

Permanent care - Q & A

This article lists a range of questions on permanent care which were posted by visitors to the Better Health Channel. Our experts provide the answers.

Q. If I have been a foster carer, can I be a permanent carer? Can I only be one or the other?

Foster parents can become permanent carers and are very welcome to apply to their permanent care service. Once a placement is made, it is expected that no further foster placements will be accepted for a period of time, to allow the child to settle and find their place in your family.

Q. I am single and do not have a partner currently but I would like to become a permanent carer. Do you have any advice?

Single carers are welcome to apply to become permanent carers, since you are not required to be married or in a relationship. As caring for a child, especially a child from a disrupted background and with special needs, presents a range of challenges, it is important that single carers have support from others. This may be from extended family or supportive friends. Single carers find that it is important to have such support – to have someone they feel relaxed with to talk to about parenting issues, school, behaviour and so on. Professional support is provided, but it can never replace the support from trusted friends and family.

It is also important to explore your plans for the future and think about the potential impact of being a single carer. The effects on the child of a new partner being introduced in the future also need to be considered. While all these issues need to be thought about, they do not preclude your application – there are some very successful single parent placements.

Q. Can I choose the age and sex of the child or is the child selected for me?

Selection is a participatory process; you are asked to think about the type of child you feel would fit in with, and benefit from, your family. This includes issues like the age and sex of the child and other characteristics, such as whether the child has a disability or has other special needs. Some time is spent on exploring these issues.

You become aware of different children who need a permanent family as you go through the education and assessment process. After you are approved, discussions may be held about specific children and you are asked about your preferences. Older children are involved in the decision about their new permanent family.

Permanent Care services hold what they call a 'link meeting' to decide which child will be placed with which family. You are provided with detailed information about the child who may be placed with you, and given time to consider before an introduction is organised.

Q. If I am concerned about the welfare of a child in permanent care, who do I contact?

If you have concerns about the care a child is receiving in permanent care, and if you know the name of the permanent care agency involved, it is best to contact the agency directly and speak to them about your concerns. Alternatively, you can contact the Department of Human Services region that covers the area where the family lives, and speak to a child protection worker.

If you believe a child is at risk of abuse or neglect, you should make a notification to the local child protection office as soon as possible. Contact numbers are in the telephone book, under Human Services, or on the Human Services website

If you need to notify after hours or on the weekend, contact the Child Protection 24-hour line on 131 278 (toll free). All children have the right to be physically and emotionally safe at all times and they rely on adults to help them stay safe. Early identification and intervention can lessen the effects of child abuse.

Where to get help

- North and West Metropolitan Region, Department of Human Services, (Northern) Tel. 03 9412 5457
 - Anglicare Western, Tel. (03) 9687 5200
 - Southern Region Connections Tel. (03) 9530 0666
 - Eastern Region, Department of Human Services Tel. (03) 9843 6413
 - Barwon South Western Region, Department of Human Services Tel. (03) 5226 4540
 - Gippsland Region, Anglicare Gippsland Tel. (03) 5133 9998
 - Hume Region, Department of Human Services Tel. (03) 5832 1500
 - Loddon Mallee Region, St Lukes's Anglicare Tel. (03) 5440 1100
 - Grampians Region, Child and Family Services Tel. (03) 5332 1434
 - Statewide, Centacare Catholic Family Services (03) 9419 5633
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- Adoptive Families Association of Victoria
 - Child Protection 24-hour line Tel. 131 278

Want to know more?

Go to [More information for support groups](#), related links and references.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

DHS - Children Youth & Families

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