



January 2018

Statutory out-of-home care - Designated Agency Digital Records Transfer to FACS

Purpose

This information sheet outlines the obligations and requirements to transfer digital client records for children, young people and their carers from your agency to FACS (on behalf of the Secretary).

The detailed arrangements for the transfer of digital client records will need to be discussed directly with your agency.

Refer also to *Statutory out-of-home care - Designated Agency Paper Records Transfer to FACS Information Sheet No: 2* in relation to paper records. There is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Government Records Repository to facilitate arrangements for the transfer of paper records.

Legislative basis for good records management

Creation and maintenance of complete and accurate records relating to services for children and young people is essential to support the ongoing care, interests, rights and entitlements of the child or young person in statutory out-of-home care, as well as the legal and accountability requirements of the designated agency.

Sections 160 and 170 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* provides the legislative basis for the maintenance and retention of records.

Section 160 states:

Each designated agency must ensure that written, photographic and other records relating to the development, history and identity of a child and young person for whom the Minister has parental responsibility and for whom it has supervisory responsibility are maintained and are accessible to the child or young person.

The NSW Child Safe Standards for Permanent Care 2015 outline a number of requirements in relation to recordkeeping. The standards can be accessed in full from the NSW Children's Guardian website

(<https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/statutory-out-of-home-care-and-adoption/nsw-standards-for-permanent-care>).



Delivery of records to FACS under section 170

Designated agencies must keep records made by them in relation to the placement of a child or young person in statutory out-of-home care for a period of seven years after ceasing to be responsible for the placement¹. After the seven years, the agency must deliver these records to FACS for ongoing management.

This obligation applies to any agency that ceases to be a designated agency provider of statutory for out-of-home care. At the cessation of statutory out-of-home care service provision, the agency must deliver relevant records to FACS for ongoing management.

Business systems

Designated agencies will have varied means of storing records related to the services being provided to children, young people and their carers. Some of this information may be being stored in business systems.

FACS is unable to accommodate the transfer of whole business system databases. Information in these systems will need to be converted to acceptable digital formats prior to transfer to FACS.

For any enquiries about technical aspects of the business systems in use, please contact FACS.

Transfer process

Designated agencies should contact FACS to advise of the impending transfer of digital records to FACS, identifying the clients, items, formats, size and expected timeframe of the transfer. As well, a manifest to support the transfer process will need to be built. Please contact FACS to discuss how this can be done.

Agencies need to be careful to identify which client digital records are:

- closed because they no longer receive a service
- open because they require ongoing case management

Metadata

- Metadata is to be created to describe the content of the records being transferred. This is so information can be tracked, traced and checked, and also to help define context and relationships. Microsoft Excel is the preferred format for metadata transfer for those with Microsoft Office. For other formats please discuss with FACS.

¹ Obligation under s.170 of the *Children and Young Person (Care and Protection) Act 1998*



- Minimum metadata would include the child or young person's name, gender, date of birth, address and the designated agency's ID number (if available). Please refer to "Statutory Out-of-home care Designated Agency Digital Systems Recordkeeping Information Sheet" for other suggested record metadata, especially record creation date.
- Titling of digital records is important to ensure that information can be meaningfully understood. Please contact FACS to discuss file naming protocols.

Hybrid client files (paper and digital)

- Where records to be transferred are for the same child or young person are a combination of both hard-copy paper *and* digital files, there must be a clear linkage/cross reference between the paper and digital files.

Bulk transfer of multiple client records

- Where a transfer involves the records of multiple children or young people, extreme care must be taken to ensure that the information for each client is clearly identified and separated.

Transfer mechanism

- Records will need to be transferred securely. Please contact FACS to discuss the available options.

Transfer frequency

- To minimise administrative burden for designated agencies, FACS recommends that digital file transfers occur once per year for all that have reached the 7 year transfer point during the previous 12 months.



Preferred digital formats

FACS has adopted current best practice in managing digital formats² to inform the process of transferring digital records back to FACS. Information stored in the most recent version of these formats benefits any subsequent migration.

- Document and text formats:
 - Plain text (.txt)
 - Portable Document Format (.pdf)
 - Microsoft Word (.doc, .docx)
 - Open Document Format (.odt)
- Scanned paper documents:
 - Portable Document Format (.pdf)
- Spreadsheet formats:
 - Comma separated values (.csv);
 - Microsoft Excel (.xls, .xlsx)
 - Open Document Format (.ods)
- Presentation formats:
 - Microsoft PowerPoint (.ppt, .pptx)
 - Open Document Format (.odp)
- Image Formats:
 - JPEG (.jpg, jpeg);
 - Tagged image file format (.tif, .tiff)
- Audio Formats:
 - MPEG 1/2 Audio Layer 3 (.mp3);
 - MPEG-4 (.mp4)
 - WAVE (.wav) using an LPCM codec
 - Lossless audio formats (eg FLAC)
- Video Formats:
 - MPEG-4 (.mp4)
- Email Formats:
 - MIME (.eml)

Other digital formats

For enquiries about other digital formats, especially if you are not using Microsoft Office products, please contact FACS to determine their acceptability. If they are not acceptable, then those digital records may need to be converted into one of the acceptable formats, or possibly converted/printed to paper form for transfer with paper files. For additional advice on migration of records between digital formats, the State Archives migration methodology may provide helpful information on migration planning, test strategy, and quality assurance. Please refer to <https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/recordkeeping/advice/digital-archives-migration-methodology>.

Other related Information Sheets for designated agencies

- Statutory out-of-home care Designated Agency Recordkeeping Information Sheet No: 1
- Statutory out-of-home care Designated Agency Paper Records Transfer to FACS Information Sheet No: 2
- Statutory out-of-home care Designated Agency Digital Systems Recordkeeping Information Sheet No: 4
- Statutory out-of-home care Designated Agency Recordkeeping FAQ's Information Sheet No: 5

² Adapted from the Public Record Office Victoria ([Long Term Preservation Formats](#)).



Key records transfer resources

- [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#)
- [NSW State Records recordkeeping advice](#)
- [Office of the Children’s Guardian \(OCG\)](#)

Further advice

For further information about the record transfer or retrieval process or to discuss the management of designated agency client records, please contact your FACS Contract Manager.

For technical and logistical support with records please contact:

FACS Staff Support Centre

Ph: (02) 9377 6000

Email - NGORecordsManagement@facs.nsw.gov.au