

Raising them strong

Case management

What I need to know as a carer



Family &
Community Services
Community Services



ABOUT THIS BOOKLET/STATUTORY CARE

Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is for Aboriginal people who are looking after children or young people who are not living with their parents because of a Children's Court order. This is called **statutory out-of-home care** (OOHC).

You might be an Aboriginal nan, pop, aunty, cousin or an Aboriginal person who is not related to the child.

What is this booklet about?

This booklet is about what you can expect as a carer when

- ▶ you are receiving a Statutory Care Allowance, and
- ▶ the Minister for Community Services has parental responsibility (PR) for the child you are caring for, or
- ▶ you share PR for the child with the Minister.



Statutory Care is when the Children's Court has made an order requiring a child or young person to live with a person who is not their parent in a place which is not their parental home for longer than 14 days. It does not include care by a relative unless the Minister has PR.

Who can help you?

- ▶ The **Aboriginal Statewide Foster Carer Support Service** (ASFCSS) provides support, information, advice and training to Aboriginal kinship and foster carers and non-Aboriginal carers caring for Aboriginal children. The ASFCSS is provided by the Aboriginal Child Family & Community Care State Secretariat (NSW) Inc. (AbSec). Phone **1800 888 698** or **02 9559 5299**.
- ▶ **Connecting Carers NSW** gives foster, kinship and relative carers across NSW access to free ongoing training, education and peer support. It also runs a 24-hour help line to support foster carers. Phone **1300 794 653**.



When a child comes to live with you

When a child comes to live with you, the agency will talk with you about:

- ▶ the child's health
- ▶ the contact the child should or should not have with their parents and other significant people
- ▶ when and where contact happens
- ▶ the child's schooling or education
- ▶ what the child's strengths and interests are
- ▶ any behaviours that you should know about
- ▶ what information about the placement with you can be given to the child's parents or other people who are significant to the child.

The agency will give you

- ▶ a copy of any court orders for the child – these are confidential
- ▶ a Medicare card or number for the child
- ▶ a letter to take to Centrelink which says the child is in your care
- ▶ a copy of the current case plan for the child
- ▶ any other documents that you need to help you care for the child such as an education plan.



Parental responsibility (PR)

When a child goes to court, the court decides who should have overall responsibility for the child and who the child should live with. This is called parental responsibility (PR) and is often given to the Minister for Community Services. The Minister is represented by an agency, either Family & Community Services or a non-government OOHC agency such as Barnardos.

- ▶ Sometimes, the court gives PR to a relative.
- ▶ Occasionally, PR is shared between the Minister and a relative. For example, the Minister might have responsibility for religion and a relative might have responsibility for everything else to do with a child.
- ▶ PR is a legal responsibility. It is not the same as case management which is the planning and day-to-day care of a child or young person.
- ▶ An agency may have case management responsibility but not have PR and vice versa. For example, a non-government OOHC agency may manage everything to do with a child in care while Community Services has PR.



Case management

Case management is about setting goals, planning and acting to achieve the best for children, young people and families. Everyone works together on a **case plan**. Case management involves Aboriginal staff, communities and service providers.

Community Services may delegate PR to an agency. That agency has responsibility for all case management work but Community Services keeps some decision-making powers about such things as specialist medical intervention and marriage.

Whether it is Community Services or another agency, whoever has case management has responsibilities which you should know about to:

- ▶ give you information about the child
- ▶ give you documents about the child
- ▶ include you in meetings about the child
- ▶ include you in making decisions about the child
- ▶ provide some financial support for the child.



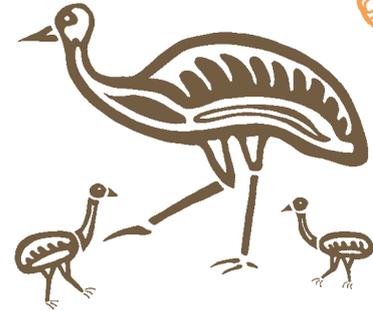
What is a case plan?

A case plan is a record of what is decided at a case planning meeting.

The case plan says who has to do what by when.

For example:

- 1 Caseworker Jan to talk with carer and organise holiday camp for Rory and arrange payment by the agency.
- 2 Carer Mary to get three quotes for a bed for Rory.
- 3 Caseworker Jan to organise contact with Rory's parents at the park every second Thursday from 3-5pm.



Case planning meetings

Case planning meetings are held to discuss and make decisions about the child in your care.

The meeting will always have a main goal and will look at everything to do with the child's well-being including:

- ▶ where they are going to live and for how long
- ▶ identity/culture
- ▶ family and other significant relationships and contact
- ▶ health
- ▶ education or training
- ▶ emotional and behavioural development
- ▶ social/living skills and peer relationships
- ▶ legal issues.



Who attends a case planning meeting?

The caseworker will organise a case planning meeting and invite you. Your participation in the meeting is important because you live with the child and are responsible for making day-to-day decisions for them.

Other people who attend are:

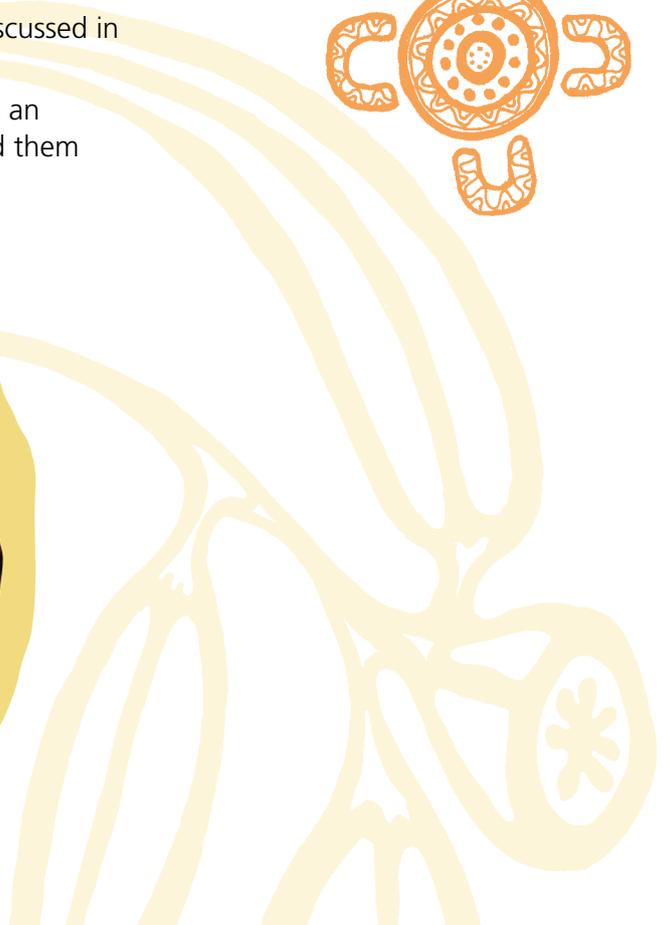
- ▶ the child if they are old enough and want to (it's good to encourage them)
- ▶ birth parents
- ▶ other people significant to the child
- ▶ the caseworker and sometimes their manager
- ▶ sometimes other people such as the child's counsellor.



What happens at a case planning meeting

Before the meeting

- ▶ A caseworker will talk with you about what will be discussed in the meeting.
- ▶ Ask for a copy of any documents or reports, including an agenda for the meeting, so you have a chance to read them before you go.



At the meeting

- ▶ You will be asked about how you think the child is getting on and whether you have any concerns.
- ▶ Notes of the discussion are written down as minutes.
- ▶ Your views will be recorded in the minutes, including if you disagree with a decision that is made.
- ▶ If PR is to the Minister alone, the agency has responsibility for the child and makes final decisions in the best interests of the child.
- ▶ If you and the Minister share PR, then you make the final decision about the things you have PR for. For example, if the Minister had PR for where a child lived but you had PR for education, you would decide where the child goes to school and if the child should have extra help with education.
- ▶ After the meeting, you will get a copy of the updated case plan.
- ▶ Sometimes the meeting happens over the phone in a conference call.



Financial support

The Statutory Care Allowance is for the day-to-day care of a child or young person. It covers:

- ▶ food
- ▶ daily travel
- ▶ gifts
- ▶ hobbies and activities
- ▶ holidays
- ▶ pocket money
- ▶ clothing and footwear
- ▶ suitable car restraints
- ▶ household provisions and costs
- ▶ education expenses including school uniforms
- ▶ everyday medical expenses
- ▶ pharmaceutical costs including basic medications.

The Statutory Care Allowance is reviewed every year.

The **Teenage Education Payment** (TEP) helps authorised carers support young people in an approved course of education or training. Carers of a young person aged 16 or 17 and receiving Family Tax Benefit A may be eligible to receive TEP. For more information talk to your local Community Services Centre.



Extra financial support

If the child in your care needs services or items which are outside the expected costs of raising a child, ask your Community Services Centre for help with these expenses. These may include:

- ▶ family contact
- ▶ child care
- ▶ tutoring
- ▶ ongoing dental services
- ▶ optical services
- ▶ professional therapy
- ▶ setting-up costs
- ▶ maintaining identity and culture.



All requests for extra financial support payments need to be approved by the agency before any money is spent.

Allow time for payments to be considered. If approved, your caseworker may arrange payment directly to the shop or agency that provides the item or service. If a decision to pay for an item or service is made, that is recorded in the case plan.

When a child goes to court

When a child goes to court, the agency will tell you:

- ▶ What decisions were made at court.
- ▶ If the child has to go back to court.
- ▶ Who the child needs to talk to before court such as a legal person. When a child goes to court, they are always given a lawyer to represent them at no cost.
 - ▶ If the child is over 12, they can tell their legal representative what they would like to happen.
 - ▶ If the child is under 12, the legal representative talks with them and acts in their best interests.
- ▶ You can support the child by going to court with them.
- ▶ If you have cared for the child for a long time, you may be asked to be part of the court proceedings so you can give your views.





FAQs

Q Can someone else come to a case planning meeting with me?

A A carer support caseworker can attend a case planning meeting specifically to support you. If you want to raise concerns and want a friend or relative or someone else such as an Aboriginal community member present to support you, you may ask for a separate meeting. ASFCSS offers support services.

Q What if I disagree with a decision made at a case planning meeting?

A You should state your views. These will be recorded in the minutes. If you wish to lodge a complaint, follow the guidelines for that agency. (For Community Services, ask for the Support For You brochure at any CSC.)

Q What if the child or young person does not have an allocated caseworker?

A A duty officer will be allocated by the agency to help you if you have a question and to follow up actions to be done.

Q What if I buy something, get a receipt and then ask the caseworker to pay for it?

A You may not get paid for the item. **All payments must be approved first.**

This booklet is part of the Raising Them Strong resource project that includes booklets, topic cards and a DVD. It was developed with Aboriginal foster and kinship carers, carer support workers, caseworkers and the Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec).

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For copies call 02 9716 2663 or visit www.community.nsw.gov.au and go to the resource order form.



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