

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 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 during the referral process (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?
- considering the age of the child or young person in determining whether VOOHC or other support should be provided, and/or whether a particular VOOHC placement is appropriate (NB: children under 7 should not be placed in centre-based care unless they have complex health needs that require such care)
- encouraging a child/young person's (and their family's) participation in decision making?
- the need to request information about risk both in relation to the child or young person and the potential placement and to work collaboratively with services to gather such information.
- providing induction, supervision, and ongoing training around VOOHC requirements to ensure employees arranging VOOHC for children/young people are aware of the legal requirements.
- 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

Do policies:

- clearly define what a prohibited practice is?
- clearly define what a restrictive practice is?
- confirm the need to collect information about the behaviour support needs of a child or young person and whether a behaviour support plan is in place?
- confirm the need to request information about whether there are any restrictive practices in place that have been registered with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission?
- confirm the need to ensure that children and young people with restrictive practices in place are referred to agencies that are registered with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to implement such plans?

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
- 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?
- do policies specify that children/young people and their families will be provided with information about their rights (including their right to raise concerns and the risk of significant harm reporting process)?
- 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, reporting 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 Department of Communities and Justice 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?
- define reportable incidents that need to be notified to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission?
- contain clear processes for identifying and reporting these allegations to the head of a providing agency, where the allegations involve staff from the providing agency (with whom the arranging agency has arranged VOOHC for a child or young person)
- contain clear processes for reporting allegations that may involve the head of agency of that providing agency?

3. VOOHC Register

Do policies:

- state that the VOOHC Register's Placement History Function is used to view the child/young person's VOOHC placement history when making a referral, including information about the number of days spent in care in the last 12 months and any current supervision agency or case?
- state that the VOOHC Register's 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)?

4. Intake and Assessment

Do policies:

- confirm that VOOHC will only be arranged with another agency if that agency is
 - a designated or registered (non-designated) agency; and
 - able to meet the needs of the child or young person, having regard to the child or young person's age, development and individual circumstances?
- confirm that the agency's registration with the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) will be confirmed on the OCG's website prior to making a referral to that agency?
- confirm that the VOOHC Register's placement history function will be used to identify VOOHC services previously used by the child/young person as well as supervision and case planning flags and prompt information exchange with those agencies involved?
- confirm that VOOHC that is arranged in line with a child/young person's case plan (if a case plan is in place)?
- confirm the eligibility of a child/young person and/or their family members to access VOOHC services?
- confirm 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 an assessment of the proposed agency's ability to meet those needs?
- confirm 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 this information will be passed on to the proposed agency during the referral process.
- confirm how children/young people and their families can access, and correct information held about them?
- confirm how the views of the child/young person and their family have been sought and recorded?

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?