame themselves for their parent using drugs or alcohol. It's important to reassure the child or young person that they're not responsible for their parent's drug and alcohol use.

If you're a relative or kinship Carer managing contact and dealing with this type of situation, it may be helpful to set up some ground rules with parents. For example, the parent doesn't go to your house when they're under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Ground rules can help to reduce risk to the child or young person even if the parent doesn't always stick to them.

If a parent arrives at your home under the influence of drugs or alcohol, remain calm and use a gentle tone of voice when talking to them. Don't criticise them or try to have a long conversation. If they become aggressive, call the police.

Contact visits supervised by Territory Families will be cancelled if a parent arrives under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Carers who are involved in supervising contact visits are encouraged to do the same.



decision making

Below is a table that can quickly identify who is responsible for make decisions about some situations or questions you may have regarding the child or young person.

Territory Families has developed a Guideline called 'Decision making for Carers', which is found online at territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au or you can ask the child or young person's Case Manager for a copy of the guideline



Not Responsible



Responsible

Bail

Legal representation



Carer



Territory Families

Contact

Contact with birth family and significant others



Carer



Territory Families

Provide Information

Provide information to parents on whereabouts of child or young person



Carer



Territory Families

Behaviour

Day-to-day behaviour



Carer



Territory Families

Develop behaviour management plan



Carer



Territory Families

Life story work

prepare and help child or young person with recording information



Carer



Territory Families

Religion

Religious instruction as per Care Plan



Carer



Territory Families

Information

share relevant information with school when appropriate

☒

Carer

☒

Territory Families

Passport

applying for a passport

☐

Carer

☒

Territory Families

Name Change

Change of name

☐

Carer

☒

Territory Families

Driving lessons

inform child/ young person's Case Manager

☐

Carer

☒

Territory Families

decision making

Below is a table that can quickly identify who is responsible for make decisions about some situations or questions you may have regarding the child or young person.



Not Responsible



Responsible

Armed Forces

Armed Forces

enlisting in the armed forces



Carer



Territory Families

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeship

enter an apprenticeship



Carer



Territory Families

Media & Public Appearances

Media and public appearances

where the out-of-home care status (e.g. child or young person not referred to as 'foster child') and identity of a child or young person is not revealed (please advise Case Manager, so family are advised they may see child or young person in the media)



Carer



Territory Families

where the out-of-home care status and identity of the child or young person is revealed



Carer



Territory Families

Pocket Money

Pocket money

to be covered by Carers child maintenance payments



Carer



Territory Families

Holidays

Holidays and travel with the Carer including overnight stay interstate

please inform Case Manager of your plans so contact details can be recorded can not interfere with child/ young person's normal routines e.g. contact arrangements, school attendance.



Carer



Territory Families

Holidays and travel during the day (via air) with the Carer interstate

can not interfere with child/ young person's normal routines e.g. contact arrangements, school attendance.



Carer



Territory Families

Holidays and travel

interstate/ international Passports



Carer



Territory Families

Recreational Activities

Recreational, leisure, sporting and community activities

participation as per Care Plan



Carer



Territory Families

decision making

Below is a table that can quickly identify who is responsible for make decisions about some situations or questions you may have regarding the child or young person.



Not Responsible



Responsible

Medical

Medical emergency at school

first point of contact



Carer



Territory Families

Medical/dental

general medical and dental treatment or check-ups not requiring surgery or specialist treatment identified in Care Plan, e.g. treatment for asthma or diabetes



Carer



Territory Families

Medication

administration of medication prescribed by a medical practitioner as well as some over-the-counter medicines



Carer



Territory Families

Medication

approval of psychotropic medication (such as antidepressants) if part of an approved behaviour management plan and prescribed by a doctor



Carer



Territory Families

Surgery

Surgery

(non-emergency)



Carer



Territory Families

Dental

Dental check-ups

standard cleans and check ups



Carer



Territory Families

Child minding

Child minding

unplanned or infrequent arrangements



Carer



Territory Families

Child minding

planned and frequent arrangements including formal child care



Carer



Territory Families

Hearing & Eye tests

Hearing and eye tests

give permission for tests conducted at school



Carer



Territory Families

Immunisation

Immunisation



Carer



Territory Families

decision making

Below is a table that can quickly identify who is responsible for make decisions about some situations or questions you may have regarding the child or young person.



Not Responsible



Responsible

School

School attendance

ensure attendance on a day-to-day basis



Carer



Territory Families

School attendance

first point of contact when attendance is a problem



Carer



Territory Families

School attendance

second point of contact if attendance is an ongoing issue



Carer



Territory Families

School camp

attendance permission



Carer



Territory Families

School expenses

such as fees, uniforms, books, travel and excursion costs



Carer



Territory Families

School excursion

day trip within the town young person resides



Carer



Territory Families

School excursion

not in the town young person resides, interstate or overseas for any length of time



Carer



Territory Families

School expulsion

if expulsion is being considered, the school to contact carer and agency (also see school suspension)



Carer



Territory Families

School

Before and after school care

unplanned or infrequent arrangement, these costs are to be covered by the Carers Allowance.



Carer



Territory Families

Before and after school care

any planned or frequent arrangement, funding for this to be discussed with Case Manager and documents in Care Plan.



Carer



Territory Families

Change of school

make decisions regarding school enrolment, education and training provide school with information about the child or young person's history (where appropriate) and care arrangements, including current schooling arrangements and supports.



Carer



Territory Families

School expulsion

finding an alternative educational placement following expulsion (also see School suspension)



Carer



Territory Families

School report cards and test results

school sends to Carer or Territory Families (different depending on School / Region)



Carer



Territory Families

School photos

permission for child or young person to be in school photos



Carer



Territory Families

Parent/Teacher

Parent/teacher

interviews



Carer



Territory Families

decision making

Below is a table that can quickly identify who is responsible for make decisions about some situations or questions you may have regarding the child or young person.



Not Responsible



Responsible

Overnight Stays

Overnight stays

occasional social activities, sleepovers



Carer



Territory Families

Overnight stays

regular overnight stays in other people's homes



Carer



Territory Families

Haircut

Haircut

for young people 13 years and over haircuts and colour changes are to be negotiated between Carer and young person



Carer



Territory Families

General haircuts for children in care can be approved by the carer unless otherwise informed by the Case Manager or the child or young person's Care Plan.

Note: if you think the child's culture or religion is a factor in the decision to cut their hair, call the Case Manager to discuss.

High Risk Activities

High-risk activities

organised by school such as rock climbing or surfing



Carer



Territory Families

Celebrations

Celebrations

(please keep the birth family in mind)



Carer



Territory Families

Camping

Camping

out of town of residence with Carer



Carer



Territory Families

Moving Interstate

Moving interstate with child or young person

discuss with Case Manager before you move



Carer



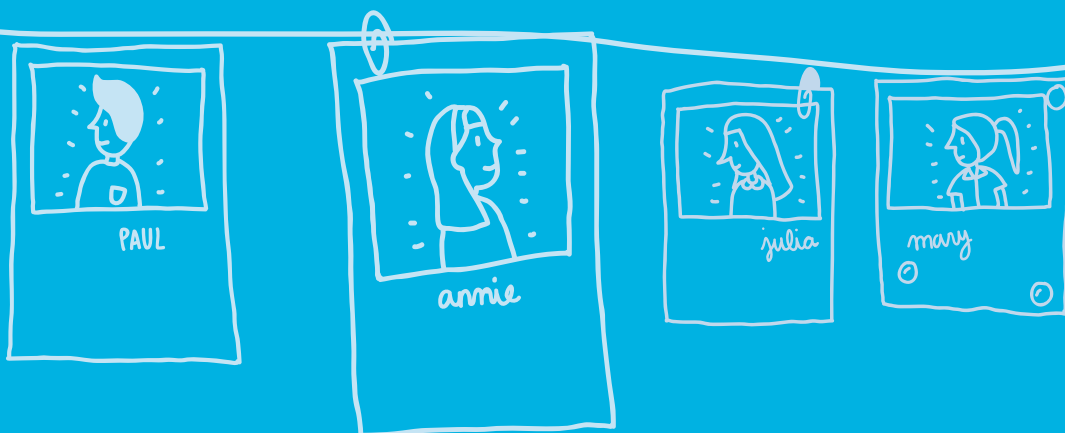
Territory Families



cultural information



There may be some cases where the child or young person may be scared to attend the funeral. This should be discussed with the child and their family to avoid any potential disrespect to other family and community members.



cultural information



The identity, culture and language of a child or young person comes from their relationships with family, community and land. As a Carer, your role is to:

- **support the child or young person's access to family and community;**
- **promote the child or young person's understanding of their culture; and**
- **maintain their connection to their community.**

Cultural ceremonies for Aboriginal children in care

Sorry Business

Sorry Business is the term used to refer to the death of a family or community member and the mourning process that follows. Sorry Business involves responsibilities and obligations to attend funerals, taking part in mourning activities and ceremonies. These events can take place for up to a week or more. It is important for the child's wellbeing to be able to participate in Sorry Business.

It is important to note that it is common practice not to display images or speak the name of the deceased person during and for some time after Sorry Business has taken place.

There may be some cases where the child or young person may be scared to attend the funeral.

This should be discussed with the child and their family to avoid any potential disrespect to other family and community members

A little tip!

There are a few practical things that you can do to help a child or young person settle in to your home.

- Ask them if there are certain foods they really like or dislike before preparing meals.



Men and Women's Business

Men and Women's Business is considered to be a sacred and private time in Aboriginal culture. These ceremonies occur at different stages of men and women's lives. For some Aboriginal children and young people in care, there may come a time where they are called upon by their family or community to participate in Men or Women's Business. As a Carer, it is important to support and respect the privacy of the child or young person's involvement in Men or Women's Business.

Parents

Gathering information about birth parents and family helps the child or young person to connect to their cultural and religious heritage. This includes information about:

- **when their parents were born**
- **countries, cities or communities their parents, grandparents and extended family came from, and what these places are like**
- **language their parents and extended family speak**
- **things their parents and extended family did for a living**
- **parents' religion, religious beliefs and practices, and holidays, special events, foods and dress associated with their parents' culture or religion.**

Culture

You can help the child or young person explore, understand and strengthen their own sense of identity by gathering information about:

- **cultural and religious celebrations, events and activities they've participated in with their family**
- **memories of these events and what they did**
- **language they spoke at home**
- **things they enjoyed like certain kinds of food, places, people or special experiences.**

For children or young people born overseas, also gather information about:

- **the country or town they were born in; and**
- **things they remember, such as where they lived, friends, games they played, important people in their lives and what they liked and didn't like.**

For a useful source of geographical, social, migration, religious, linguistic and cultural information visit these websites:

- **Department of Immigration and Citizenship www.immi.gov.au**
- **Diversity Health Institute Clearinghouse www.dhi.gov.au**
- **Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) www.snaicc.org.au.**

For lists of days of cultural and religious significance across the year, you can visit: www.immi.gov.au

Go to Home > A Diverse Australia > Calendar of Cultural and Religious Dates
www.crc.nsw.gov.au

Go to Home > Days of Religious Significance

Non-Aboriginal Carers

Maintaining cultural connections

As a non-Aboriginal Carer of an Aboriginal child or young person, it is important to help them to maintain connections to their family, community and culture by:

- **gathering as much information as possible about the child or young person's community;**
- **promoting interest in their culture by providing books, music, art and opportunities to participate in cultural activities; and**
- **assisting them to maintain contact with their family, community and culture by;**
 - encouraging and participating in conversations about their family and community and sharing this with the child or young person;
 - being involved in community activities and events;
 - networking with Aboriginal Carers, workers and services in your local area; and
 - identifying significant people in the child or young person's life who can assist in maintaining links with their community.

Children and young peoples participation in cultural events is one way of gaining an understanding about:

- **the value and sense of belonging to an Aboriginal community the practices and ceremonies that maintain Aboriginal cultures;**
- **how diverse groups of Aboriginal people see themselves;**
- **how to pay respect to Aboriginal peoples, cultures and heritage; and**
- **how to gain the respect and understanding of others and the broader community through sharing pride for culture.**

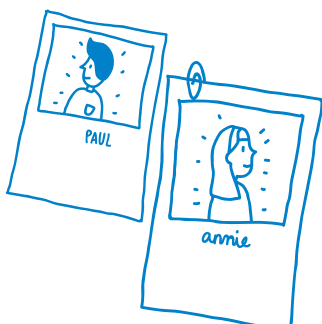
Importance of promoting a positive cultural identity

It's important to help children and young people develop a positive view of themselves. For Aboriginal children and young people, this includes encouraging and nurturing respect and knowledge about Aboriginal culture.

A child or young person's cultural identity is an important part of who they are. Talking about positive role models who may have experienced racism and bullying and still achieved great heights may help to develop a positive cultural identity, for example A.B. Original, Cathy Freeman, Dan Sultan, Adam Goodes, Ernie Dingo and Aden Ridgeway.

Children and young people who are strong in their culture have higher self-esteem, confidence and expectations of what they can achieve. When children and young people are joked about, bullied or treated badly because of their cultural background, they start to doubt their own worth.

Some children or young people may struggle to acknowledge they are Aboriginal,



either because of their own cultural confusion or because they may not have been encouraged to do so. While children and young people can't be forced to acknowledge their culture, your attitude and interest in their cultural identity can help reduce confusion and negative stereotyping and encourage a sense of belonging and pride.

Racism and bullying

Racism is any attitude or behaviour that assumes someone is inferior because of their skin colour or race. This can also take the forms of discrimination or bullying.

Racial discrimination is being treated unfairly because of race, colour, nationality, descent, or ethnic or ethno-religious background.

Racial bullying, or harassment, means subjecting someone to verbal, physical or emotional abuse for the same reasons.

Racism can hurt the child or young person. It can make them feel bad and as though they don't belong. It can cause hatred and violence. Nobody has a right to treat a child or young person this way and it's up to the adults in their life to protect them.

At school

Here are some things you can do if the child or young person in your care experiences bullying at school:

- **keep a diary of what happened, when it happened, who was involved and who witnessed it;**
- **talk to the teacher about it and what can be done;**
- **talk to the principal about the school's policy for dealing with racial bullying and what formal steps will be taken to prevent it from happening again;**
- **help the child or young person to work out ways of dealing with the situation that makes them feel more in control and safe. For example, taking a different way home, staying with a group of friends or telling the teacher as soon as something happens;**
- **take a support person with you if you find it difficult talking about this with the school;**

Developing strategies to deal with racism before it happens allows you to help prevent it getting out of control. Some strategies include:

- **make sure you all understand that racism can be against the law, is unacceptable and no one deserves to be treated that way;**
- **lead by example – don't make racist slurs or jokes about other people's cultures or backgrounds;**
- **have discussions about racism at home and encourage conversation about its effects and impacts;**
- **encourage and value diversity; and**
- **don't ignore racism or bullying – challenge it.**

- **keep in contact with the school until the problem is fixed; and**
- **if it keeps happening, have the Case Manager participate in the school meeting.**

Outside of school

If the child or young person in your care experiences bullying outside school, there are some things you can do;

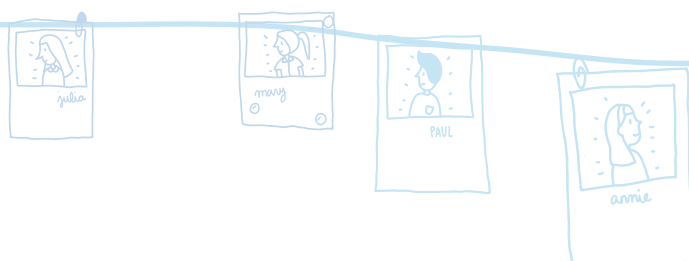
- **if you witness it, be assertive and challenge the behaviour by naming what's happening and their behaviour isn't okay, particularly if it's family and friends who'll have regular contact with the child or young person;**
- **be aware that the child or young person is watching how you respond so they can learn how to deal with it themselves;**
- **don't threaten, intimidate or verbally abuse the bully;**
- **listen to the child or young person and take their feelings and fears seriously;**
- **let them know that it's not their fault;**
- **don't tell them to just ignore it, call them names like 'sook' or make excuses for the behaviour; and don't let anyone else do so; and**
- **encourage and help the child or young person to develop pride in their cultural background and get support from family and friends.**

If you don't know what to do, the child or young person is traumatised, or you're getting stressed, contact the Case Manager for support.

How you can help

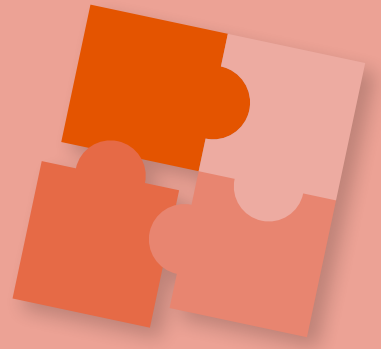
You may need to help the child or young person in your care deal with racism at school, among friends, in the community, or even in your own home or neighbourhood.

When a child or young person suffers because of racism, discrimination or bullying, they can feel angry, isolated and powerless. As their Carer, you have a responsibility to speak out if you see it happening and the right to expect something to be done about it.

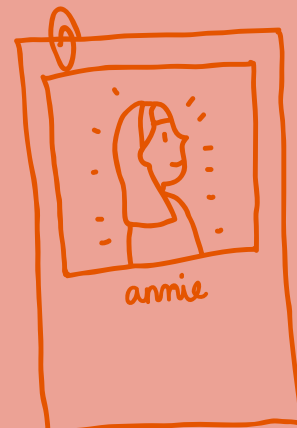




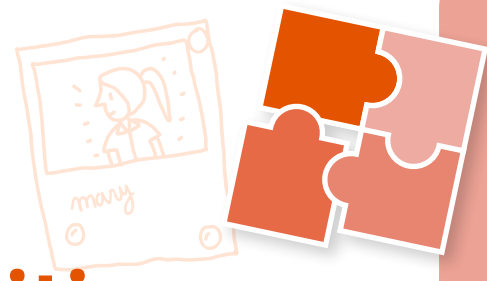
children & young people with disabilities



*Like all children and young people,
those with disabilities need the care
of a loving adult, time with friends
and a widerange of life experiences.*



children and young people with disabilities



Like all children and young people, those with disabilities need the care of a loving adult, time with friends and a wide range of life experiences.

The Case Manager will give you any information that they've gathered from the child or young person's parents, previous carers and doctors about their routines, medications, specialised equipment and educational needs. If the child or young person is using a disability service, you may need to become involved with the service to learn more about the child or young person's disability.

As a Carer of a child or young person with a disability, you may need to access additional supports. These may include respite care, specialised equipment, such as a wheelchair or lifting device, house/car modifications or support services. To assist Territory Families with any financial decisions regarding additional care for a child/ young person, all additional care must be recorded within the Care Plan.

Territory Families can assist with:

- **assessing the needs of the child or young person;**
- **organising placements and respite services (where available);**
- **organising ongoing Carer training and information;**
- **making decisions about Carer Allowances; and**
- **organising support services.**

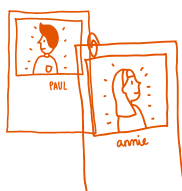
You can speak to the Territory Families Case Manager to discuss support options including:

- **referral for community support services and therapy ;**
- **access to specialised equipment;**
- **disability respite services; and**
- **referral to other programs/services to support you and the child or young person in your care.**

Take appropriate measures, with support and assistance from Territory Families, to promote the physical, cognitive and psychological recovery, rehabilitation and social reintegration of persons with disabilities who become victims of any form of exploitation, violence or abuse.

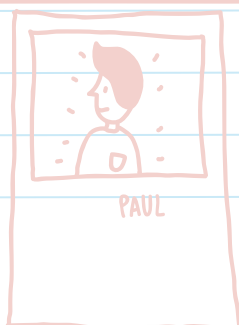
Resources/National Disability Insurance Scheme

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) priority is to ensure people with disability continue to get the support they need. The changes that are required to existing disability support systems are significant. Arrangements are being made to ensure the scheme can be introduced gradually, ensuring a smooth transition for people with disability and support providers. For more information please refer to the NDIS website: www.ndis.gov.au .

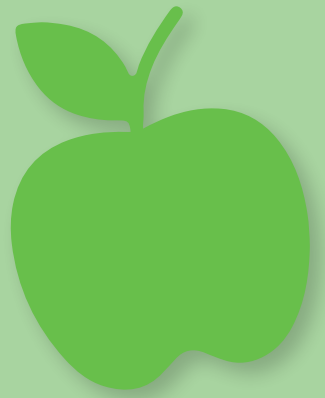


notes

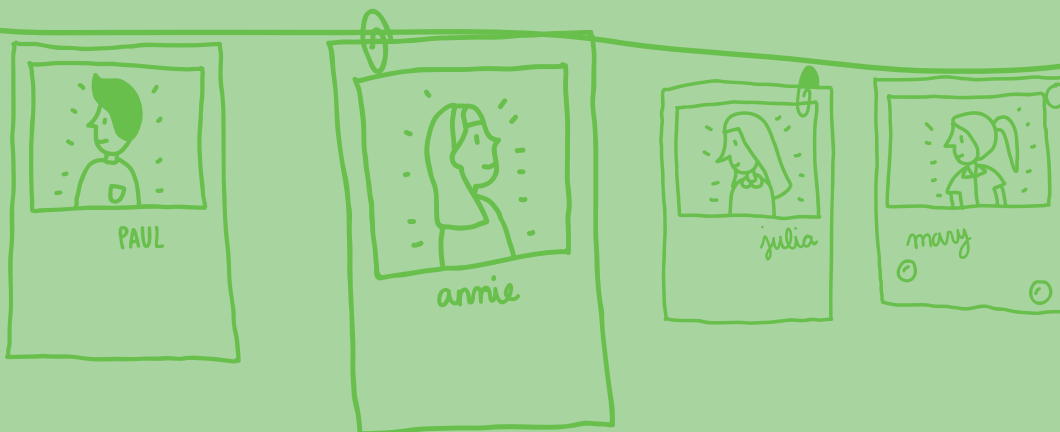
Lined area for notes.



health and wellbeing



Children and young people in care tend to have higher rates of health, developmental, behavioural and emotional challenges.



Health and Wellbeing



Children and young people in care tend to have higher rates of health, developmental, behavioural and emotional problems. Many also have physical and intellectual disabilities. This is often a result of their experiences before coming into care due to abuse, neglect, prenatal and postnatal exposure to parental drug abuse, and exposure to high levels of conflict and family violence.

The medical and dental health of children and young people in care will be assessed regularly. If treatment is required, appropriate services will be arranged by Territory Families and provided in an expedient manner.

A baseline assessment should occur during the first three months of a child or young person entering care to provide information against which future assessments of the child or young person's progress and development can be measured. The baseline assessment will identify any significant and/or immediate needs, which should be addressed.

Routine medical and dental treatment for children or young people in care should be sought from local general practitioners in the first instance. Referrals for specialist treatment should be made by the general practitioner to either Department of Health specialists or private specialist medical or dental practitioners if necessary.

Consent for medical and dental treatment

Consent for medical and dental treatment must be provided except when a patient requires emergency treatment (e.g. after a car accident). Who can provide consent will depend on the individual circumstances. Some medical and dental procedures require the consent of the child or young person's legal parent before they can be performed. When the child is in care, Parental Responsibility may still be held by their natural parents or by Territory Families Chief Executive Officer (Case Manager), which depends on the type of Court Order that is in place. Talk to the Case Manager about who has Parental Responsibility for the child or young person who is living with you. There are also occasions when a young person may be able to provide consent for themselves.

Aboriginal Health Clinics are a preferred provider for Aboriginal children and young people.

Costs

Medicare will pay the full cost of medical treatment in public hospitals or a bulk billing clinic, Territory Families encourages the use of these services when available.

If a private practitioner who does not bulk bill is utilised, Medicare may provide a reimbursement to cover some of the costs, but there may be 'out of pocket expense' or 'gap' payment required. A Carer in receipt of a Carer allowance for the

child or young person is expected to pay the gap fee because the Carer allowance has been calculated to include provision for everyday medical expenses.

When specialist services are required, the cost of these services is usually met by Territory Families. To be reimbursed for the cost of specialist services under Medicare, a referral must be provided by a general practitioner.

If the child or young person requires regular medical appointments due to a chronic or severe illness, the medical expenses may be met by Territory Families. This should be discussed with the Case Manager to evaluate the circumstances.

Administering medication

When administering medication prescribed by a doctor, make sure it's given strictly as directed. Immediately seek their advice if the child or young person is having a reaction to the medication. When buying non-prescription medication, such as painkillers and cough and cold remedies, you must consider the child or young person's medical history and any past side effects to different types of medication.

Tell the Case Manager if the child or young person has allergies or reactions to particular types of medication so they can record this information on the child or young person's file.

When a child or young person can give consent

If a child or young person has sufficient maturity to clearly understand the risks involved in the provision of medical or dental services, they may be able to give 'informed consent' to a procedure, or the provision of clinical sexual health and reproductive services and supplies. Whether a child or young person is capable of informed consent is determined by the treating medical practitioner.

Dental and orthodontic

Children and young people should have regular dental check-ups. The cost should be covered by the Carer Allowance. You can consent to dental check-ups. However, you'll need the Case Manager's prior approval if the child or young person needs dental treatment involving surgery.

Routine dental treatments are provided through the Northern Territory Oral Health Services program free of charge through school based clinics, community clinics and mobile clinics. Children and young people must have a Medicare card.

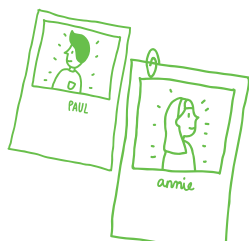
To make an appointment telephone 8922 6466 Territory wide.

Orthodontic treatment requires Case Manager approval due to costs outside of the public system.

Medicare Child Dental Benefits Schedule

Medicare provides dental services to children and young people between 2 and 17 years of age.

For more information about the Medicare teen dental plan, contact Medicare Australia on 132 011 or visit www.humanservices.gov.au



Immunisation

The Case Manager will give you information about the child or young person's immunisation history when they are placed with you.

It is expected that children and young people receive all appropriate immunisations. Immunisations require the consent of the person who has Parental Responsibility for the child. Talk to the Case Manager about any required immunisations, which will need to be in line with the NT Department of Health immunisation schedule. Please keep a health record while the child or young person is in your care.

For more information, refer to NTG Infant and Child Vaccinations: nt.gov.au

Hepatitis, HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases

You can not consent to any medical testing without Territory Families approval, except if the young person gets their own medical treatment and gives informed consent for testing.

If you are told about a child or young person's infectious disease status, you can not disclose this information except to a medical practitioner or dentist for medical advice or treatment.

As a rule, Carers should always use universal control procedures. The basic principle is to treat all bodily substances (including blood, body fluid, urine and faeces) as potentially infectious and to use protective barriers and practices.

Psychotropic medications

Psychotropic medication are prescribed by a doctor to treat a range of conditions including ADHD and mental illness. They affect thinking, perception, mood, level of arousal and behaviour. Their use must be part of a treatment plan approved by the Case Manager. If these conditions are met, you can administer psychotropic medication.

It's illegal to give psychotropic medication to control the behaviour of a child or young person in out-of-home care, unless it is part of the child or young person's approved behaviour management plan. You must let the Case Manager know if the doctor alters the psychotropic medication or dosage so its use can be properly monitored and documented.

A little tip!

Showing respect by talking to them in the way you appreciate being spoken to and taking what they say seriously.



Medical related travel assistance

You may be able to get help with travel costs associated with taking the child or young person to specialist medical appointments.

This includes help with fares, petrol for kilometres travelled and parking costs. You must get prior approval from the Case Manager.

Health Care Card

See Australian Government assistance in this guide: www.humanservices.gov.au

Foster Child Health Care Card

The Foster Child Health Care Card provides access to cheaper Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme medications for foster children and young people. Carers must apply for the card which is issued by the Australian Government Department of Human Services. The concessions only apply to the child or young person in care, not the Carer or spouse.

Information on eligibility and how to apply for a Foster Care Health Card is available from the: Department of Human Services on 13 61 50 or at www.humanservices.gov.au

Medicare card

When a child or young person is placed in statutory out-of-home care, the Case Manager will apply for a new Medicare card number for the child or young person immediately. Whilst waiting for a new Medicare card to be issued, a Carer can still access medical services or prescriptions for the child or young person in care and receive reimbursement of any medical services given. Alternatively, Territory Families may have a copy of the child or young person's family Medicare card.

If the child or young person requires medication on the Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme (PBS), it is a legislative requirement that they provide a Medicare card to the pharmacist to determine the child or young person's eligibility to the PBS. However, where it is not possible for the child or young person's Carer to provide Medicare card details, a pharmacist can use a pharmacy only special Medicare number. With consent of the child or young person's Carer, the pharmacist can also phone the Medicare Australia PBS enquiry line to obtain the child or young person's Medicare card number.

Private health insurance

Contact your private health insurance provider if you want to add a child or young person to your family's policy. Your insurer can tell you what legal papers they need to prove the child or young person is in your care. Some insurers allow you to add a child or young person up to the age of 21 years on your existing family health cover for free. If your insurer charges you to add the child or young person to your existing policy, the cost is to be met from the Carer Allowance.

Bonding and attachment

A **bond** is an emotional connection between two people.

An attachment is the **bond** that forms in child/mother and child/primary Carer relationships.

Bonding is the process of forming this attachment. Healthy attachment to their mother/primary Carer sets the foundation for positive relationships with others in the future. Poor attachment can lead to emotional, behavioural, social and relationship problems.

Harm, exploitation, chaotic environments, fear, lack of bonding experiences and repeated rejections by parents/Carers are some of the factors that interfere with bonding and attachment. Specific problems associated with poor attachment will vary depending on the nature of harm and exploitation, and how long the child was exposed to the harm or exploitation and the child or young person's age. Some children and young people may have obvious emotional and behavioural problems while others may have more subtle problems that are harder to recognise. These include developmental delays, comforting behaviours, emotional problems, odd eating habits, abusive behaviour and aggression.

Ways you can help a child or young person with attachment problems include:

- **nurture them in the way you would any child or young person while carefully monitoring how they respond;**
- **try to understand their behaviour before reacting;**
- **care for them based on their emotional age;**
- **be consistent, predictable and develop regular routines;**
- **model and teach appropriate social behaviour;**
- **take the time to listen and talk to them;**
- **have realistic expectations and accept that progress may be slow; and**
- **celebrate small changes.**

Tips for building self-esteem:

- letting them know that you're glad they are who they are;
- giving them attention, affection and spending time with them;
- showing respect by talking to them in the way you appreciate being spoken to and taking what they say seriously;
- taking an interest in their hobbies, activities, schoolwork and opinions; giving them specific praise for the things they do including their efforts;
- making them feel needed by asking them for help with tasks teaching them to trust their feelings;
- keeping special mementos, taking photos and celebrating achievements;
- showing them that you have faith in them and their judgement; and
- being careful not to send negative messages that say they're a failure, a nuisance or unwanted.

Self-esteem

Children and young people in care have often experienced harm and exploitation, trauma and adversity. A child or young person's experiences before and during care, such as being separated from parents or insecurity arising from placement changes, can affect their self-esteem, confidence and ability to cope.

Self-esteem is about feeling good about yourself. It's about knowing you can do things well, you belong, you matter and you're worthy of being loved and accepted by the people who are important to you. Having high self-esteem enables us to act independently, attempt new tasks, deal with challenges, tolerate frustration, take pride in our achievements and actively participate in our community.

Encouraging involvement in sport and recreational activities

Encouraging children and young people to participate regularly in sport, play, creative hobbies and other activities they enjoy helps them to develop new skills, self-esteem and a sense of purpose and identity. This may include sport, arts, music, dance, drama and playgroups.

You have a great deal of influence over the child or young person's attitudes towards sport and recreational activities. Your lifestyle, enthusiasm and support can have a major impact on getting them involved in activities.

Involvement in these positive activities can:

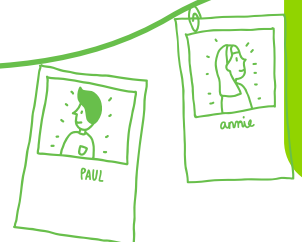
- **help children and young people get through a difficult time;**
- **let them make links in their community, interact with peers and make new friends;**
- **provide opportunities for safe risk-taking, learning and developing teamwork, coordination and discipline skills;**
- **offer a way to express themselves and their feelings creatively in a safe environment;**
- **promote self-worth and a sense of accomplishment;**
- **provide a chance to play and learn together; and**
- **give you an opportunity to make new friends and develop a support network in your local community.**



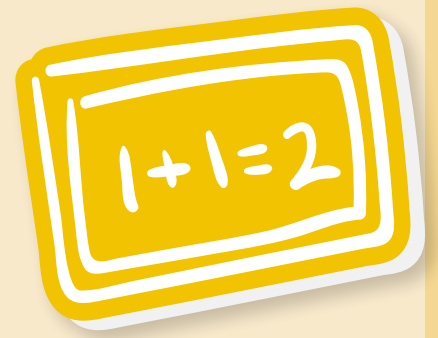
Getting them involved

- play with them, take them to the park or go to a playgroup;
- be active and have your own interests;
- be active as a family;
- find out about local sport and recreation clubs, groups and activities;
- emphasise having fun and reduce competitive situations for children and young people who are developing skills;
- give lots of encouragement and offer to help if the child or young person is having difficulty learning a new skill;
- encourage them to do activities at home with their friends
- restrict screen time (time spent watching TV and playing computer games);
- find out what activities are offered at their school;
- take an interest in what they do each day at school, including favourite subjects, sports and what they do at lunchtime; and
- volunteer to help in the classroom, coach a sports team, or assist with major sporting events such as swimming carnivals and inter-school sports days.

Speak to the Case Manager if you're having difficulty accessing sport and recreational activities, or wish to discuss the child or young person's sport and recreational needs

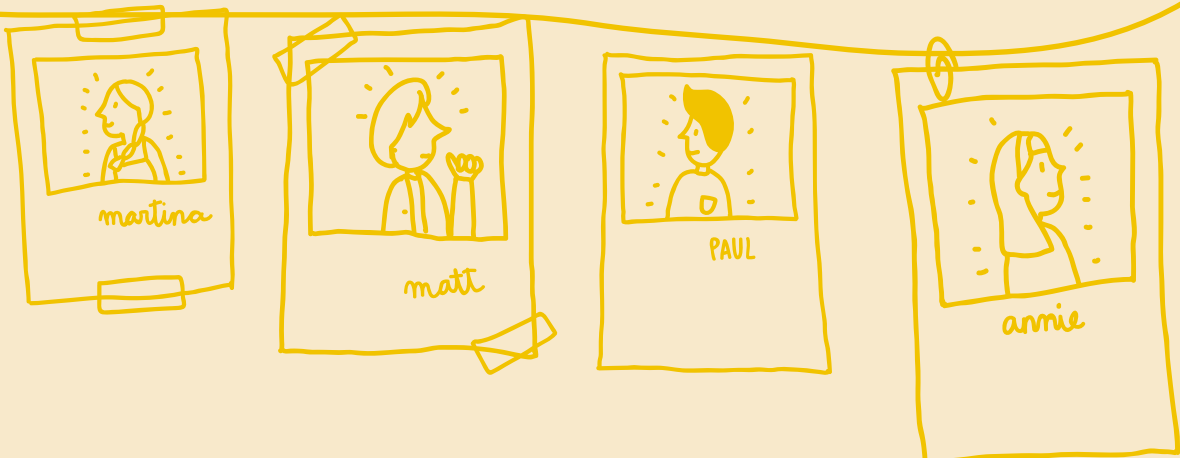




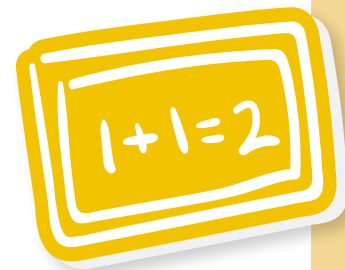


education and schooling

Staying involved in learning up to Year 12 and beyond gives children and young people greater employment opportunities and a broader set of social skills.



education and schooling



Education may not have been a priority for some children or young people in care. This can cause poor self-esteem, gaps in their learning and difficulty settling into school. Children and young people may have experienced additional stress that comes from moving to a new placement, starting school, moving from primary to high school or changing schools.

Staying involved in learning up to Year 12 and beyond gives children and young people greater employment opportunities and a broader set of social skills. It also prepares them for life after school and helps them to make decisions about their future.

Research shows that children and young people in care are at higher risk of poor educational achievement.

Involving children and young people in learning from a young age is vital for the best start in life. Children and young people benefit from education in several ways learning such things as:

- **Problem solving;**
- **Communication;**
- **Social skills.**

Compulsory school age

All school-age children and young people must be enrolled in and attending school or registered with the Board of Studies for home schooling.

The compulsory school age is six–17 years. Children and young people may enter Preschool at the beginning of the school year in NT government schools if they turn five on or before 31 July in that year. Young people must complete Year 10. If this happens before they are 17 years old, they must also be doing one of the following on a full-time basis:

- **school or registered home schooling;**
- **approved education or training (e.g. TAFE, apprenticeship or traineeship);**
- **full-time paid employment (average 25 hours a week); and**
- **combination of work, education and/or training.**

If the young person in your care chooses not to stay in school, training or employment, it can affect their income support, including the youth allowance, from the Commonwealth Government.

Related policies published online:

www.education.nt.gov.au;

www.territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au.

Encouraging learning

Children and young people need to be encouraged to think and talk about their goals and any support needed to achieve them. They also need to establish what they enjoy and are good at.

As well as encouraging them to attend school, you can encourage learning by:

- reading together and going to your local library;
- talking to them about what happened at school in an open way to encourage them to discuss what they've learned and any issues;
- giving them a regular structured time and a place for homework and providing assistance when required;
- providing opportunities for the child or young person to study with their friends;
- balancing homework with recreation, play and sporting activities and acknowledging and giving praise for all achievements;
- taking them on trips that relate to school work, for example, museums and art galleries - many of which are free;
- knowing what's going on at school and meeting friends and teachers;
- talking with the school and making sure the child or young person gets the educational or social support they need;
- attending parent-teacher meetings; and
- discussing with the Case Manager the child or young person's education history, what support they have had in the past, current concerns and types of support the child or young person may need.

School fees & contributions

The Carer Allowance should cover general educational costs. This includes the cost of uniforms, stationery, textbooks, excursions, school camps, levies, photos, activities and so on. Additional costs may also be covered if this is part of an approved Care Plan such as tutoring or purchasing a computer.

NTG have a back to school payment scheme which provides financial assistance to parents and guardians of children or young people enrolled in a Northern Territory (NT) school or registered for home-schooling.

For more information, go to the website: www.nt.gov.au

Schooling

You're responsible for making sure the child or young person in your care attends to school. The school will contact you if the child or young person's attendance becomes an issue. If it continues to be a problem, the school will contact the Case Manager.

Choice of school

When possible, children or young people in care will remain in their usual school after entering care. Most attend public schools. If you feel the child or young person's educational needs can't be met by the public education system in your area, discuss this with the Case Manager.

Enrolling in to a new school

You must have prior approval from Territory Families before changing schools. When the child or young person transfers or enrolls in a new school, the Case Manager will advise the new school and provide them with information about the child or young person's history (where appropriate), care arrangements, current schooling arrangements and support. They'll also explore strategies with you and the child or young person to maintain contacts with friends and significant others.

The child or young person's records will be transferred to the new school. The student's out-of-home care coordinator will make sure the new school understands and implements the child or young person's individual learning plan.

Suspensions

The school will implement an appropriate range of student welfare and discipline strategies before imposing a suspension, unless an immediate suspension is necessary. The school will inform you if a suspension is imposed. If suspension occurs, inform the Case Manager so they can work with you and the school to identify and manage return-to-school strategies.

Expulsions

The school will contact you if they're considering expelling the child or young person, to discuss the issues and available options. Contact the Case Manager as soon as possible if this happens in this situation.

Before school, after school and vacation care

Approval is required from Territory Families before the child or young person in your care can regularly attend before school, after school or vacation care.

Photos

School photos are an important record of the child or young person's school history. The carer allowance should cover the cost of these photos including those for school formals and graduation dinners.



Formals and Graduation

Formals and graduation dinners acknowledge the educational achievement of young people. They also mark the transition from childhood to young adulthood.

Every young person in care should have the opportunity to attend their school formals and graduation dinners if they choose. The Carer Allowance covers cost of tickets, dresses, accessories, suit hire, shoes, hair, make-up and beauty products, transport, photos and graduation gifts.

Leaving school early – see page 46 (compulsory school age)

A young person must leave school with a Year 12 certificate or equivalent qualification. To be eligible for the allowance, they must be in full-time education or training, or a combination of part-time work and study for at least 25 hours a week.

For more information on youth allowance, go to: www.humanservices.gov.au

If the young person in your care is at risk of leaving school, contact the Case Manager.

School refusal

Talk to the teacher and the Case Manager if the child or young person is refusing to go to school or you suspect they're skipping school. You'll get help to look at why this may be happening and identify strategies to encourage school attendance and any additional support that may be required, including a referral to Youth Connections.

Legal advice by age

The NT Legal Age Commission (NTLAC) have provided a resource about the laws that affect young people in the NT: "At what age can I": www.legalaid.nt.gov.au

end of placement



Placements end for many reasons, including returning home, moving from short-term to long-term placement, change in Carer's circumstances, difficulties in the placement and moving to independence.



end of placement



Reunification of the Child or Young Person's Family

Reunification to a child or young person's family is a primary consideration for Territory Families, working with the family and continually assessing whether it is safe for the child or young person to return home. It is in the best interest of the child or young person, that the family plays a positive and active role in the care of the child or young person and the decision making about them. When there is not sufficient safety for reunification to occur, maintaining an appropriate relationship between a child or young person and their family remains imperative for their healthy development.

The best outcomes for children and young people are achieved when Carer families and families work together with Territory Families in the best interest of the child or young person. The level of communication between a Carer and the child or young person's family is dependent on the needs of the child or young person and safety issues as well as the confidence of the Carer. There are many examples of experienced, confident and skilled Carers having close involvement with family to the benefit of the child or young person. New Carers should expect to have contact with the child or young person's family supported through Territory Families staff, or through phone calls or emails, or even in person.

Placements end for many reasons, including returning home, moving from short-term to long-term placement, change in Carer's circumstances, difficulties in the placement and moving to independence. When a child or young person moves from one placement to another living situation, this is referred to as a 'transition'.

Planned move

Most moves are planned. You, the child or young person, their family (when appropriate) and other relevant people should be involved in the planning process. The child or young person's Care Plan will outline when the placement will end and how this transition is going to take place.



Unplanned move

Talk to the Case Manager as soon as possible if you think the placement is at risk of breaking down. The Territory Families Placement Unit and Carers Assessment Support Team will work with you to identify possible ways of supporting the placement that may prevent it from ending. An unplanned placement change may be unavoidable due to a sudden change in circumstances. If this happens, the Case Manager will find an alternative placement for the child or young person and put in place strategies to support their transition.

To help you, the child or young person and their family through a placement change, the Case Manager is responsible for:

- ensuring that everyone is told the reasons for the change in placement;
- providing information to everyone about the new placement, as appropriate;
- clarifying their role and your role in helping the child or young person with the transition;
- involving you, the child or young person and their family in planning and decision-making processes that involve them, wherever possible and appropriate;
- deciding when and how the child or young person will leave the placement;
- making sure everyone knows how to access the complaints system in case they wish to have a decision reviewed;
- preparing the child or young person as well as they can for the move in the available time;
- giving you and the child or young person the opportunity to say goodbye and stay in contact after the placement ends, when possible and appropriate;
- deciding the amount and type of future contact between you and the child or young person if it's agreed contact will be maintained;
- ensuring the child or young person takes all their belongings with them; and
- making every reasonable effort to keep the child or young person in the same school where they've established relationships.

Planning for the move

When a placement comes to an end, you and the child or young person may experience a range of emotions. You may have strong feelings about the placement coming to an end or even disagree with the decision. The child or young person may feel excited and eager about the move or anxious and confused. Raise and discuss any issues and concerns during Care Planning meetings.

It's important for you and the Case Manager to encourage the child or young person to be positive about the move and do what you can to help make it as easy as possible for them.

What needs to go with the child or young person

When the child or young person in your care leaves your home, they must be allowed to take their personal belongings with them, including:

- **personal items they brought with them when they arrived;**
- **items of clothing, bedding, equipment, etc. purchased specifically for them;**
- **anything that has been given to them;**
- **money they've saved or earned; and**
- **their birth certificate, Medicare card, Health Care Card, personal health record (Blue Book), *Life Story Book*, school reports, awards and photos.**

Every child or young person should also have suitable luggage to carry their belongings, such as a suitcase or travel bag.

Saying goodbye

There's no easy way to say goodbye to a child or young person you welcomed into your home, and loved and cared for. Handling emotions associated with a child or young person leaving can be difficult, even if you accept the decision. Saying goodbye properly is an important part of the grieving and healing process. There's no one right way to do it. It's personal, each situation is different and everyone needs to say goodbye in their own way.

Some suggestions for easing the separation when it comes time to say goodbye:

- **reassure the child or young person about the change;**
- **spend some time together, create a scrapbook filled with memories you and your family have shared with the child or young person;**
- **write a letter telling them how much the time you've spent together means to you and the things about them that make them special;**
- **make a video of your home, places they liked to go and messages from your family and their friends;**
- **have a party or special dinner surrounded by family and friends so that everyone can say their goodbyes; and**
- **don't be afraid to cry or to give them a hug.**

Keeping in contact

The Case Manager will talk to you about whether ongoing contact with the child or young person, is appropriate. If it is, they'll ask whether you'd like to maintain contact and seek the views of the child or young person and their family. Agreed contact arrangements will then be included in their Care Plan.

A little tip!

Most moves are planned.

You, the child or young person, their family (when appropriate) and other relevant people should be involved in the planning process.

notes

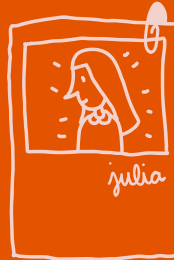
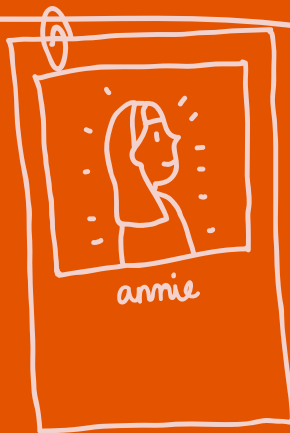
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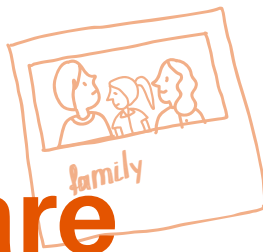
leaving and after care



*Support and guidance is important
for young people as they mature
into adulthood.*



leaving & after care



Support and guidance is important for young people as they mature into adulthood. This is particularly true for those in care as they may have had an unstable family life. These young people also need good independent living skills because they may have less family support than most. This section will help prepare you and the young people for leaving care.

Planning for young people leaving statutory care

Territory Families is responsible for developing a Leaving Care Plan once the young person is ready to move to independent living.

The Case Manager will work with you, the young person, and significant other people in their life to develop the plan at least 12 months before they leave statutory care or turn 15. The plan will include reasonable steps to prepare the young person for their transition to independence.

The plan generally covers:

- **accommodation;**
- **employment and income support access to education and training;**
- **personal history (including cultural background) contact details; and**
- **independent living skills (including financial management, health and lifestyle issues).**

Any costs for young people over 18 years of age may be covered by the Carer Allowance if identified in the Leaving Care Plan. This can be discussed further with your Case Manager.

The Case Manager will talk to the young person about ongoing support needs and how to access information and services. Young people should receive a copy of the Go Your Own Way Kit from The CREATE Foundation, this will help them get organised for leaving care.

The CREATE Foundation's, contact details are listed below.

A little tip!

Care leavers are entitled to access their personal information in Territory Families records about their time in care. This service is provided free of charge.



Care leavers information

Care leavers are entitled to access their personal information in Territory Families records about their time in care. This service is provided free of charge.

Care leavers still living in NT who were in the care of Territory Families can organise to access their information through any Territory Families Office. They will need to out an application form and provide proof of identity, such as a driver's licence, birth certificate, or pension or Health Care Card.

The application form asks for details that are used to conduct a search for Territory Families records containing the care leaver's personal information. The details include their full name, any other names by which they may have been known, their date of birth, and the names of their mother, father and any siblings. When records are located, the care leaver is contacted and a time is arranged for them to go through the information with a Territory Families officer who can provide information and support.

Care leavers are given a copy of their personal information and their original birth certificate, school reports, medical records and personal photos, if these documents are held on a file.

Information for young people leaving care

Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA)

Young people aged 15–25 who are in care or have been in care may be eligible for TILA from the Australian Government, if they need help to pay for some of the things needed to move to independent living.

TILA is a one-off assistance of up to \$1,500 paid direct to an agency to buy the following types of goods and services for the young person:

- **utilities connection moving expenses;**
- **appliances and whitegoods furnishings;**
- **food;**
- **financial or other counselling education; and**
- **transport to get to studies or work, phone credit, etc.**

For more information, refer to the Australian Government website:

www.dss.gov.au



Youth allowance

To be eligible for the youth allowance, the young person will need to do further study or training if they don't have a Year 12 certificate or equivalent qualification. Those in part-time study or training will also need to do extra activities, such as part-time work, volunteer work or youth programs to be eligible. The total number of hours they'll usually need to do is 25 hours a week.

Young people enrolled in an approved Youth Connections program are eligible to receive the youth allowance. See The Youth Connections program in the Education – Compulsory school age section of this guide. Job Services Australia or Centrelink will also work with the

young person to set out their training and activities in a written plan. To continue receiving the allowance, they'll usually have to meet with Job Services Australia or Centrelink each month to talk about the plan and show they're doing all their activities.

For more information, call Centrelink on 132 490, or refer to the website: www.humanservices.gov.au

The CREATE Foundation (NT)

The CREATE Foundation provides services and programs for children and young people in care and those leaving care. CREATE services include:

- **mentoring by young people who have left care;**
 - **events, workshops, training, youth forums and advisory groups;**
 - **club CREATE - members get a welcome pack, quarterly newsletters, invitations to events and birthday card each year; and**
 - **CREATE Your Future website at www.createyourfuture.org.au , which assists young people leaving care. It has information on topics like health, housing, education, employment and other peoples' experiences of leaving care.**
- www.create.org.au

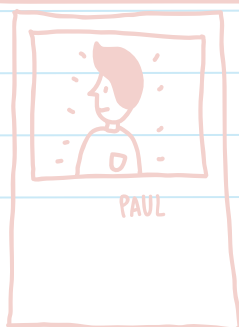
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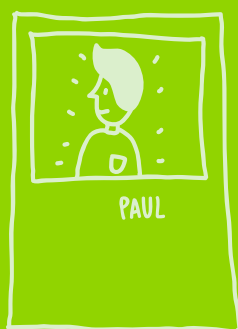
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support services for **carers, children & young people**



*Share what motivates you to care
for other children and the special
role they play in making a difference
in foster children's lives.*



support services for carers, children and young people



Caring for vulnerable children and young people in out-of-home care is both challenging and rewarding. The Northern Territory Government recognise the enormous value of the work Carers do, and we're committed to supporting you in your role and want you to take care of yourself.

Your own children

Looking after someone else's child or young person can affect your own children in different ways. They may feel they're not getting enough attention from you, that the foster child or young person is getting special treatment or that they have to share too much. Yet many children of Carers later become Carers themselves.

Talking to your own children about how they're feeling before, during and after each placement helps to identify areas of potential conflict early. Share what motivates you to care for other children and the special role they play in making a difference in foster children's lives. Listen to what is and isn't working for them, and discuss possible ways of doing things differently.

If you're worried about how your own children are coping, talk to the Case Manager, who can help you identify strategies for managing areas of conflict and any extra support you may need.

Carer training/training to become a carer

The Carer Induction Program will introduce you to your roles and responsibilities as a Territory Families Kinship or Foster Carer under the Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 and the Placement Regulations 2010 and is provided as part of the Carer assessment and approval process.

All Territory Families Carer applicants must attend the 2 day 'face to face' Carer Induction training program

The six training Induction Modules include:

- 1. Introduction to Foster and Kinship Caring;**
- 2. Caring for an Aboriginal Child in your Care;**
- 3. A New Child in your Home;**
- 4. Why children come into care;**
- 5. Understanding the Impacts of Trauma and creating a Healing Home;
and**
- 6. Self-Care and Managing Continuity**



You may also be able to access some of the Territory Families online training, please speak with your Carer Services Practitioner or go to: mylearning.nt.gov.au. Look for 'non- NTG users' on the top left hand side of the page.

There are lots of courses to choose from but for your role it will be useful for you to access the courses on Child Protection training (go to Territory Families) and follow the prompts to enrol.

The Foster and Kinship Carers Association (FKCA) also provides further training for carers. You can access more information and training content by going to the following web link and by joining FKCA, there is no fee for joining.
www.fkca.org.au

Carer Burnout

Burnout is emotional, mental and physical exhaustion caused by prolonged stress that can creep up on you over time. It saps your energy, takes away your motivation and can make you feel hopeless, cynical, and resentful and as though you have nothing more to give.

Signs of burnout vary from person to person. Some of the more common signs are feeling drained and tired most of the time, getting sick a lot, not sleeping well, decreased satisfaction, increased irritability, forgetfulness, self-doubt, social withdrawal, or using food, drugs or alcohol to cope.

Recognising the warning signs of burnout and taking steps to get balance in your life is the best prevention.

To take care of yourself and prevent burnout:

- eat healthy food, get regular exercise and adequate sleep;
- slow down and take time out to do things you enjoy;
- start or end the day with a relaxing ritual such as watching TV, doing yoga stretches, meditating, taking a bath or reading;
- set boundaries and learn to say 'no' when too much is demanded of you; and
- ask for help and support from friends, family, other Carers or the Case Manager when required.



Counselling Services

Territory Families provides Carers with access to free counselling and support through the EASA Counselling Service. Carers and their families can contact EASA directly by ringing the service and requesting an appointment. Carers will need to identify themselves as a Territory Families Carer to access the service. Carers may be asked for evidence of their role as a Carer. The Carer approval letter, approval documentation, a payment invoice or advice of the Carer Allowance is proof of being a Carer.

The service is confidential and Territory Families will not be informed of your attendance. EASA is available to Carers at no cost.

Phone 1800 193 123 or visit: www.easa.org.au

After-hours and crisis support

In an emergency call triple zero (000) or for life threatening situations, call 000. If something serious happens to the child or young person, call the Child Protection Helpline on 1800 700 250.

Contact the Child Protection Helpline if:

- **you're concerned for the child or young person's safety;**
- **you don't know where they are;**
- **the child or young person has run away (even if you know where they are);**
- **the child or young person has been detained by the police; and**
- **the child or young person hasn't returned from a contact visit when expected and if you need approval for medical or dental treatment.**

You must report your concerns if you believe a child or young person is being, or has been, harmed or exploited. This is a legal responsibility under the Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 and is called mandatory reporting. Your report can protect a child or young person and get help for a family. It may even save a child or young person's life.

A little tip!

Recognising the warning signs of burnout and taking steps to get balance in your life is the best prevention.



Respite care

There may be times when you need to take a short break from being a Carer. Respite care provides Carers with time-out from the demands of the parenting and caring role. It can be planned and regular or a one-off break that's for a few hours, days or weeks.

Talk to the Case Manager about financial and other assistance available if you feel you need a break. Requests for respite services are assessed to determine the level of need for it. All approved respite is recorded in the Care Plan.

Who can provide respite?

Respite can be provided by relatives, friends, neighbours, volunteers or authorised respite Carers. Having the same person provide regular respite helps the child or young person to form meaningful relationships:

- **any person who looks after a child or young person in statutory care occasionally, for example babysitting or an overnight stay, does not need to be authorised; and**
- **any extended family member who looks after a child or young person for regular or frequent respite care does have to be authorised.**

Who provides short breaks for carers?

Carers who are approved and trained as foster or kinship Carers are able to provide short breaks for other Carers. Preferably, Territory Families will approve a member of the child or young person's family or community to provide short breaks. Carers who provide short breaks for primary Carers, receive a Carers Allowance in proportion to the time they provide care. Carers may provide care for children or young people on short breaks, either through regular, ongoing planned visits or in emergency situations. Ideally, regular short breaks should be provided by the same person and preferably be someone known to the child or young person to allow a trusting bond to form.

Information about extended family that can be assessed and authorised as respite Carers for foster and kinship "network of care".



Other types of respite

Members of your extended family, or the child or young person's extended family, may be able to help when needed (for example, a grandparent, aunt or older sibling). These will require involvement from Territory Families if you need a more regular time-out plan.

Other options can include:

- **vacation care;**
- **child care;**
- **a sleepover at a school friend's house;**
- **involvement of community members;**
- **recreational camps;**
- **employing help (such as a registered nurse for a child or young person with a disability); and**
- **life skills development courses (such as cooking classes) for older children.**

Advocacy for Carers

There may be occasions when some Carers feel that they are not able to adequately express their view point in meetings or would like a support person. In these instances Carers can request assistance from the Foster Carers Association NT Incorporated: assistance may be in the form of accompanying and or supporting Carers at meetings.



Foster & Kinship carer financial assistance



This guide explains the payments that are available, what you have to pay for, and what we pay for, when caring for a child or young person.



foster & kinship carer financial assistance



The Carer Allowance has been established so that you can provide for the children and young people placed in your care. You are expected to use this money to pay for the child or young person's care. Territory Families will pay for some additional costs. This guide explains the payments that are available, what you have to pay for, and what we pay for, when caring for a child or young person.

If you believe the child or young person in your care needs extra items or services that the Carer Allowance will not cover, you need to discuss this with the Case Manager. If we agree to cover additional expenses you can claim a reimbursement. You will only be able to claim a reimbursement if you have been given pre-approval for expenditure. You must provide a tax compliant receipt with your claim.

Payments you may receive for the care of the child or young person

Establishment payment

At the beginning of a new placement (not respite placements) for the child or young person you will receive a \$200 establishment payment.

This must be used to purchase any items the child or young person may need of a personal nature (e.g. toiletries, pyjamas, shoes and clothing).

If the \$200 payment is insufficient to meet a child or young person's immediate needs this can be discussed with the child or young person's Case Manager.

The Case Manager (after seeking approval from the Manager) may buy additional items, or you will be reimbursed if you have agreed to make the purchases.

Standard Carer Allowance

The allowance is paid directly to you each fortnight. The allowance is for the previous 2 weeks. It is not paid in advance. The amount is calculated according to the child or young person's age, a child or young person's special needs, and where you live.

The standard Carer Allowance covers the everyday expenses of caring for a child or young person.

Reference: Current Payment Rates - Carer Community

Carer Allowance-

Complex for children and young people with complex needs

A Carer Allowance- Complex (level 2-4) is paid if the child or young person is assessed as having greater needs.

The higher rate of reimbursement is intended to cover the costs of extra physical care, cleaning, and any extra care supports needed for the child or young person.

The Case Manager in consultation with people most familiar with the child or young person's needs and with reference to available Professional assessment reports, completes the complexity tool to determine the level of the special needs loading.

The allowance rate is reviewed annually or whenever there is a significant change in the child or young person's circumstances.

Respite Care

Carers who provide respite care receive a respite Carer Allowance that is a slightly higher daily rate than the standard Carer Allowance.

You may provide respite care to other children/ young people or respite care may be planned and arranged for a child or young person in your care.

The Respite Carer Allowance is made to the Respite Carer. You will continue to receive your usual allowance during periods of Respite Care for up to 14 days where the child or young person is returning to your care at the end of the respite period.

Respite care can be arranged; where the respite is a regular occurrence it must be included in the child or young person's Care Plan.

If the respite period is longer than four nights, normal standard Carer Allowance rates apply.

Extra payment if you live in a remote location

If you live in a remote location you will receive an additional amount due to increased living costs. The loading applies to all areas outside of the Darwin Outer Regional area.

You must use the Carer Allowance to pay for the care of the child or young person.

These expenses include:

Everyday expenses The expenses you would normally have when raising a child or young person. Everyday expenses includes things like:

- **nutritious food and accommodation;**
- **utilities-power, water;**
- **clothing and footwear;**
- **school uniforms, school books, school lunches, stationery and excursions;**
- **everyday travel costs;**
- **toys and incidental gifts or treats for the child or young person;**
- **pocket money;**
- **leisure and hobby activities;**
- **outings and entertainment;**
- **haircuts*;**
- **babysitting, occasional child or young person care;**
- **routine medical and dental care;**
- **pharmaceuticals and one-off prescription medications; and**
- **personal care items, e.g. toiletries, sunscreen, personal hygiene products, nappies.**

**please refer to Haircut section's in Decision Making tool.*

Extracurricular activities

You are expected to pay for at least one activity per school term.

This includes entrance fees, courses, club memberships, registration for events.

For example dance or music classes, playing club sport.



Medical Appointments and medications

- **All general medical costs such as routine visits to the doctor, dentist and optometrist;**
- **Over the counter non-prescription medicines, basic first aid creams, paracetamol (e.g. Panadol);**
- **Single issue prescription medications (i.e. not ongoing repeat prescriptions).**

NOTE Children and/or young people in care are issued with a Medicare Card.

Bulk Billing clinics will provide services at no charge through Medicare.

Aboriginal children and young people are able to attend Aboriginal Health Services free of charge or if residing in a remote community, the local health clinic.

You should also apply for a health care card for the child or young person.

Additionally where you don't yet have a copy of this card, Aboriginal children and young people are entitled to subsidised prescriptions under the Closing the Gap co-payment measure.

Dental care

Routine dental treatments are provided through the Northern Territory Oral Health Services program free of charge through school based clinics, community clinics and mobile clinics. Children and young people must have a Medicare card.

To make an appointment telephone 8922 6466 (Territory wide).

Allied health services such as Occupational Therapy and Speech Therapy.

Where it is identified that a child or young person in your care may require these services the child or young person's Case Manager will arrange for the child or young person to receive the service through the Children's Development Team, NT Health. These services are provided free of charge.

Insurance

You are strongly encouraged to consider having insurance. Where you choose to have home building and contents insurance and comprehensive vehicle insurance, you are responsible for the payment.

If you have private health insurance for yourself and your family you may choose to add the child or young person in your care, however we do not require this so you are responsible for any additional cost.

Travel Costs

You are responsible for the cost of every day travel, such as taking a child or young person to and from school, child care, sporting and recreational activities, social activities and medical appointments.

Pocket money	An agreed amount should be discussed with the child or young person and the Case Manager. The Case Manager may refer to the Pocket Money Guidelines as a guide for choosing an age appropriate amount.
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Expenses paid for by Territory Families

There are additional expenses that we will cover, but only if you have received prior approval. When gaining approval for reimbursement, it is important to ensure that the type and amount of the expense is included within the claim. This helps to eliminate any confusion when processing your payment. If you incur additional expenses without prior approval you will not be able to claim a reimbursement.

Specialist medical expenses	When not available through the public health system, or not available in a reasonable timeframe as determined after speaking with the child or young person's Case Manager; we pay the cost of Specialist appointments whether one off or ongoing.
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Chronic illness	Costs associated with a chronic medical condition requiring ongoing care, repeat prescriptions or other medical aids.
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Disability	Where a child or young person has an assessed disability we will work with the Office of Disability to arrange the provision of supports, services and resources for the child or young person. *Over 2017-2018 the Northern Territory will transition in stages to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.
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Complex Dental Care	Non routine dental care - e.g. crowns, orthodontics. We will be guided in accessing these additional services for the child or young person by a Dental Health professional.
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Private medical and allied health services	When non-specialist services are not available through the public system, or not available in a reasonable timeframe*, we will pay for private medical care, therapists and allied health services not met by your private health insurance.
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**this will depend on the child or young person's age, need and individual circumstances and will be determined by the Case Manager in consultation with relevant health service and approved by a Territory Families Manager*

Extracurricular activities	We will pay for more than one extracurricular activities each term when these are preapproved and part of the child or young person's Care Plan.
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Travel expenses

Travel must be preapproved by the Case Manager (who will seek approval from an appropriate delegate) or included in the Care Plan (if it is regular travel that has been agreed as essential). The approved mode of travel will depend on the distance and safety considerations.

For example it may be more cost effective and safer for you to travel by a commercial air service rather than drive very long distances for a family contact visit.

We may pay for travel when you take a child or young person in your care to attend Court, for you and the child or young person to attend Territory Families meetings and travel for Family contact and other significant cultural visits (as reflected in the Care Plan).

If travelling in your own vehicle and claiming a per kilometre reimbursement you must maintain a log book and provide the log book with your claim for reimbursement.

If the agreed Care Plan includes activities that involve you driving the child or young person a cumulative distance in excess of 250 kilometres each week, the kilometres in excess of 250km will be reimbursed.

You cannot claim for travel that you would have undertaken anyway.

For example if you drop a child or young person off at school on your way to work you cannot claim for the travel, and it cannot be included in your cumulative weekly total.

Specialist sport training

We will assist with meeting the costs associated with a child or young person engaged in specialist sports training, coaching and activities at an elite or representative level

Gifts

We will pay the equivalent of one week's level one standard Carer Allowance (in total per year) for the purchase of special occasion gifts for the child or young person.

Special occasions include birthdays, Christmas, or other celebrations of cultural or religious importance to the child or young person.

Purchase of special occasion gifts should be discussed with the Case Manager and included in the Case Plan.

Mobile phone. Other telephone expenses. Computers and or tablets	Where a child or young person requires a mobile phone for safety, or access to a phone for regular telephone calls to family (family contact) we will meet the cost of this. Where a child or young person requires a computer or tablet for use in study or communication we will pay for this.
Extraordinary education and employment costs	<p>We will meet the cost in the following circumstances:</p> <p>School uniforms for a child or young person who moves to a new school and NT back to school vouchers have already been utilised in that year,</p> <p>Assist with school fees where it has been discussed and decided through the child or young person's Care Plan that the child or young person will be attending a non-government school,</p> <p>Tuition fees where it is identified through an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that it would be beneficial for the child or young person,</p> <p>Additional copies of school photographs for the child or young person's parents.</p> <p>The cost associated with a child or young person participating in a student exchange program (where the exchange is overseas CEO/Minister approval will be required), and</p> <p>Costs associated with a young person undertaking a trade for e.g. tools or special uniform.</p>
Official documents and Licenses	<p>We will meet the cost of a child or young person's Passport, Birth Certificate, Driver's Licence.</p> <p>Territory Families will meet the cost of the Carer (and adult household member's) probity checks including Working With Children Check (ochre card) and Criminal History Checks.</p>
Interstate and overseas holidays with the Carer family	<p>All interstate and overseas travel with a child or young person in care requires prior approval. This can be a lengthy process so it is important to plan well in advance.</p> <p>We may provide financial support for a child or young person in care to accompany the Carer family on interstate or overseas vacations. This is considered on a case by case basis.</p>
Funerals	If a child or young person in your care passes away we pay for the funeral expenses. We also pay for children or young people in care to attend funerals of significant family members as is appropriate.
Insurance/ compensation	We will consider out of pocket expenses reimbursing Carers for deliberate damage to your person, house, or vehicle caused by a child or young person placed in your care, on a case by case basis.

Important information about Carer Allowance

Overpayment

If you receive an overpayment the amount will need to be repaid. If you receive an overpayment it is important to inform the child or young person's Case Manager or call the Payments Hotline on 8999 1006. Together we will work out a repayment plan. This may include an agreed deduction from future Carer Allowance payments until the money has been recovered.

Carer Allowance delays

When a child or young person first comes to your care there may be a delay in receiving the first fortnightly Carer Allowance. This will depend on the day the child or young person was placed with you in the pay fortnight and on how quickly the information about the new placement has been registered in our Client Information System. If you are experiencing financial hardship because of a child or young person being placed in your care and you require money prior to receiving the first Carer Allowance payment, please speak with the child or young person's Case Manager, who will be able to make arrangements through their Manager to provide immediate assistance.

Respite Care payments, Establishment payments and pre-approved expense reimbursements usually take some time to be processed. You can speak to the child or young person's Case Manager and ask them to enquire about the payment; you can also contact the Payments Hotline. It is important that you receive written advice on the type and amount agreed for the reimbursements. This may significantly reduce timeframe for the reimbursement and will avoid misunderstandings about commitments.

Territory Families Payments Inquiry Line: (08) 8999 1006 or
Email: TF.finance@nt.gov.au

Keeping a record

You will receive an official Placement Agreement for each child or young person placed, which will include the days they have been with you. To make sure you have received the correct payment it is helpful to keep a record of the days of care you have provided.

For example use a diary to record the children or young people you have had in your care, and the days they have stayed with you, particularly if you are providing different types of care for multiple children and young people. Keeping a diary also allows you to record other important information relating to the child or young person, any appointments, special events, family contact, school and sporting events, and any other relevant information.

You may be eligible for additional financial assistance

Northern Territory Government

Sports Vouchers

Sports vouchers that can be redeemed for sport, cultural and recreation activities. They are available for school enrolled child or young person from preschool to Year 12.

You can receive 2 x \$100 vouchers for each child or young person- 1 in January and 1 in July each year.

Visit this link for information: www.nt.gov.au

Learn to Swim vouchers

For children under five years of age who are not enrolled in preschool or school are eligible for swim vouchers under the *Learn to Swim Voucher Program*. You can receive 2 x \$100 vouchers each year for use at registered swim activity providers.

See links below for more information NT Water Safety Awareness Program: www.royallifesaving.com.au

Learn to Swim vouchers for your child: www.nt.gov.au

Back to School Vouchers

Each school enrolled child or young person from transition to Year 12 is entitled to a \$150 voucher in term 1 each year. The voucher is used to assist in the purchase of text books, stationery, uniforms and to attend school camps.

Visit this link for information

Back to school payment scheme: www.nt.gov.au



Child Care

When you have received approval from Territory Families for a child or young person living in your care to attend registered child care services, and you and/or your co-carer and the child meet the eligibility criteria for Child Care Subsidy (CCS), an application must be made to Centrelink by you (the Kinship or Foster Carer).

Kinship and Foster Carer's play an important and necessary role in the Child Care Subsidy application process for children in care as they meet the definition of being the 'Individual' under the Commonwealth's Family Assistance law. The application for CCS can be completed online or at your local Centrelink Service Centre (search here www.humanservices.gov.au for your local Service Centre).

CCS Eligibility criteria:

- **The child must be 13 or under (some exceptions apply).**
- **The child must be immunised in accordance with the Northern Territory immunisation schedule found here.**
- **The Carer must be an Australian Citizen, permanent resident or be a Special Category Visa (SCV) holder (talk to the Case Manager or Carer Services if you think you are a SCV holder).**

Your application will need to be linked to your [MyGov](#) account. When your application is successful you will receive a notification from Centrelink informing you of the results of your application. Refer to the following online guides here:

[CCS 'How to Claim'](#)

[Centrelink online account help - Claim Child Care Subsidy](#)

Once you are successful in your claim for CCS, the Case Manager will have a conversation with the registered child care provider and send them a letter confirming that the child who is placed in your care meets the criteria for the Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing). This subsidy pays 120% of the CCS and is paid directly to the registered child care provider. All children in care receiving registered child care services should be subsidised under the Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing).

Australian Government

Child Care

Some registered child care providers may charge a rate for child care services that is more than what subsidy pays, this is called a Gap payment. Territory Families can pay the Gap fee when it's pre-approved by a financial delegate.

The child's Case Manager will also provide you with an Australian Government Child Care Subsidy Factsheet and other resources. The Case Manager can also support you with the application process if you need help.

The Australian Government Department of Education and Training has developed a [Guide to ACCS \(child wellbeing\)](#) for your reference.

Payments for families

There are a number of payments that individual Carers may be eligible for such as Parenting or Carer payments. Eligibility will depend on your individual circumstances, for example if you are unemployed, single, working part time.

For further information about eligibility and obligations see, Payments for families:

www.servicesaustralia.gov.au

Australian Government Department of Human Services

Family Tax Benefit

Family Tax Benefit: this is an income tested payment that helps with the cost of raising children. It is made up of two parts; Family Tax Benefit Part A and Part B.

For further information about eligibility and obligations see, Family Tax Benefit:

www.servicesaustralia.gov.au

Australian Government Department of Human Services

Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme

This scheme helps families of primary and secondary students who do not have reasonable daily access to an appropriate state school, because of geographical isolation or the child has a disability or special health related need.

For further information about eligibility and obligations see, Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme:

www.servicesaustralia.gov.au

Australian Government Department of Human Services

Ph: 132 318

Health Care Cards

You can apply for a Foster Child Health Care Card.

The card will be issued in the child's name and the concessions only apply to a child.

For further information about eligibility and obligations see, Foster Child Health Care Card:

www.mychild.gov.au

Australian Government Department of Human Services

Medicare

The Case Manager must enrol the child with Medicare and to obtain a card for the child. You will be given access to the card (a photocopy of the card, the card number or the actual card).

**Aboriginal children attending Aboriginal Medical Services will be seen without a card, as long as you are able to provide their full name and date of birth.*

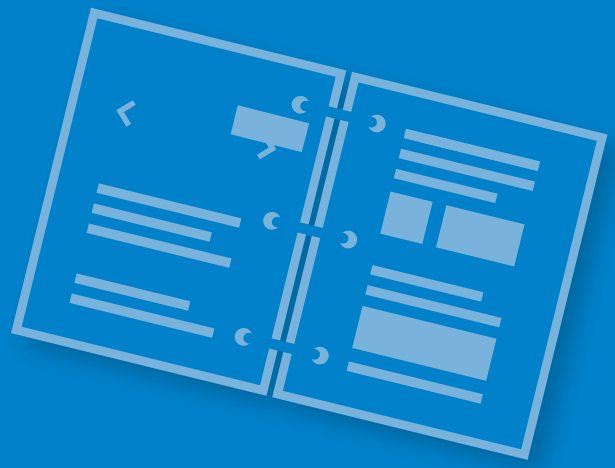
Human Services (Centrelink) have a Grandparent Adviser who can support grandparents who have caring responsibilities for their grandchildren as well as other non-parent Carers, to provide tailored information about payments and support services based on your family circumstances,

call 1800 245 965. OR

Depending on your circumstances, you may be eligible for support from the Department of Human Services which deliver a range of Australian Government benefits and concessions to the general community.

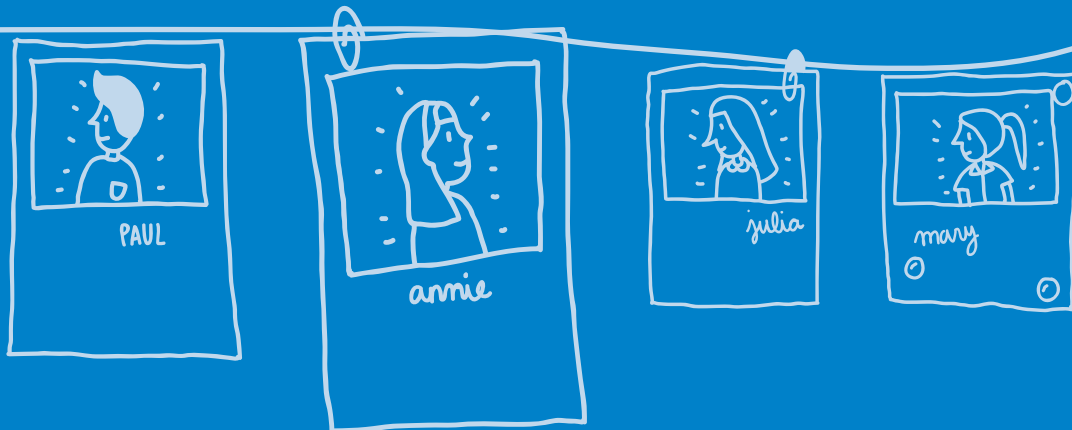
The main ones that may be available to you as a Carer of a child or young person in out-of-home care are listed below:

- ABStudy
- Assistance for isolated children
- Baby bonus
- Carer allowance
- Child Care Benefit
- Child Care Rebate
- School kids Bonus (replacing Education tax refund)
- Family tax benefit
- Foster Child Health Care Card.

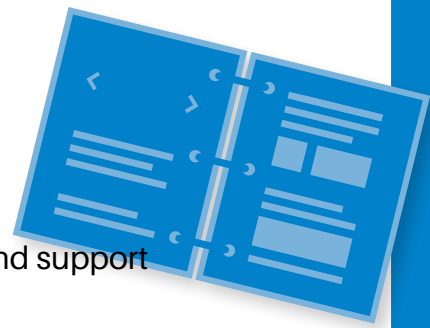


resources

The following services offer counselling, training, information and support to Carers dealing with parenting issues



resources



The following services offer counselling, training, information and support to Carers dealing with parenting issues.

For information about the full range of Australian Government help available.

This includes payment rates and eligibility criteria, check the Human Services website, call the Centrelink Families and Parents or visit a Service Centre.

www.servicesaustralia.gov.au

Ph: 13 615

Foster and Kinship Carers Charter of Rights

More information can be found on the website:

www.territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au

For children and young people in care.

CREATE Foundation

www.create.org.au

Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT Incorporated

This is a Northern Territory advocacy, resource and support organisation for Carers. More information can be found on the website:

www.fkca.org.au

Northern Territory Cultural and Linguistically Diverse related services

Relationships Australia NT - Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Project

More information can be found on the website:

www.nt.relationships.org.au

P: 1300 364 277

Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory (MCNT)

This is a community-based non-profit organisation that advocates and provides direct services for individuals, families and communities from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds in the Top End of the Northern Territory.

More information can be found on the website:

www.mcnt.org.au

P: (08) 8945 9122

Working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) adolescents

The Australian Institute of Family Studies provides a directory of key contacts for practitioners working with CALD adolescents.

More information can be found on the website:

www.aifs.gov.au/cfca

Multicultural Services of Central Australia

It diverse range of services to migrants and refugees. More information can be found on the website:

www.msca.org.au

Ph: (08) 8952 8776

Parentline

NT Parents, Carers and family members have direct access to qualified counsellors and can choose to speak with either a male or female counsellor. They are also able to arrange to call back and speak with the same counsellor to work through their issues.

More information can be found on the website:

www.parentline.com.au

P: 1300 30 1300 8am - 10pm

Raising Children Network

The Raising Children Network is an online resource for parenting children and young people. It provides a range of information on newborns, infants, toddlers, pre-schoolers, school children, pre-teens and teens.

More information can be found on the website:

www.raisingchildren.net.au

Relationships Australia NT



Compliments and Complaints

Territory Families seeks to provide clients and members of the public with a professional and effective service, however there are times when complaints and concerns about our service arise. Territory Families takes all complaints seriously and is committed to managing complaints in an accountable, transparent, timely and meaningful way.

Complaints are a vital source of feedback that allows Territory Families to gain an understanding of our clients and stakeholders views of their experience with the Agency. This feedback allows us to understand what works well and what we need to improve.

- Children's Therapeutic Team (Urban and Remote)

From four NT locations, the therapeutic team support families to raise children in a safe and supportive environment by providing therapeutic interventions to children (0 - 17yrs) who have experienced hurt or trauma.

For more information, talk to the Case Manager and go to their website:

www.nt.relationships.org.au

Office of the NT Children's
Commissioner

P: 1800 259 256

E: occ@nt.gov.au

SNAICC (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care)

This resource is designed to support and empower you in your day-to-day caring role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

More information can be found on the website:

www.supportingcarers.snaicc.org.au

Territory Families Complaints Unit

P: 1800 750 167

E: TF.complaints@nt.gov.au

**Territory Families
Attention: Practice Integrity
PO Box 40596
Casuarina NT 0810**

P: 8955 6006



Stronger Communities for Children: Communities Driving Better Outcomes for Kids and Families in Remote Northern Territory.

This is an Australian Government initiative supporting local Aboriginal people as drivers of change in their communities.

More information can be found on the website:

www2.aifs.gov.au

Territory Families

Territory Families brings together many of the key functions that work together to create stronger communities where children experience safe, healthy and happy childhoods, women and men from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds have equal opportunities, and senior Territorians are appreciated and respected. For more information, go to website:

www.territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au

Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT Incorporated

P: 1300 030928

E: info@fkca.org.au

NTG Parents, Families, and Youth

This an NT Government collection of resources, advice, and tips for raising and caring children and young people.

More information can be found on the website:

www.nt.gov.au/community

The Children's Commissioner Northern Territory

More information can be found on the website:

www.childrenscommissioner.nt.gov.au

Triple P – Positive Parenting Program

Parenting courses for parents and Carers in a range of formats, including information seminars, small groups and self-directed programs. For more information, talk to the Case Manager and go to their website:

www.triplep-parenting.net.au

Territory Families Regional and Local Offices

Contact details for the Team Leader or Manager within the local office:

Northern Regional Office

P: 8922 7167

Southern Regional Office

P: 8955 6006



notes

Lined area for notes.

