

Self-Assessment Checklist

This self-assessment checklist is designed to assist your agency in assessing your policies and procedures against the *Statutory Procedures: Voluntary Out-of-Home Care in NSW* (the Procedures) before submitting your application to the Office of the Children's Guardian. The checklist must be read in conjunction with the Procedures. The Office of the Children's Guardian considers the listed criteria when registering and monitoring agencies who provide and/or arrange Voluntary out-of-home care (VOOHC) in NSW.

1. Principles of Care

General

Do policies include a statement/s about:

- how the agency will meet the needs of children/young people accessing VOOHC?
- the rights and responsibilities of employees, families and children/young people accessing VOOHC (including provision of information to families about VOOHC processes and information exchange)?
- having a family centred approach with a focus on family preservation and the use of VOOHC as a last resort?
- encouraging a child/young person's (and their family's) participation in decision making and service delivery?
- the need to work collaboratively with both formal and informal supports to meet the needs of the child/young person?
- providing induction, supervision, and ongoing training around VOOHC requirements and child safety to ensure employees/volunteers providing support to children/young people in VOOHC are trained and supported to meet their needs?
- children/young people not remaining in VOOHC for more than a total of 90 days in any 12-month period unless care is provided by a designated agency or supervised by a designated agency registered to provide supervision?
- children/young people not remaining in VOOHC for more than 180 days in any 12-month period without a case plan that appropriately meets their needs?
- how information and data is collected, stored and used?

Complaints

Does the Complaints Policy:

- include a definition of a complaint?
- include information about how complaints can be received (i.e. verbal, written, via surveys) and who they can be made to?
- discuss how children/young people and their families can be supported to make a complaint (including access to external advocates)?
- identify how complaints can be raised about senior management, the principal officer and members of the board?
- discuss the management of any real or perceived conflict of interest when responding to complaints?
- clearly explain that complaints involving allegations of abuse and neglect and/or criminal conduct need to be referred to Police and/or the DCJ Child Protection Helpline?
- discuss how the complaint will be recorded and where the information will be stored?
- describe the complaint resolution process and the staff members involved?
- include information about avenues of appeal, including information about external complaint agencies?

Behaviour Support

Does the Behaviour Support/Restrictive Practices Policy:

- emphasise the importance of positive behaviour support strategies to assist the child/young person to develop skills in monitoring and regulating their behaviour?
- clearly define what a prohibited practice is?
- clearly define what a restrictive practice is?
- confirm that Behaviour Support Plans need to be approved by both parents and the agency officer (i.e. consenting to the implementation of the plan within the agency)?
- include a statement that volunteers/employees will be supported and trained in behaviour support and the individual needs of the children/young people they support?
- discuss how the implementation of the plan is documented?

For VOOHC agencies registered with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

Do policies also:

- confirm that the agency is registered with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to implement behaviour support plans with restrictive practices (or includes a statement about an intention to do so should restrictive practices be required)?
- confirm that the agency needs to register an intent to implement any *specific* behaviour support plan that includes restrictive practices with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission?
- state that any unauthorised use of a restrictive practice will be notified to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission as a reportable incident?
- state that behaviour support plans are to be developed by clinicians registered with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission?
- discuss the approval process for restrictive practices via a Restrictive Practices Panel and the need to upload the plan and approval on the ICT system?
- state the need to report any use of the restrictive practices to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission on a monthly basis?
- state that plans will be reviewed at least annually?

2. Child Safe Organisation

Staff Recruitment and Training

Do policies:

- provide clear guidance for:
 - recruiting staff (including referee checks)
 - supervising staff
 - staff training and induction
 - managing staff performance and feedback processes?
- confirm that all staff in child related employment (including board members, executive staff and volunteers) are required to have a Working With Children Check (WWCC)?
- confirm that the agency is required to verify all WWCC checks on the Office of the Children's Guardian's website?
- identify who verifies WWCC checks within the agency and state that staff cannot verify their own WWCC?
- state that all employees/volunteers with a WWCC bar or interim bar will be removed from child related employment?

Prevention/Risk Management

- does the code of conduct set out the standards of expected behaviour for management, staff, visitors and children/young people?
- do policies identify how risks are identified, assessed and managed (at intake and ongoing)?
- do policies discuss age appropriate placement matching, including that:
 - children under 7 should not be placed in centre-based respite unless they have complex health care needs?
 - when children (under 16) are placed with young people (16 – 17 years), a risk assessment will be conducted, and risk management plans developed?
 - children under 16 will not be placed with adults, unless in exceptional circumstances (as outlined in the Procedures) and only with parental consent?
 - that young people 16 years and over will only be placed with an adult following a risk assessment and parental consent?
 - that the placement of children/young people with adults must be approved by the Principal Officer?
 - that any placement of children and adults together must be regularly reviewed to determine the ongoing suitability of the arrangement?
- do policies state how children/young people will be educated about abuse and neglect and how they will be supported to raise concerns?
- do policies identify all types of harm a child could be subjected to (physical, psychological, sexual and neglect etc)?
- do policies stated that staff will receive training in identifying and responding to the abuse and neglect of children?

Child Protection

Do policies:

- define risk of significant harm (ROSH)?
- identify who is a mandatory reporter, when a report to the DCJ Helpline is required, the use of the mandatory reporting tool, how the report should be documented, and which staff members should be advised of the report?
- define reportable conduct and the allegations that need to be notified to the Office of the Children's Guardian?
- for agencies registered with the NDIA, define reportable incidents and the allegations that need to be notified to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission?
- stipulate the timeframe and staff member responsible for notifying matters to the Office of the Children's Guardian and NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission?
- describe the investigation process for reportable conduct and reportable incident matters, including:
 - how, when and who should document the allegation
 - the nature of the initial response/risk assessment and management.
 - reporting to Police
 - reporting to DCJ
 - developing an investigation plan
 - managing conflicts of interests, including allegations involving senior management and board members
 - how evidence will be gathered
 - procedural fairness
 - the findings available
 - who can make the final decision
 - avenues of appeal
 - how the investigation is documented
 - the investigation of client to client matters (for NDIS registered services)?
 - the investigation of unexplained serious injury matters (for NDIS registered services)?

3. VOOHC Register

Do policies:

- state what information is to be collected at intake for inclusion on the VOOHC Register?
- state that the information must be accurate to avoid duplication on the VOOHC Register?
- state who is responsible for the maintenance of the VOOHC Register and who will take on this role should that staff person be on leave?
- state that the placement history function is used during intake and assessment to identify the child/young person's previous placements and facilitate appropriate exchange of information and collaboration with other agencies occurs (including any designated supervising agencies or agencies that have developed a case plan for the child/young person)?
- state that the VOOHC placement must be entered onto the VOOHC Register within 5 days of a child/young person entering the placement?
- state that the VOOHC Register must be updated within 5 days of the child/young person leaving the placement?
- state that any supervision agreement will be entered onto the VOOHC Register within 5 days of the supervision agreement being finalised?
- state that any case plans will be entered onto the VOOHC Register within 5 days of the agreement being approved?

- state that the VOOHC Register Quarterly Activity Report will be used to self-monitor VOOHC Register entries?
- confirm the staff member/s responsible for data entry and review/analysis of the VOOHC Register?
- confirm the role of the VOOHC Coordinator?
- state that staff members will be trained in the VOOHC Procedures and use of the VOOHC Register?
- state that a child/young person in statutory out-of-home care must not be entered onto the VOOHC Register?

4. Intake and Assessment

Do policies state:

- the eligibility of a child/young person and/or their family members to access VOOHC services?
- that information will be gathered in relation to a child/young person's needs, likes, interests, current plans (i.e. epilepsy management; dietary; behaviour support etc) and routines with a formal assessment of the agency's ability to meet those needs?
- that information about the child/young person's legal status (i.e. are they under the parental responsibility of the parents or Minister) will be recorded at intake and that children/young people under the care of the Minister will not be placed onto the VOOHC Register?
- how children/young people and their families can access, and correct information held about them?
- that there will be age appropriate placement matching with assessment of risks posed by other children/young people accessing VOOHC at that time and that risk mitigation strategies are developed and implemented as appropriate?
- that there will be ongoing review to determine the suitability of the placement?
- that the placement will be confirmed in writing to the parent/s within 7 days (prior to the placement occurring)?
- how the views of the child/young person AND their family have been sought and recorded?
- that as service agreement, signed by all parties, will be developed and will include information about the rights and responsibilities of the child/young person, their family and the agency?

5. Information Exchange

Do policies:

- state what needs to be collected (including the information required as per *the Statutory Procedures - Voluntary Out-of-Home Care in NSW*)?
- state how information is collected?
- state why is it collected?
- state how it is stored?
- state who can access it?
- state how and when it can be accessed?
- state how long it is stored?
- include information about Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Person's (Care and Protection) Act 1998* and both the proactive and responsive release of information where there are safety, welfare, and wellbeing concerns?
- confirm who is delegated to approve Chapter 16A releases?
- discuss how information related to the Chapter 16A release should be documented and stored?
- discuss other privacy legislation and considerations?

Other Areas for agencies providing longer term VOOHC (over 90 days)

6. Supervision

Do policies:

- state that the agency will contact a designated supervising agency who will arrange supervision before a child/young person has been in VOOHC for more than a total of 90 days in any 12-month period and that the OCG must be notified where supervision requirements are not met?
- state that the parents will be advised of the supervision arrangement and be provided with the details of the designated supervising agency – with evidence of such discussions documented?
- state that supervision arrangements will be lodged onto the VOOHC Register within 5 days of the supervision commencing? (designated supervising agency only)
- state that the Children's Guardian should be notified when the supervision arrangement has ended? (designated supervising agency only)
- state that all agencies providing VOOHC to the child/young person requiring supervision are aware of their roles and responsibilities and detailed in the supervision agreement?
- discuss the process for monitoring supervision agreement including reviewing the agreement within a specified timeframe, amending the agreement as required and identifying if the agreement is no longer required?
- detail the nature of the information about the child/young person that will be provided to the designated supervising agency?

7. Case Planning

Do policies state that:

- agencies must develop a case plan *before* a child/young person has been in VOOHC for more than a total of 180 days in any 12-month period and that the OCG will be advised if this requirement is not met?
- the case plan will be in line with VOOHC Procedures and will include information about the frequency of reviews (at least annually)?
- that case plans will be developed following a formal case conference that includes the child/young person, their parent and relevant agencies?
- case plans will include information about how the child/young person and their parent participated in the development of the case plan and their views?
- the case plan will be lodged onto the VOOHC Register within 5 days of the case plan or review being finalised?
- a copy of the case plan and/or review is retained while the child/young person is in VOOHC and is kept until the child turns 18 years old (or longer if required by law or funding)?
- the goal of the case plan is to reduce unnecessary VOOHC placements with multiple agencies and to ensure the needs and aspirations of the Child/young person are being met?
- the case plan requires the consent of the child/young person and/or their parent?

- the case plan will incorporate previous assessments and plans and will consider goals regarding the child/young persons':
 - physical needs
 - health needs
 - nutrition/dietary needs
 - education and/or vocational needs
 - emotional and behavioural support needs
 - social needs
 - cultural needs
 - spiritual needs
 - recreational and leisure needs
 - identified risks associated their care
 - meeting the needs of the child/young person and their family
- transition through life stages (i.e. to secondary education; returning to the care of their parents; to adulthood).