
Foster care, permanent care and adoptive parent support services

Summary

- Foster care, respite or short term care is when carers take care of a child until the child. This may occur until the child turns 18. Children are placed in foster care as a result of a court order, or through a voluntary arrangement between the child's parent and a foster care agency.
 - Foster care families receive ongoing financial support from the Department of Human Services.
 - Foster care agencies support foster carers through telephone calls, home visits, after-hours support and regular supervision sessions.
 - Children placed in permanent care come through child protection services and it is not a voluntary placement. Financial assistance is available to help families cover some expenses.
 - The Victorian Government's Adoption and Permanent Care team is a good place to start for information, advice, support and referral to organisations that can help with the challenges permanent care families might face.
 - Financial support from the Department of Human Services is available to help eligible parents care for a recently adopted child.
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Sometimes, for many different reasons, children need to be raised by a family other than the one they were born into. Adoption, permanent care and fostering are ways of bringing a child into your family. There are a number of family support services available, including financial support, to help foster carers, permanent care families and adoptive parents.

Support services for foster carers

Foster care is the temporary care of vulnerable children aged up to 18 years by foster carers. Children are placed in foster care for a range of reasons. Sometimes foster care occurs as a result of a court order, and sometimes it is through a voluntary arrangement between the child's parent and a foster care agency.

The Victorian Government funds foster care agencies (also known as 'community service organisations') to operate foster care programs, including specialist adolescent and therapeutic programs.

Foster care agencies are responsible for supporting foster carers. You can expect the foster care agency to offer you support through telephone calls, home visits, after-hours support and regular supervision sessions. Your foster care agency can also provide ongoing training to help you develop the skills you need to meet the challenges faced as a foster carer.

For more information, support and advice, contact your foster care agency.

Foster Care Association of Victoria

The Foster Care Association of Victoria offers an information and support service for foster carers.

Visit the [Foster Care Association of Victoria](http://www.fostercare.org.au) website to find out more about the Carer Information and Support Service and submit an online enquiry, or call the helpline service on (03) 9416 4292.

Financial assistance for foster carers

The Department of Human Services provides foster care families with ongoing financial support. The fortnightly non-taxable allowance contributes to the costs of the child's food, clothing and other expenses. A number of other payments and reimbursements are also available for certain foster children and situations including for those families who are caring for a child with disability or a medical condition.

See the Department of Human Services [Financial guide for home-based carers](#).

You may also be eligible for a [Foster Child Health Care Card](#) if you are a foster carer, or caring for someone else's child.

See the Department of Human Services website for more information on the [types of payments](#) you might be eligible to receive. The Foster Care Association of Victoria provides a number of useful information sheets on its website, including some on financial assistance for foster parents. See the [Foster Care Association of Victoria](#) website for details on current Centrelink entitlements and education entitlements.

Support services for permanent care families

Children placed in permanent care come through child protection services. Unlike adoption, it is not a voluntary placement. The Victorian Department of Health & Human Services and the courts make decisions about the safety of children and whether a child will be placed with a permanent care family.

In most cases, children in permanent care will still have contact with members of their birth family. You would have financial responsibility for the child, but financial assistance is available to help with some expenses. Find

information about [payments for families](#) from the Department of Human Services website.

Children placed in permanent care often come from disrupted backgrounds and may have experiences of neglect, abuse and rejection. Some have a physical or intellectual disability. They may have had many changes of carers, schools and living arrangements. Their birth parents may have struggled with a mental illness, or alcohol or drug addiction.

This can lead to challenging behaviour and difficulties in forming trusting relationships.

The Department of Health & Human Services is a good place to start for information and referral for help. There is an Adoption and Permanent Care team in each Department of Health & Human Services region across Victoria.

Services include:

- applicant assessment
- placement of children
- post-placement supervision
- counselling.

Contact your Adoption and Permanent Care team for further information. If you are unsure which team covers your area, your Department of Health & Human Services division can assist you in several offices. See the [Permanent care](#) fact sheet for more information and contact details for the Adoption and Permanent Care teams.

Support services for adoptive parents

Adoption means that the people caring permanently for the child become the child's legal parents. This affects the child's name, birth certificate and inheritance rights. About 20 babies in Victoria are placed for adoption each year.

The Department of Health & Human Services' Adoption and Permanent Care team is a good first place to find information and referral for assistance to adopt a child. Find the [Adoption and Permanent Care team](#) nearest you.

Financial assistance for adoptive parents

The Department of Human Services provides financial support to help eligible parents care for a recently adopted child.

You or your partner may be eligible for:

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- Parental Leave Pay or the Newborn Upfront Payment and Newborn Supplement paid with Family Tax Benefit Part A
- Dad and Partner Pay
- Family Tax Benefit
- Parenting Payment.

Check your eligibility with the **Department of Human Services**.

Where to get help

- Foster Care Association of Victoria Carer Information and Support Service, call (03) 9416 4292
- DHS Caregiver Reimbursement Help Desk, call 1300 552 319
- Victorian Department of Health & Human Services, call 1300 650 172
- Foster Care Hotline, call 1800 013 088

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

Department of Health and Human Services

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