



CHALLENGE
Community Services

Foster Care

Foster Care Information Booklet



WE'LL BE WITH YOU ALL OF THE WAY

Types of Foster Care

Carers can choose to take on children or young people under different types of care arrangements.

Respite Care

Respite Care involves regular, time-limited care provided to a child or young person on an occasional basis. From time to time, parents and carers need a break from their caring role. Respite care provides a secure home for children and young people in these situations, often only for short periods of time such as during school holidays, once a month or on weekends.

Immediate Placement

Immediate placement is when a child or young person is placed with a foster carer within four hours of the referral. There is no specific length of time a child can remain with the foster carer; however these types of placements can range from six weeks to six months or more.

There is often limited information available regarding the children and young people who require immediate placement.

Short-Term Care or Restoration Care

When placed in short-term care or restoration care, a child or young person is placed with a foster carer for a short period. This can be anywhere from several months to two years. The child or young person may be restored to their family, transitioned into guardianship care, adopted, or transitioned to a long-term foster care arrangement. Carers will be supported to work with the parents or potential guardian to support this process.

Guardianship

Guardianship is where a child or young person is cared for by a person they already know, such as a family member or significant other. A Guardianship court order means the child or young person is no longer considered to be in foster care.

When you become a guardian, you take on the parental rights and responsibilities for the child, until they are 18 years old. Guardianship carers are required to complete an annual report to the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ).

Foster to Adopt

Foster to Adopt is when an individual, couple, or family adopts a child or young person who is in their care. Adoptive parents take on all legal rights and responsibilities for the child or young person. Fostering to adopt provides a child or young person with a stable family while supporting the child or young person to maintain contact with their biological family.

ITC Step-Down Care

This involves caring for a child or young person where they are transitioning from an Intensive Therapeutic Care service into a foster placement. Carers who provide intensive therapeutic step-down care have special authorisation for this level of care and undergo specific training to support them in this caring role.

Permanent Care

Long-term care is where a child or young person remains part of your family with ongoing support from Challenge. The legal rights of the child or young person remain the responsibility of the Minister for Communities and Justice. Long-term care is required when restoration to family, guardianship, or adoption are not an option for the child or young person.



Carer Requirements

As a carer you will need to provide a safe, nurturing, and stable family environment for the children and young people in your care.

What does it take to become a carer?

In order to be a carer, you must be able to:

- Be committed to holding a meaningful role in a child or young person's life.
- Provide a safe and caring environment for a child or young person.
- Support children and young people to maintain regular contact with their family and significant others.
- Meet the day-to-day needs of the children or young people who are placed in your care.
- Demonstrate that you are a creative problem solver with listening skills, flexibility, and a sense of humour.
- Manage your family finances with consideration of expenses associated with supporting a child or young person.
- Participate in assessments, reviews, meetings, networks, and training in your role as a carer.
- Work as part of a larger team.
- **Applicants must be a permanent resident of Australia at the point of application.**



N.B. The information provided in this booklet is current as of the 10/02/2021.
Challenge reserves the right to have this information updated at any time.

fostercare@challengecommunity.org.au | www.challengecommunity.org.au

Suitability Checks

When you apply to become a foster carer, Challenge Foster Care will undertake a suitability assessment. As part of this assessment, it is required that the following checks be conducted for any potential carers and household members over the age of 16. This includes anyone who resides on the property for more than 21 days per year.

Working with Children Check (WWCC)

A cleared Working with Children Check must be held at all times by all carers, potential carers, and household members over the age of 18. If a person moves into the house, onto the property or stays for more than 21 days in a year, Challenge must be notified in advance to ensure a Working with Children Check can be completed prior to the person moving in.

The easiest way to obtain a Working With Children Check (WWCC) is by applying via the [Office of the Children's Guardian](#) website. Follow the prompts to apply - verify your details at Service NSW/Roads and Maritime NSW- wait for email confirmation.

Please note, this can take up to 6 weeks. For foster care, you only need to apply for the voluntary WWCC, there is no cost for this.

National Police Check

As a carer for Challenge, you will be required to complete a National Police Check every five years. You must also notify Challenge if you become aware of any criminal charges against you or a household member. All household members aged over 16 will need to complete a National Police Check. If a person moves into the house, on to the property or stays for more than 21 days in a year, Challenge must be notified in advance to ensure a National Police Check can be completed prior to the person moving in.

Community Services Check

In order to be authorised as a Foster Carer, Challenge will complete a Community Services Check for all potential carers and household members over the age of 16. If a person moves into the house or on to the property, or stays for more than 21 days within the year, Challenge must be notified in advance to ensure a Community Services Check can be completed.



Suitability Checks

Other Agency Check

As part of the suitability assessment to become a carer, Challenge will need to make contact with any other agency where you have previously enquired about becoming a foster carer.

Identification Check

You will need to provide Challenge with personal identification, such as passport, driver's license, medicare cards amongst others. This is required as part of Challenge's Suitability Assessment to become a carer and for the five-yearly National Police Check. All applicants need to provide proof of permanent residency.

Home Inspection

A home inspection will be completed as part of your suitability assessment to become a foster carer. A spare bedroom must be available for a child or young person in care. It is important for children and young people to have their own bedroom to contribute to their sense of belonging, safety and privacy.

As an authorised foster carer for Challenge, a home inspection will be completed as part of your annual carer review or if you move to a new house. A Challenge staff member will also work with you to identify any potential hazards within the home environment as part of your monthly placement support.

Pool Compliance

Where there is a pool or spa on the property, Challenge will require a pool compliance certificate. This must be completed prior to carer authorisation being granted or the placement of a child or young person in the house.

The Swimming Pools Act 1992 requires swimming pools to be surrounded on all sides by a fence and also to have a child-resistant gate, which should be kept closed at all times. The Act defines a swimming pool as any excavation, structure or vessel that is capable of being filled with water to a depth greater than 30 centimetres. This includes spa baths and portable/inflatable pools.

Medical Checks

Challenge will require all potential carers to undergo a physical and mental health assessment to ensure there are no concerns which may impact on your suitability to be a carer for Challenge.

Where a potential carer has undergone fertility treatment prior to their application, Challenge may cease the application process until there is evidence that any sense of grief and loss has been resolved. The resolution of grief and loss is required to meet carer competency within the assessment.

Medical Checks will be conducted every five years, or sooner if required by Challenge. Carers who undergo assessment for guardianship or adoption will need additional health checks, as required for these application processes.



Challenge reserves the right to cease the application process at any point if the applicant is deemed unsuitable by the organisation's standards.

What learning and development support is available to carers?

Challenge have a learning and development strategy to support our carers in providing trauma-informed care. Challenge also provides training and support to assist carers in providing care which meets the specific needs of the child/children placed within your care.

Carer Training

Prior to authorisation, potential carers will complete mandatory training called 'Shared Lives' and further carer training if required. These training modules provide potential carers with an overview of fostering and the out-of-home care system. They also provide an introduction to trauma, its impact on brain development, and related behaviour.

After authorisation, Challenge provides foster carers with regular training. This includes training in relation to providing care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people; attachment and bonding; contact with significant others; and, challenging behaviours.

Challenge provides continued support to allow you to complete two training sessions per year through the provision of flexible training options and casework support. Ongoing learning and development is considered a requirement of being a carer for Challenge.

Carer Assessment

All potential carers will undergo an assessment prior to being authorised as a foster carer for Challenge. The Carer Assessment will look at the elements of care and identify areas of strength and further development. This process will determine the potential carer's suitability and the recommended conditions of authorisation to support Challenge in matching children and young people to your family and circumstances. This assessment will be completed by a qualified and experienced carer assessor.

Carer Reviews

Once you have become an authorised carer for Challenge, we will complete a Review within 60 days of your first placement and annually thereafter. Carer Reviews may also be undertaken where there is a change in carer circumstance or as requested by Challenge. On completion of a carer review, a plan may be created to address any areas of support or development that were identified during the Review.



What financial supports are available?

As a foster carer, you are provided with financial support to assist you in your caring duties. Foster carers receive a **fortnightly allowance** to meet the day-to-day expenses associated with caring for a child or young person.

To help with the costs of being a foster carer, financial support is available dependent on the number of children in your care, the level of their needs, and the type of care you provide. A foster care allowance is paid to carers to cover most of the additional costs of caring for a child or young person. Carers are encouraged to obtain home and contents insurance. Any damage caused by a child or young person in the care of Challenge should be covered by the carer's insurance or carer allowance.

What am I expected to pay for as a carer?

Expenses to be covered by a foster carer include:

- Clothing
- Education costs
- Footwear
- Uniforms
- Basic medical needs, including medication
- Text books
- School excursions
- Toiletries
- General medical needs and dental needs
- Recreational activities
- Pre-school fees
- School camps
- Food
- Sporting activities

Any additional funding requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must be approved within the child or young person's case plan.

Other financial assistance available

You may be eligible for financial assistance through the Australia Government. For the range of supports available, visit the Department of Human Services website: www.humanservices.gov.au.



Frequently Asked Questions

What policies or agreements will I be required to sign?

There are a number of documents you will need to sign in order to become an authorised carer. These are:

- The Code of Conduct for Authorised Foster, Relative and Kinship Carers
- The Charter of Rights for Children in Out-of-Home Care
- The Carer's Placement Agreement, which covers:
 - The role, responsibility, expectations, and rights of the Carer
 - Decision-making authority.

What if I change my mind?

You have the right to withdraw your carer application at any time. Once you become a foster carer you need to advise Challenge in writing if you no longer wish to be authorised to provide care.

How does the placement process work?

When a child or young person is in need of care and protection through foster care, Challenge receives a referral for the placement of a child or young person where there is availability of carers and these carers are suited to the requirements of the child entering care.

Once the referral is received, Challenge will complete a comprehensive placement assessment. You will be provided information in relation to the immediate needs of the child or young person. You will also have the opportunity to discuss any issues that may arise for you and your household before you accept the placement. In some circumstances, children and young people will require immediate placement and little information will be available at time of placement in these instances.

Once a child or young person is placed with you, the Challenge Caseworker will provide ongoing support to you and the child or young person in your care.



Frequently Asked Questions

What is the 'Carers Register'?

The Carers Register is a secure, restricted access system designed to improve the authorisation process by supporting better information sharing between designated agencies.

The Carers Register records identification information about carer applicants and authorised carers, and their household members including their names, previous names, gender, date of birth, and whether they identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Recorded household information includes the residential address, a list of all persons living in the home and the outcome of a home inspection. Associations between carers and household members are recorded, including movements into (and out of) carer households.

A carer's application and authorisation history, including application refusals and any cancellation or suspension of authorisation is recorded on the Carers Register.

Information about the Carers Register is available from the OCG's website at www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au. If you have a question, please email carers-register@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au.

How do I lodge an internal complaint or feedback?

Those who register a complaint are protected from any repercussions, reprisals, or victimisation as a result of making a complaint. Wherever possible, complaints should be resolved directly with the staff or manager of the service concerned.

Complaints may be logged with Challenge in the following ways:

- On the Challenge website via **'Your Feedback'** in the Contact Us menu
- In person
- By telephone on 1300 058 113
- By letter at PO Box 487 Tamworth, NSW 2340

Challenge is responsible for dealing with complaints from the public concerning Challenge's affairs. Challenge Quality & Customer department is responsible for dealing with complaints and feedback.



Frequently Asked Questions

What happens if there is a change in my circumstance after I become a carer?

If your circumstances change, tell your Case Worker as soon as possible. In some circumstances, a carer review will be undertaken. Challenge may be able to provide you with support, where required.

Are there limits on the number of children I can care for?

The number of children Challenge will place with a carer is assessed on a case-by-case basis. For example, a child with special needs will require a much higher level of care. If you would like to increase the number of children in your care, you will need to discuss this with your Case Worker. In circumstances where Challenge supports a potential increase to your authorisation, a re-assessment will occur to determine your capacity to meet the needs of any additional child whilst not compromising the quality of care being received by the children or young people already in placement with you.

What supports can you offer carers for a child from an Aboriginal background?

Aboriginal children have a cultural support plan developed by their Case Worker, in consultation with family, kin, and community members. Resources and training are made available to carers to promote positive and meaningful connections to Aboriginal culture for the child or young person. However, the priority is that Aboriginal children will be supported by an Aboriginal organisation and placed with Aboriginal carers.

What supports can you offer carers for a child from a CALD background?

When a child or young person requires a cultural support plan, their Case Worker will consult with their family, as well as other key stakeholders, to develop a plan that supports the child or young person's cultural needs.

What if I want to move to a new house while I have a child or young person in my care?

Prior to a child or young person moving into a new home, Challenge will need to complete a home inspection, and obtain a pool compliance certificate if there is a pool or spa on the premise.



Frequently Asked Questions

Can friends or family members provide care for the child or young person?

Time with friends and family members is supported on a case-by-case basis as part of the child or young person’s case plan. Challenge will require certain checks and assessments to be undertaken as part of the approval process. Where care arrangements will be on a regular basis, family members or friends may need to be authorised as regular respite carers for the child or young person.

Can Challenge cease my application?

At any time during the authorisation process Challenge Community Services reserves the right to withdraw an application if the applicant is deemed unsuitable by the organisation’s standards. Applicants will be notified of the reasons that have resulted in the application being ceased and will have the opportunity to discuss these with a Challenge staff member.

Notes



Want to know more?

If you have any further questions, or want more information, don't hesitate to contact us.

Contact Challenge Community Services on **1800 084 954** or at **[challengecommunity.org.au](https://www.challengecommunity.org.au)**

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