



Australian Foster Care Association

Policy and Position Statement

on

Training and Accreditation of
Foster Carers

2005

For Foster, Relative and
Kinship Care Across Australia

Training and Accreditation of Foster Carers

Position:

All foster carers, including relative carers, must receive initial pre-service training that is designed to equip them with the basic knowledge needed to provide effective foster care. Ongoing training and specialist training must be made available to all foster carers throughout the year. Costs associated with foster carers attendance at training should be fully met by the foster care agency or the Department. Foster carers should be encouraged and assisted to attend further and additional training, seminars, workshops and state and national conferences. Initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation/approval of foster carers is necessary to ensure children are being cared for appropriately.

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 training and accreditation. 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:

The full and ongoing training and accreditation of foster carers is critical to the standard of care provided to the children and young people in placement. Acquisition of knowledge and the development of a strength based model of partnership can only occur through groups of foster carers and workers coming together and sharing their experiences. The opportunity for learning must be afforded to every foster carer in every State.

Acknowledgements:

1. More and up-to-date knowledge means better working relationships and better outcomes for children and young people in care.
2. Without initial and ongoing training, foster carers are putting themselves and the children and young people for whom they care at risk.
3. Much can be achieved from the opportunity of workers and foster carers learning and teaching together.

Issues:

1. Prior to accreditation/assessment, foster carers should undergo a minimum number of hours of training, covering the same basic content, providing an accurate and honest picture of fostering. This could possibly be linked to a nationally accredited course. Relative carers should also have access to this training.
2. Training of foster carers must involve the State or Territory Foster Care Association and/or foster carers for the duration of the training.
3. Foster carers interested in becoming trainers should undergo training for this task.
4. Foster carers participating in training as part of the training team should be paid or recompensed (eg: equal number of hours of housekeeping paid for).
5. All costs associated with foster carers attending training should be met by the foster care agency or department to ensure that foster carers are not out of pocket (travel, parking, babysitting etc).
6. Assessment and approval/accreditation of foster carers should be conducted in partnership by a worker and a trained foster carer.
7. Newly approved/accredited foster carers should be mentored by a more experienced foster carer in a buddy system.
8. A series of follow-up training sessions should be available to new foster carers during their first year.
9. A range of ongoing and specialist training packages should be available to all foster carers throughout the year. Specifically these should include First Aid and infectious diseases training, and wherever possible, also include courses in general parenting skills to cope with a range of behaviours in children.
10. A variety of media should be used to assist in learning (videos, audio tapes, work books, home study, online).
11. Foster carers should be approved/accredited for an initial period and have regular ongoing renewals of approval/accreditation.