



Australian Foster Care Association

Policy and Position Statement

on

Accountability in Foster Care

2005

For Foster, Relative and
Kinship Care Across Australia

Accountability in Foster Care

Position:

Children and young people who have been taken into care because of abuse and neglect in their own family are entitled to be safe from abuse and neglect by the system, workers and Foster Families. This means there needs to be effective accountability protocols for the system (Government Departments and Non-Government Organisations), workers (Government and Non-Government), and Foster Families, which should be open and transparent and have consequences for any actions, which significantly harm a child or young person or significantly impact negatively on their wellbeing.

Commentary:

The Australian Foster Care Association (AFCA) membership consists of representatives of the recognised Foster Care Associations of each State and Territory. The above statement represents the position of AFCA as at 1 January 2005. This is not meant to be an exhaustive statement but rather covers the major issues raised by foster carers in relation to sector accountability. The statement has been produced to encourage:

- Quality outcomes for children and young people in care;
- Satisfying partnerships between foster carers, relative carers and workers; and
- Consistency across the nation.

Definition:

Accountability needs to be related to the safety and well being of the child. The needs of the child must be paramount and any action taken must be in the best interests of the child. Significant harm should be identified as something that threatens the safety of the child/young person rather than the quality of the care provided.

Acknowledgements:

1. Alternative Care is a difficult and complex area where it is identified that actions need to be taken in context
2. Foster Carers provide care 24 hours a day 7 days a week for children and young people who can be damaged and present on-going challenges that need to be addressed in a family situation to help them progress.
3. Workers have a responsibility to children, birth families and foster families to ensure that any process is fair, transparent and equitable and has the best interests of the child as focus.
4. There need to be accountability processes that ensure government funding is being used effectively.

Issues:

1. The system needs to have policies and practices that are suggestive of good practice and recognize the diversity of families and the difficult roles of workers and foster families.
2. Workers should be adequately trained and supported to provide children and young people and foster families with support and with good decisions related to the care of the children and young people in the foster family.
3. Foster families should be adequately trained and supported to provide quality care for the children and young people in their care.
4. Foster families and workers need to accept that there has to be an appropriate system of monitoring their actions and the care of the children and young people so that the community as a whole can have confidence in the foster care system.
5. Foster families should be able to demonstrate that allowances provided to care for the children have been used to provide quality care. This should involve visits and discussions with foster families and children and young people to monitor and enhance the quality of care provided. (Note: this does not include itemised accounts but the range and quality of resources and activities provided for the child.)
6. Government has a responsibility to ensure adequate funds are available to provide the appropriate services to enable the system, workers and foster families to meet their responsibilities.
7. Government has a whole-of-government responsibility to ensure that all Government Departments provide quality resources and support to children and young people in care and their foster families.