Grant Guidelines

Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study

Expression of Interest to Undertake Analysis on Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care
Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study - Expression of Interest to Undertake Analysis on Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care

A new grant opportunity is available for researchers with interest and expertise in children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC). The grant is offered and administered by the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS).

FACS is committed to listening and learning from the perspectives, experiences and wisdom of children and young people in care.

More than just a kid in care — a podcast we produced with young people with care experiences — helped the agency to hear the unvarnished truth about what it means to grow up in the care system. The young people speak passionately about fighting the stereotypes that hold them back and the power of family and cultural connection.

They also shared the feeling of helplessness that comes from strangers making decisions about their lives without their say.

Sadly, children growing up in OOHC are at greater risk than their peers of experiencing negative life outcomes. The degree to which this is due to abuse and neglect prior to OOHC, removal from their family, or by their experiences in OOHC is not well understood.

In order to fill the information gap and to better inform child protection policy, FACS initiated the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study (POCLS): the outcomes of children and young people in out-of-home care in 2010.

The POCLS is the first large-scale prospective longitudinal study of children and young people in OOHC in Australia and tracks the experiences and permanency outcomes of 4,126 children who entered care for the first time in 2010/11. The POCLS links child protection, health, education and criminal justice data for children in care with first-hand accounts from children, caregivers, caseworkers and teachers. It examines their experiences in OOHC and developmental pathways in the domains of safety, physical health, socio-emotional wellbeing and cognitive/language development.

The POCLS Expression of Interest (EOI) to undertake analysis on children and young people in OOHC is a one-time request for grant applications and has been established to address a specified suite of priority policy issues using the POCLS data asset.

The EOI aims to:
  o improve the outcomes for children in OOHC and their families by contributing to informed policy and practice and a strengthened OOHC service system
  o encourage the use of the POCLS survey and linked services data in policy relevant research
  o invest in building career researchers in OOHC.

The POCLS EOI will fund up to 10 research projects that make use of the POCLS data asset. Funding will include up to $30,000 per project to support researcher salaries and wages. The POCLS data access costs will be met by FACS.

This is an exciting opportunity and we look forward to receiving your submissions.

With my best regards,

Michael Coutts-Trotter  
Secretary
Grant Guidelines

Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study

Expression of Interest to Undertake Analysis on Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care

The Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study (POCLS) - EOI to undertake analysis on children and young people in OOHC is a one-time solicitation for grant applications, established by the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) to address a specified suite of policy issues. The POCLS EOI aims to:

- Improve the outcomes for children in OOHC and their families by expanding the evidence to inform policy and practice and strengthen the OOHC service system
- Encourage the use of the POCLS survey and linked services data in policy relevant research
- Raise the profile of the POCLS study among researchers and the community – through policy relevant research, research outputs and research-guided policy and practice change
- Begin to develop a critical mass of researchers with expertise in using the POCLS data
- Invest in building career researchers in OOHC

The POCLS EOI will fund up to 10 research projects that make use of the POCLS data asset. Funding will include up to $30,000 per project, to support researcher salaries and wages. POCLS data access costs will be met by FACS.

About the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study (POCLS)

The Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study (POCLS) is the first large-scale prospective longitudinal study of children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) in Australia and is funded and managed by the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS).

POCLS provides a strong evidence base to inform policy, practice and professional development, to improve decision making and support for children and young people who cannot live safely at home. POCLS survey and linked services data forms a significant data resource for studies whose aims are consistent with the aims of the POCLS data asset.


All children and young people who entered OOHC for the first time in NSW between May 2010 and October 2011 were invited to participate in the study. Participant ages ranged from 9 months to 17 years at Wave 1 data collection. The POCLS population cohort which is all children and young people
who entered OOHC for the first time in NSW numbers 4,126 participants. The cohort includes two subsets:

- Children on Interim Care and Protection Orders (n=1,298): a subset of children who entered care for the first time ever between May 2010 and October 2011 but did not receive final care and protection orders by April 2013 (many would have been assessed as being able to return to their parents' care with appropriate services and supports; others may have received final orders after April 2013).
- Children on Final Care and Protection Orders (n=2,828): a subset of children who entered care for the first time ever between May 2010 and October 2011 and who went on to receive final care and protection orders from the Children’s Court by April 2013, allocating to the Minister full aspects of parental responsibility (PR), shared aspects of PR, or no aspects of PR (e.g., full aspects of PR to a relative and thus in supported care). Children in this subset of the study cohort are eligible to participate in a face-to-face interview for the POCLS regardless of their pathways in OOHC. The parent/carer for 1,789 of these children gave verbal consent for FACS to pass their contact details to a data collection agency (I-view) for a face-to-face interview. I-view subsequently sought written consent from the parent/carer at the time of the face-to-face interview. At Wave 1, 2, 3 and 4, a total of 1,285, 1,200, 1,033 and 961 interviews, respectively, were conducted.

The POCLS data asset consists of multiple data sources. The POCLS interview questions make use of standardised tools and measures where available. Data items collected from participants (children, carers, parents, caseworkers and teachers) include:

- Birth Parent Characteristics: Demographics, number of children, physical health, risk factors (including domestic violence, substance misuse, mental health, intellectual disability, whether the parent grew-up in OOHC)
- Child Characteristics: Demographics, temperament, exposure to risk of significant harm (type/duration/severity), age at entry to OOHC
- Caregiver Characteristics: Demographics, family composition, health & wellbeing, carer experience and training, relationship with child, facilitated family contact, parenting style, activities with child, informal support network, satisfaction with being a carer
- OOHC Services & Support: Assessment of child’s needs, provision of services, casework support, case planning, family contact, carer training & support, caseworkers relationship with child and family, advocacy, restoration, adoption
- OOHC Placement Characteristics: Type, duration, stability, placed with siblings, culturally matched, physical environment, location, neighbourhood
- Child Experience in OOHC: Safety, permanency, identity, felt security, peer relationships, childcare/school/work, self-efficacy, participation in decision making
- Child Outcomes: Safety, physical health, socio-emotional wellbeing, cognitive ability

The POCLS survey data is also linked to administrative data held by NSW FACS (risk of significant harm reports, legal orders, care period (entries and exits), and placements); NSW Ministry of Health (hospitalisations, emergency department attendances, perinatal data, ambulatory mental health services, and deaths); NSW Department of Education (National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)); NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research (Reoffending Database); and the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC). Record linkage to these administrative datasets was
completed by the NSW Centre for Health Record Linkage (CHeReL). These data provide service use measures, indicators of abuse and neglect and broad outcome indicators for children and young people in the POCLS cohort.

De-identified scans of the NSW My Personal Health Record (Health Blue Book) are part of the POCLS data asset (if provided by the carer at the time of the Wave 1 face-to-face interview).

Ethical approval for the POCLS was provided by University of New South Wales Research Ethics Committee (HC10335 & HC16542) and NSW Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council Ethics Committee (No. 766/10). Ethical approval for NSW linked services data was provided by NSW Population and Health Services Research Ethic Committee (NSW PHSREC) (HREC/14/CIPH/74; Cancer Institute NSW: 2014/12/570). Approval was also obtained from State Education Research Applications Process (SERAP) (No. 2012260). Consultation with the Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec) was conducted as the peak body for Aboriginal OOHC and CREATE as the peak body for children and young people in OOHC.

The POCLS provides unique, high-quality information about the wellbeing trajectories of children in OOHC. Wave 1 provides a baseline indication of children’s socio-emotional wellbeing, cognitive/learning ability, safety and physical health at entry to care. The addition of each wave provides information on children’s pathways and the factors impacting on outcomes. The POCLS data asset allows for the cohort of children on final care and protection orders to be compared with the children on interim care and protection orders; and the general population (standardised measures). Findings from the POCLS has the potential to inform changes in policy and practice regarding working with children in OOHC, improve investment decisions and improve the long-term outcomes of children thus reducing the long-term cost of social services.

Further details on POCLS, including the study Data Dictionaries, Questionnaires and other user documentation is available at www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care.

Research Priorities for EOI

The priority topics for POCLS research in 2019 have arisen out of extensive consultation with stakeholders and are in line with the FACS strategic priorities.

The POCLS EOI will fund up to 10 research projects that make use of the POCLS data asset to answer the following policy areas:

1. **What can the POCLS tell us about the OOHC service system and factors that influence children’s outcomes?**
   This includes children and carers experiences of placement stability, different placement types, NGO and FACS case management, family contact, casework, access to services, child activities and hobbies, early childhood education, school education, preparation for leaving care.

2. **What can the POCLS tell us about permanency options and children’s outcomes?**
   This includes family preservation (no final orders cohort), family restoration, guardianship, open adoption, long-term OOHC placements.
3. **What can the POCLS tell us about the experiences of children and young people who have entered OOHC and their developmental outcomes over time?**
   This includes the factors that influence developmental outcomes (socio-emotional wellbeing, physical health, cognitive learning ability) including the long-term influence of maltreatment backgrounds (including inter-generational trauma) prior to entering OOHC.

4. **What can the POCLS tell us about carer characteristics and what can we do to better support carers?**
   This includes describing carers’ socio-demographic characteristics, characteristics of carers’ households, carers’ satisfaction with their caring role, training and support networks.

5. **What can the POCLS tell us about the experiences and developmental outcomes for cohorts of interest?**
   This includes Aboriginal children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, young people who are offending, children with disabilities, children entering OOHC for the first time at different ages (infants, middle childhood, and as teenagers)

Whilst the *EOI* is not seeking to be prescriptive, research questions that address one or more of the priority areas and link policy and practice will be favoured.

Please note, there is no data on aftercare at this stage.


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**Funding information**

**Closing date for applications**
Applications should be received by close of business on **Friday 28 June 2019**.

**Who should apply?**
All suitably qualified researchers with experience in child protection/ OOHC research and quantitative data analysis are encouraged to apply. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) students whose supervisor(s) meet these criteria are also encouraged to apply.

**Commencement**
The funding Commencement Date for successful applicants is 15 July 2019.

**Duration**
The duration of funding will be for one year. All analysis, preparation of reports and publications and Evidence-to-Action Notes must be completed within 12 months.

**Funding**
The total POCLS *EOI* value is **$30,000 per project**, including any on-costs. This will be provided in two instalments, payable at project start and on receipt of a final report at the conclusion of the project.
FACS will consider applications that involve collaborations between research centres and projects where additional funding is sought from other bodies to support the project.

All successful applicants will be required to sign the FACS Service Agreement (including related insurance documents) and other data use and confidentiality agreements; have a Working With Children Check; and have researchers accessing the data and publishing approved by the POCLS Human Research Ethics Committees. All publications must be submitted to FACS for a technical review and approval by relevant data custodians prior to publication. Non-agreement to enter into any of these agreements/approvals will preclude eligibility for the grant.

The Service Agreement will be prepared by FACSIAR and its content is not open to negotiation. Successful applicants will be required to seek FACSIAR approval for any amendments /changes to the project. Successful applicants must also make the results of their research available through the usual scientific channels.

**Expected project outputs**

At the completion of the funded project the successful applicant will be expected to provide a report that documents the study’s Aims, Method, Findings and Conclusion. The report must be in the form of a final draft paper(s), ready to be submitted to an academic journal for consideration for publication. All funded projects require policy and practice implications to be summarised in an Evidence-to-Action brief (3-5 pages in length) that will be published on the study webpage. FACSIAR can assist with guidance on preparing the Evidence-to-Action brief.

**How to apply**

Complete the Application Template attached and return via email to:

Ms Harriet Wallis Jara  
The Sax Institute  
Level 13 Building 10, 235 Jones Street Ultimo NSW 2007  
PO Box K617 Haymarket NSW 1240  
Harriet.WallisJara@saxinstitute.org.au

**Limits on Proposals**

There is no limit on the number of POCLS EOI grants that can be held by a single researcher or research group. However, consistent with the POCLS EOI objectives, and dependent on the number of high quality applications received, successful applicants may be limited to one POCLS EOI per researcher or research group.

**Selection Process**

The POCLS EOI Steering Committee will assess and rank all applications using the selection criteria presented below.

Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified by 15 July 2019. Due to the expected large number of applicants, detailed feedback to unsuccessful applicants will not be possible.
Selection Criteria

Proposed Quality and Innovation: 40%

1. Does the research directly address one or more of the FACS priority policy areas?
2. Is the conceptual/theoretical framework innovative and original?
3. Will the aims, concepts, methods and results advance knowledge?

Feasibility: 20%

4. Does the project’s design and leadership provide confidence in the timely and successful completion of the research?

Benefit: 20%

5. Does the research address multiple domains/ priorities/ policy areas?
6. Will the proposed research be cost-effective and value for money?

Candidate: 20%

7. Evidence of past performance
8. Time and capacity to undertake the proposed research.

Project start-up

Research funded by FACS will be conducted in accordance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007). The POCLS HREC(s) approvals are required for all projects accessing POCLS data. FACS will guide the successful applicant through the ethical review process. Work on the project will be expected to start as soon as the Service Agreement is executed, HREC approvals are provided and data access arranged.

Grant information session for interested applicants

Further information about the grant and Q&A will provided via a webinar on Tuesday 4 June 2019, from 1:00 to 2:00. To join in please register by emailing Ms Harriet Wallis Jara at Harriet.WallisJara@saxinstitute.org.au.

Queries and further information

Further information is available by contacting
Ms Harriet Wallis Jara
The Sax Institute
Level 13 Building 10, 235 Jones Street Ultimo NSW 2007
PO Box K617 Haymarket NSW 1240
Harriet.WallisJara@saxinstitute.org.au