

Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety

Commissioning and Strategy PROCEDURE

Title: Foster Care Recruitment (Expression of Interest and Assessment)

Purpose

This procedure sets out the actions required of funded service providers undertaking foster care recruitment services (Providers) and regional placement services when managing prospective foster carers through the Expression of Interest (EOI) stage and once an Application for Approval (APA) is properly made.

This ensures every prospective foster carer receives a timely and consistent response and is prioritised according to the needs of children in care.

It outlines the specific processes and timeframes for:

1. Routine Foster Carer Recruitment Pathways; and
2. Fast-Track Foster Care Recruitment Pathways.

This is an iterative process that will adapt with engagement with relevant stakeholders managing placement decisions for children in care.

Process

1. Routine Foster Care Recruitment Pathway

1.1 Expressions of Interest (EOI)

EOIs are submitted via the Queensland Governments 'How to become a foster carer' web page or similar landing pages with Providers, or via proactive Provider engagement within communities.

If not already proactively engaged, Providers will:

- contact the prospective foster carer within 48 hours and discuss the information requirements with the prospective foster carer; and
- provide material or guide the prospective foster carer to relevant supporting information.

Ongoing EOI engagement consists of distinct, non-linear stages that reflect the nature and level of engagement between the provider and members of the prospective foster carer household:

- *Remote engagement:* Prospective foster carers are engaged through telephone and email contact only. Providers are expected to progress engagement to an in-person stage within two weeks or exit the process.
- *In-person engagement:* Prospective foster carers participate in face-to-face activities and/or home visits. During this stage providers are expected to support prospective foster carers to either submit an application or exit the process.

- **APA ready:** The prospective foster carer household is considered ready to submit and APA, with the application to be completed within the next five business days

1.2 Application for Approval (APA) and initial foster carer assessment

An APA is completed by a prospective foster carer when all members of the household are confident and ready to commence their foster care journey.

An APA will be completed prior to a prospective carer undertaking Getting Ready to Start Training.

Providers are responsible for ensuring the quality and completeness of the APA, including the verification of identity. Providers will ensure APAs are provided to Placement Services the same day.

Placement Services will determine if the APA is properly made and liaise with the Provider if amendments are required. Upon receipt of the APA, Placement Services will create (or select an existing) person profile and Regulation of Care (ROC) case in Unify and provide the ROC Case ID to the Provider as soon as possible.

Once an APA is properly made, initial foster carer assessments are completed and submitted to placement services and a final decision on the application is made by the delegated officer within 65 days.

Initial foster carer assessments may be extended by the delegated officer with written agreement from the applicant (refer to section 143A of the *Child Protection Act 1999*). Any extension past 60 days for a routine foster care recruitment pathway must be endorsed by the Regional Director.

Halfway through the assessment process, the foster care recruitment provider and the proposed foster care support provider will convene to review the prospective carers' wishes regarding placement preferences in the Foster Care Agreement and discuss any identified or anticipated support requirements. Placement Services may be involved in this process.

This will occur by week five for prospective foster carers on the routine pathway, and week three for those in the fast-track pathway. This process is intended to promote effective collaboration, ensure continuity of support, assist placement matching, and facilitate a seamless transition between providers.

It is expected that providers will manage resources efficiently when planning and undertaking activities with prospective foster care households. As a result, some assessment activities may be partially or fully completed during the EOI engagement stages. Providers will be expected to proactively support the completion of key pre-assessment requirements, including:

- Obtaining and reviewing the Central Screening Unit outcome letter
- Conducting applicant and household member interviews and recording information in the Foster Care Initial Assessment Template supported by the Foster Care Initial Assessment Guide
- Completion of the household safety study form
- Completion of the Getting Ready to Start training or recognition of prior learning, supported by the Foster Care Training Guide
- Blue Cards issued for all applicants and adult household members.
- Outcome and consideration of discretionary checks (if requested)
- Submission of completed assessment and all ancillary documents prior to the timeframe expiry, including Foster Care Agreement.

It is expected that regional Placement Services will support efficient planning and coordination to facilitate timely approval of foster care assessments by the delegated decision-maker. Placement Services will also oversee the recording, completion and distribution of:

- Certificate of Approval and approval documentation
- Carer affiliation to Foster Care Support Service
- Vendor Form

1.3 Support and assess routine pathway prospective foster carer households

The Routine Foster Care Pathway involves a 65-day process to be completed by the Provider from the lodgement of the EOI

- **Within five business days** of an APA being properly made an initial foster care assessment for will be underway (refer to section 1.2 Application for Approval (APA) and initial foster care assessment for process).
- **Within 60 days** (including the above five business days) the Service Provider will complete the initial foster carer assessment and mandatory training modules and submit this to Placement Services for a decision.
- **Within five days** of receiving the initial foster carer assessment package the delegated officer will decide the outcome of the application

2. Fast-Track Foster Care Recruitment Pathway

2.1 Identification of potential fast tracked prospective foster carers

During engagement with prospective foster carers at the EOI or Application stage the household will be identified for Fast-Track consideration when the prospective foster carers and their household members nominate:

- They are seeking to provide full time care; and
- They are ready to commence their fostering journey now.

The provider will immediately engage with the prospective foster carers and within two days notify Placement Services of the prospective foster carer applicant via the Fast-Track Intake Form. The Fast-Track Intake Form will provide additional information related to matching considerations to better identify and support placement of a child currently living in residential care but requiring family-based care arrangements.

The provider has a maximum five business days to obtain the Application for Initial Approval (APA), have this lodged with Placement Services and confirm the APA has been properly made. This engagement includes remote and in-person engagement. Within one business day of the receiving the Fast-Track Intake Form, Placement Services will confirm or deny the prospective foster carer's inclusion in the Fast-Track Pathway. This decision will be based on the needs of children living in residential care and the initial information provided by the prospective foster carers in the Fast-Track Intake Form. The Placement Services decision will be confirmed in the completed Fast-Track Intake Form and returned to the Provider.

If the prospective foster carers are not included in the Fast-Track Pathway, they will continue through the processes of the Routine Foster Care Recruitment Pathway.

2.2 Support and assess Fast-Track prospective foster carer households

The Fast Track Foster Care Pathway involves a 32-day process to be completed by the Provider from the lodgement of the APA.

- **Within five business days** the Service Provider will complete an APA with all members of the prospective foster carer household (*refer to section 1.2 Application for Approval (APA) and initial foster care assessment for process*).
 - o Within two business days - Initial contact with prospective applicant following enquiry

- o Within three business days - Completion and submission of the application for approval (APA properly made)
- **Within 30 days** the Service Provider will complete the initial foster carer assessment and mandatory training modules and submit this to Placement Services for a decision.
- **Within two days** of receiving the initial foster carer assessment package the delegated officer will decide the outcome of the application

One week following APA lodgement the provider must confirm that personal information checks are progressing and that there are no barriers to finalising these checks. Where required, the provider must take proactive steps to support progression of the checks, including liaising directly with Blue Card Services to assist with and resolve any additional information requests.

Providers will proactively seek consent from applicants to engage on their behalf via the [Approval to contact Blue Card Services Form](#) and [Approval to discuss confidential information with Blue Card Services From](#).

Throughout the 30-day assessment period

- Placement Services may provide de-identified information about a child to assist the Provider and assessor during the training and assessment process.
- Providers will alert Placement Services to any deviation, or anticipated deviation from the 30-day assessment timeframe. Any requests for extension must be endorsed by the Region's Director of Placement Services.

At any stage a prospective foster carer indicates that they are no longer able to provide full time care and/or are not ready to continue their fostering journey, they will revert to the Routine Foster Care Recruitment Pathway.

Roles and Responsibilities

Service Providers

- Ensure all procedural timelines included in this procedure are adhered to and any deviation, or anticipated deviation, is escalated immediately to Placement Services.
- Ensure outlined reporting processes regarding routine and fast-tracked pathways for prospective foster carers are accurate and timely.

Regional Placement Services

- Ensure that Fast-Track Intake Forms are responded to with urgency
- Ensure APAs are properly made and recorded on Unify as soon as possible
- Review and/or create the ROC Case in Unify and ensure the ROC Case is updated to include notes that the ROC case is a 'Fast-Track Pathway'.
- Undertake concurrent placement matching linked to assessments under a Fast-Tracked Pathway
- Maintain close contact with Providers in relation to the children in residential care requiring family-based placement and assist the transfer of relevant information relating to children requiring priority placements.

Regional Director (each Region)

- Consider and make decisions on requests for extensions to the 65-day routine application timeframe or 32-day fast track application timeframe

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Help Contact: FamilyBasedCareandSupportMailbox@families.qld.gov.au

Links:

Procedures

Child Safety Practice Manual

Related Policies

Foster care training (383-5)

Foster care matching: a partnership approach (639-2)

Placement of children in care (578)

Forms

[Application for Initial Approval - Form 3a](#)

[applicant-assess-rec-initial-guide.pdf](#)

[Household safety study](#)

[foster-carer-training-guidelines.pdf](#)

Fast Track Intake Form

[Foster and Kinship carer orientation and responsibility guide](#)

[Approval to discuss confidential information with Blue Card Services Form](#)

[Approval to contact Blue Card Serviced Form](#)

Related Legislation

Child Protection Act 1999

Child Protection Regulation 2023

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