

Support for carers

The importance of support

Being a foster carer or kinship carer is a challenging role with certain stresses and pressures. Research shows that carers who feel supported:

- achieve better outcomes for children and young people in their care
- continue in their role as carers for longer periods of time
- are less likely to experience 'burnout'.

It is important to build a network of people around you who can provide both formal and informal support.

Formal support

Formal support is provided by people or organisations with a formal responsibility to help and support carers. The Department of Child Safety and non-government foster and kinship care services are the main providers of formal support for you as a foster carer or kinship carer.

You will identify the support you need to care for the children and young people placed with you with your support worker from the department or non-government foster and kinship care service. These supports may include:

- home visits
- telephone calls
- information about your role and that of the department
- financial support, as detailed in the fact sheet *Foster and kinship care allowances and benefits*
- respite placements
- training
- crisis response
- access to local support groups.



You can also access support services through:

- Foster Care Queensland – Foster Care Advocacy Support Team delegate
- your local carer support group.

Informal support

Informal support is as vital as formal support, although it plays a different role and is likely to come from different sources. You may choose to access informal support from family, friends, neighbours, other carers or community groups. Often, informal support will come in the form of social support, which is important to help you feel cared about, and gather emotional support. It may also involve practical support, such as help with household and other tasks involved in your role as a carer.

Building a support network

You can discuss with your support worker the level and types of support you need. Proactively building a support network will help you manage the challenges and demands you will face as a carer. It is important to be aware of what support is available and know how these services can be accessed.

Important contacts

The Department of Child Safety

Child Safety Service Centres

The contact details for your local Child Safety Service Centre will be provided by your Child Safety Officer or support worker. A full list of Child Safety Service Centres is available at www.childsafety.qld.gov.au or call **1800 811 810**.

- Child Safety Officer – responsible for children or young people placed with you. This is the person you will have the most day-to-day contact with.
- Team Leader – supervises a team of Child Safety Officers.
- Manager – manages a Child Safety Service Centre.
- Administration Officer – the first person you will speak to when you call a Child Safety Service Centre.

Zonal Offices

Each Child Safety Service Centre belongs to one of seven zones across Queensland. Zonal Out of Home Care teams have a role in the recruitment and assessment of foster carers and kinship carers. Your zonal office may also respond to complaints that can not be resolved at the Child Safety Service Centre level. For more information about lodging a complaint, see the fact sheet *Do you have a complaint about the Department of Child Safety?* The contact details for your local zonal office can be obtained from your Child Safety Officer or support worker. A full list of zonal offices is available at www.childsafety.qld.gov.au

Child Safety After Hours Service Centre

The Child Safety After Hours Service Centre is the 24-hour service provided by the Department of Child Safety to respond to clients of the department, foster carers and kinship carers, other government departments and non-government foster and kinship care services for urgent child protection matters. This service includes the management of critical incidents, consultation with clients and carers and the provision of after-hours responses to children and young people to meet the department's child protection responsibilities.

The dedicated line for carers is **3235 9901** – please note, this number is not for public use. For general enquiries contact **3235 9999** or **1800 177 135**.

Other organisations and services

Non-government foster and kinship care services

If you are affiliated with a non-government service, contact your local Child Safety Service Centre or PeakCare Queensland for more information.

Foster Care Queensland

Foster Care Queensland represents carer interests and provides advice and support. Contact **3268 5955** or visit www.fcq.com.au

Foster Care Advocacy Support Team

The Foster Care Advocacy Support Team (FAST) consists of a local delegate from Foster Care Queensland who is part of a team of specially trained foster carers who provide support, advice and advocacy on behalf of carers. There is a FAST delegate for each Child Safety Service Centre.

Local Carer Support Groups

These local groups usually meet on a monthly basis and can provide you with support, advocacy and information. Your local Child Safety Service Centre can provide contact details for your local support group.

PeakCare Queensland

PeakCare Queensland is the peak body for non-government services working with foster carers and kinship carers. If you are interested in knowing if there is a community agency in your local area that works with foster carers or kinship carers, contact **3368 1050** or visit www.peakcare.com.au

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Partnership

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Partnership works with the department and Recognised Entities to ensure that effective services are provided to Indigenous children and young people, families and communities. Contact **3255 3604** or refer to the fact sheet *Recognised Entities* for more information.

CREATE Foundation

CREATE Foundation works to connect and empower children and young people in care and improves the care system through activities, programs, training and policy advice. Contact **3847 3922** or visit www.create.org.au

Parent Help Line

Parent Help Line provides telephone counselling for parents and carers. Hours of operation are 8am – 10pm, seven days a week. Contact **1300 30 1300** or visit www.parentline.com.au

Kids Help Line

Kids Help Line is a free, confidential and anonymous 24-hour telephone and online counselling service specifically for children and young people aged between five and 18. Contact **1800 55 1800** or visit www.kidshelpline.com.au

For more information visit www.childsafety.qld.gov.au

Or contact the Department of Child Safety on **1800 811 810** or **3224 8045**.

