

Providing foster and kinship care

Therapeutic and medical needs for a child in care



Most children and young people who are in out-of-home care have experienced some sort of harm or trauma in their lives that will impact on each of them differently.

The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services is responsible for ensuring that each child or young person receives the help they need, when they need it, from appropriate services.

As a foster or kinship carer, you will work with the child or young person in your care, their family, the child safety officer and other people in the child or young person's life to identify their needs, and how best to meet these needs.

Identifying the child's or young person's needs that must be addressed to improve their emotional, physical and psychological well-being is part of the case planning process. An essential part of the child's case plan is their Child Health Passport which includes important information about their health, including assessments, regular visits to the doctor and treatment from other health professionals when there are specific health needs.

Therapeutic needs

Entering out-of-home care can be a frightening and traumatic event for children and young people as they are taken away from their family. It is important to ensure they receive support to help them deal with the emotions they experience. This can be done in a variety of ways and should involve your input and support.

As a carer you will quite possibly form the closest relationship with the child or young person. Therefore it is important you have access to as much support as possible, to help both you and the child or young person in your care. Your child safety officer and non-government foster and kinship care service support worker can help you make contact with other support agencies.

Sometimes a child or young person may display difficult behaviour or emotions that you may feel unable to manage. It is important to remember there is support available for both you and the child or young person in this situation. This can include family members, the department and non-government foster and kinship care services.



What support is available for the child or young person?

Some of the services that can help support a child or young person include:

- sexual assault counselling
- drug and alcohol counselling
- grief and loss counselling
- speech therapy
- play therapy
- occupational therapy
- school support
- specialist medical support
- youth services
- family or individual counselling or therapy.

The child safety officer will oversee any necessary referrals for a child or young person and help you access the services as required in the child's case plan (refer to Carer fact sheet 10: *Case planning and Placement Agreements*).

Medical needs

It is recognised that children and young people in out-of-home care generally have poorer health outcomes than other children and young people. They have been identified as having increased mental and developmental health issues, and are less likely to have access to continuous medical care.

It is important as a foster or kinship carer that you are aware of the health and developmental needs of the child or young person in your care. It is also important to work with the child safety officer to make sure that the child or young person has a Child Health Passport and ongoing access to medical and dental care. This

includes assessments, regular visits to the doctor and treatment from other health professionals when there are specific health needs.

The child health passport process commences with the collection of a child's essential health information, when a child is placed in out-of-home care under the *Child Protection Act 1999*.

The child health passport is also a folder, containing a **copy** of relevant documents applicable to the child's health. It will be provided to you as the child's or young person's carer to enable you to adequately respond to their health needs. It **must** move with the child or young person if they change placements.



For more information

To find out more information about therapeutic and medical needs for a child in care:

- call the department's general enquiries on **1800 811 810** or **3224 8045**
- visit **www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety**
- visit your local child safety service centre
- call Foster Care Queensland on **3256 6166**.