



Australian Foster Care Association

Policy and Position Statement

on

Relative and Kinship Care

2005

For Foster, Relative and
Kinship Care Across Australia

Relative and Kinship Care

Position:

Relative care, sometimes also known as kinship care, of children requiring alternative care should be encouraged and fully supported. Where relative care is considered to be the best option for the child, the relative carers and the child should have full access to support and services as if they were in mainstream foster care. This should include financial and personal support for both the relative carer and the child or young person. Relative carers should be trained, accredited and accountable for the provision of a quality service, similar to accredited or approved foster carers.

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 relative care. 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:

Relative care occurs when a child or young person is taken into care and placed with a person approved or nominated under state legislation as a relative carer (sometimes also referred to as kin or kinship carer). A relative carer may be a person:

- To whom the child is related by blood or marriage; or
- Who is a member of the child's community; or
- Who is considered as family or a close friend; or
- Someone with whom the child has a previous significant connection.

Acknowledgements:

1. Relative care is the preferred option for placing a child or young person taken into care if a safe and appropriate placement is available and sufficient support is provided.
2. Placements with relative carers can occur prior to any approved training occurring and if the relative carers have no previous experience of fostering, they should be trained, assessed and accredited to ensure that the placement is appropriate for the child or young person and also for the relative carers as soon after the placement as possible.

Issues:

1. Formal initial and on-going training and approval/accreditation should be available for relative carers with the same support and conditions as for accredited or approved foster carers. This includes renewal of accreditation or approval.
2. A suitable process for providing initial information (including written, video, or computer based materials) needs to be available and used at the time of placement (or beforehand if possible).
3. Relative carers should have an assigned worker to maintain contact with both relative carers and the child or young person in care in order to provide support and to help in meeting standards of care which will be monitored as for other foster carers.
4. Support should be provided to assist with sensitive intra-family issues as well as to facilitate any child-specific and on-going training required.
5. Financial support should include all relevant State subsidies/allowances and respite as well as all Commonwealth Benefits available to accredited or approved foster carers.
6. Relative carers should be aware of the standards of care and accountability required of them and these should be no less than for approved or accredited foster carers.
7. Relative carers provide care for a child requiring protection and should have access to the same support, training, processes and rights as approved or accredited foster carers as well as meeting the same responsibilities.
8. If relative carers are subject to an allegation, it should be treated in the same respectful and open process as for accredited or approved foster carers.
9. Relative carers should be encouraged to join a local support group of foster carers and to become a member of their State Foster Care Association.