

CARER HANDBOOK



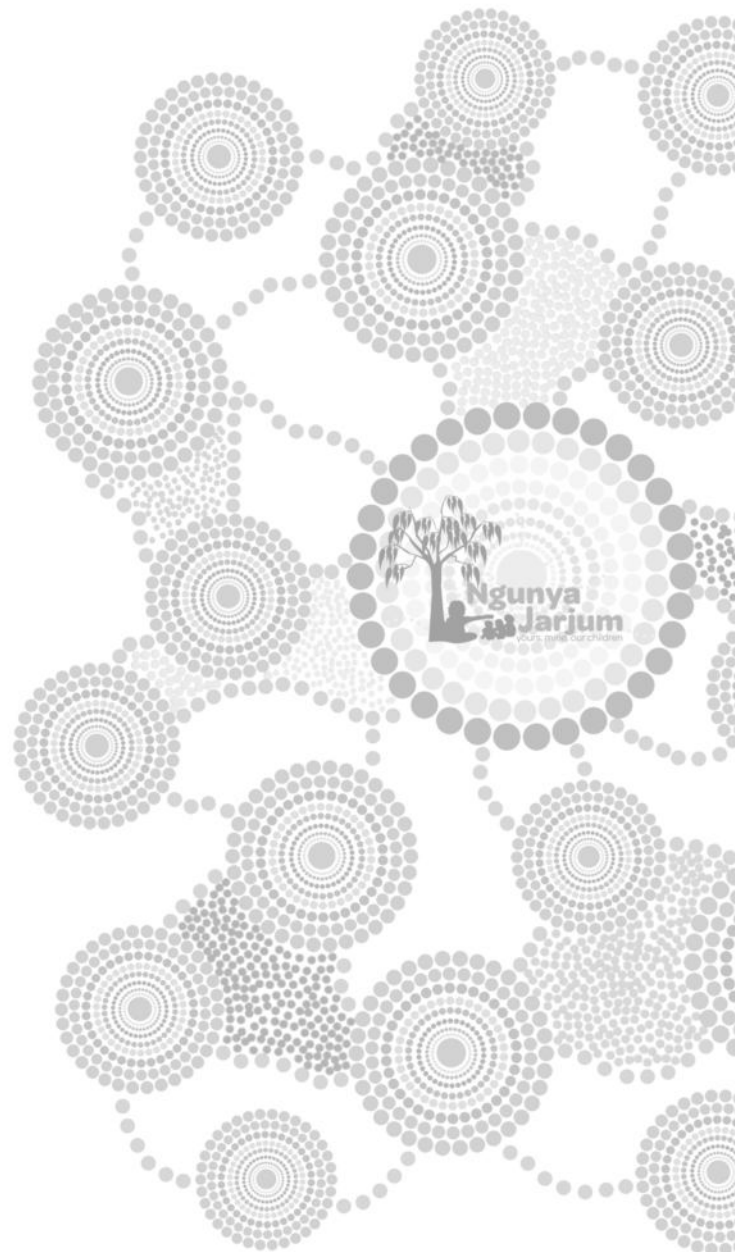
Dear Carers,

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with information to support you in your important role as a kinship or foster carer. It specifically relates to being a carer with Ngunya Jarjum. By providing this information, we aim to help you keep informed about your role and responsibilities in caring for a child, and where to go for help and support.

Throughout this handbook, you will also find useful resources that provide further information about a particular topic. There is a lot of information in this handbook but, as each care situation is different, some matters need individual responses. If you cannot find an answer to your question or concern, please discuss it with your caseworker. This handbook is intended as a guide only and you are encouraged to seek advice from your caseworker regarding your particular circumstances where necessary.

This handbook reflects Ngunya Jarjum's current Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) policies and procedures, standards of care and legislation that govern our service delivery. The main legislation which outlines legal obligations in the provision of care for children and young people who cannot live with their families is the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998.

This handbook also refers to information found on the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) website, please refer to <https://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/> for more information.



Acknowledgement

Ngunya Jarjum would like to acknowledge the First Nations people of our country and recognise their continuing connection to our land, water and culture.

We would like to acknowledge that we work on Bundjalung country and acknowledge the Widjabul/Wyabul people as the traditional owners of it. As guests of this country may we always respect and preserve it.

We would like to acknowledge and thank our present Elders for their wisdom and guidance, and may we honour the memory of our Elders who have passed on before us and the sacrifices that they have made for our people.

We would also like to acknowledge our Jarjum who will be our future Elders. May we nurture and respect them as individuals by honouring the work that we do to make a difference in their lives.



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Introduction

Ngunya Jarjum (meaning “all our children”) is one of the largest Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations in Northern NSW and has been delivering services for jarjum and families on Bundjalung Country on the Far North Coast (FNC) of NSW since 1996. The FNC area covers the Tweed, Richmond and Clarence Valleys.

In 1995, Ngunya Jarjum was formed after a group of Elders in Casino identified the need to keep children and young people on country and within an Aboriginal family unit. Ngunya Jarjum's mission was to ensure that if children could not be at home, they would be kept safe, on Country, with community. This mission endures today in the range of services we provide from culturally sensitive Statutory Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) to Family Preservation services and additional supports we provide to children and young people, families, carers and the community.

Ngunya Jarjum is funded and has a service agreement with the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) to provide culturally appropriate care placements for Aboriginal children from the FNC area who are in need of OOHC. We also have a Case Work Support Team (Balaa) and a Family Preservation Program (Gumaguy).

Ngunya Jarjum are also required by the funding agreement to recruit, train and support Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal carers across the FNC to provide suitable care placements for Aboriginal children and to ensure these placements promote the children's safety, culture, family relationships, education, development, welfare and emotional and physical wellbeing.

The OOHC program currently provides care for over 150 OOHC placements, with placement types ranging from emergency/crisis, temporary care, short term, restoration plans and long-term permanent care.

Our Vision

A connected, culturally rich and thriving community where Ngunya Jarjum support our local families to nurture their children, raise them on Country, and preserve our culture and strength into the future.

Our Values

Belonging - Every child has a right to be immersed in their family and culture to grow up strong in their identity and know who and where they belong to.

Compassion - Compassion, kindness and empathy will underpin the approach of support and services to children and families to acknowledge the untreated trauma and grief suffered by Aboriginal people over generations.

Integrity - We act professionally, with honesty and truth.

Respect - We value building meaningful relationships and work to build trust with families, communities and our partners.

Culture - We lead with culture in our practice.

Child-Centred - Everything we do is in the best interests of our jarjums.

Community-Oriented - We work to meet community needs and aspirations.

Family-Led - Families participate in and lead decision making where possible.

Gan Ngaa Lee La - We pay attention, listen deeply and take time.

Teamwork - Our staff are dedicated to reaching the highest standards in their work. They are highly valued and supported in their wellbeing and careers



Section 1: Placement and Planning



What is Out-of-Home Care?

Children and young people are sometimes not able to live safely at home. Foster, relative and kinship care in a family-based setting provides a safe, nurturing and secure environment. While in Out-of-Home care, children and young people are supported to maintain contact with their birth family and community, as long as it is safe for them to do so.

Carers must understand that it is their role to support the child. This does not give the carer any form of ownership. Being a carer for Ngunya Jarjum is not taking a child into your home to be your own child and it is not a substitute for adoption.

Caring can be one of the most rewarding experiences, and yet at certain times it can be an extremely demanding and challenging one. However, the final decision, about becoming a carer, is up to you. It takes special kind of people to make this decision.

Aboriginal Placement Principles

Our work is guided by the Aboriginal Child Placement Principles which ensures the best interests of the child are recognised and met to maintain the child's link to their Aboriginal culture. When a child is placed in out of home care, the order which must be followed is:

- a) Placed with a member of their extended family or kinship group
- b) If not with a), then with a member of the community to which they belong
- c) If not with a) or b), then with carers in another Aboriginal community
- d) If none of the aforementioned options are available, placement with a non-Aboriginal foster home becomes the last resort.



Types of Placements

Kinship Care

Relative or kinship care is a type of care that places a child or young person with a relative or someone they already know, for example a grandparent. In Aboriginal communities, kin may be a relative of the child or young person or someone who shares a cultural or community connection. Being cared for by relatives or kin also helps children avoid the trauma of being placed in unfamiliar environments. Unfortunately, not all children or young people have family or kin who can care for them, so foster carers from the wider community are vitally important.

Foster care

Arrangements are made for a child or young person, or siblings, to live in a family setting with authorised carers from the community who are not family or kin. The carer's own children may be living in the home, too.

- **Long Term Care**

Long term carers provide much needed stability, safety and security for a vulnerable child or young person who cannot return home for a longer period, if at all. They may need support for a period of years, or until they reach adulthood.

- **Short-Term and Medium-Term Care**

Sometimes children and young people need to stay with someone to support them while their parents or family are working on making changes so their children can be returned to them. Or they may be waiting for a decision from the Children's Court on their long term future. These placements may last several months.

- **Respite**

From time to time, parents and carers need a break from their caring role. Respite care is for short periods of time such as weekends, once a month or during school holidays. Respite carers provide crucial support for the child's regular carers, by giving them a break.

- **Emergency Care**

Emergency care provides a secure, safe place for a child or sibling group when there are concerns for their immediate safety. Referrals are received 24 hours a day and placements may be made after hours. Carers may be asked to provide care at very short notice.

Things to Consider Prior to Placement

Before a child or young person comes into your care, you need to consider a range of important factors as the dynamics of your family will change with the inclusion of the child or young person.

- A child or young person may come into your home feeling abandoned, helpless, worthless, depressed, anxious, distrustful or even responsible for their family's situation. They may appear indifferent or be eager to please, withdrawn, angry or upset. These are all reactions to great personal loss, abuse, separation and change. Their sense of loss may be for parents, sibling, friendships, their home, pets, familiar places and routines.
- Children and young people will behave in different ways in any new situation. They may cry or withdraw, act as though they are much older, seem vague, appear disinterested and tough or show little emotion. They may be very good and try to please, especially early on.
- Children and young people in care will need time to adjust to a new environment which includes new places, people, routines and boundaries. These adjustments require a lot of time and patience. It is unrealistic to believe you can "fix" them overnight. It can sometimes take years for a child or young person to feel safe and secure especially if they have had multiple placements and rejections.
- A decision to take on a child or young person should not be made lightly. Carers need to be aware that any change of placement or breakdown of placement is traumatic and can have far reaching effects on a child or young person.

You will need to ask yourself the following questions:

- Will the child or young person be a risk to my family e.g., display sexually explicit behaviours to any family members or visitors?
- Do they exhibit self-harming behaviours or other behaviours e.g., violence, that my family will not accept and may place them at risk?
- Are they suicidal? Do they have any mental health issues e.g., depression?
- What effect will their experience of abuse and/or neglect have on my family?
- What effects could certain behaviours have on my family?
- What protective behaviours training is available for my family?

Being a Carer with NJ

To remain a carer with Ngunya Jarjum, carers must:

- continue to reside in the Far North Coast region from Grafton to Tweed Heads
- provide the necessary skills to meet the needs of children who may have experienced trauma or be prepared to undertake training or further learning
- be sensitive and supportive of the child's natural family
- maintain compliance with the Code of Conduct
- not have a criminal record for violent or abusive behaviour
- not have any substance abuse problems
- notify us if you develop a physical or mental health condition that may limit your ability to provide care.

Planning and Decision Making

There are a series of processes used in the planning process for children and young people in OOHC.

Processes that involve carers are:

- Monthly Home Visits
- Case Plan Meetings
- Cultural Support Plans
- Behaviour Support Plans
- Household Safety Checks
- Carer Reviews



Permanency Planning

Children and young people in care who experience stability and permanency are more likely to develop healthy and long-lasting emotional attachments, maintain a strong sense of identity and connection, and achieve better life outcomes. This is why NSW child protection laws require children and young people entering care to be placed according to permanent placement principles. Keeping families safely together is always the priority. Where this is not possible, permanent placement principles guide the decisions made by caseworkers or the Children's Court in providing children and young people with a safe and stable home.

The preferred order for the permanent placement of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child or young person is:

- Restoration (returning the child to their family)
- Guardianship (usually by relatives or kin)
- Long-Term Care (with parental responsibility assigned to the Minister, a relative or kin)

Restoration

The first goal of permanency planning is to return the child or young person to the care of their parents or legal guardian when it is safe to do so. This is called 'restoration' and involves a high level of engagement from the birth family or legal guardian. Caseworkers work closely with the birth family and the carer to make it safe for the child to return home to their family. Carers often play a vital role in supporting the child or young person's contact and connection with their family as part of the restoration plan.

In many circumstances, carers will continue to have a relationship with the child they cared for, once the child returns home to their parent/s. While returning a child to their parents can be hard because of the attachments you have formed, it is can also be a rewarding and joyful experience, seeing a child safely reunited with their family.

Guardianship

If restoration is determined by the Court to not be achievable in a two-year timeframe, guardianship is the next permanent option to be considered for children in care.

Guardianship is where a suitable person has the independent care of a child or young person until they're 18 years old. Guardianship orders aim to provide a stronger sense of belonging, stability and security for children who can't live safely at home with their parents.

A child or young person in the care of a guardian is no longer in out-of-home care. This means guardians are responsible for caring for a child or young person without a caseworker or agency monitoring their placement or providing support.

The Children's Court of NSW may grant a guardianship order if the applicant is considered suitable and if the child or young person cannot return home because it's unsafe. A carer, relative or other person close to the child or young person can apply to become a guardian.

Guardians are required to demonstrate that they are able to facilitate family time for the child and support them to have strong connections with their parents, siblings, grandparents and extended family or kin, when this forms part of the care plan, which is the plans submitted to the Court as part of the guardianship proceedings. To be suitable as a guardian you need to demonstrate that you will support and facilitate this connection and are able to meet the child's ongoing emotional, physical and cultural support needs where applicable without the help of an agency.

To become a guardian, carers need to participate in a guardianship assessment. This is a thorough assessment to ensure carers will be able to meet all the ongoing and changing needs of the child without support from the agency until the child is 18. The assessment also determines if guardianship is in the best interest of the child, and whether guardianship is appropriate now or could be at some time in the future.

To learn more about guardianship, visit DCJ.nsw.gov.au/families/guardianship. If you think that guardianship may be right for you and the child you care for, speak with your caseworker.

Case Planning

A case plan for a child or young person in Out-of-Home Care has a case plan goal or permanency goal of Restoration, Guardianship or Long Term Care. The case plan records all the important decisions and tasks that are necessary to achieve the goal and objectives agreed on by all parties.

As a carer, you have responsibility for making day-to-day decisions about children or young people in your care. This gives you an important role to play in case planning, and a right to participate in decision-making about the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children or young people in your care.

Case Plan Meetings

Case plan meetings inform the development of case plans that are monitored monthly and reviewed annually. Carers, NJ, birth families, significant others including Elders, teachers, and others should participate in the case plan development.

Carer can expect:

- to be informed in advance when the meeting will be held.
- that in some cases they will be asked to attend in a group, in others they may meet separately with the caseworker.
- that when they are unable to attend their views will be presented by the caseworker.
- that their views and opinions will be treated respectfully.
- that their knowledge of the child or young person will inform the planning process
- where they are not invited, the reason for this will be explained to them.
- to be consulted about all decisions that have an impact on their care of the child or young person.
- to receive signed copies of the case plan.

Monthly Home Visits

Your caseworker will conduct monthly home visits. These visits are to help support carers on a regular basis and to allow the caseworker to discuss and sight the child or young person. The caseworker meets with the child or young person to discuss:

- what's going well
- their worries
- their achievements
- what they are looking forward to
- what they want

The caseworker meets with the Carer to discuss:

- their concerns about the child or young person.
- the achievements and strengths of the child or young person.
- any issues which require early intervention to prevent possible placement breakdown.

Leaving and After Care

What is a Leaving Care Plan? Your caseworker will begin working with you, the young person and significant other people in their life on a Leaving Care Plan once they turn 15. The plan will include reasonable steps to prepare the young person for their transition to independence. The Leaving Care Plan generally covers:

- a safe place to live (whether they are staying on with you, returning to their birth family or setting up independent living arrangements)
- access to education and training
- employment and income support
- independent living skills (including financial management, health and lifestyle issues)
- personal history (including cultural background)
- contact details
- agencies and people responsible for carrying out each part of the plan.

Your caseworker will talk to the young person about ongoing support needs and how to access information and services. Carers and young people should receive a copy of the Leaving Care Plan.

When does the Care Allowance stop?

Carers are entitled to carer reimbursements until the child or young person reaches 18 years of age or when they finish school or TAFE. However, when a child turns 16, the Carer Allowance is reduced. This is where additional payments such as the Teenage Education payment (TEP) or Youth allowance come in. Speak with your caseworker about other financial supports that may be available. You will be provided further information about the carer allowance and post leaving care financial support.

Transition Planning

When a child or young person moves into a different living situation, it's called a 'transition'. Every child or young person has the right for their transition to be well planned and conducted at their pace. Carers play a vital role in transition planning allowing children and carers to move on. At times, placement breakdowns and transitions are not planned moves. When this happens, it is important that carer's take responsibility to try and make this as stress free as possible for children and young people.

Section 2: Rights and Responsibilities



Carer Legal Rights and Responsibilities

As an authorised carer, you are one of the most important people in the child's or young person's life for the time they're in your care.

However, you are also part of a team, all with different responsibilities. Your rights and responsibilities as a carer of a child placed with you following a Children's Court Order are outlined in the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998.

Out-of-Home Care is a partnership between:

- the child or young person
- the child or young person's family and friends
- the carer and their family
- the caseworker for the child
- key people in the child or young person's life from education, health, religious or cultural organisations
- Ngunya Jarjum



Rights of Carers

Ngunya Jarjum carers are entitled to:

- be treated with consideration, trust, honesty, respect, acceptance and fairness.
- privacy, especially with regards to their address, bank account details and other financial issues.
- be consulted by Ngunya Jarjum before any identifying placement information is disclosed to the child's parents or significant others that could adversely affect the safety, welfare or wellbeing of the carers or their family and be advised about their right to appeal a decision made about disclosure of information.
- be provided with relevant background information about the child and their family, including any medical issues, court orders, contact arrangements and educational or personal needs the child may have.
- say 'no' to a placement, if they feel they cannot meet the child's needs.
- be given a clear explanation of their role as caregiver and the role of the caseworker.
- be treated as a member of the professional team that develops and reviews the child's case plan and to contribute to making decisions that will affect the child.
- advice and support from our Ngunya Jarjum staff to better meet the child's needs.
- support services that can help them resolve conflict and stabilise the placement.
- support services to help them deal with feelings of loss when a placement ends.
- annual reviews that acknowledge their strengths and identify training needs.
- regular ongoing training in caring for children.
- be informed about how to review a decision and make a complaint.
- receive an allowance for looking after the child in their care.
- participate in case planning for the child.
- be indemnified against loss or damage to property if caused deliberately by a child in their care, in some circumstances.

Responsibilities of Carers

General care for the Child

- Provide a caring home and experiences that meet the child or young person's physical and emotional needs.
- Work as part of the team with Ngunya Jarjum and other professionals including DCJ to ensure the safety, welfare and wellbeing of the child in their care.
- Attend foster care meetings when required and training sessions when offered.
- Seek guidance from their caseworker when they are not sure of the limitations of their role. Also seek guidance if they experience problems with the child or young person's behaviour or with other agencies that the child is involved with, for example, school and health services.
- Treat information about the child or young person's family as confidential.
- Allow the caseworker to visit and support them on a regular basis and to see the child or young person on their own.
- Help the child or young person understand why they are in care and express their feelings about their own family.
- Help the child or young person retain their own sense of identity and culture, including religious beliefs and their connection to their mob.
- Understand and respond to the child or young person's key developmental milestones.
- Avoid criticism about the child or young person's family.
- Actively encourage the child or young person to participate in recreational activities.
- Cooperate positively with contact arrangements with the child or young person's natural family.
- Participate in regular reviews of the case plan for the child or young person.
- Uphold the principles of the Charter of Rights for children and young people in care and ensure their foster child is also familiar with their rights.

Health Care for the Child

- Consent to medical and dental treatment which doesn't involve surgery.
- Contact their caseworker if the child or young person needs a general anaesthetic for any purpose or if a medical practitioner (doctor) recommends the administration of any drug of addiction or psychotropic medication.

Life Story Work

- Maintain records, for example, keep a diary or scrap book of key events, photos, school and health records on the child or young person's progress in your care
- Record any relevant information about the child or young person while they are in your care, such as any injury the child may experience in your home, no matter how minor.

Ngunya Jarjum involvement

- Give their caseworker clear information about the child's progress and behaviour
- Inform their caseworker (or call the After Hours number 1800 822 863) as soon as possible in the event of a critical event, e.g., the child or young person suffers a serious accident, injury or illness.
- Inform their caseworker if the child or young person makes any disclosures of abuse.
- Inform their caseworker if they or anyone in their household is charged or convicted of an offence for which a penalty of imprisonment for 12 months or more may be imposed.
- Inform their caseworker about any significant changes or events in their family including new people coming to live in their home.
- Inform their caseworker if they intend to travel or move interstate or overseas.

Personal responsibilities

- Attend ongoing carer training and conferences as required and talk to the caseworker about any seminars or courses that may assist them in their role as a carer.
- Work in the best interests of the child or young person. This may mean accepting that the child or young person will probably be going home, and they and their family may have mixed feelings about this—especially if the child or young person has become part of their family.
- Cooperate with the caseworker and discuss any areas where they disagree with a care plan and why.
- Accept that a different home may be more suitable for a child or young person who does not settle into their home.

Rights of Children and Young People and Their Families

The Charter of Rights outlines the general rights and responsibilities of every child and young person in out-of-home care. These rights reflect those of any child or young person. The Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 requires that these rights are supported by carers and caseworkers. Their rights include but are not limited to:

- the right to have contact with their family and community.
- the right to be told why they are in care and to keep a record of their time in care.
- the right to ask for any information that is being kept about them, to read their file and to add information to their file.
- the right to be treated fairly.
- the right to be treated with respect.
- the right to feel safe and not be abused.
- the right to complain.
- the right to services that promote their health and wellbeing.
- the right to ask for extra help with their education.
- if they have to go to court, they have the right to be helped and supported.
- the right to do things they enjoy.
- the right to their own beliefs and way of life.
- the right to make choices about everyday matters.
- the right to say what they are thinking and feeling.
- the right to take part in making important decisions affecting their life.
- before leaving care, they have the right to be involved in planning the kind of support and assistance they may need after leaving care.

As an authorised carer, you are responsible for upholding and complying with all the rights of children and young people in your care. You should ensure that any child or young person in your care understands and knows their rights.

Charter of Rights booklets that are easy to understand, engaging and age appropriate are available in two versions, one for 7 to 12-year-olds and one for 13 to 17-year-olds. Speak to your caseworker or visit the DCJ website to get a copy.

Additionally, children in out-of-home care also have the right to:

- be given information concerning the proposed authorised carer by the designated agency responsible for the placement before being placed with the authorised carer.
- appeal a decision of the Children's Court.
- on leaving out-of-home care, have access free of charge to files containing personal information relating directly to them and be provided with their original documents and history of their time in care.

Parents of children and young people in out-of-home care have the right to:

- appeal a decision of the Children's Court.
- be informed of your child's progress and development during their placement.
- ask NJ for services that could help your child return to your care.
- be given information about the placement based on assessment under Section 149 (B-K): Placement of Information to parents and significant others.

Specific rights also apply to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, kinship groups, representative organisations and communities are to be given the opportunity to participate in decisions made concerning the placement of their children and young persons and in other significant decisions made under this Act that concern their children and young persons.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are placed in out-of-home care in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Young Persons Placement principles.

Ngunya Jarjum is dedicated to ensuring children and young people in out-of-home care and their families are informed of their rights and are given to them in ways that are clearly understandable to them.



Code of Conduct for Carers

Authorised Ngunya Jarjum Carers are expected to provide for the children in their care in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Conduct for Carers. New carers will have to sign off on this Code of Conduct before we can place children with them. The Code of Conduct sets out the following requirements for Carers:

General

- Follow the lawful policies, procedures and guidelines brought to your attention by your agency.
- Maintain the rights of the child in your care as set out in the NSW Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care in NSW.
- Immediately report to your agency any allegations or incidents of abuse, neglect, ill-treatment or reportable allegations of which you become aware.
- Allow your agency to inspect your home and meet with and speak to the child in your care. Your agency needs to give you reasonable notice and arrange a reasonable time to visit the child.
- Actively participate in the development, implementation and review of case plans for the child in your care.

Care environment

- Provide a home that is safe, clean and comfortable and meets the needs of the child in your care.
- Respect that children are entitled to personal privacy and ensure their belongings are kept safe and treated with respect.
- Provide a care environment where the child is not exposed to physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or verbal abuse, ill treatment or neglect.
- Provide a range of things for the child in your care to do. These activities and toys should reflect the child's age, development, skills and interests.
- Report immediately to your agency any incidents in the home or any change in who lives in your home. Incidents include:
 - the child is expelled or suspended from school
 - the child is absent without your permission for a period of 24 hours or more
 - the child travels interstate without the appropriate notification or approval
 - the child suffers a serious accident, injury, illness or death
 - the child witnesses any acts of domestic or family violence

- you become a parent to another child
- another child joins your household
- you or any other member of your household are charged with or convicted of an offence for which a penalty of imprisonment for 12 months or more may be imposed.
- Allow the child in your care to participate in normal childhood activities that are appropriate for their age and level of development.
- Include the child in your care in activities with other children in the home, appropriate to their interests, developmental stage and ability.

Sleepovers and holidays

- It is your responsibility to ensure that children placed in your care are provided with safe care arrangements. You remain responsible for making decisions about the children in your care and should remain contactable when children are with part time carers (formerly respite), camps, sleepovers and like activities.
- Children in your care can have occasional sleepovers, holiday visits and play dates with extended family and friends. These people do not need Working With Children Checks and you do not need prior approval from your agency. You remain the child's carer during these times. It is your responsibility to make sure the people the child is visiting are safe and appropriate. You need to obtain approval from your agency for any regular sleepover arrangements such as where a child is spending more than 21 nights per year with the same person.

Family and significant others

- Recognise and respect that the child has a right to maintain relationships with their birth family where safe to do so. A child's connection to their birth family should extend beyond their parents.
- Recognise and respect that the child has a right to maintain relationships with significant people in their life and their cultural community/s where safe to do so.
- Support these relationships as per the child's care plan, case plan and any relevant court orders.
- Listen to and respect the views of the child about the manner and frequency of time they spend with family and significant people.

Identity, emotional and social development

- Support the child to feel safe and develop a sense of security.
- Work with your agency to meet any specific trauma or disability needs that a child in your care may have.
- Support the child to develop a positive sense of identity.
- Support and encourage the development of positive friendships.
- Respect the right of the child to express their views freely about decisions that affect them and properly consider those views with regard to the age and maturity of the child.

Culture

- Recognise the importance of the child's cultural identity to their wellbeing.
- Assist in implementing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in your care.
- Assist in implementing the Cultural Plan for culturally and linguistically diverse children in care.
- Allow the child to observe their religion (if any).

Wellbeing, health, disability and education

- Follow the positive behaviour support policy of your agency. This will include ways to encourage positive behaviour in children and will help you respond to challenging behaviours.
- Focus on using positive behaviour support practices as described in the positive behaviour support policy or approved Positive Behaviour Support Plan by your agency.
- Only use behaviour support practices as described in the positive behaviour support policy or approved positive behaviour support plan by your agency.
- The use of any physical punishment or coercion, force-feeding, deprivation of food or any punishment intended to humiliate or frighten a child is unlawful and is not permitted. Only use restrictive practices that are part of an approved Positive Behaviour Support Plan or Behaviour Support Plan, time limited and reviewed regularly.

- Report any incident where physical restraint has been used following the protocol for critical incident/event reporting within your agency. These reports enable your agency to respond quickly and provide appropriate support. Physical restraint is only to be used in extreme situations where there is a risk of serious injury to the child or another person. Physical restraint is an action taken to restrict a child or young person's movement.
- Dispense medication, particularly psychotropic medication, according to medical advice. Psychotropic medication is any medication prescribed by a doctor which affects a child or young person's thinking, mood, behaviour, level of arousal or perception. An example is dexamphetamine which is often prescribed for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). You must not reduce or withdraw medication without medical advice. You must let your agency know if the child is prescribed a psychotropic medication or if the prescription is changed. A child who is prescribed psychotropic medication requires a Positive Behaviour Support Plan to ensure that other behaviour support strategies are being used to manage behavioural difficulties.
- Ensure the child's health, wellbeing and dental needs are met and any planned intervention is carried out in a timely manner.
- Support and seek assistance for any disability needs of a child in your care.
- For a child with a disability, it is the responsibility of your agency to seek access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), in collaboration with carers. You should work with the NDIS Support Coordinator to implement the NDIS plan to meet the disability needs of the child.
- Immediately notify your agency of any major medical events, surgery, hospitalisation and school suspension.
- Regularly provide information to your agency about the child's well-being, including issues that may arise about their development, health, behaviour and educational progress.
- Have expectations around duties – such as chores or participation in activities – that are reasonable and reflect the age and physical and intellectual development of the child in your care.
- Provide an environment which promotes learning and helps the child to reach their full potential and future goals.

Leaving care plans

- In consultation with and with the help of your agency, support young people to develop skills and transition to adulthood. This will include teaching the young person the skills required for independent living. Recognise that a young person may not be ready to live independently as soon as they turn 18 years old.
- Leaving Care Plans for the young person should be developed from the age of 15 years old.
- Where the young person has a disability or disabilities, work with the assistance of your agency and the NDIA, implement plans for a transition period to independent living or a more supportive accommodation option if required, depending on the young person's needs.

Carers can expect to be:

Respect and participation

- Recognised for the important things you do that help the child and the community more broadly.
- Supported in your role as a carer and respected as someone with your own needs including being able to access supports both within your family and community as well as from your agency. Support options should be tailored to the child and your needs and can include sleepovers, overnight camps, extended visits with significant people in the child's life or their extended family.
- Valued for what you bring to the role, including your language, cultural heritage, religious beliefs and life experience.
- Entitled to participate in making decisions concerning the safety, welfare and well-being of the child in your care.
- Respected for your opinion and consulted on decisions about the care of a child. There are some decisions that, as the child's carer, you can make and some decisions that are the responsibility of your agency or the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (formerly FACS) but your opinion should always be considered and respected.
- Encouraged to participate in and provide your views in case planning and review and case management.
- Entitled to nominate a support person to be present when attending meetings with your agency.
- Entitled to access personal information held on file by your agency about you.
- Provided with information about your agency's complaints process.

Information

- Provided with a copy of the NSW Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care in NSW.
- Provided with a clearly expressed statement of purpose of your agency.
- Provided with all relevant information that is available about the child in your care to help you care for the child and understand and meet their needs.
- Provided with all relevant known information to ensure your safety and the safety of other members of your household.
- Given clear, written information and training on your legal responsibilities as a carer and any reporting obligations required by your agency.
- Given clear information about reportable conduct and your agencies' obligation to record, investigate and respond to allegations of reportable conduct against an employee (including carers and adult members of a carer's home). Reportable conduct is any sexual offence or sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child (including a child pornography offence); any assault, ill-treatment or neglect of a child; and any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.
- Provided with information about the process of investigations and advised of the outcome of any investigation within a reasonable timeframe.
- Provided with access to an interpreter, as required, when important decisions are being made about your relationship with your agency and/or the child in your care.
- Provided with information about foster, relative and kinship carer support networks, including 24 hour support numbers, which can support you in your role as an authorised carer.

Support and training

- Entitled to access the services of government funded agencies such as My Forever Family NSW or AbSec NSW Peak Aboriginal Corporation, that provide support, training and resources to all NSW carers.
- Provided with ongoing training and resources to support the child in your care to feel safe and develop a sense of security as well as caring for yourself.
- Provided with support, resources and assistance to ensure the child's health, wellbeing and educational needs are met.

- Provided with support and assistance to help address trauma-related issues for a child in your care.
- Provided with support and assistance for a child with a disability and disability related issues.
- Provided with training and support on ways to encourage positive behaviour in children in out-of-home care, including appropriate actions to respond to challenging behaviours.
- Supported and trained to implement cultural support plans for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse children in your care.
- Provided with access to support services if a reportable conduct investigation occurs.

Reportable Allegations and Reportable Conduct

- Under the Children's Guardian Act 2019 the Department of Communities and Justice and agencies must notify reportable allegations about their 'employees' to the Children's Guardian and complete an investigation of those allegations.
- Carers and other adults living in their house are included as employees and are subject to an investigation if reportable allegations are made against them.
- You are expected to cooperate with a reportable conduct investigation.
- Reportable Conduct is not limited to your conduct towards a child in out of home care as it extends to your conduct towards all children.
- Reportable Conduct means:
 - a) a sexual offence
 - b) sexual misconduct
 - c) ill-treatment of a child
 - d) neglect of a child
 - e) an assault against a child
 - f) an offence under section 43B (failing to reduce or remove risk of child becoming victim of child abuse) or 316A (Concealing child abuse) of the Crimes Act 1900
 - g) behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.



Section 3: Identity and Culture



Identity

Ngunya Jarjum recognises the importance of identity and family relationships for children and young people in out-of-home care because a sense of belonging supports self-esteem, mental health and well-being.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have connections to culture, community and Country that nurture and support their wellbeing, spirituality and sense of identity. It is important to the wellbeing of children and their families that these connections are maintained and strengthened.

Cultural Plans

Cultural Plans outline how a child's identity, language, spirituality, religion, and connection to family, community, Country and culture will be maintained and supported by carers, caseworkers and others. Cultural plans are part of case planning and should be developed in partnership with significant people in the child's life and community. NJ will record on the child or young person's file all significant people in their life.

Ngunya Jarjum will ensure that the child or young person retains their name, identity and cultural attachment to the Nation/s or Belonging place. This must be established at first assessment and every effort made to support and educate the carer/s in allowing and supporting the child or young person to use their own language and practice their particular spiritual beliefs and practices.

When developing a child or young person's cultural plan, NJ will ensure strategies are in place to encourage the child or young person's self-esteem and identity whilst in OOHC. This will be ensured through active participation in activities such as cultural camps and workshops, contact and ongoing participation in community and culture and Life Story Work.

Family Contact

In nearly all cases children will want to maintain contact with their families during the time they are in OOHC. Research shows that children who do keep in regular contact with their families tend to do better in OOHC than those who, for whatever reason, lose touch.

It's important that you encourage them to maintain contact with their family and help to make this happen as appropriate to their needs. Contact can include letters, phone calls and pre-arranged visits.

Family contact will be dependent on the goal of the

child or young person's case plan, as well as any specific Court Orders or agreements. Carers may be expected to transport children and young people to and from contact visits where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Life Story Work

Life Story work is very important to assist children and young people in OOHC develop a sense of self, in relation to their life experiences. It is a chronological account of the child or young person's history and should be started when the child enters OOHC and maintained throughout their time in care. Life story work is a record of a child or young person's life in words, pictures, and photos.

The carer is generally the person who works with the child or young person to record their life story. Carers should collect day-to-day information such as photos and other memorabilia. NJ encourages carers to send a copy of photos and other memorabilia to caseworkers. Carers need to have a clear understanding of ways to maintain life story work including:

- taking photos to put in the book at special events and on special occasions, such as birthdays and first day at school
- encouraging the child or young person to keep personal items to put in their book such as letters, cards, drawings, and paintings
- recording the life story at the child or young person's pace. This may be a gradual process as they become more comfortable compiling detailed information about their families and time in care
- spending time with the child or young person to update the My Life Story Book
- discussing with the child or young person that the My Life Story Book is confidential and that no-one should access it without their permission
- keeping the book in a safe place. The carer should discuss with the child or young person where to keep their My Life Story Book, so it is safe
- ensuring that the My Life Story Book goes with the child or young person when they leave care.

NJ encourages carers to display family portraits around their home as it is helpful for our jarjum to see themselves as a valued and important part of a family.

Piercings

Children and young people are encouraged to express personal choice in their appearance; however, a carer cannot allow any piercings of a child or young person without seeking permission of the case worker. Carers should be aware that it is illegal to have piercings done without the consent of the person with parental responsibility.

Cultural Agreement

Maintaining connections with family, community and culture is essential to the long-term wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. As a Carer you agree to help promote the child or young person's connection with their culture and strengthen their sense of identity. Further training may be identified and or required by Ngunya Jarjum.

The below are indicators of that must be adhered to at all times whilst you remain a carer for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child or young person:

- Family details and personal histories are recorded and available to children and young people where appropriate.
- Children and young people's preferences to identify with particular names, places or people are respected.
- Events of significance to a child or young person and their family are celebrated.
- Children are supported to maintain meaningful connections with community, culture, language and spirituality.
- Children and young people have opportunities to participate in activities and experiences relevant to their background, culture and identity.
- Children and young people's case plans and Cultural Plans include strategies to assist them to maintain meaningful connections with family, community, culture and language.

The below are practical ideas for cultural connection to support the above indicators:

- Recognising and supporting the role of birth parents and families where possible.
- Asking your caseworker for information about special cultural needs.
- Gathering as much information as possible about the child's communities and making this information available to them.
- Visit and learn about areas of significance to the child or young person's Country/Nation and community of belonging.
- Encouraging the child to talk about their families and communities.
- Networking with Aboriginal carers at Ngunya Jarjum, as well as, relevant Aboriginal workers within the government sector and your local community.

- Engaging with local Aboriginal community controlled organisations and services.
- Identifying significant people in the child's life who can help them maintain links with their community.
- Providing opportunities for the child to make connect with other Indigenous children, adults and community members.
- Maintain the child's cultural interest by providing them with age appropriate books, toys, music and videos from their culture.
- Provide opportunities for the child and your family to learn the child's birth language and Country.
- Encourage the child to participate in planning cultural celebrations and events as part of your family traditions.
- Talking with the child about Aboriginal and Torres Strait history, culture and issues.
- Explaining the child's identity and their heritage. Advise on appropriate resources (caseworker to inform and advise carer as required).
- Assisting the child through any adverse experiences of racism, discrimination and bullying.
- Assist and encourage the importance of ongoing life story work.
- Interacting and participating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, such as community events, art exhibitions, films, documentaries and plays that are written by or include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Promoting positive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander role models such as sports people, artists, actors, musicians and community leaders by finding out who they are and showing an interest in them.
- Getting pictures and articles that reflect a positive view of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and discuss them with the children.
- Putting up posters and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander works of art in the home.
- Understanding the importance of funerals as significant events in the life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Doing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and craft projects at home.



Disclosure of Information to Parents and Significant Others

Children and young people entering care come with a network of relationships. Providing information about a child's placement to parents and other significant people in their lives can help maintain those relationships and support a young person's sense of belonging and identity. Providing this information can also help provide a smooth transition from care back to home.

The Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 Section 149B to 149K and the OCCG Guidelines clearly set out how requests from the parents of a child in care for information about a child's placement must be handled. (Persons who have a significant relationship with the child can also make a request, in writing, for information).

There is a range of levels of placement information (from Type 1 to Type 5) that must be considered by the Ngunya Jarjum Manager when making a decision about what placement information will be disclosed. These levels contain information that in the Type 1 high level identification information will enable the person requesting the information to identify, for example, the carer's surname and where the child is residing. While in the Type 5 lowest level non-identifying information will be placement information such as the carer's first name and how many children the carers have and their ages.

The Ngunya Jarjum Manager will make the decision about what level of information will be provided and will take into account the wishes of the child and their carers and act to ensure their safety, welfare and wellbeing will not be adversely affected by the disclosure of the requested placement information.

The Manager will formally write to carers before releasing Type 1 high level identification information. Carers can, within 28 days, ask the Manager not to release the information. If the Manager still thinks that it is in the child's best interest to release the information, then the carers will be informed of this in writing.

Type 1: High Level Identifying Information

- Full name of carer and other family/household members
- Carer's address and location, telephone numbers including landline
- Name of CYP school

Type 2: High Level Information that may allow a person to establish high level identification information

- Description or location of school
- Name of school principal
- Email address containing part of the authorised carer's surname

Type 3: Contact Contact information that doesn't allow establishment of high level identification information

- Post office box address
- General location area
- Authorised carer's first name, unless it's an unusual name
- An email address that doesn't include the authorised carer's surname or employer
- Carer's mobile phone number
- CYP mobile

Type 4: Non-Identifying Non identifying information about significant family members

- Births, deaths, marriages and other significant life events for key people in the authorised carer's extended family that may impact on CYP's life
- Moving house or school – advising of the event but not the new address
- Any departures or arrivals of other children to the carer's home

Type 5 General Non identifying contextual placement information

- First name of authorised carer
- Cultural identity, religion and language spoken at home
- General details about the family composition, backgrounds, lifestyle and experiences
- General information about the placement

Section 4: Health and Education



Health

Children and young people in out-of-home care are a vulnerable group with increased rates of physical, developmental, emotional and mental health issues compared to peers of the same age.

A child or young person's experience of trauma and abuse impacts significantly on their health and wellbeing. Some children in care may have unmet health needs and may have experienced significant developmental delay due to physical and environmental factors. Unmet health needs or poor health may negatively affect other aspects of a child or young person's life. For example, poor eyesight may impact education or participation in sport.

Ngunya Jarjum will ensure relevant health information is shared with you when a child or young person is in your care. It is also important that a child's health is monitored while in your care and that this information is shared with Ngunya Jarjum. Medical reports must be obtained from health providers and provided to your caseworker.

A child or young person in OOHC is required to receive timely and appropriate health screening, assessment, intervention, monitoring and review of their health needs. This includes annual health checks, dental checks and other health appointments a child may need.

Please refer to the carer Code of Conduct for when you can and cannot consent to medical treatment on behalf of a child or young person in OOHC.

Medicare Card and Health Care Card

When a child or young person is placed in out-of-home care, the caseworker will immediately apply for a new Medicare card number for the child or young person. While waiting for a new Medicare card to be issued, a carer can still access medical services or prescriptions for the child or young person in care.

All children are entitled to a Health Care Card to receive pharmaceutical benefits. Your caseworker will organise this for the child.

Ambulance

Children and young people in OOHC have exemptions from NSW Ambulance fees.

Keeping Up with Immunisations

When a child or young person is placed with you, your caseworker will give you information about the child's immunisation history. It is expected that children and young people receive all available immunisations. You can give consent for immunisation of a child or young person in line with the NSW Ministry of Health immunisation schedule. It is important you maintain their health records for as long as they are in your care.

My First Health Record

All children born in NSW receive a copy of My Personal Health Record (the Blue Book). The Blue Book has valuable information about a child's health and development. Children born outside of NSW who are living in NSW are also entitled to a free copy of the Blue Book. You can get a copy from your local child health care centre or hospital or on the NSW Health website.

Dental

Children and Young People must have annual dental checks. If a child or young person requires any dental work, it needs to be discussed with the caseworker. Please give copies of dental reports to your caseworker.

Nutrition

Nutrition is a part of good health. Your local health provider can provide guidance in providing a balanced diet.

Being Active

Keep our mob active. You can do this by being physically active with your family and joining sports groups. You can apply for ActiveKids vouchers to use for sports and fitness costs through Services NSW.

Smoking

Ngunya Jarjum wants carers to be aware of the increasing evidence of the serious effects of passive smoking. Based on scientific evidence, smoking in the presence of children is harmful to their health. It is Ngunya Jarjum carers and family members are not to smoke in the vicinity of the children, both in the home and in the car.

Vaccination Schedule

| Age | Disease | Vaccine |
|-----------|---|--|
| Birth | Hepatitis B | H-B-Vax II (IM) OR Engerix B (IM) |
| 6 weeks | Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, Haemophilus influenzae type b, hepatitis B, polio | Infanrix Hexa (IM) OR Vaxelis(IM) |
| | Pneumococcal | Prevenar 13 (IM) |
| | Rotavirus | Rotarix (Oral) |
| | Meningococcal B (Aboriginal children only) | Bexsero (IM) |
| 4 months | Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, Haemophilus influenzae type b, hepatitis B, polio | Infanrix Hexa (IM) OR Vaxelis(IM) |
| | Pneumococcal | Prevenar 13 (IM) |
| | Rotavirus | Rotarix (Oral) |
| | Meningococcal B (Aboriginal children only) | Bexsero (IM) |
| 6 months | Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, Haemophilus influenzae type b, hepatitis B, polio | Infanrix Hexa (IM) OR Vaxelis(IM) |
| 12 months | Meningococcal ACWY | Nimenrix (IM) |
| | Pneumococcal | Prevenar 13 (IM) |
| | Measles, mumps, rubella | MMR II OR Priorix (IM or SC) |
| | Meningococcal B (Aboriginal children only) | Bexsero (IM) |
| 18 months | Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis | Infanrix OR Tripacel (IM) |
| | Measles, mumps, rubella, varicella | Priorix Tetra OR Proquad (IM or SC) |
| | Haemophilus influenzae type b | ACT-HIB (IM or SC) |
| 4 years | Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio | Infanrix-IPV (IM) OR Quadracel (IM) |
| Year 7 | Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis Human papillomavirus | Boostrix (IM) Gardasil 9 (IM) |
| Year 10 | Meningococcal ACWY | Nimenrix (IM) |

Behaviour Support

Children and young people who have experienced trauma have particular challenges to overcome. A trauma informed base replaces labelling a child or young person as being resistant, bad or uncooperative with that of being affected by an injury. It's important to understand that the child or young person in your care is not just trying to be difficult. Most kids in care live with ongoing anxiety, alarm and deep emotional pain, even if it isn't obvious on the surface. Your caring, kind and consistent manner teamed with the use of effective discipline strategies will, over time, influence their behaviour.

You are not expected to manage challenging behaviour on your own. Your caseworker can work with you to identify ideas, techniques, strategies and support services to help you deal with the situation and make some progress towards more positive behaviour. Together, you, your caseworker, and possibly other experts such as a psychologist, should consider the least intrusive and most supportive ways to address the challenging behaviour. The options include positive parenting approaches and behaviour support strategies, with the possibility of escalating to a Behaviour Support Plan in certain circumstances.

Restricted and Prohibited Practices

Carers must not use any form of discipline that involves spanking, slapping, shouting, blaming, shaming or ridiculing the child or young person in their care. The law specifically restricts or prohibits the use of certain practices.

Restricted practices

You cannot use restricted practices to manage a child or young person's behaviour unless they are included in their Behaviour Support Plan. Restricted practices which can only be used as part of an approved Behaviour Support Plan include:

- psychotropic medication for the sole purpose of controlling behaviour
- 'non-exclusionary' time-out (used consistently to target a particular behaviour by withdrawing the carer's attention for a period of time so as not to reinforce the unacceptable behaviour)
- 'exclusionary' time-out (the removal of a child or young person from a situation)
- response cost (denying a child or young person valued items or activities as a consequence for unacceptable behaviour)

- restrictive access (limiting a child or young person's access to items, activities or experiences by means of physical barriers)
- physical restraint to restrain a child or young person. Talk to your caseworker if you're unsure whether a form of discipline you're using is a restricted practice.

Prohibited practices

Prohibited practices are against the law and must not be used in any circumstances to manage the behaviour of children or young people in care. Prohibited practices include:

- any form of corporal punishment (for example, smacking or hitting)
- any punishment that's intended to humiliate or frighten a child or young person
- any punishment that involves immobilising them with a chemical or physical restraint
- force-feeding or depriving a child or young person of food
- use of medication to control or restrain a child without a Behaviour Support Plan, proper medical authorisation or legal consent
- use of punishing techniques, such as putting a child or young person in a hot or cold bath, putting spice in their food, or squirting liquid on their face or body
- over-correction, where the punishment is out of proportion to the behaviour (for example, making a child or young person clean an entire room because they tipped their meal on the floor)
- confinement or containment (for example, a child being forced to remain in a locked room or other place that they can't leave)
- punishment that involves threats to withhold family contact or change any part of a child or young person's case plan
- denying access to basic needs or supports
- unethical practices, such as rewarding a child or young person with cigarettes
- any other act or failure to act that is an offence under the civil or criminal laws of NSW.

In a small number of cases, a Behaviour Support Plan may include the use of a restraint such as sedation in specific circumstances.

Behaviour Support Plans

Where a child or young person exhibits challenging behaviour that goes beyond what you can reasonably be expected to manage as a carer, a Behaviour Support Plan may be required. The plan is prepared by a psychologist or similar expert who is skilled in working with challenging behaviour. Your caseworker should review the Behaviour Support Plan with you within the first few weeks, and then every three months from then on.

Education

You play a crucial role in supporting the child or young person in your care to participate and achieve the best outcomes at school. Education may not have been a priority for some kids. This can cause gaps in learning and make it harder for them to settle into school. They may also be dealing with the additional stress of moving to a new placement, starting at a new school, moving from primary to high school, or changing schools.

Staying involved in learning up to Year 12 and beyond gives children and young people greater employment opportunities and a broader set of social skills. It also prepares them for life after school and helps them to make decisions about their future.

Early Education

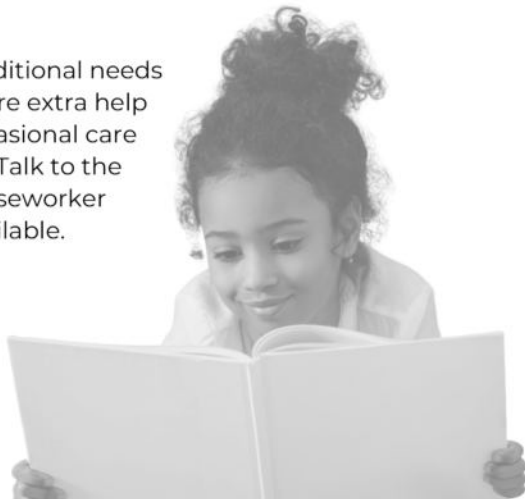
Children aged three to five years old will benefit from preschool or childcare. It helps them get ready for 'big school' and learn new social skills. Involving them in learning from a young age will give them the best start in life. High-quality preschool programs allow children to learn the problem-solving, communication and social skills they need for future educational success.

Young children benefit from education in a number of ways. For example, they learn:

- how to build relationships and be part of a community
- how to work with classmates to achieve goals
- how to accept success and disappointment
- about diversity, tolerance and acceptance.

Kids in out-of-home care get priority places at childcare or preschool – talk to your caseworker to learn more about early childhood learning and local preschool options. Local playgroups and early childhood centres often have a lot of information about what services are available.

Children with additional needs sometimes require extra help at preschool, occasional care or vacation care. Talk to the school or your caseworker about what's available.



School

In NSW, children must be enrolled in and attending school, or registered with the Board of Studies for home schooling, from the age of six, although many kids start at the age of five. To be eligible to begin kindergarten, the child must turn five on or before 31 July of that school year. Ensure children and teenagers always get a good night's sleep and a healthy breakfast before they set off for school. Make learning part of everyday family life and help them establish good routines. You can support learning by:

- being involved in the school community and getting to know your child's teachers and friends
- attending parent-teacher meetings – a great opportunity to talk about how the child or young person is progressing
- telling the school and your caseworker about any issues which may impact on the child or young person's ability to learn
- participating in the child or young person's personalised learning and support planning and encouraging them to be part of the process
- checking with your caseworker or school to make sure any actions are followed through
- asking kids about what they are doing at school, what they enjoy and what they are having trouble with
- giving them a regular structured time and a place for homework and checking their homework
- providing opportunities for them to study with their friends
- balancing homework with recreation, play and sporting activities
- reading together and going to your local library
- acknowledging and giving praise for achievements, big and small
- taking kids on trips that link to school work, for example, museums and art galleries – many of which are free
- making sure learning and support planning documentation, school reports and any other relevant education records are provided to new carers or parents if a student moves placement or returns home.

You can also encourage the child to:

- participate in learning and support planning
- participate in activities which support their learning and connection to the school community
- complete their homework and talk about what they enjoy at school and what they are having trouble with
- understand that completing school and going to university or TAFE will give them their best possible chance of success in life.

Section 5: Child Protection and Safety



Child Protection and Safety

Ngunya Jarjum takes the safety and protection of our children and young people very seriously. It is important that as a carer you are aware of what to do in certain circumstances where children and young people are at risk.

Critical and Non-Critical Incidents

The Carer must immediately notify the caseworker or On-Call worker when:

- the child or young person is expelled or suspended from school
- the child or young person is absent without permission for a period of 24 hours or more
- the child or young person is absent from NSW without permission for any period
- the child or young person suffers a serious accident, injury, illness or death
- the Carer becomes a parent to another child or young person
- Carer or any other members of the household are charged with or convicted of an offence for which a penalty of imprisonment for 12 months or more may be imposed.

Occasional arrangements, such as a sleep-over at a friend's house, play dates and babysitting, do not constitute a "discharge" of care.

Ngunya Jarjum assess whether the report is a minor incident or a Critical Event. When the incident is minor, causes no harm and the child or young person returns to their placement, the caseworker completes an Incident Report with a Risk Assessment or Safety Plan where required.

What to Do During a Critical Incident

If the child or young person is in danger or seriously hurt, call 000 for police and/or ambulance. It is important to try to stay calm and call Ngunya Jarjum. Our out of office number is 1800 822 863.

When a serious incident occurs that involves a child or young person in your care, contact your caseworker at Ngunya Jarjum as soon as possible. This will ensure that you and the child or young person receive the support needed following the incident. It will also help Ngunya Jarjum to follow our required procedures.

When a Child or Young Person Runs Away

If you are concerned that a child or young person may have run away, you must notify Ngunya Jarjum. When the child or young person runs away from a placement the caseworker:

- notifies Manager Casework
- takes all possible steps to locate the child, which might include visiting or telephoning the child's friends and relatives
- takes all reasonable steps to bring the child home, once they are found
- notifies the Helpline and notifies the police when the child can't be found
- if the child refuses to return, tries to negotiate an agreement with the child about their safety
- tells the child that we need to inform DCJ and/or the police because we are responsible for their safety
- consults members of the Aboriginal community
- supports the carer to understand the incident and deal with their emotional response.

Disclosures of Abuse or Neglect

Children and young people often don't disclose abuse or neglect the first time it happens. They may experience a sense of helplessness or hopelessness and take weeks, months or sometimes years before making their abuse known.

Disclosure can be deliberate or accidental. For example, a child or young person might:

- 'blurt out' a harmful experience, or their fear of something
- confide privately that they have been abused or fear that they will be abused
- tell another child
- provide hints in drawings, during play or in stories
- disguise a disclosure by posing 'what if' or 'a friend of mine' scenarios.

If a child or young person discloses information to you about abuse or neglect, listen calmly without judgement. Reassure them they did the right thing by telling you, that you believe them and that you're there to support them. Don't make promises you may not be able to keep, for example, that you'll make sure nobody ever hurts them again. Don't ask probing questions and be careful not to let them see reactions of shock, disbelief or fear.

Your role is not to interview the child or gather evidence. This is the responsibility of specially trained caseworkers

and, if appropriate, police officers. However, you do have an obligation to report the disclosure. As soon as possible, you should:

- write down what the child or young person said or did, using their exact words where possible, and dating the conversation or incident
- record and date your observations about their mood or demeanour
- share the information with your caseworker to assist in the assessment and investigation process.

Where appropriate, let your child know that you have to tell their caseworker. Explain you want to help keep them safe and that it's the caseworker's job to do whatever needs to be done to keep them safe. Your child may not be happy about you reporting the disclosure, and they may even oppose it. Keep in mind that it is important for the authorities to take the necessary action to prevent any further harm to the child, their siblings or any other children who come into contact with the person alleged to be responsible.

Allegation of Abuse in Care

From time to time, allegations of inappropriate conduct or behaviour towards children and young people are made against carers. Education, training, good parenting practices and a strong connection to your caseworker can help prevent situations that may be seen as inappropriate. However, even the best carers can have allegations made against them.

Allegations arise for a variety of reasons. When an allegation is made against a carer, Ngunya Jarjum is required to determine whether the allegation constitutes a reportable allegation under the Ombudsman Act 1974. Reportable allegations include:

- sexual offence or sexual misconduct committed against, with, or in the presence of a child (including a child pornography offence)
- assault, ill-treatment or neglect of a child
- behaviour that causes psychological harm to a child whether or not, in all cases, with the consent of the child
- behaviour that may not meet the requirements of the Code of Conduct, for example, if a carer physically punishes (smacks) a child in care.

Investigations are based on fairness to the carer who is the subject of the allegation, while giving the highest possible priority to the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person.

What happens when an allegation is made?

The Ngunya Jarjum Reportable Conduct team investigates allegations of reportable conduct made about Ngunya Jarjum carers.

To ensure the welfare of the child or young person and any other children living in the house, it may be necessary to remove them from the home during the investigation. This decision is made following an assessment of the safety and welfare of the child or children in care. If the concerns meet the threshold of reportable conduct an investigation will be carried out, the carer will be:

- told there is an allegation
- told what the allegation is in as much detail as possible so they can respond and give information that they think is important about the event or allegation
- able to have a support person present if they choose to be interviewed during the investigation
- able to ask questions, provide information and seek a review after a finding is made, if they believe not all the relevant information was known.

The carer will be notified of the allegation once DCJ (if involved) and Ngunya Jarjum have the information needed to provide a clear and accurate decision about the conduct.

All details, records and documents about the case are treated confidentially. Only people who have a direct role in the investigation are included in discussions and correspondence. Confidentiality is extremely important for protecting all concerned from undue stress and making sure the investigation and assessment process is fair.

What are the next steps?

If it is decided that the carer's conduct fits the definition of an allegation of reportable conduct, Ngunya Jarjum:

- plans an investigation, gathers evidence and gives the carer the opportunity to respond to each allegation of reportable conduct
- completes an investigation report and makes findings for each allegation of reportable conduct
- tells the carer the outcome in writing
- may make recommendations about what should happen next, for example, providing support to children or reviewing the carer's situation to determine if they are able to continue caring for children in out-of-home care.
- may notify the Office of the Children's Guardian or the NSW Ombudsman about the allegation and what action the agency has taken. The NSW Ombudsman ensures the government and certain non-government agencies in NSW have systems in place for preventing reportable conduct and handling reportable allegations and convictions involving their employees
- updates the Carers Register.

If it is decided that the conduct does not fit the definition of an allegation of reportable conduct, the agency and sometimes DCJ decide what further action is required to keep the child safe.

Probity Checks

To be a carer, you and the people in your home must provide information to be assessed and entered on the NSW Carers Register. The NSW Carers Register is a central database of people who have applied to become an authorised carer, or have been authorised as a carer, to provide statutory or supported out-of-home care in NSW. The register helps to ensure that only appropriate individuals are authorised as carers in NSW. Under the current NSW legislation, the authorisation of a statutory foster carer and the authorisation of a relative or kinship carer both require the same pre-authorisation probity and suitability checks to be completed.

Identification Documents

As part of Ngunya Jarjum's probity checks, we require carers and all household members over the age of 16 to provide Identification documentation for our own records. ID with an expiry date must be current. The common types of Identification are:

- Birth Certificate or Passport (1 required)
- Driver Licence or Photo Card front and back (1 required)
- Medicare/Bank/Credit/Debit Card (2 required)

If you are unable to provide documents from this list please refer to the National Police Check requirements. Please note your information will be securely stored with limited access.

All forms of ID documentation provided must include the applicant's full name. If documents using a former name are provided, evidence of the name change must be included in addition to the four ID documents such as a change of name certificate or a marriage certificate.

National Police Check

It is a requirement under legislation that all carers and household members over the age of 18 years have a current National Police Check. National Police Checks are only current for 3 years at Ngunya Jarjum. You must also notify us if you become aware of any criminal charges against you or a household member.

When your police check is due to expire or you are a household member turning 18, our compliance team will get in contact with you to remind you. A carer or household member can do their own police check by applying online and Ngunya Jarjum will reimburse you. Alternatively, you can complete a National Police Check Form and provide us with the required documentation.

Working with Children Check (WWCC)

A cleared Working with Children Check must be held at all times by all carers, and household members over the age of 18. Failure to provide Ngunya Jarjum with this document may result in the agency suspending your authorisation and payments or finding an alternate placement for the child/ren in your care.

When your WWCC is due to expire or you are a household member turning 18, our compliance team will get in contact with you to remind you. It is your responsibility to apply for your own WWCC.

Community Services Check

Ngunya Jarjum will complete a Community Services Check for all potential carers and household members over the age of 16. If a person moves into the house or on to the property, or stays for more than 21 days within the year, Ngunya Jarjum must be notified in advance to ensure a Community Services Check can be completed prior to the person moving in.

Household Members

As a carer you need to notify your caseworker if a person is planning to move into, or out of your home or if a person is staying in your home for 21 days or longer (or short periods totalling 21 days). A household member is also a person(s) that lives on your property including a unit, studio or caravan.

All household members regardless of their age are required by the Office of Children's Guardian to be recorded on the Carer Register.

A person over 16 years moving into your home must provide identification, apply for a National Police Check and Community Service Check. Your caseworker can assist you with probity checks.



Safety Around the House

All kids should grow up in a home environment that is safe and comfortable. Alongside all the love and emotional support you offer, you'll be looking after a child or young person's physical health and security too.

In the kitchen

- Have a fire extinguisher or fire blanket located in or close to the kitchen.
- Keep cleaning products and medications out of reach of children.
- Keep knives and other sharp objects out of reach of children; a knife block is a good solution.
- Keep electrical cords for appliances like kettles and blenders out of reach of children.
- Wash hands before preparing food, feeding young children, serving food or eating.
- Wash hands after handling raw food.
- Use a separate cutting board for meat.
- Cook on the back burners of the stove where possible, and position handles out of reach.
- Rinse a cleaning cloth or sponge after use and put it somewhere to dry.

In the bathroom

- Set the hot water system so that tap water is not hotter than 50C.
- Keep hazardous materials including medications and razors out of reach of children.
- Do not keep electrical appliances in the bathroom.
- Use non-slip mats in the shower and bath.
- Wash hands after using the toilet or changing a nappy.
- Wash toothbrushes in hot water and keep them away from the toilet and sink to prevent contamination.
- Never leave babies, infants and small children alone in the bath.
- Wash hands before giving someone medicine or first aid.
- Wash hands after having contact with blood or body fluids, coughing or sneezing or blowing your nose.
- Wear rubber gloves when someone in the house is sick or injured and you are dealing with bodily fluids, blood, faeces and vomit.
- Properly dispose of used bandaids, bandages and needles.

Around the house

- Locate furniture away from windows to ensure a child can't climb up and out of a window.

- Locate heaters at least one metre away from anything flammable, such as curtains.
- Clean surfaces regularly, particularly those that are touched often like doorknobs and stair rails.
- Clean surfaces frequently when someone is ill and immediately if contaminated by bodily fluids, blood, faeces or vomit.
- Clean a baby's change table at least daily and whenever dirty.
- Regularly wash children's toys.
- Keep pets clean and regularly empty litter trays.
- Install an electrical safety switch to minimise the risk of electric shocks and injuries, deaths or fires.
- Use power boards in electric sockets instead of double adapters, and do not overload them.
- Switch off and unplug electrical appliances when not in use.
- Do not use extension cords in areas where they may be tripped over or pulled out accidentally.
- Do not run extension cords under carpeting or rugs, as they may overheat.
- Attach safety barriers to the top and bottom of stairs to prevent falls if there is a baby or infant in the home.
- Keep cords for blinds and curtains out of reach of children.
- Install at least one working smoke alarm on each level of your home (this is a legal requirement in NSW and anyone who does not comply is guilty of an offence and can be fined).
- Keep smoke alarms in working order; check twice a year and change batteries once a year.
- Have a fire escape plan and practise it regularly (for tips about home fire safety go to NSW Fire and Rescue).
- Keep handy the phone numbers of the police, fire brigade, ambulance and NSW Poisons Information Centre so all members of your household can find them easily.

Around water

- Familiarise kids with water and teach them to swim.
- Always know where your child is. Make sure that any doors or gates that provide access to areas where there are water tanks, drains, fountains, ponds or pools are kept locked. Remember that small children can also drown in unexpected places like baths and spas.
- Do not leave water in eskies, buckets or wading pools; small children can drown in just a few centimetres of water.
- If you live on a property with a dam, make sure that your yard is securely fenced.
- Do not leave older children in charge of younger children.

Cyber Safety

For many young people, particularly teenagers, their online life is an important part of their social identity. However, with this comes the concern that young people might also access potentially harmful online contexts.

Be aware of how to support a young person in your care accessing technology, including putting precautions in place and taking action to prevent cyber dangers.

Safety and Privacy Online

Sharing images and information through websites, forums, online games and social networks such as Instagram, Facebook, Tumblr and Snapchat is a large part of what keeps young people connected to friends – but it can also jeopardise their privacy and safety. Speak with your caseworker to see if it's appropriate for the child or young person in your care to be contacting others through social networking - sometimes contact is restricted or requires supervision in the best interests of the child, so it's important you know who they are talking to online.

- Let your child know their safety is important and for that reason you want to check and set the privacy settings of every new app, online club or digital communication they download or sign up for. Choose strict privacy settings and make sure location sharing is turned off.
- Make the privacy rules clear to your child. There are certain things kids should never share online including their full name, home address, school address, current location or phone number. Explain that reputable people and businesses won't request this sort of information, so if someone is asking for it, your child or teen should let you know.
- Explain that people often say things online they would never say in person, and that they may be exposed to what's called 'cyber bullying' either from friends or strangers. Tell them the easiest way to discourage a cyber-bully is to ignore them. You can also delete or block bullies so you no longer see their messages.
- Remind them that if something online seems wrong, inappropriate or dangerous, they'll probably feel it: maybe their heart will pound or their stomach will churn. If they're feeling that way during any sort of online conversation, they should exit it straight away and let you know.
- Make sure they realise that people can disguise their true identities when they're communicating online and tell them to never meet up in the real world with someone you have met online – this can be risky. If

you know that the child or young person in your care has had any sort of inappropriate contact online, report it to the police and the school if needed, so they can follow it up. Also let your caseworker know.

Watch what you post or say online too! Remember you can also give away too much by posting or publishing information such as your name, photos, birth date and address. Without realising, you may also post identifying or personal information about the child in your care, making it very easy for someone to locate the child or young person. It's hard to control access to information once it has been posted online. Think before you post and try to limit your use of social channels and the personal information you publish online.

Kids and the Internet

Many children and young people use the internet to help with homework, listen to music, play games and chat with friends. Kids are vulnerable to many of the risks of using the internet. These include:

- meeting predatory adults online, posing as potential friends
- giving out personal information, such as phone numbers or photos
- visiting sites showing pornography, racism or depictions of violence
- staying up too late playing games and contacting friends
- spending too much time online, compromising 'real world' friendships.

In the early years, it's appropriate to be very actively involved when your child is online: talk about how to use the internet safely, insist that devices are used in public areas of the house, and perhaps consider using settings or software that limit what your child can do online.

As your child gets older, you can pull back a bit. Keep up the conversations about what they're doing online, but don't undermine your older teen's privacy by demanding passwords, logging on to their devices or using software to track their activity unless you have real concerns for their safety. It's better to make it clear what your values and expectations are, and ensure that your teen knows they can always come to you with questions or problems around what they encounter online. For more information and advice, visit:

The eSafety Commissioner [esafety.gov.au](https://www.esafety.gov.au) - Resource that helps kids, carers and other Australians stay safe online.

Think U Know [thinkuknow.org.au](https://www.thinkuknow.org.au) - Information about cyber-safety and preventing child exploitation for carers and kids.

Section 6: Communication and Confidentiality



Communication

To ensure children and young people are well cared for, carers and Ngunya Jarjum staff have a responsibility to communicate openly and share information. In a good working partnership, you and your caseworker will share a common understanding of the goals for the child or young person in your care and will keep each other up to date on any news, changes or concerns.

NJ and carers communicate by:

- responding promptly and courteously to one another
- contacting one another to share information and feedback
- listening to and respecting each other's point of view
- working together to resolve concerns
- working together to protect the confidentiality of sensitive and personal information.

Confidentiality

Ngunya Jarjum has a commitment to uphold confidentiality.

This includes the preservation of personal information regarding the service, service user and their families which could be disclosed in the course of seeking and receiving services from Ngunya Jarjum.

The obligation to respect confidentiality is binding for everyone involved and in making every effort to maintain confidentiality, the following rules apply:

- information regarding children and their families will not be discussed in the presence of other clients, staff, management committee members, carers or any other person not directly involved
- all business relevant to Ngunya Jarjum that may be of a private nature to staff, carers, management or other workers should not be discussed in the presence of service users
- upon ceasing duties with Ngunya Jarjum, no service business or information regarding service user, carers, staff or management should be discussed or disclosed.

Ngunya Jarjum places paramount importance on confidentiality and privacy, however there are times when preserving particular issues may place a child or young person at risk, particularly in child protection cases. Ngunya Jarjum has a duty of care to appropriately share information that impacts on the safety of children and young people, indicates risk to the child, informs decision making in child protection matters, or impacts on the safety of the carer's family.

Permission to Be in the Media

Children cannot be named or pictured in a newspaper or other source of media without consent of Ngunya Jarjum that is in line with section 149 B-K of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998.

Complaints

Ngunya Jarjum sees our complaint system as an essential part of the provision of the quality service. It provides us with a useful source of information and feedback for improving Ngunya Jarjum's service.

Ngunya Jarjum aims to provide high quality service and support for children, their families and their carers. However, sometimes children, families, carers, agencies or community members may need to express a concern, make a complaint or appeal a decision made by Ngunya Jarjum.

Complaints don't have to be in writing but we can assist children, their families or their carers to complete the Ngunya Jarjum "Complaints Form" if they would like us to do so. There will be no negative consequences to any person, child, family member or carer for raising a concern, making a complaint or appealing a decision.

Children will be supported at all times by their Ngunya Jarjum caseworker when they make a complaint (unless the complaint is about the caseworker, then the CEO or Manager Casework will assist). The caseworker will answer their questions and assure them that they have the right to be heard.

If you would like to make a complaint or would like a copy of our Complaints Policy, you can contact your caseworker or another trusted person at Ngunya Jarjum. Complaints can also be made online at <https://ngunyarjarjum.com/contact-us/complaints/>.

The NSW Ombudsman

If you remain unhappy with the response you have received, you can take your complaint to the NSW Ombudsman's Office. The Ombudsman is an independent body that oversees a range of agencies in NSW, including those that deliver services to children. The Ombudsman is responsible for making sure that agencies are aware of their responsibilities to the public and act reasonably as well as lawfully.

Section 7: Carer Supervision and Support



Supervision and Support

We value the work our carers do and the contribution they make to the lives of children and young people. Appropriate support for the families who care for children and young people is vitally important to a successful placement and the Out-of-Home Care team works hard to ensure that carers receive the best possible support. We provide the following support to all our carers:

- Access to a NJ caseworker
- After hours and crisis support
- Supervision and support from your caseworker and the Manager Casework
- Training, resources and carer connection events
- Regular home visits and phone contact
- Activities and other opportunities for carers and jarjums
- Referral to specialist supports, depending on needs
- Financial support

Dedicated Staff

In addition to your designated caseworker, Ngunya Jarjum has a team of dedicated staff that are dedicated to providing quality supervision and support for our carers. Our Carer Assessments and Reviews team's key responsibilities are to:

- recruit, assess and develop new carers
- provide annual carer reviews and support
- provide ongoing training and education for new and existing carers
- provide information to carers before a placement begins.

Monthly Supervision

Your allocated caseworker provides supervision for a carer as part of the monthly home visit. These visits are to help support carers on a regular basis and to allow the caseworker to discuss and sight the child or young person. The caseworker plans time in the home visit to meet privately with the carer for supervision and support. Topics discussed and recorded in the Monthly Visit Prompt Sheet, including;

- Are there better ways we can work together better?
- Respite
- Training and support
- Self-care
- Therapeutic intervention (behavioural support)
- Resources and information
- Other issues for the carer

Carer Reviews

Once you have become an authorised carer, we will complete a Carer Review annually. Carer Reviews may also be undertaken where there is a change in carer circumstance or as requested by Ngunya Jarjum.

The annual carer review involves meeting with your caseworker to:

- provide each other with feedback
- discuss any difficulties or issues that need resolving
- ensure that you are complying with the Code of Conduct
- identify your training and support needs
- review your previous Carer Development Plan
- update your Carer Development Plan and set a date for the next review
- check the current circumstances of your household to ensure nothing has changed to affect your authorisation.

On completion of a Carer Review, a plan may be created to address any areas of support or development that were identified during the Review.

Household Safety Checks

A home inspection will be completed as part of your annual carer review or if you move to a new house. The caseworker will also work with you to identify any potential hazards within the home environment as part of your monthly placement support. Carers with swimming pools must register your pool and have a valid pool compliance certificate.

Placement Breakdowns

When the caseworker, carer or child or young person identify problems in the placement indicating a risk of placement breakdown the caseworker completes a Placement Risk Assessment and develops a plan to reduce the risk.

The caseworker may:

- visit you and the child or young person more frequently
- request a review of the Behaviour Support Plan
- implement support
- identify coaching needs for behaviour management
- check in with other household members
- use the Life Story Work to help the child or young person identify when they became unsettled or concerned.

Taking Care of Yourself

Carers spend a lot of time caring for others, but often don't do enough to look after themselves. That can lead to emotional, mental and physical exhaustion. It's important for you to maintain or improve your health and wellbeing in times of stress. Some self-care tips are:

- eat healthy food, exercise regularly and get enough sleep
- slow down and take time out to do things you enjoy
- start or end the day with a relaxing ritual such as doing stretches, meditating, taking a bath or reading
- set boundaries and learn to say 'no' when too many demands are made on your time
- take pleasure in the small successes you have with the child or young person in your care, from an unexpected smile to a real 'thank you'
- connect with other carers to share stories about the challenges and joys of caring
- ask for help and support from friends, family, other carers or your caseworker when you need it
- talk about respite, home help and other options for support with your caseworker
- plan ahead for holidays so you and the kids can get a break together or apart.

If you're worried about how you or your own children are coping, talk to your caseworker. Together, you can identify strategies for managing worries, areas of conflict, or any extra support you may need.



Respite Care

Respite care is another term for "break" and sometimes carers need to have respite provided for them. Respite care is provided on a case-by-case basis and should be discussed as part of the child or young person's case plan. Respite provides an opportunity for carers to have a break, renew your energies, or have alone time with your family. It also aims to provide a positive experience for the child or young person. Respite is provided by authorised carers and your caseworker will work with everyone involved.

Counselling

Caring for children and young people can be difficult and demanding, and you may consider counselling. Your caseworker is able to help with arranging counselling sessions. Counselling is totally confidential, and your counsellor will not be informed of any interaction between you and your counsellor.

Training for Carers

Ngunya Jarjum will provide training and/or resources to help keep up your skills as a carer. This may be identified through carer reviews or offered throughout the year as training such as First Aid Courses become available. You will be notified by letter or email and invited to attend. Ngunya Jarjum also hosts Carer Conferences biennially which include a series of information sessions and workshops.

After a Child or Young Person Leaves Your Care

When a child or young person leaves your home there may be many feelings and changes within your home. When a child or young person leaves your care:

- give yourself and your family time to grieve as long as necessary.
- allow yourself to have mixed feelings about the child or young person leaving your care
- support your own children in expressing their feelings
- you are entitled to a "debriefing" with your caseworker
- talk to your caseworker about the placements, the effect it had on you and your family, and how you feel about taking on another child or young person in care.

Financial Support

The Foster Carer Allowance is intended to reimburse the carer for the day-to-day care of the children and/or young people in your care. The Foster Care Allowance is not means tested and is not affected by Centrelink payments that the carer or young person may be receiving as it is treated as a 'reimbursement' for expenses incurred.

The day-to-day expenses covered by the Foster Carer Allowance include:

- Food
- Household provisions and costs
- Clothing and footwear (including school uniforms)
- Daily travel
- Suitable car restraints
- Sports, hobbies, and activities
- General educational expenses
- General medical and pharmaceutical expenses
- Gifts and pocket money

For any other expenditure request/s outside the Foster Carer Allowance Expense Guide, the request will only be considered if it is an 'unplanned exceptional circumstance/s' situation. Each case will be considered on its own merit and if you believe you have an 'unplanned exceptional circumstances' then please discuss this with your Caseworker/Caseworker Manager.

Domestic Necessities

The normal needs of the child/young person such as food, accommodation, utilities (water, electricity and gas) and suitable transport are to be covered by the foster care allowance. In relation to transport, this includes items such as motor vehicle registration / service and suitable child safety-restraints.

Education

All general expenditure associated with schooling is expected to be covered from the foster care allowance. This may include uniforms, writing materials, excursions, school camps, school levies, text books, etc. Other educational costs such as tutoring must be identified in the child/young person's annual Case Plan.

Child Care

Ngunya Jarjum covers the cost of two days per week child care. All carers must apply to Centrelink for a Child Care Benefit (CCB). Ngunya Jarjum will pay the net of the child care fees, ie. less the CCB. The cost for other child care must be identified in the annual Case Plan of each child.

Teenage Education Payment (TEP)

Where a TEP is being made to a carer the payment is to provide education-related assistance to the carers. The payment is for costs such as supplies and uniforms, as well as activities to improve opportunities for the young person to stay in education or training. Extra financial support for education related expenses must be identified in the annual Case Plan of the child/young person.

Hobbies, Sports, Activities and Holidays

Hobbies and holidays are all to be paid from the Foster Care Allowance paid to the carers. Additional sporting or activities should be discussed with your caseworker. This requires prior approval and must be identified in the annual Case Plan of each child/young person.

Medical

All general medical and all pharmaceutical costs (both prescription and over the counter drugs) are to be met from the allowance. All children and young people in OOHC receive free ambulance, are provided with a Medicare Card and participate in the 'Closing the Gap' OOHC Health Pathway, all of which assist in minimising health related costs.

Professional Therapy

Professional Therapy must be recommended and approved by Ngunya Jarjum and identified in the Case Plan. Unusual items may be claimable separately and where possible should seek prior approval of Ngunya Jarjum before incurring the expense.

Travel

Carers are expected to cover daily travel from the Foster Care Allowance. This may include travel to respite, local birth family contacts, etc. Additional travel assistance may be considered by Ngunya Jarjum through discussion with your caseworker.

Respite

The cost of Respite with an authorised carer will be met by Ngunya Jarjum where the respite has been pre-arranged and/or pre-approved.

Clothing and Footwear

All clothing and footwear, both general and school wear, is to be purchased from the allowance paid to carers.

Carers do not need to meet any thresholds for extra financial assistance support. However, it is essential that carers seek prior approval via their caseworker or caseworker Manager before incurring any 'extra' costs for which they will be seeking further support and/or reimbursement.

Support Services and Resources

AbSec (NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation)

1800 888 698
absec.org.au

Centrelink | Services Australia

136 150
servicesaustralia.gov.au

My Forever Family NSW

1300 782 975
Interpreter service: 131 450 (weekdays 9am – 5pm)
myforeverfamily.org.au

Medicare | Services Australia

132 011
servicesaustralia.gov.au

Office of the Children's Guardian

(02) 8219 3600
ocg.nsw.gov.au

NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT)

1300 006 228
ncat.nsw.gov.au

NSW Ombudsman

(02) 9286 1000 (within Sydney) or
1800 451 524 (outside Sydney)
ombo.nsw.gov.au

Legal Aid NSW

1300 888 529
legalaid.nsw.gov.au

Department of communities and Justice

1800 000 164
dcj.nsw.gov.au

DCJ Careleaver's Line

1800 994 686
CareleaversLine@facets.nsw.gov.au

Link Up Family Services (NSW)

02 9837 2200
1800 624 332

Emergency Contacts

Emergency Services (Fire, Police, Ambulance)

000

Health Direct Australia

1800 022 222
healthdirect.gov.au

Kids Helpline

1800 55 1800
kidshelpline.com.au

Lifeline Australia

13 11 14
lifeline.org.au

Poisons Information Centre

131 126
poisonsinfo.nsw.gov.au

Child Protection Helpline

132 111

Contact Information

If you have any further questions, or need assistance, don't hesitate to contact us. We're here for you every step of the way.

Caseworkers are available and talk to you if you have concerns or issues. They may be able to refer you to a service for additional support if this is something that you feel would help you.

Ngunya Jarjum provides an On-Call service outside office hours and on weekends for any urgent matters or emergency situations.



Phone: (02) 6626 3700
After Hours: 1800 822 863
Fax: (02) 6622 5500
Hours: Mon – Fri 9.00am 4.30pm

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<https://www.facebook/NgunyaJarjumAboriginalCorporation>

