



Australian Foster Care Association

Policy and Position Statement

on

Support for Foster Carers

2005

For Foster, Relative and
Kinship Care Across Australia

Support for Foster Carers

Position:

Foster carers are volunteers who give of their time, skill, love, home, personal resources and family to care for children and young people unable to live at home with their own families. Foster carers commit to these children and young people 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In order to provide a high level of quality care, foster carers need the assistance and support of a network of people. This network needs to be readily accessible and immediately responsive to the foster carer.

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 support for foster carers. 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:

Support for foster carers encompasses a wide range of areas. It can include everything from a listening ear when needed, to the commitment of funds to undertake major extensions to a home to facilitate placement of a sibling group.

Acknowledgements:

1. Foster carers are volunteers.
2. Foster carers are not paid for what they do.
3. Foster carers are multi-skilled people and whilst many do not have a formal qualification, their life experience is invaluable.
4. When a foster carer contacts a departmental worker, agency worker, or foster care association, they are looking for genuine understanding and consideration for the difficult tasks they face.
5. Current levels of support to foster carers are inadequate and the continuation of the fostering system is at risk if this is not addressed as a matter of urgency.

Issues:

1. Foster carers are significantly under resourced in the area of support.
2. Foster carers need support in the form of:
 - prompt and comprehensive responses when a foster carer contacts a worker for a decision/solution/advice/answer
 - full re-imburement of foster child related costs;
 - access to appropriate support on a 24 hour basis;
 - regular respite and leave entitlements;
 - dedicated telephone lines to officers/workers for requests;
 - computers for email communication with workers;
 - regular follow-up visits and planning meetings with workers;
 - trauma and grief counselling by independent counsellors;
 - full and accurate information about the child or young person prior to placement;
 - up front placement grants and allowances from State and Commonwealth departments;
 - placement grants for new children, sibling groups or children with special needs;
 - full reimbursement for additional out-of-pocket expenses and a fast and efficient system for claims;
 - full inclusion in information sharing and discussion of decisions that affect the child or young person;
 - full assistance with medical and educational needs of the child or young person;
 - additional support for the care of children and young people with disabilities;
 - regular training, and support to attend conferences and seminars;
 - funded advocacy and legal services, lobby groups and peer support groups;
 - insurance cover; and
 - regular updates of policy changes, newsletters and foster carer manuals.