

Policy: Travel for Children in Care

Children in the care of the Chief Executive Officer will often need to travel while in care. The travel can be for a range of reasons including attending routine appointments and day to day activities, Carer family day trips, interstate travel and international travel. This policy provides guidance for decision making, approval processes and consent for travel.

It is important to understand that:

- The Chief Executive Officer has an obligation to ensure that travel is safe, appropriate and in the best interests of the child;
- The Chief Executive Officer has an obligation to know where a child is and who they are with. When the Delegated Officer approves travel for a child they must ensure that they have sufficient information to satisfy this obligation;
- Proposed travel for a child in care should be identified and endorsed in the child's Care Plan as required; and
- The reason, details, approvals and consents for travel must be recorded in CCIS and the client hard copy file.

Some examples of travel that may be undertaken by a child in care include:

- Contact visits;
- School trips and excursions;
- After school activities and sports;
- Travel for medical and other appointments;
- Transferring to a new placement; or
- Day trips with their Carer;
- Holiday travel with their Carer.

Considerations prior to travel

- Where the Chief Executive Officer has parental responsibility, the wishes of the family should be considered;
- Where the Chief Executive Officer has daily care and control, the parent's consent is required;
- The wishes and views of the child should be considered;
- The travel plan should be consistent with the child's Care Plan including any goals of reunification or long term stability and contact arrangements; and
- It must be identified whether the travel poses any risks for the child and an assessment made on the basis of this risk whether to approve the travel.

Travel arranged by Territory Families

When Territory Families arranges travel for a child in care, the Case Manager will consult with the Team Leader and decide who should accompany the child, or if the child can travel unaccompanied. If a Territory Families staff member is to accompany the child, the Staff Travel Policy must be followed. Any travel for staff, the child, or their Carer booked through the Northern Territory Government system must be approved through TRIPS. Sufficient time must be allowed to plan, obtain approval and consent, and complete documentation.

Carers providing transport in a motor vehicle

A child in care may need to be transported to an appointment, activities, to and from school, family contact visits etc. When a child is in a foster or kinship placement the Carer is usually responsible for providing this transport. Carers may use their own car to provide transport. The Carer must have a current and valid driver's licence and the vehicle must have current registration, and be in road worthy condition. Children must not be transported by motor cycle or motor scooter.

Use of NT Fleet Vehicles within the Northern Territory

In some circumstances Territory Families may provide an NT Fleet vehicle to the Carer, on either a temporary or ongoing basis, in order to support the child's placement and provide for their transport needs. If the child's placement changes the vehicle must be reallocated to the new Carer, in order to continue the support to the child. The Carer is authorised to drive the vehicle only within the Northern Territory.

Use outside the Northern Territory

Carers provided with an NT Fleet Vehicle (as above) must be advised that they are not permitted to drive the vehicle outside the Northern Territory without the written approval of the CEO of Territory Families. The Carer must request approval by contacting the Case Manager, who is then responsible for obtaining the approval and advising the Carer of the outcome of the request.

Carers should be advised to allow at least 4 weeks to obtain this approval.

Child car restraints

Case Managers must ensure that children in care are safely restrained in an appropriate child restraint when being transported in Territory Families' vehicles.

Carers also must ensure that children are restrained appropriately in their vehicles. If the Carer does not have a suitable restraint available or fitted to the vehicle, the Case Manager should make arrangements for this equipment to be loaned or purchased. For a short term placement it is more appropriate to hire or loan a restraint to the Carer.

Refer to the child safety section of the nt.gov.au website for important information about child vehicle restraints. <https://nt.gov.au/emergency/child-safety/child-restraints>

Carer family holidays and outings

Authorised Carers can take a child in their care on trips by car anywhere within the Northern Territory without seeking prior approval. NOTE: if the travel exceeds 250km and the Carer intends to claim a reimbursement this must be approved prior to the travel commencing.

- If the trip includes a single night stay, approval is not required but the Case Manager must be informed prior to the travel;
- If the trip will involve participation in activities that carry a high risk of injury (e.g. rock climbing, horse riding) permission must be obtained from the Case Manager to participate in the activity;
- The travel must not interfere with the child's normal routines, including contact arrangements, school attendance, planned activities, or any arrangements detailed in the child's care plan. The Carer may seek permission for the child to travel in these circumstances, and be approved by the Case Manager if in the child's best interests.

A Carer is expected to pay for the travel and accommodation costs associated with a child in care participating in family holidays and outings. If a Carer is unable to meet the costs for the child in care Territory Families may consider making a contribution. The Carer must request financial support and provide the Case Manager with the estimated costs before booking any travel (refer to the table below for required consent and documentation).

The Case Manager will provide the Manager with an outline of the costs the Carer has proposed Territory Families cover, and the reasons the Carer is unable to pay these costs. Refer to the Financial Delegations.

All other travel within Australia

Consent must be obtained from the Delegated Officer prior to travel commencement for all other travel within Australia (see Table 1 on page 5).

This means that consent is required for:

- Any travel by air (including air travel within the Northern Territory);
- Any interstate travel whether by road or air;
- Trips that include more than one night stay; or
- If the Carer requests Territory Families to contribute to the cost of travel.

International Travel

Approval and consent is required for all international travel. The process of obtaining approval and obtaining consent may be lengthy, therefore it is important that Carers submit requests for approval as early as possible and that this request is immediately actioned by the Case Manager.

Approval for international travel can only be provided by the Chief Executive Officer, whether or not Territory Families is making a contribution towards the child's travel expenses. Consent must be provided by the person with parental responsibility for the child, which may not be the CEO in some circumstances. It is best practice to inform the parents of the child of the intended travel to seek their support, even when parental responsibility is held by the CEO or another specific person.

When international travel is proposed, the following should be considered by the Case Manager and discussed with the Carer before progressing the request:

Smart Traveller – Travel warnings and other advice

Case Managers should check the Smart Traveller website <http://smartraveller.gov.au> for advice on travel security and specific information regarding the proposed destination. If the Smart Traveller website advice is that travel to the destination is unsafe then the travel should not be approved.

Passport and visa requirements

A valid passport will be required (usually with at least six months validity remaining). If the child or young person already has a valid passport, the expiration date should be checked as soon as travel plans are proposed.

If the child does not have a passport this must be obtained. The Case Manager is responsible for making a Passport application for a child in the care of the CEO. Refer to Obtaining a Passport.

After obtaining a passport, travel to some countries will also require a visa. Up to date information on visa requirements and costs for the destination country or countries should be checked as early as possible and plans made to obtain necessary visa/travel

documents. Note that in some instances a visa will be required for transit stopovers en-route to the final destination.

Immunisations and Health

It is the responsibility of the Case Manager to consider any health risks or immunisation requirements for the proposed destination of travel. The Case Manager must ensure any necessary immunisations are provided to the child.

Travel Insurance

If a child or young person is travelling with a Carer on a holiday, the Carer must be advised that travel insurance that includes comprehensive health cover will be required. Particularly when travelling internationally the child may need to be specifically nominated under the policy. It is important to check the insurance policy product disclosure statement (PDS) to ensure that the policy provides adequate coverage, and that the child in care can be included under the coverage. A copy of the PDS information should be provided by the Carer when they request permission to take the child on an international trip.

Table 1: Travel approval and consent requirements

	<i>Travel within the Northern Territory</i>	<i>Interstate Travel</i>	<i>International Travel</i>
Approval	<p>Approval is not required for day to day travel, or day trips by car with the child's authorised Carer (including a single night stay). If staying overnight the Case Manager <u>must be informed</u>.</p> <p>All other NT travel requires approval of the Executive Director. This includes any travel involving more than a single night stay (e.g. holidays, school camps). The Executive Director must approve <u>any</u> air travel within the NT regardless of duration.</p>	<p><i>Approver: Executive Director</i></p> <p>All interstate travel for a child in care of the CEO must be approved by the Executive Director.</p> <p><i>Approver: Chief Executive Officer</i> If the Carer has been allocated an NT Fleet vehicle to provide transport for the child it must not be used for interstate travel without the written approval of the Chief Executive Officer.</p>	<p><i>Approver: Chief Executive Officer</i></p> <p>All international travel for a child in the care of the CEO must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer, whether or not a financial contribution is requested.</p>
Required Consent*	<p>Consent of persons with parental responsibility is not required for day to day travel, or day trips with the child's authorised Carer (including a single night stay). All other NT travel requires consent of the person/s with parental responsibility. This includes any travel involving more than a single night stay (e.g. holidays, school camps) and any air travel regardless of duration.</p>	<p>Person/s with parental responsibility must consent.</p>	<p>Chief Executive Officer <u>and</u> person/s with parental responsibility (if this is not the Chief Executive Officer).</p>
Required documentation	<p>Determined by Executive Director.</p>	<p>Determined by Executive Director. For use of NT Fleet Vehicle for interstate travel :Memo to Chief Executive Officer endorsed by Executive Director.</p> <p>Carer provided with completed <i>Authorisation for a Carer to travel with a child in care</i></p>	<p>Memo to Chief Executive Officer endorsed by Executive Director. CEO must approve all international travel for children in care. Carer provided with completed <i>Authorisation for a Carer to travel with a child in care</i> Passport valid up to 6 months Visa(s) if required Carer to be provide with, and take, a copy of the Court order.</p>
Territory Families Financial Contribution - Additional approvals are required for any financial contribution towards the child's travel <u>before expenses are incurred</u>.	<p>Any additional documentation as determined by Executive Director to seek approval for financial support. Refer to <i>Financial Delegations 5.4.1</i> TRIPS approval when travel is being booked by Territory Families through the NTG system.</p>	<p>Any additional documentation as determined by Executive Director to seek approval for financial support. Refer to <i>Financial Delegations 5.4.2</i> TRIPS approval when travel is being booked by Territory Families through the NTG system.</p>	<p>Any additional documentation as determined by Executive Director to seek approval for financial support. Refer to <i>Financial Delegations 5.4.3</i> Memo to Chief Executive Officer seeking approval of travel and expenditure, endorsed by the Executive Director. Chief Executive Officer must approve international travel and expenditure. TRIPS approval when travel is booked by Territory Families through the NTG system.</p>

***Note:** If a Carer has parental responsibility, the above consents are not required and the Carer can make travel plans without informing Territory Families, however financial support is not provided by Territory Families under these circumstances.

Legislative Basis

[Care and Protection of Children Act 2007](#)

[Motor Vehicles Act](#)

[Australian Passports Act 2005](#)

[Australian Citizenship Act 2007](#)

Standards

[Standards of Professional Practice](#)

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Current Version V 1.2

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Update:	Information added: CEO approval required to drive NT Fleet vehicles interstate. Updated Table 1.		
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