Australian Foster Care Association

Policy and Position Statement

on

Good Practice in Foster Care

2005

For Foster, Relative and Kinship Care Across Australia

Good Practice in Foster Care

> **Position:**
> Foster carers and workers in the sector must strive for continuous improvement of service to children and young people in the care of the State. Good practice must be the minimum acceptable practice in foster care and better practice shared across the sector on a regular basis. Governments must be encouraged to commit resources to the researching, piloting and implementation of programs and projects designed to improve outcomes for children and young people in care and that support the notion of developing partnerships. Our ultimate goal is to achieve best practice in the provision of care for all children and young people in care.

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 good practice. The statement has been produced to encourage:

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

Definition:

Good practice in foster care predominately depends on the commitment of all parties involved to work on issues of partnership. Where good practice occurs, the outcomes for children and young people in care are significantly improved. Further, the work satisfaction levels of both workers and foster carers increases.

Acknowledgements:

1. Good practice is occurring around the nation and needs to be acknowledged, shared and celebrated.
2. Good practice needs to appear in the simplest of tasks through to the management of extremely complex tasks.
3. Good practice is the responsibility of all parties within the sector.
4. Evidence based good practice from overseas needs to be researched and, where appropriate, strived for in Australia.

Issues:

1. The achievement of good practice needs a commitment by all stakeholders. An open, honest and trusting relationship between them is needed to allow good practice to develop.
2. Good practice can only be achieved where parties have a mutual respect for each other's roles and are committed to equality of power.
3. Good practice includes:
   - recognising the role, expertise, life skills and contribution of foster carers, and the treatment of foster carers as an equal member of the corporate parent/caring team;
   - the children and young people in care are involved in decision making concerning their lives wherever possible and appropriate;
   - actions and interactions such as how people are spoken to, the level of information shared, open and honest communication and the provision of support;
   - adherence to the requirements of legislation and commitment to policy such as placement agreements, planning meetings, reimbursement of claims, handling of concerns and allegations, renewal of approval, etc;
   - commitment to responsibilities such as the development of children's life histories, encouragement of positive family contact, dealing with the emotions and behaviours of children in placement, etc;
   - improvement in learning such as ongoing training, attendance at seminars, support groups, etc; and
   - recognition of the role of others, such as the sharing of positives and negatives, joining in social events, etc.

4. For the future development of good practice, the following are required:
   • a system for the collection and publication of good practice from the eyes of all parties involved;
   • gatherings focussing on the showcasing of good practice;
   • shared practice workshops; and
   • funding to pilot and report on programs and projects to improve outcomes for children and young people in care.