

Foster Carer Training Guidelines

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1. Introduction

The purpose of the Foster Carer Training Guidelines is to support a consistent approach to training, including mandatory training, for foster carers. It outlines the requirements for foster and kinship care agencies in delivering foster carer training to ensure potential and current foster carers receive a consistent standard of training.

Foster carer training is important to equip potential and current foster carers with the necessary skills and knowledge required to undertake their critical caring role. The training will enable carers to understand their role and responsibilities as a carer, including allowing them to make an informed choice to become carers. It will also assist carers to meet the legislative statement of standards and policy and procedural requirements when caring for children and young people placed in their care.

It should be noted that people considering becoming, or currently providing care as approved kinship carers can also access the training available to foster carers. However, foster and kinship care agencies will work with kinship carers to identify their specific learning, development and support needs and adapt the training accordingly in recognition of the unique challenges faced by kinship carers. In addition to carer training the [Family Caring for Family information guide](#) is also available to support kinship carers.

2. Foster Carer Training

The Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (Child Safety) is committed to providing foster carer training that aligns to the critical phases of a carer's development that will guide and support carers to continue to learn and develop over time in their caring role.

These development phases include:

- **Getting ready to start** – to support induction and assessment. A mandatory requirement to be completed prior to a foster carer's initial approval
- **Starting out** – to be undertaken during a carer's first year as an approved foster carer. A mandatory requirement to be completed prior to a carers first renewal. These modules include the Hope and Healing trauma informed training and Water Safety Training.
- **Continuous learning** – learning and development opportunities for all carers to access at any stage to support their individual needs.

Wherever possible, resources for foster carer training will be designed to enable flexible and timely delivery, including the use of technology to connect with carers online as well as training in small groups, self-paced learning and one-to-one delivery.

Training content and resources under each phase are published on the Child Safety website at: <https://www.cyjma.qld.gov.au/foster-kinship-care/training/foster-carer-training>

3. Information for prospective carers

Prospective carers must be given adequate information about foster care, and have the opportunity to ask questions, prior to making a decision to undertake foster carer training. Information sessions

for members of the community who enquire about becoming a foster carer are optional. However, these sessions may be a time efficient and effective way to provide information about the roles and responsibilities of a foster carer to assist in decision-making about whether to proceed to training.

A preliminary indication of the commitment of an applicant should be made prior to inviting them to undertake a mandatory training component. While this may occur during a phone interview with the potential applicant it is recommended that a home visit take place. During the visit the potential applicant will have the opportunity to seek further information and participate in a discussion about the key requirements, roles, and responsibilities of foster carers, including mandatory assessment requirements such as household safety studies, referee, medical and personal history checks in addition to Blue Card requirements. It is also recommended that a preliminary assessment be undertaken to determine if the applicant will require additional support to complete the training including providing oral responses to assessments. It is important that this be handled sensitively to allow an applicant to make realistic choices in a positive way. Research indicates that careful attention to this part of the process will assist greater retention in training and longevity as a foster carer.

4. Foster Carer Training

4.1 *Getting ready to start* – induction and assessment

Getting ready to start training focuses on supporting the induction and assessment of perspective foster carers prior to their initial approval. It is recommended that all participants undertaking *Getting ready to start* modules do so in face-to-face group sessions. Face-to-face group sessions provide perspective foster carers with the ability to interact with their carer peers to challenge, be culturally responsive, develop relationships and apply learnings through interactive discussions. This communication and interaction provide excellent context for trainers to identify and respond to any challenging scenarios, understandings, or ideas that new carers may support or struggle within their caring role.

After the completion of the *Getting ready to start* training modules each participant's level of competency in the learning outcomes must be assessed, based on a review of their responses to the assessment and participation in the group session activities, if relevant. Assessment must be completed individually by participants, even where people who reside together intend to make an application to hold a joint approval as foster carers. Where possible, trainers can assist participants to complete written responses to the assessments, recognising that different learning styles and preferences need to be considered. For example, participants may choose to provide oral responses to the assessments. This can be done via electronic communication or in an interview with a staff member from the foster and kinship care agency, who then records the response. Responses must reflect an understanding of the key concepts of each module. Occasionally, exceptional circumstances may exist for a perspective foster carer and any alternative arrangements for delivery and assessment should be flexible and appropriate to the carers needs.

Where applicable, the training team may meet as a panel to complete the assessment. An overall outcome of competent/not competent must be recorded for each participant on the Foster Carer Training - *Getting ready to start* Record of Attendance and Competency Outcome (form), which is retained on the participant's file.

When competency is achieved in each of the *Getting ready to start* training modules participants will receive the Statement of Achievement in Foster Carer Training - *Getting ready to start* Certificate signed by the individual who completed the assessment of competencies. Foster carer applicants must achieve competency in the learning outcomes of the Foster Carer Training - *Getting ready to start* as a prerequisite for initial approval as a foster carer.

Templates of forms, assessment answer sheets and the Statement of Achievement in Foster Carer Training - *Getting ready to start* Certificate are available on request from local child safety placement services unit. The foster and kinship care agencies will provide a copy of the signed Statement of achievement to the local child safety placement services unit for their information and record.

4.2 Starting out – 1st year in

Foster Carer Training - *Starting out* modules are to be undertaken during a carer's first year of care. They are a mandatory requirement to be completed prior to a carer's first renewal. These modules, which include the Hope and Healing trauma informed care training, are provided to support a carer undertake their role effectively.

Following initial approval as a foster carer, the foster and kinship care agency will ensure that each foster carer has an individualised development and support plan, recorded as part of their Foster Carer Agreement. For kinship carers, the foster and kinship care agencies will work with Child Safety to ensure any learning, development and support needs are recorded in the Placement Agreement.

In conjunction with planned support, it is the responsibility of the foster and kinship care agency that the foster carer successfully completes the *Starting out* training modules within 12 months of initial approval as a foster carer.

Where possible, foster carers should be assisted to complete any written responses to the assessment. However, oral responses can be provided and recorded in an interview.

Once each module is completed participants will receive the Statement of Achievement in Foster Carer Training - *Starting out* certificate. To demonstrate completion of the mandatory training the foster and kinship care agencies will provide a copy of the signed Statement of achievement in Foster Carer Training - *Starting out* certificate to the local child safety placement services unit for their information and record.

Templates of forms, assessment answer sheets and the Statement of Achievement in Foster Carer Training – *Starting out* are available on request from local child safety placement services unit.

Each foster carer may also complete a Learning Journal to demonstrate practical application of knowledge and skills gained from the modules and through their experience of providing care to a child or young person placed with them. Learning Journals are discretionary and may be used by carers who prefer a reflective style of learning. Learning Journals may be completed jointly by the foster carer and their support worker from foster and kinship care agency, where applicable.

Completion of Foster Carer Training - *Starting out* is a prerequisite for the renewal of approval of the carers certificate at the end of the 12 month period.

In exceptional circumstances, such as where a foster carer lives in a remote location or in circumstances of ill health, the CSSC Manager with responsibility for the renewal of approval may approve an extension of up to six months for the completion of all the *Starting out* modules; that is 18 months from their initial approval date. Any extension and the circumstances of the extension are to be recorded on the Foster Carer Agreement. An extension to complete the *Starting out* modules does not preclude a carer from applying for and gaining a renewal of approval. However, failure to complete the modules in the period of the extension may result in suspension or cancellation of the certificate of approval.

Kinship carers and long-term guardians may also access the *Starting out* training modules to support their care of a child or young person.

4.3 Continuous Learning – continuous learning for carers

Foster Carer Training – *Continuous learning* should be flexible and based on the carer's specific learning, development and support needs. *Continuous learning* can be accessed at any time after a carer is approved. *Continuous learning* can include a variety of training methods including face-to-face training, online modules, podcasts, or webinars.

Foster and kinship care agencies have a responsibility to support both kinship and foster carers to identify and access the *Continuous learning* opportunities. This includes updating the foster carer's development and support plan and working together with Child Safety as part of the regular review of the Foster Carer Agreement and Placement Agreement.

The completion of *Continuous learning* training is not a condition of any further renewal of approval and there are no set minimum hours to complete. Following a foster carers' first renewal, the foster and kinship care agency will ensure that each foster carer has an individualised development and support plan, recorded as part of their Foster Carer Agreement. For kinship carers, the foster and kinship care agencies will work with Child Safety to ensure any learning, development and support needs are recorded in the Placement Agreement. Progress and activity of continuous learning opportunities, including those training needs identified and yet to be provided, will be noted in a carer's subsequent renewal assessments.

Foster and kinship care agencies may continue to support the completion of a Learning Journal to demonstrate practical application of knowledge and skills gained from the continuous learning opportunities or assist in identifying with individual carers the continuous learning opportunities sought that will be the most beneficial to their caring role. Learning Journals are discretionary and may be used by carers who prefer a reflective style of learning.

Continuous learning training opportunities may be provided by the foster and kinship care agencies, Child Safety, or any other external government and non-government organisations delivering relevant training. Wherever possible, *Continuous learning* training and resources will be accessible to foster carers remotely and provide for self-paced adult learning opportunities.

While suggested content relevant to the continuous training needs of approved carer can be found at <https://www.cyjma.qld.gov.au/foster-kinship-care/training/foster-carer-training>, agencies are encouraged to develop resources as required and source opportunities relevant to the carers they are supporting. All resources developed need to align with departmental policies and procedures to ensure accuracy and consistency in the messages provided to carers.

4.4 Exceptional Circumstances preventing the completion of training

In exceptional circumstances, such as where a foster carer lives in a remote location or in circumstances of ill health, the CSSC Manager with responsibility for the renewal of approval may approve an extension of up to six months for the completion mandatory training requirements.

Any extension and the circumstances of the extension are to be recorded on the Foster Carer Agreement and a condition on a carer's approval. An extension to complete mandatory training modules does not preclude a carer from applying for and gaining a renewal of approval, subject to conditions being attached.

Occasionally, exceptional circumstances may exist for a foster carer where one partner is absent from the household for significant periods of time due to a genuine work commitment. This applies to people who reside together where one partner is employed in the defence forces or mining industry and stationed overseas for a minimum period of six months, or where one partner's work location is based interstate or overseas. In this situation, the CSSC Manager has the discretion to approve both carer applicants with the condition the carer's partner complete training when their circumstances change. Where this is not a viable option, the manager may, as a last resort, waive the requirement that the partner completes the training. Training requirements may only be waived where flexible delivery, including one-to-one delivery, is not possible.

In exceptional circumstances, where the requirement for a foster carer to complete the mandatory training has been waived, the carer's foster carer agreement will be updated to reflect how the carer's development, learning and support needs will be met.

5. Delivery Requirements for Foster Carer Training

Face-to-face group delivery of training is the preferred method for providing *Getting ready to start* training as it allows for the interactive delivery of the content, establishes relationships between foster carers and models the partnerships that are required between Child Safety staff, foster and kinship carer agency staff and foster carers. A mix of both face-to-face group delivery and online learning for *Starting out* training is encouraged.

Best practice for delivering foster carer training includes jointly facilitated training between foster and kinship care agencies, child safety and foster carers to ensure prospective and approved foster carers are provided with a comprehensive overview of the foster carer role.

5.1 The training team

For the delivery of the *Getting ready to start* or *Starting out* modules, the training team should include the roles listed below.

- A Key trainer, who is a foster and kinship care agency staff member, or a trainer contracted by a foster and kinship care agency¹.
- Where available, co-facilitators to jointly facilitate with the key trainer, co-facilitators may include but are not limited to:
 - an experienced child safety practitioner (may include a child safety officer, team leader or senior practitioner)
 - an experienced foster carer
 - a foster and kinship care staff member from another agency.
- Where a foster carer is not able to be a co-facilitator, it is highly recommended that a foster carer should attend, as guest speakers to share their experience
- other guest speakers may include but are not limited to:
 - young people in care or who have exited care
 - parents of children in care
 - Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander elders or community members
 - Staff members from peak organisations such as CREATE, Peakcare Inc, the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak, and Queensland Foster and Kinship Care.

It is acknowledged that there are circumstances that may prevent foster carers participating as either facilitators or guest speakers such as rural and remote locations or the availability of carers. In these circumstances, the use of pre-recorded content featuring carers discussing their experiences may also be used to support the training delivery.

To ensure that foster carers are available to co-facilitate training or participate as guest speakers it is recommended that foster and kinship care agencies actively work to identify and support foster carers to deliver training on a planned basis. For example, where carers express an interest in participating in delivering training, this should be recorded as part of the carer's development and support plan in the Foster Carer Agreement outlining the supports required by carers to develop skills in this area and how they will be met.

5.2 Determining suitability of experience and qualifications

The foster and kinship care service is responsible for ensuring that the key trainer is both suitable and had the necessary qualifications and/or experience to adequately deliver foster carer training. In deciding whether the trainer has suitable qualifications, licensed foster and kinship care services may consider the following:

- individual's prior training and assessment experience
- qualifications in facilitating training
- relevant experience and/or qualifications in child protection

Where training is delivered jointly with another foster and kinship care agency, the responsibility will be a joint decision and agreement from all agencies involved will be recorded.

¹ Please refer to the [Service Agreement - Standard Terms](#), section 22. *Subcontracting*, for more information on the contractual obligations when subcontracting training.

The key trainer is responsible for determining the suitability of the foster carer to co-facilitate and may consider the following when determining the foster carer's suitability:

- the number of years the foster carer has been caring
- the number of children the carer has cared for as well as the children's complexity of need
- relevant experience and/or qualifications in child protection
- experience and/or qualifications in delivering training
- supports provided to the carer to develop their skills in training as part of their development and support plan.

5.3 Record keeping

The foster and kinship care services will keep a record of staff suitable to key trainers and key training activities they each undertake.

The key trainer must ensure that all relevant documents associated with the administration of Foster Carer Training are completed. This includes the:

- record of attendance
- assessments
- copies of certificates, which are to be maintained on the participant's file and provided to your local child safety placement services unit for their information and record.

It is also the responsibility of the key trainer to maintain information in relation to the *Getting ready to start* and *Starting out* training modules delivered, locations and number of participants for regional planning and monitoring and reporting purposes.

5.4 Costs

All costs associated with the delivery of training to prospective and approved carers is included in Placement Services funding contracts with foster and kinship care agencies and will be met by the agencies responsible for delivering the training.

Where training is delivered jointly with another foster and kinship care agency, the costs associated with delivering the training will be negotiated by the agencies.

5.5 Reimbursement to foster carers and other guest speakers

Foster carers and other community members of the training team assisting as co-facilitators or guest speakers should be acknowledged and reimbursed for their time. The reimbursement should be determined and met by the foster and kinship care agency responsible for delivering the training and may consider the following:

- the individual's experience and/or qualifications in delivering training
- the individual's experience and knowledge of their role
- the amount of time spent by the individual in both the preparation and facilitation of training
- the financial outlay incurred such as babysitting, travel, stationary and other relevant costs
- whether there are local community protocols or guidelines outlining recommended reimbursement fees

5.6 Reimbursement to participants attending training

Participants undertaking *Getting ready to start* training will not be reimbursed for any costs incurred. Participants who are approved foster or kinship carers who attend the *Starting out* and/or approved *Continuous learning* training modules may claim costs for childcare and travel from Child Safety as per Child Safety's [Child related costs \(645-1\) policy](#) and [Child related costs – carer support procedure \(645.5-2\)](#). Where required foster and kinship care agencies will support the carer to make claims for eligible reimbursement.

6. Roles and responsibilities

Foster and kinship care agencies are responsible for coordinating, planning and delivering mandatory carer training (*Getting ready to start* and *Starting out*) for carers and prospective carers attached to their agency. Planning needs to ensure available training opportunities for potential carers are made available in a timely way and reduce delays in suitable foster carer applicants being approved. Planning needs to also ensure approved carers can complete all starting out modules within their first 12 months of approval.

Foster and kinship care agencies are responsible for sourcing, developing and providing continuous learning training opportunities for carer they support.

Where possible, foster and kinship care agencies are also responsible for promoting and sharing their training calendars and or resources within their regions to ensure training is locally co-ordinated and carers have timely access to training across the region. Foster and kinship care agencies are also encouraged to share their training calendars with Queensland Foster and Kinship Care where possible.

At a state level, foster and kinship carer agencies, Child Safety and Queensland Foster and Kinship Care will work together to identify and promote state-wide learning and development opportunities for carers as part of the *Continuous learning*.

Child Safety is responsible for publishing and updating training content and supporting resources for mandatory training under

- *Getting ready to start* – induction and assessment
- *Starting out* – 1st year of care

Child Safety will also share *Continuous learning* training resources and opportunities for agencies when available.

Child Safety will update foster and kinship care agencies on changes to training resources through the *Family Based Care Strategic Implementation Group* and publish resources at <https://www.cyjma.qld.gov.au/foster-kinship-care/training/foster-carer-training>.

7. Recognition of prior learning

Recognition of prior learning will be given to foster care applicants who have previously completed relevant mandatory foster carer training in Queensland.

Recognition of prior learning can be provided for all or part of *Getting ready to start and Starting out* training by a:

- foster carer assessor, where a returning Queensland carer applicant's response and level of knowledge can evidence competency as part of the assessment, **or**
- key trainer, where an applicant can submit relevant documentation to the key trainer, including completed work sheets for the key trainer to assess competency. Information on statutory requirements in Queensland can be flexibly provided on a one-to-one basis.

If there is an interruption to an individual's progression through *Getting ready to start* training, there can be recognition of prior learning, provided the individual is assessed as having achieved competency in the modules previously completed.

Recognition of prior learning should consider whether there has been significant legislative, policy or practice changes which impact the role of the carer, which cannot be flexibly provided on a one-one basis

Where returning Queensland carers have not completed the Hope and Healing trauma informed training, they will need to complete the training as part of their mandatory requirements for approval as a foster carer. The training would be a requirement during a carer's first year of approval upon return.

Recognition of prior learning for a previous interstate foster carer can be provided for part of *Getting ready to start and Starting out* training by a:

- key trainer, where an applicant can submit relevant documentation to the key trainer, including completed work sheets for the key trainer to assess competency. Information on statutory requirements in Queensland can be flexibly provided on a one-to-one basis.

8. Evaluation of Foster Carer Training

Where evaluation forms are provided the completed forms should be held in the trainer's workplace for use in any trainer or training material review. Feedback and or amendments proposed as a result of participant feedback can be sent to:

familybasedcarerandsupportmaibox@cyjma.qld.gov

The content and structure of Foster Carer training will be periodically reviewed and updated based on changes to legislation, policy and practice as well as feedback received. Updates are subject to Child Safety approval processes.

To ensure program integrity and enable an accurate evaluation of the Foster Carer training for *Getting ready to start and Starting out* modules the content should not be amended or changed.

9. Links

9.1 Related legislation or standards

Child Protection Act 1999

Libraries and Archives Act 1988

Related Government guidelines

9.2 Related Child Safety procedure

Child Safety Practice Manual

Child Related Costs Policy No: 645-1

9.3 Certificates

Statement of Achievement Foster Carer Training - *Getting ready to start*

Statement of Achievement Foster Carer Training – *Starting out*

9.4 Forms

Foster Carer Training - *Getting ready to start* Training Record of Attendance and Competency Outcome