

Participation in Preparation for OOHC Adoption Seminars

Preparation for OOHC Adoption Seminars are designed to provide carers with an understanding of the differences in parenting a child who is under the parental responsibility of the Minister to parenting an adopted child. Information provided through these seminars is an essential part of this important decision making process and a necessary part of carers' preparation for an adoption assessment.

At the Preparation for OOHC Adoption Seminars, carers learn about:

- the OOHC adoption process
- open adoption
- what the assessment process entails
- the timeframes for progressing an adoption
- the circumstances where adoptions may be contested
- the lodging of an adoption application with the Court
- the experiences and issues of other carers applying to adopt.

Whether carers are currently at the pre-enquiry stage (yet to have a formal case plan goal of adoption for the child they are wish to seek adoption), or have formally been invited to apply to adopt, they must participate in a Preparation for OOHC Adoption Seminar before an assessment can commence.

A Preparation for Adoption seminar is an important opportunity for carers to learn about adoption. The requirement to attend a seminar is a recognition that carers considering the adoption of a child or young person in their care and providing them with a home and family 'for life' should have the most current legislative, practice and process details available to them.

When Preparation to OOHC Adoption Seminars are held

Preparation for OOHC Adoption Seminars are held by Communities and Justice between 8 - 10 times per year. They are usually held at the Ashfield office located at 223 Liverpool Road, Ashfield. Attempts are made to hold these seminars as central to participants as is practical. At times there may be seminars scheduled for regional locations however these are held in response to demand and when resources permit.

If Adoption is considered an appropriate permanency goal to explore for the child or young person in your care, the Regional Adoption Caseworker will make a referral for you to attend an upcoming seminar. The dates of the next upcoming seminars will be forwarded to you, for you to select the most appropriate to attend.

Carers who have participated in a Preparation for OOHC Adoption Seminar when previously adopting a child in their care

Where a carer is applying to adopt a child in their care and have already attended a Preparation for OOHC Adoption Seminar within the last two years, they will not be required to attend an additional seminar unless Communities and Justice determines that there have been significant changes to the *Adoption Act 2000* or other adoption reforms have taken place in the interim period.

Your OOHC Caseworker will be able to provide advice on whether your attendance at a Seminar is required.

Legitimate reasons for not participating in a Preparation for OOHC Adoption Seminar

Communities and Justice recognises there are a wide range of possible reasons why carers might not be able to participate in a Preparation for OOHC Adoption Seminar. These reasons might include work commitments, distance, expense, childcare and health issues.

Preparation for OOHC Adoption Seminars are free. However, potential help for carers to participate in these seminars may be considered on a case-by-case basis. To discuss individual circumstances, carers should contact their OOHC caseworker at their Community Services Centre or Funded Service Provider.

The participation of both carers in a couple

All carers adopting a child in their care are required to participate in a Preparation for OOHC Adoption Seminar. Where carers are a couple, both partners are required to attend. An expression of interest to adopt will not progress until both have participated.

Each carer may participate in different Preparation for OOHC Adoption Seminars.

If one of the carers within the relationship has attended a Preparation for OOHC Adoption Seminar within the last two years they will not be required to attend another one unless Communities and Justice determines that there have been significant changes to the *Adoption Act 2000* or other adoption reforms have taken place in the interim period.