

Once you have lodged an application to become a carer there is a process to determine your suitability to care for our most vulnerable children and young people. This factsheet discusses the steps involved in this process. The steps are:

- 1) Screening Checks
- 2) Assessment
- 3) Approval / registration
- 4) Annual Re-registration
- 5) Training

## Screening Checks

First you will be asked to complete several **Screening Checks**. These checks are:

**Medical check:** Your General Practitioner completes a written report and provides information on your physical and emotional capacity to care for children.

**Criminal history check:** Police search their databases to determine if you have a recorded criminal history against your name. If you have a history of minor offences, you may still be considered to become a carer. The recency and severity of the offences will be taken into account during the assessment.

**Child Protection check:** Family and Children's Service (FACS) will conduct a check of their own records to ascertain if you are 'person believed responsible' for having maltreated children. This information is collected during Child Protection investigations. A Child Protection History is not equivalent to having a Criminal History, unless the matter was investigated by the Police and you were subsequently convicted by a court of law.

**Referee Reports:** You will be asked to provide the names of two un-related people who can write a reference about you, to tell us what they think about your suitability to become a carer.

## Assessment

The **assessment** process is about getting to know you to determine if you are the right person to care for children and young people. Assessments are a detailed process where applicants will need to provide information about themselves, their background, personal relationships and attitudes to caring, among other things.



The assessment is a time to discuss your motivation to become a carer and consider the impact of caring upon you and your family and reflect upon your ability to cope with the pressures associated with caring. There is no such thing as the 'perfect carer', and we will work with you to identify the personal qualities you have to offer children and young people.

As part of the assessment, workers will conduct a **Physical Safety Check** to make sure that your home is a physically safe environment to care for children and young people.

## Approval/Registration

Information collected during the assessment process will be used to determine whether you are a person considered suitable to care for children and young people. The information will be written into a report and a recommendation made as to whether you should be approved or not approved.

Unsuccessful applicants receive a letter explaining the reasons why they were not approved.

Approved carers receive a letter stating that they are approved and detail the type of care you are registered to provide. Approved carers will be registered for up to 12 months.

## Re-Registrations

Each year your registration will be re-assessed to determine your ongoing suitability to remain a carer. **Carer re-registrations** are an opportunity to reflect upon your experiences as a carer and discuss any significant changes that have occurred over the last twelve months and consider their impact upon your capacity to continue caring.

## Training

Carers are required to attend some mandatory training sessions. Training is an opportunity to provide you with additional information about caring and enhance your capacity to provide the optimum standard of care for children and young people in your home.

Some of the things you will learn at training include:

- information about the reasons why children and young people enter care
- the roles and responsibilities of FACS and carers
- special considerations when caring for Aboriginal children and young people
- issues that children and young people in care experience.



Other training opportunities will arise throughout the year and carers are strongly encouraged to attend.

## **Support**

Carers receive support from lots of different sources. When you become a carer you become part of a caring team. Carers, birth parents, extended family, caseworkers and other involved professionals work together to provide the highest level of care and support possible to children and young people. All of these people will provide different levels of support for carers too.

FACS will provide you with a worker you can approach at any time for information or support. In Darwin and Alice Springs, this will be a worker from the Placement Support Team. These are staff specifically dedicated to supporting carers. In smaller regions you will receive support from a staff member from the local FACS office. In most instances this will be the child's caseworker.

Support is always available from Foster Care NT. A pamphlet about Foster Care NT is either enclosed with the enquiry package, available on our website to download, or can be posted to you. Other carers are a valuable source of support as they have first hand experience being a carer, and often share the same experiences, feelings and emotions that you might when you are caring for a child.

A child placed in your care will become an immediate part of your family and daily routine. As such, your family and friends will also be a major source of support for you.