



Family &
Community
Services

Policy on provision of financial support to foster and kinship carers of young people 18 years and older completing full-time studies



Document approval

The *Policy on provision of financial support to foster and kinship carers of young people 18 years and older completing full-time studies* has been endorsed and approved by:

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Document version control

Distribution: FACS districts

Document name: Policy on provision of financial support to foster and kinship carers of young people 18 years and older completing full-time studies

Trim Reference CSM15/144

Version: Version 1.0

This document replaces N/A

Document status: Final

File name: <insert file here>

Authoring unit: Child Safety and Permanency, Programs and Service Design

Date: March 2015

Next Review Date: March 2018

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1 Purpose of policy

1.1 Purpose

This policy document outlines the financial support available to authorised carers who support a young person's foster care placement beyond 18 years of age in order to assist that young person to complete Year 12 or an equivalent qualification on a full-time basis.

The NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) encourages Year 12 completion by young people in out-of-home care (OOHC), to help ensure that care leavers access the recognised wage and employment benefits of Year 12 completion¹.

Target group

Authorised FACS and non-government organisation (NGO) carers of young people who have exited statutory or supported OOHC² due to age, but continue to reside with that carer in order to complete Year 12 or equivalent studies on a full-time basis. See also Section 3 "Scope and application".

1.2 Background and policy links

This policy contributes to the NSW Government's *NSW 2021* goal to better protect the most vulnerable members of our community and break the cycle of disadvantage.

In addition, FACS has a number of objectives to support improved client outcomes and aligned to the FACS Strategic Statement. The two key objectives supported by this policy are:

3. *People received targeted support to improve their lives and realise their potential and*
5. *People receive ongoing support while they need it to break disadvantage*

This is a new policy that builds on the *Guidelines on the provision of assistance after leaving out-of-home care* (the Ministerial Guidelines) and the *OOHC Service Provision Guidelines*.

The following documents are linked to this policy:

- [*Guidelines on the provision of assistance after leaving out-of-home care*](#)
- *Financial support for children and young people in OOHC: Policies and guidelines for FACS managed placements (July 2014)*
- [*Teenage Education Payment Guidelines*](#).

¹ See for example Ryan C. 2011, *Year 12 completion and youth transitions*, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) Research Report 56, National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), SA.

² Includes 'Supported Care With Order' and 'Supported Care No Order'

2 Definitions

The table below is a list of terms, keywords and/or abbreviations used throughout this document.

Term	Definition
Care leaver	Young person 18-24 years (inclusive) who was previously in NSW statutory or supported OOHC and exited care due to age (OOHC ends at 18 years of age).
Carer	Persons providing a home to those care leavers in respect of whom the financial support is being provided. While these people are no longer 'authorised carers' of those care leavers, the term 'carer' is used in this policy for ease of reference.
Course completion	A course is considered complete when classes and assessments have finished and the young person is no longer required to study or complete work. Graduation should not be used as the 'course completion' date.
Year 12 or equivalent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher School Certificate (HSC) • HSC via school-based apprenticeship or traineeship • HSC via Vocational Education and Training (VET) Board Endorsed³ courses • TAFE NSW Certificate IV in Tertiary Preparation • Post-school course at Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) Certificate II level, or higher • International Baccalaureate, diploma level.
Full-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary school, including HSC 'accumulation' Pathway provided that it has been assessed that the accumulation arrangement is the most appropriate full-time study load for the young person (procedures to be developed) • TAFE course provided the course is at least 15 hours per week including work placement • any other course equivalent to Year 12 provided that the course is not specifically described as a part-time course.
Out-of-home care (OOHC)	Statutory or supported OOHC as defined in sections 135A and 135B of the <i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998</i> .
NGO	Non-Government Organisation: Contracted by FACS to provide out-of-home care or specialist aftercare services.
FACS	NSW Department of Family and Community Services.
TEP	Teenage Education Payment.

³ Courses that are endorsed by the Board of Studies NSW to contribute to the HSC.

3 Scope and application

This policy is to be followed by FACS and NGO staff with case management and case work responsibility for OOHC, leaving care, and after care cases.

It applies to statutory and supported out-of-home care arrangements that are (or were):

- provided by an authorised carer receiving a care allowance, and
- provided to a young person exiting care due to age (OOHC ends at 18 years of age), and
- continued after the young person's 18th birthday in order to support the young person's completion of Year 12 or equivalent studies⁴.

It does not apply to OOHC arrangements that are (or were):

- delivered under an OOHC model that does not use an authorised carer, e.g. residential care
- ending for reasons other than the child or young person's age.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the *Guidelines on the provision of assistance after leaving out-of-home care* (the Ministerial Guidelines).

FACS staff should read this policy in conjunction with *Financial support for children and young people in OOHC: Policies and guidelines for Family and Community Services managed placements* (the Financial Guidelines).

4 Legislation

The support outlined in this policy is provided in line with section 161(3) of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (the Act).

Section 161(3) of the Act authorises continued financial assistance to people who continue to provide a home to a young person between the age of 18 and 24 years (inclusive) who is residing with them for the purpose of securing full-time education or training, and where financial assistance was being provided under section 161 immediately prior to that young person turning 18 years old.

This section applies to statutory and supported OOHC.

5 Policy statement

Young people due to transition to independence from OOHC at the same time that they finish school are at risk of not attaining their HSC or equivalent if they need to establish independent accommodation and find work to pay rent.

⁴ Until the young person reaches 25 years of age, in line with s161(3) of the Act.

Many young people will turn 18 while they are completing Year 12. This is more likely for young people in OOHC as a result of the circumstances in which they entered care, meaning that they may finish school at an older age than their peers.

To address this risk, financial support is available to carers who extend foster care arrangements for a young person studying Year 12 or equivalent on a full-time basis.

If a young person exits their placement without finishing school (for example to pursue employment), but returns to reside with the carer within twelve months to study Year 12 or equivalent on a full-time basis, financial support may be provided for the duration of that study period.

Financial support is provided at a rate equivalent to that received by the carer immediately before the young person's 18th birthday. Access to related contingency and extra support payments remain in place for the duration of the financial support period. Eligibility for financial support under this policy does not influence eligibility for continuation of TEP installments, which should be assessed separately using the *Teenage Education Payment guidelines*.

6 Roles and responsibilities

Staff with case management responsibility for OOHC and transition to independence, are to ensure that this policy and its associated procedures are implemented. This should be embedded in leaving care planning and support, which starts when a young person is 15 years old.

7 Monitoring, evaluation and review

It is the responsibility of OOHC Service Improvement in the Programs and Service Design division to monitor and update this policy when required. This policy will be reviewed every three years and when any significant new information, legislative or organisational change warrants amendments to this document.

8 Support and advice

For support and advice related to this policy please contact the OOHC Service Improvement team in the FACS Programs and Service Design division: oohcreform@facs.nsw.gov.au.