INITIAL CARER CONSULTATION

SHARING INFORMATION EARLY TO HELP CARERS GET TO KNOW AND SUPPORT CHILDREN IN CARE

ACT Government
Community Services

INFOSHEET

In the ACT, *A Step Up for Our Kids* strives to create a therapeutic, trauma-informed care system that helps kids grow up strong, safe and connected. A system where everyone involved – service providers, carers and families – understands the impact trauma has on a child's behaviour, health and development. A system that builds positive, safe and healing relationships and practices because of its understanding of trauma, attachment and child development.



One way we do this is by meeting early with carers when a child comes into their care, to share information about the child and their background. We call this an **initial carer consultation**.

WHAT IS AN INITIAL CARER CONSULTATION?

An initial carer consultation is a preliminary conversation between a trained therapeutic assessor and a carer about the child who has recently come into their care. It happens very soon after the child enters care to help carers early on, to be aware of the trauma and adversity the child has experienced, and the possible impacts. It is a two-way process providing carers with the opportunity to ask questions as well as contribute information about the child they are caring for.

Sharing this information early helps carers better understand the child in their care and be more equipped to respond to and support them.

Initial carer consultations are not used for children or young people on Voluntary Care Agreements (VCA), or those in residential care.

Talking with carers early to share information about a child's background, helps equip carers from an early stage to respond to and support the child who's come into their care.

WHAT INFORMATION IS SHARED?

The therapeutic assessor will share with you practical information about trauma-informed therapeutic care with particular relevance to the child you are caring for.

This will include:

- why the child has come into care
- what trauma they have experienced, for example abuse, neglect, exposure to family violence
- the impacts of developmental trauma
- what to look out for in the child's behaviour that could indicate they need help
- strategies to help settle the child into their new environment / your home
- tips for creating a therapeutic care environment
- tips for helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children maintain cultural connection.

The assessor is there to help you and you should feel free to ask questions and share any concerns you have.

After the meeting, the assessor will send you, and your case manager, a record of your conversation, including trauma-informed resources particularly relevant to the child in your care.

WHEN DOES IT HAPPEN?

Carer consultations happen whenever Emergency Action is taken or when a child first comes into care under an interim Care and Protection Order. If this matches your situation, then you can expect a therapeutic assessor from the CYPS Therapeutic Assessment and Planning team to make contact with you early on.

WHERE DOES IT HAPPEN?

The therapeutic assessor will meet with you at your home, or at another location that works for you. Phone consultations are available for interstate and regional carers.

WHO CAN ATTEND?

Typically, the consultation involves you and a therapeutic assessor. It doesn't matter if you are a kinship or a foster carer.

Sometimes, the child's case manager will also be invited, however, it is not compulsory for them to attend.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER?

If the child remains in care, a detailed therapeutic assessment will be completed at a later time. During your initial carer consultation, the therapeutic assessor will tell you about the assessment process and when it will likely happen. The purpose of the assessment is to learn more about the child and identify specific support options that will best help them emotionally, physically and developmentally.

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

You are also encouraged to read:

- Therapeutic assessments: Identifying challenges and relevant supports early
- Therapeutic Assessment Review Reports: Ensuring children continue to get the right support as time goes on
- My Therapeutic Assessment Report (for young people)
- Strengths and difficulties questionnaire
- Carer handbook: The go-to resource for kinship and foster carers in the ACT

CONTACT US!

For additional resources or to have a brief follow-up discussion, contact:

Therapeutic assessor:

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Phone:

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Email:

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Note: All case management queries are to be directed to your case manager.



Note: In this document, 'child' or 'children' also refers to a young person or young people under the age of 18.

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