

### *What support will I receive?*

There are many people and places you can turn to for guidance and support. In addition to the child safety service centre in your area or your local non-government foster and kinship care service, there may be carers who meet to share experiences and support each other.

Carers can also seek support from Foster Care Queensland – a community organisation that supports and advocates for carers and children in their care. Some Indigenous Recognised Entities also provide support to Indigenous foster and kinship carers.

### *What will I need to do as a kinship carer?*

As a kinship carer, you will need to provide a safe, stable and supportive environment for the child or young person in your care, as well as meet the emotional, educational and social needs of the child.

It is important that children maintain contact with their families and retain links with their past so they can develop a sense of personal identity. You will need to support the involvement of the child's family in their life and respect the child's cultural heritage and family background when making decisions about their care.

### *Who do I contact to find out more?*

For more information on kinship care and becoming a carer:

- contact your local child safety service centre
- phone the foster carer recruitment line on **1300 550 877**
- visit **www.childsafety.qld.gov.au**

**Foster Care Queensland (FCQ)** is a community organisation open to all foster and kinship carers. FCQ is committed to informing, supporting, representing and advocating for carers and the children in their care. FCQ can be contacted on **(07) 3268 5955**.

**PeakCare** is a peak body for community agencies working with foster and kinship carers. If you are interested in knowing if there is a community agency in your local area that works with carers, contact **(07) 3368 1050**.

## Information for kinship carers



## ***What is a kinship carer?***

Some children and young people are unable to stay at home because their families may not be able to look after them or because they may be at risk of harm.

Whenever possible the Department of Child Safety tries to ensure that children maintain close links with their families and their communities. Often, we turn to the extended family or to someone the child knows to provide care. A kinship carer is a person related to the child, or is considered to be family or a close friend.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, a kinship carer may also be another Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person who is a member of their community or language group, or who is compatible with the child's community or language group.

Kinship carers can provide care in an emergency, for respite and for short, medium, or long periods of time.

## ***What allowances do I receive?***

Foster and kinship carers receive a fortnightly caring allowance for each child or young person placed with them by the Department of Child Safety. It covers items such as food, clothing, household provisions, gifts, pocket money, entertainment and other everyday costs of caring for a child.

The allowance is not considered a 'payment' for caring and it is not a source of income. It is a reimbursement toward the real costs of providing care. Respite carers receive an allowance in proportion to the amount of time they provide care for a child.

The caring allowance is not subject to tax and should not be cited as income for any purpose, such as yearly tax returns, applications for Commonwealth benefits or when applying for loans from financial institutions.

You may also be eligible for Commonwealth Government benefits such as the Family Tax Benefit A and/or B, Child Care Benefit, Maternity Payment or Parenting Payment.

## ***How do I become a kinship carer?***

Usually, you will be approached to become a kinship carer when it is assessed that a child is unable to live at home. Alternatively, you may express an interest in becoming a carer for a child from your immediate family or community who is already in care.

To become a kinship carer you will need to lodge an application form and provide proof of identity. You will then participate in an assessment process to determine if you are the most suitable person to care for the child. As part of this assessment process, personal history checks will be undertaken. You will also need to apply for a 'blue card' which ensures that you are suitable to care for children.

The Department of Child Safety is responsible for approving all suitable kinship carers.

If you are approved as a kinship carer you will care for a specific child, for a set period of time. Once the child leaves your care, you will no longer be a kinship carer.

Becoming a kinship carer is a serious decision for any family. It is a commitment that should not be made without prior discussion and consideration of the change and challenge that is part of the kinship carer experience. It is important that you take time with your partner, your children and any other significant people in your life to consider the impact that being a kinship carer may have.

## ***If I am kin to the child, why do I need to be assessed?***

When a child requires a placement in foster or kinship care, it is the responsibility of the Department to make certain the child is cared for in the most suitable care environment.

Although you may have previously cared for the child informally on behalf of the family, it is now the responsibility of the Department to determine where the child will live.

In some circumstances, there may be a number of relatives who can provide care, or a child may have special needs and require a carer with certain skills or training. Assessments are conducted to identify who will be the most appropriate carer for the child.

## ***Will I need to do training?***

Kinship carers are encouraged to participate in an induction training process that is tailored to their needs.

The induction gives carers an understanding of the experiences of children in care and how this impacts on their care needs. It also helps new carers to gain the knowledge and skills to better meet the needs of children and young people in their care.

Kinship carers are also encouraged to access other training opportunities offered by the department and non-government foster and kinship care services.