

Providing foster and kinship care:

Maintaining confidentiality



The principle of confidentiality

Everyone who works with children, young people and their families, needs to respect their privacy and maintain confidentiality. As a foster or kinship carer, you need to be aware of your responsibilities under the *Child Protection Act 1999* for handling information you may receive in your role as a carer.

You must not use or disclose information, or give access to information about another person (including a child, young person or their family), unless it is necessary to perform your role as a carer, or it is for the child's protection and wellbeing.

There are some circumstances where it is permissible to use or disclose information. For example, if it is required or permitted by law, or if the information is about the person you are disclosing it to. Always talk to your Child Safety Officer or foster and kinship care service first, if you are unsure about what information can or can't be disclosed.

You must not publish information without the written approval of the Director-General of the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, that could identify a child as:

- a child who has been the subject of an investigation under the *Child Protection Act 1999*
- a child who is in the custody or guardianship of the chief executive
- a child for whom an order is in force

- a child living in Queensland who has been harmed, allegedly harmed or is allegedly at risk of harm by a parent, step-parent or another family member.

This includes publishing information on social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Myspace, other discussion forums), or by way of television, newspaper, radio or other form of communication.

Failure to maintain confidentiality is an offence under the *Child Protection Act 1999* with penalties including a fine or imprisonment up to two years.

Tips for maintaining confidentiality

- You can always discuss details about the child and their family with relevant Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services' staff, your Child Safety Officer, or foster and kinship care service worker.
- You may share certain information about a child or another person, with others (for example a school teacher, child care staff member, Foster Care Queensland representative, Foster Care Advocacy Support Team delegate or a member of your immediate family) if it is necessary for the child's protection and wellbeing, or to perform your duty as a carer.

- Only disclose as much information as necessary, to help that person understand and meet the child's needs.
- Before sharing information, ask yourself “does this person need to know the information I am about to share?”
- If in doubt, ask your Child Safety Officer or foster and kinship care service worker about what information can be disclosed.
- If you intend to provide information or photographs to the media about a child in care or another person, or allow the media access to a child in care, you must first check with your Child Safety Officer that nothing is disclosed that indicates that the child is in care.
- Maintaining confidentiality does not prevent you from advocating for the child in your care. However, it is important that you disclose the least amount of information necessary.
- Ensure that personal information is stored securely. For example, hard copy records are locked away in a filing cabinet and electronic records on your computer are password-protected.

For more information

To find out more information about maintaining confidentiality:

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