

# Foster Care FAQs

## **What makes a good carer?**

First and foremost, carers require a commitment to the wellbeing of children and young people, an ability to be flexible, patience and understanding, a good sense of humour and an ability to work well with other people. We provide training for carers, to help them develop skills and learn about young people who have lived through traumatic experiences and troubled family lives. A good carer will be understanding of children and young people's behaviour, and be patient and perceptive in dealing with their needs.

## **What is the aim of foster care?**

The primary aim of foster care is to provide children and families a secure, supportive and educational environment so that they can eventually reunite. Where this is not possible, the aim is generally to find a stable, long-term environment where the child can live (permanent care or adoption, for example).

## **Who receives foster care?**

Our foster care programs provide a safe and supportive environment for children and adolescents who are unable to live with their own families for various reasons. We also offer support for families in crisis, and families who have a child with a disability or developmental delay.

## **Do carers have a child placement at all times?**

Carers may go 'on hold' or discontinue their care at any time. However, potential applicants are strongly encouraged to consider the importance of stability for children in foster care and understand the commitment involved in accepting a placement.

**Besides financial reimbursement, what other support is provided to carers?**

Casework staff are on-call 24/7. They are trained and available to provide assistance in any scenario that may arise during care. They can also refer children or carers to other services or training as required. We also offer carer support groups and training programs.

**How do foster children attend school?**

It is generally preferred that children are placed close to their current school, so they can continue with their enrolment. In most cases, the carer will transport the child to and from school. However, there is some flexibility and it depends on the needs of the child.

**How old are foster children?**

The age of children and young people in foster care ranges from 0-18 years. Carers can specify the age and gender of the children they wish to care for.

**What sort of care is most required?**

People are needed to provide all types of care, from respite to longer-term. People are also needed who can care for sibling groups to keep children from the same families together. Boys aged between 6-13 years of age are among the most difficult children to find foster care placements for.

**What financial support is provided to foster carers?**

Carers receive a tax-free fortnightly reimbursement from the Department of Health & Human Services. The amount of this reimbursement is dependent on the age of the child and the complexities of the care needs.

## **How long do children require care?**

We offer four main types of foster care, with different support time frames.

### Emergency care

This is where a carer provides a safe and secure home at short notice, often for just one or two nights in an emergency or crisis situation.

### Respite care

This is where a child or young person is placed in foster care on a regular basis, usually for just one weekend per month or for up to two weeks during school holidays. It is often used to provide a much-needed break for full-time carers or birth families at risk of breakdown.

### Short term care

Short Term Care can vary from a few days to a few months, depending on the needs of the child and when it is appropriate for the child to return to their family.

### Long term care

Long Term Care lasts up to two years or more. In some circumstances the child or young person can stay with their carers until they turn 18.

## **Who can provide home care?**

People from all walks of life can become carers. It doesn't matter whether you are married, single, older, younger, with or without kids, or in a same-sex relationship – everyone can make a positive difference in a child's life.

Key attributes of carers include empathy, compassion, resilience, optimism, dependability, flexibility and willingness to work as part of a team.

To find out more about becoming a carer, fill out our online enquiry form or call one of our centres:

Eastern Metro Region – 1300 889 335

North West Metro Region – 03 9396 7400

Southern Metro Region – 0499 016 445

Bendigo & Loddon Campaspe Region – 03 5440 1100

Gippsland Region – 03 5135 9555

For all other areas of Victoria please contact The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare on 1800 013 088.

### **How can I become a foster carer?**

The first step is to attend a free information session. You will learn about the different types of foster care we provide, and about the support we offer our carers. You'll then undertake a comprehensive training course, and need to submit the relevant paperwork. Finally, a staff member will meet with you to complete the assessment process. You may then be approved as an accredited carer. This process can take between three to six months.