



Office of the
Children's Guardian

Registration and monitoring guide

Voluntary out-of-home care monitoring framework

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1 What is voluntary out-of-home care (VOOHC)?

Voluntary out-of-home care (VOOHC) refers to those situations where a parent of a child makes a voluntary arrangement with a VOOHC agency for the placement of their child in out-of-home care.

A child (person under the age of 18) is in VOOHC when:

- he or she stays overnight at a place outside his/her usual home (and within NSW);
- he or she is in the care and control of a person other than his/her parent (i.e. the person with parental responsibility for the child);
- his or her parent has entered into an arrangement with an organisation to provide or arrange that care; and
- the care is within NSW in the absence of court orders, supported care or child protection concerns.

VOOHC covers care arrangements such as:

- overnight or short-term accommodation in a group home or respite environment
- overnight stay with another family in a 'host family' arrangement
- longer term residential care
- camps that focus on respite care or behaviour support
- bail assistance

VOOHC may be for regular planned short term respite, occasional, crisis or longer term care depending on the needs of the child and their family. It is the VOOHC agency's responsibility to recruit suitable people, as prescribed in relevant legislation.

The Office of the Children's Guardian regulates VOOHC to support the safety, welfare and wellbeing of the children in these services, and to improve service coordination, planning and delivery. In NSW, VOOHC is governed by the *Children's Guardian Act 2019* (The Act) and the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Regulation 2012 (The Regulation).

The intent of the VOOHC legislation is to improve the quality, consistency and coordination of care provided to children in VOOHC.

Legislation requires all VOOHC to be provided and/or arranged by an agency that is registered by the Office of the Children's Guardian to do so, agencies are classified as either:

- a designated agency (an organisation that is accredited by the Office of the Children's Guardian to provide statutory out-of-home care to children that is also registered to provide and/or arrange voluntary out-of-home care) or
- a non-designated agency (an organisation registered by the Office of the Children's Guardian to provide and/or arrange voluntary out-of-home care to children).

Providing and/or arranging VOOHC

Only a VOOHC agency may arrange with a parent (a person with parental responsibility, or a person authorised by the parent to act on their behalf) of a child for their child to be placed in VOOHC.

An agency *provides* VOOHC where it is responsible for the overnight care of a child who is placed with an individual authorised by the agency (e.g. centre-based, residential, home based or host-family).

An agency *arranges* VOOHC when it arranges for another organisation to provide care for a child - for example, where it:

- contracts/sub contracts another organisation to provide VOOHC
- brokers another organisation to provide VOOHC or directly books a child into VOOHC provided by another organisation

Funding a VOOHC placement or providing a parent with information on service providers or suggesting they contact a particular provider is not “arranging” VOOHC.

2 Role of the Office of the Children’s Guardian

The Office of the Children’s Guardian registers and monitors agencies that provide or arrange VOOHC in NSW. The requirements for providing care are outlined in the Statutory Procedures: voluntary out-of-home care in NSW (VOOHC Procedures). These Procedures apply to all agencies that provide, arrange or supervise VOOHC in NSW. The Office of the Children’s Guardian’s regulatory functions include:

- developing and maintaining the VOOHC Procedures, that includes the areas of intake, assessment, case planning and interagency coordination
- administering the VOOHC Monitoring Framework including VOOHC registration and ongoing monitoring processes
- monitoring children in longer term VOOHC to ensure they receive care that is appropriately supervised and planned.

3 Statutory VOOHC Procedures

The VOOHC Procedures have been developed by the Office of the Children’s Guardian and address the key VOOHC provisions of the Act¹, the Regulation², and Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*.

The VOOHC Procedures establish a common framework for agencies to provide and/or arrange VOOHC. The intended purpose is to promote improved quality, consistency, efficiency and coordination in the delivery of VOOHC and to reduce the risk of children receiving VOOHC without appropriate planning.

Each VOOHC agency must have policies, procedures and practices that support compliance with the VOOHC Procedures to the extent the agency has a role in VOOHC intake, assessment, supervision, case planning and/or interagency coordination.

The VOOHC Procedures should be read in conjunction with the Voluntary out-of-home care Register Manual (the VOOHC Register Manual) which explains:

- how information about VOOHC agencies and children in VOOHC is entered on to the VOOHC Register
- how VOOHC agencies can access a child’s previous VOOHC placement and case plan history from the VOOHC Register.

¹ In particular, see sections 76-79.

² In particular, see clauses 70-79 and 80 and Schedules 3 and 4.

4 VOOHC Monitoring Framework

The Office of the Children’s Guardian is responsible for monitoring the responsibilities of VOOHC agencies under the Act and the Regulation, including agency compliance with the VOOHC Procedures.

The Monitoring Framework includes VOOHC Registration, ongoing desktop monitoring and onsite monitoring assessments.

This Registration and Monitoring Guide (this Guide) describes the VOOHC Monitoring Framework. It should be read in conjunction with the following documents available on the Office of the Children’s Guardian website at www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au:

- Statutory Procedures: voluntary out-of-home care in NSW
- Voluntary out-of-home care Register Manual
- Application for voluntary out-of-home care registration form (available on request from the Office of the Children’s Guardian VOOHC Monitoring team)
- Agency’s own policies and procedures
- The *Children’s Guardian Act 2019* (the Act)
- The Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Regulation 2012 (the Regulation).

Section 1 – Applying for VOOHC registration

1 How can an organisation apply for registration?

Agencies intending to provide and/or arrange VOOHC must first be registered by the Office of the Children’s Guardian. Before submitting an application, an agency must discuss their intention to apply with the VOOHC Monitoring Team on (02) 8219 3798 or voohc@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au.

2 The VOOHC application form

The application form includes a compliance undertaking and a submission of relevant policies that detail an agency’s practice, having regard to the VOOHC Procedures and this Guide.

3 Compliance undertaking

An authorised person from the agency must certify that the agency:

- understands its responsibility for compliance, to the extent that the agency has a role in VOOHC intake, assessment, supervision, case planning and interagency coordination, as prescribed in the VOOHC Procedures
- will participate in VOOHC supervision and case planning as required
- understands its legal responsibilities when working and exchanging information with other organisations in relation to voluntary out of home care
- will comply with the requirements of the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012*.

4 Compliance areas

An agency, to the extent that it intends to provide or arrange VOOHC must submit policies and procedures against each compliance area considering the agency’s status and intention. An agency should also have procedures and practices to support these policies.

List of compliance areas

Area 1: Principles of care

Area 2: Child Protection and Child Safety

Area 3: VOOHC Register

Area 4: VOOHC Intake and assessment (service planning)

Area 5: VOOHC Supervision of child or young person’s VOOHC (designated agencies intending to supervise VOOHC only)

Area 6: Planning and reviewing VOOHC (agencies intending to provide VOOHC to children and young people in 180 days or more).

Area 7: Coordination of services and information exchange

Agencies should consider the following questions prior to submitting their VOOHC application and relevant policies:

- Do our processes and practices reflect the requirements of the VOOHC Procedures?
- Are relevant staff aware of the VOOHC Procedures requirements?
- Do staff require training or additional support to understand the VOOHC requirements?

Please refer to Attachment 1 for further information on the Compliance Areas and Outcomes.

5 Additional compliance requirements

VOOHC agencies are also required to comply with any other relevant NSW and/or Commonwealth laws and any requirements from its funding bodies.

Working With Children Check compliance

The *Child Protection (Working With Children) Act 2012* requires all persons engaged in child related work to have a Working With Children Check (WWCC) clearance (unless legally exempt). The Child Protection (Working With Children) Regulation 2013 stipulates that board members (governing body members) and Principal Officers of VOOHC agencies also require WWCC clearances.

Once registered, all agencies are required to provide a WWCC Audit: Worker Information list to the VOOHC Monitoring team which will be reviewed for compliance by the Office of the Children's Guardian WWCC Compliance team.

For further information see <https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/working-with-children-check>

Swimming pool compliance

The *Swimming Pools Act 1992* requires owners to register their swimming pools and spa pools on the NSW Swimming Pool Register.

Where a VOOHC agency's services include a swimming pool, this *Act* requires the agency to register the pool, have a valid certificate of compliance and have the pool inspected at least once every three years.

Agencies registering to provide VOOHC and have pools at any centre based, residential, host family or home based location are required to provide evidence of the pool's registration and a valid certificate of compliance with its VOOHC Registration.

For further information, contact the local council relevant to your area.

6 Additional reporting obligations

From 1 March 2020, the Reportable Conduct Scheme transferred to the Office of the Children's Guardian from the NSW Ombudsman under the *Children's Guardian Act 2019*. The scheme requires the head of an organisation to notify the Office of the Children's Guardian within seven business days of becoming aware of a reportable allegation or a reportable conviction against one of their employees, volunteers or certain contractors who provide services to children. Agencies are required to conduct an investigation into the allegations and submit a final entity report (or an interim

report with information about the progress of the investigation and an expected timeframe for completion) to the Office of the Children’s Guardian within 30 calendar days.

Agencies registered with the Office of the Children’s Guardian to arrange and/or provide VOOHC in NSW may also be subject to additional reporting obligations to other government organisations, including the:

- NSW Department of Communities and Justice
- NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

7 Certificate of Registration and Notice of Conditions

Once an agency has submitted its completed application form and relevant policies, the Office of the Children’s Guardian will assess the documentation and will inform the agency in writing of the outcome.

Where the agency’s policies are assessed as compliant by the Office of the Children’s Guardian, and no further action is required, the agency will be registered, and a Certificate of Registration and Notice of Conditions for VOOHC will be sent to the agency. The agency’s contact details and Notice of Conditions will also be published on the Office of the Children’s Guardian’s website.

If an agency’s policies do not meet compliance, the Office of the Children’s Guardian will provide feedback identifying the compliance area/s that require further consideration. The agency will then be required to resubmit the relevant policies for reassessment until they are compliant.

An agency cannot provide or arrange VOOHC until it is registered and issued with a Notice of Conditions by the Office of the Children’s Guardian.

An agency’s Notice of Conditions may be varied at any stage of its VOOHC registration, not solely based on the registration process. Where concerns have been identified through the continuous monitoring processes, the Office of the Children’s Guardian may impose further conditions and/or revoke an agency’s VOOHC registration.

Section 2 – VOOHC monitoring

1 Desktop monitoring

The VOOHC Register

The Office of the Children's Guardian monitors the number of times a child accesses VOOHC. This assists to identify where additional supports to the family or formalised planning for longer term placements may be needed.

The VOOHC Register is a secure online database that records information about a child accessing VOOHC. The Register is updated by agencies that provide direct care or, in the case of supervision or case planning, the responsible designated agency. Information contained on the Register includes a child's identification details, VOOHC placement history (including entry and exit dates), the agency providing placements, and dates of supervision and/or case planning. Once an agency is registered, it will receive a secure log in and password to access the VOOHC Register.

Agencies that provide VOOHC placements must lodge the placement on to the VOOHC Register within 5 working days of the placement start date to ensure that each child's placement history is current. Failure to record a child's placement within the required timeframes may result in a child's placement history being inaccurate and a supervision and/or case plan requirement not identified until after the 90 days or 180 days in VOOHC has been breached.

Supervising designated agencies must lodge a Supervisor Notification on the VOOHC Register within 5 working days of the commencement of supervision.

A designated agency must lodge a Case Plan Notification on the VOOHC Register within 5 working days of a case plan or review being finalised. In instances where the placements are supervised, the supervising designated agency must lodge the case plan notification.

See further information on areas and expected outcomes in Attachment 1 of this document.

VOOHC Register weekly reports

The Office of the Children's Guardian monitors the VOOHC Register and analyses information that has been entered onto the VOOHC Register across all VOOHC agencies. The Office of the Children's Guardian runs weekly reports and provides email flags to agencies as necessary regarding any child's placements which require supervision or case planning or where case plans are expiring or have expired. The reports also capture any conflicts such as potential duplicate children (e.g. incorrect spelling of names) and conflicting placement dates.

Where concerns are identified regarding an agency's compliance with the VOOHC Procedures including concerns about the accuracy of data on the VOOHC Register, the Office of the Children's Guardian will write to the agency and request feedback and a resolution or prioritise the agency for an onsite monitoring visit.

VOOHC Register Quarterly Activity Reports

The Office of the Children's Guardian also generates a VOOHC Register Quarterly Activity Report (QAR) for each VOOHC agency. The VOOHC Register QAR captures an agency's compliance with the VOOHC Register and the VOOHC Procedures and identifies areas for improvement. These reports are sent out to agencies to use as a self-monitoring and planning tool for quality assurance and to ensure compliance is achieved and maintained.

The QAR is sent to the Principal Officer and VOOHC Coordinator of each agency. The agency should check the QAR and cross-reference the number of placements, supervision and case plan notifications recorded against its own records and ensure the information recorded on the VOOHC Register is accurate.

Where an agency has no activity recorded against it on the VOOHC Register, the agency is required to check the report against its records and confirm in writing, by email to the Office of the Children's Guardian that the agency has had no placements for that quarter.

The VOOHC Register QARs include:

- agency's use of VOOHC Register Placement History
- the number of children recorded per agency
- the number of placements recorded per agency
- the timeframe within which each placement was submitted onto the VOOHC Register
- the total number of placements supervised
- the total number of children with a lodged case plan
- the number of conflicting placement dates either entered in duplicate or in error.
- The VOOHC Register QAR forms part of the VOOHC Monitoring Framework and draws on:
 - placements being entered on to the VOOHC Register consistently outside of the specified timeframe
 - significant differences in number of placements entered between quarters
 - agencies identified as a potentially large VOOHC provider with no recorded placements
 - patterns of submitting inaccurate information on the VOOHC Register
 - agencies that do not confirm they have not provided any placement in the quarter.

Attachment 2 is an example of a VOOHC Register QAR.

VOOHC supervision (supervising designated agencies only)

The Office of the Children's Guardian monitors the supervision notifications on a weekly basis and may require the nominated designated agency to submit a copy of the supervision plan/agreement on request.

VOOHC case planning

The Office of the Children's Guardian monitors case plan notifications on a weekly basis and may require the VOOHC providing agency or supervising agency to submit a copy of the case plan on request.

2 Onsite monitoring

Monitoring visits and assessments

As part of the VOOHC Monitoring Framework, the Office of the Children's Guardian conducts onsite monitoring visits to, and assessments of, VOOHC agencies to assess an agency's practices and compliance with the VOOHC Procedures. Agencies are prioritised for a visit and/or assessment based on the agency's VOOHC registration and outcome of desktop monitoring, including:

- the agency's undertakings agreed to by signing and submitting the VOOHC application form

- VOOHC Register weekly reports and QARs
- supervision agreements and case plans
- action taken by an agency in response to email flags, reports and notifications
- concerns raised by a supervising designated agency

An agency will be contacted by the Office of the Children’s Guardian to advise that a monitoring visit or assessment is planned and to determine a suitable time and venue. The agency’s VOOHC Coordinator must be present at the visit and/or assessment, as well as any relevant staff member (e.g. those entering VOOHC data).

The Office of the Children’s Guardian will use a number of tools to inform the visit, designed to capture information in relation to placements, intake and assessment, supervision, case plan notifications, issues arising from VOOHC Register reports, collaboration with other agencies, and/or its use of the VOOHC Register.

The Office of the Children’s Guardian will require agencies to have available evidence to demonstrate compliance, including:

- inspections of each VOOHC outlet
- child files (including supervision agreements and case plans, where relevant)
- risk assessments and placement matching grids
- staff files
- interviews with staff
- training schedules and registers
- team meeting minutes
- complaints
- incident reports

Prior to the monitoring visit the Office of the Children’s Guardian will also request the agency to provide updated evidence of Working With Children Check and Swimming Pool compliance. These additional compliance requirements are outlined in section 1 of this document.

Onsite monitoring assessment reports

An onsite monitoring assessment report will be provided to an agency following a monitoring assessment and will include:

- a summary of findings detailing the agency’s compliance with the VOOHC Procedures
- any recommendations for improvement.

As a result of the monitoring assessment, the Office of the Children’s Guardian may:

- form the view that the agency appears or does not appear to be complying with the VOOHC Procedures and the VOOHC Registration undertakings
- conduct a further on-site monitoring assessment
- request an action plan, or revision of any current action plan
- vary the agency’s Notice of Conditions.

Attachment 1

Areas and expected outcomes

Summary of areas, each with an expected outcome as well as key points. Please note this is a summary and should be read in conjunction with the VOOHC Procedures.

Area 1: Principles of care

Refer to section 3 of the VOOHC Procedures

Expected Outcome: The agency implements the VOOHC Procedures in its practices.

VOOHC agencies should consider the following information -

- processes and practices meet the requirements set out in the VOOHC Procedures
- a family centred approach with a focus on family preservation, where the wellbeing of children is paramount
- children and their parent(s) make informed choices about services and participate in decision making
- VOOHC agencies and funding bodies work collaboratively in coordinating decision-making and service delivery for children and young people in VOOHC
- relevant staff are aware and trained in VOOHC requirements and the importance of handing over VOOHC responsibilities when changes in staff occur is considered
- children and their parent(s) must have access to fair and equitable procedures for dealing with complaints and disputes concerning VOOHC.
- positive behaviour support strategies that assist children to develop skills in monitoring and regulating their behaviour.

Area 2: Child Protection and Child Safety

Refer to section 10 of the VOOHC Procedures.

Expected outcome: The agency implements effective child safe policies and practices to protect the children and young people in VOOHC.

Working with Children Check (WWCC)

VOOHC agencies should consider the following:

- WWCC requirements are met for each staff member, volunteer, carer, adult household member and the principal officer and board members. VOOHC agencies are required to:
 - register as an employer for the Working With Children Check (if not already registered)
 - verify online the WWCC application or clearance for each staff member/carers in child-related work and any adult household members who may also reside in the host family program. The principal officer and governing body members (board members) are also required to be verified
 - ensure their own Working With Children Check is verified online by an appropriate person in the organisation (employers cannot self-verify)
 - remove any barred or unauthorised person from child-related work

Employment Related Child Protection and Disability Reportable Incidents

VOOHC agencies are required to set up systems within their organisation to ensure that they are advised of any reportable allegations or convictions against their employees, or reportable incidents (where VOOHC is NDIS-funded), and that these are reported, recorded, investigated and managed within required timeframes

Mandatory reporting where a child is at risk of significant harm

VOOHC agencies should consider the following information:

- the agency has processes and practices to manage the agency's mandatory reporting responsibilities where there is risk of significant harm, including what constitutes risk of significant harm
- awareness that the Office of the Children's Guardian may be required to report supervision and case plan breaches to the Child Protection Helpline.

Area 3: VOOHC Register

Refer to sections 3, 4, 5, 6, & 7 of the VOOHC Procedures

Expected Outcome: The agency has systems to ensure it enters information on to the VOOHC Register within specified timeframes.

VOOHC agencies should consider the following information:

- The agency has robust systems to record information on to the VOOHC Register within the required 5 working day timeframe, information includes:
 - Placement start date
 - Placement end date
 - Supervising notifications (designated agency)
 - Case plan/review notifications (designated agencies)
- The agency should also consider in its processes:
 - Accurate data entry to avoid duplicate placements being recorded on the system
 - continued accuracy and timeliness of VOOHC Register entries when data entry staff are on leave or there is a change in staff
 - use of the VOOHC Register Quarterly Activity Reports to self-monitor VOOHC Register entries
 - the VOOHC Register Placement History function is utilised when the agency receives a referral for VOOHC to view the child or young person's previous placements and to ensure appropriate exchange of information and collaboration with other agencies occurs

Area 4: VOOHC intake and assessment (and service planning)

Refer to sections 5 & 7 of the VOOHC Procedures

Expected Outcome: The agency obtains sufficient information to understand the specific needs of children, young people and their families and provides appropriate services.

VOOHC agencies should consider the following information:

- All relevant information detailed in the VOOHC Procedures is considered as part of the intake and assessment processes, including:
 - whether the service can meet the immediate and ongoing needs of the child
 - undertake risk assessment identifying risk to the child or risk the child may pose to others

- VOOHC Register Placement History:
 - VOOHC agencies obtain information from other agencies (where relevant) during intake and assessment (Coordination of service and information exchange in a child wellbeing context is referred to at the end of this section)
 - Contact any current supervising designated agencies to advise of your agency's involvement
 - Contact any current designated agency that has lodged a case plan notification for the child or young person
- children and young people and their parent(s) are included in the intake and assessment process including recording their views
- inform children and young people and their parent(s) about the VOOHC processes and what information will be held about them on the VOOHC Register, and their rights to access and correct information
- ensure that the legal status of a child/young person is recorded at intake and that children and young people on statutory care orders are not entered on to the VOOHC Register
- Obtain information about the child or young person:
 - Information required to be entered on the VOOHC Register - i.e. first name, middle names, surname, any previous names used, date of birth, place of birth, gender, whether the child identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or has a disability
 - the current formal and informal supports for the child or young person and their parent(s)/family (if information is available)
 - any health, medication, disability, environmental, safety risk, emotional/behavioural, cognitive/developmental, mobility, nutrition or dietary issues relevant to the child or young person's care – where possible the agency should obtain any management plans for these issues (e.g. Health Plan, Behaviour Management Plan, Epilepsy Plan, Asthma Plan, Allergy Plan)
 - likes and interests and the participation in educational/vocational, social and leisure activities
 - any special cultural/spiritual/religious, language or communication needs of the child;
 - the child's living and socialisation skills and any daily routine they may have (including eating, drinking, dressing, sleeping, bathing, toileting or menstruation)
 - the needs of the parent(s) and the maintenance of relationships with family and significant others
 - the emergency contact details for the child's parent(s) and other relevant family members
 - are the necessary supports being funded in the individual's NDIS plan? Is there a need for a support coordinator if one is not in place? Is a review of the Plan required?
- Written or electronic records of the intake and assessment process are retained including:
 - Each assessment and intake process, including how the views of the child or young person and their parent(s) were sought
 - confirming a VOOHC placement in writing to the parent(s) within 7 days of the placement being arranged
 - the service/s that have been agreed to (a service agreement/plan), including responsibilities and timeframes

Area 5: Supervision of a child's VOOHC

Refer to section 6 of the VOOHC Procedures

Expected Outcome: The agency fulfils its responsibilities as a supervising designated agency.

VOOHC agencies should consider the following information:

- A child does not remain in VOOHC for more than a total of 90 days in any 12 month period unless care is provided or supervised by a designated agency
- Principal care agencies are responsible for arranging any supervision required before a child has been in VOOHC for more than a total of 90 days in any 12 month period. The Office of the Children's Guardian will notify the principal care agency that supervision is/maybe required.
- Parent(s) are advised of supervision arrangements and are provided with the name and contact details of the supervising designated agency by the principal care agency
- Supervision notifications are lodged on to the VOOHC Register within 5 working days of the commencement of supervision
- All agencies providing VOOHC to the child requiring supervision are involved and aware of its roles and responsibilities as detailed in the supervision agreement
- Agencies have a process to monitor supervision agreements; including reviewing the agreement within a specified timeframe, amending the agreement as required and identifying if the agreement is no longer required or if there has been a change or additional agency providing VOOHC
- Where a child with a supervision notification moves to another agency, the relevant agencies must also consider the current supervision arrangements which may require a revised supervision plan. The new arrangements need to be reflected in the VOOHC Register

Supervision agreement/plan

Should include:

- Date of agreement - must be completed before a young person reaches 90 days in care
- Details of interagency coordination
- Case management details if applicable
- Details of how the placement/s meets the child's needs, this should be detailed in each agency's intake and assessment documentation and service plan (if the child receives long term or regular care with that agency).
- All agencies providing care to the child, noting the current principal care agency (all agencies providing care should be part of the agreement)
- Duration and frequency of care with relevant agencies
- Evidence that the parent(s) have been informed of the supervision arrangement
- Whether a child's placements are likely to reach 180 days resulting in the requirement of a case plan (see Area 7 for further case plan requirements)
- Review dates
- End of supervision agreement
- Confirmation of lodgement of supervision notification on the VOOHC Register

Supervising designated agency/case planning responsibilities (see Area 6 for more case planning requirements)

- Supervising designated agency must approve and or review (at least annually) a case plan for a child or young person's placement that it supervises

- Attend and oversight case plan meetings
- Coordinate the identification of a lead planning agency
- Identify (if any) supports the lead planning agency requires when preparing a case plan. A supervising designated agency may be required to work on preparing the case plan if it has concerns that the lead planning agency is unable to satisfactory perform this work, in this case the supervising designated agency must inform the Office of the Children's Guardian of those concerns.

Area 6: Planning and reviewing VOOHC

Refer to section 7 of the VOOHC Procedures

Expected Outcome: The agency has processes and practices to support VOOHC planning and review.

VOOHC agencies should consider the following information:

- A child must not remain in VOOHC for more than a total of 180 days in any 12 month period unless the child has a case plan that appropriately meets their needs
- Case plans are approved before a child spends more than 180 days in VOOHC in any 12 month period
- The contents of the case plan are in line with VOOHC Procedures
- Case plans are reviewed as required or at least annually
- The case plan records how the child and their parent(s) have participated
- Case plan notifications are lodged on to the VOOHC Register within 5 working days of the case plan or review being finalised
- The Office of the Children's Guardian is notified if a child has been in VOOHC for more than 180 days and does not have a case plan
- A copy of the case plan and/or review is retained while the child is in VOOHC and are kept until the child turns 18 years old in accordance with the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (Privacy Act) and the Health Record and Information Privacy Act 2002 (Health Privacy Act)
- There is a process in place to ensure that new case plans are approved and entered on to the VOOHC Register prior to the expiry date of the current case plans
- Case plans are developed as a result of a formally constituted case conference that includes the child or young person, their parent(s) and all relevant agencies.

Case planning considerations:

- aspirations of the child and their parent(s)
- does VOOHC meet the needs of the child and their family?
- if the child has a disability, how can the NDIS better support this person and their family?
- information on the formal and informal supports for the child and their parent(s)/family currently receives as well as opportunities for additional services and supports
- stability of placement, with the objective of reducing unnecessary VOOHC placements with multiple agencies
- previous assessments and plans i.e. intake and assessment and service planning
- consultation with relevant agencies and bodies
- information on the child's physical, health, nutrition/dietary, educational and/or vocational, emotional and behavioural, social, cultural, spiritual and recreational and leisure needs

- information about the needs of the child's parent(s)/family and the child's relationship with family members and significant others
- identified risks associated with the child's care and strategies for managing those risks
- recognition of impending key transition stages in the child's life and the supports required to facilitate successful transition (e.g. transition to secondary education, adulthood, returning to live with their parent(s) after a significant period in VOOHC or transitioning to another agency)
- overall goals for the child and their parent(s) - including the goals listed earlier in this section
- strategies, tasks and timeframes for addressing the goals and identified needs and risks in the plan, with the agency/person responsible for each strategy and task to be clearly identified
- a process to monitor the case plan to ensure it meets the needs of the child and their family
- a record of the views expressed by the child and their parent(s) in preparing the plan (or a record of attempts to obtain such views)
- documenting and distributing case plans and obtaining signatures
- a timeframe for review of the plan (must be no longer than 12 months)

Areas 3, 4, 5, 6: Coordination of services and information exchange in a child wellbeing context.

Refer to section 9 of the VOOHC Procedures

Expected Outcome: The agency understands and implement in its practice its legal responsibilities when working with and exchanging information with other agencies

VOOHC agencies should consider the following information:

- Personal information is collected, used, disclosed and stored in accordance with the VOOHC Procedures and relevant legislation
- Coordinated decision making and service delivery is supported and considered during VOOHC intake and assessment, supervision and planning/review
- The relationships between information exchange under the Act, the Regulation and NSW and Commonwealth privacy laws, including Chapter 16A and section 248 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, clauses 75-79 of the Regulation is understood and adhered to
- Children and their parent(s) are provided with information relating to information exchange arrangements in accordance with the VOOHC Procedures, including their right to access and correct information held about them
- The agency should ensure that there is a process in place to manage the exchanging of information under Chapter 16A. All requests and exchange of information must be recorded and the agency has an approval process in place.

Attachment 2

VOOHC Register Quarterly Activity Report



Office of the
Children's Guardian

VOOHC REGISTER QUARTERLY ACTIVITY REPORT

The VOOHC Register Quarterly Activity Report (QAR) captures an agency's compliance with the VOOHC Register and the *Statutory Procedures: Voluntary out-of-home care in NSW* (the VOOHC Procedures). Agency should use the QAR as a self-monitoring and planning tool for quality assurance and to ensure compliance is achieved and maintained.

| TEST | TEST | | CGVA0000 | |
|---|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| | July - Sept | Oct - Dec | Jan - Mar | Apr - June |
| Reporting Period: - | | | | |
| Placement history¹ | | | | |
| Number of children/young people searched by the agency | | | | |
| Duplicates | | | | |
| Number of duplicate placements | | | | |
| Number of duplicate children and young people | | | | |
| Placements | | | | |
| Number of children/young people entered onto the VOOHC Register | | | | |
| Total number of placements lodged | | | | |
| Number of placements lodged within: | 1 - 5 days ² | | | |
| | 6-10 days | | | |
| | 11-20 days | | | |
| | 21-30 days | | | |
| | 31-40 days | | | |
| | 41-50 days | | | |
| | > 51 days | | | |
| Supervised placements³ | | | | |
| Total number of placements supervised | | | | |
| Agency provides placements only | | | | |
| Agency provides supervision only | | | | |
| Agency provides placements and supervision | | | | |
| Case plans⁴ | | | | |
| Total number of open case plans | | | | |
| Agency provides placements only | | | | |
| Agency provides supervision only | | | | |
| Agency provides placements and supervision | | | | |
| Number of case plans not lodged within 180 days | | | | |
| Number of case plans expired/not renewed within 365 days | | | | |
| Comments | | | | |

¹Agency should utilise the VOOHC Register Placement History function to view the child or young person's previous placements and to ensure appropriate exchange of information and collaboration with other agencies occurs.

²Agency must enter placement on to the VOOHC Register within 5 working days of the start and end date in accordance with Clause 75(3) of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Regulation 2012.

³A child or young person may remain in VOOHC for more than a total of 90 days in a period of 12 months only if the care is provided by a designated agency or supervised by a designated supervising agency in accordance with section 77(1) of the Children's Guardian Act 2019 and Section 6 of the Statutory Procedures for VOOHC in NSW.

⁴A child or young person may remain in VOOHC for more than a total of 180 days in a period of 12 months only if the child/young person has a case plan that appropriately meets their needs in accordance with section 77(2) of the Children's Guardian Act 2019 and Section 7 of the Statutory Procedures for VOOHC in NSW. Supervising designated agency must approve and or review (at least annually) a case plan for a child or young person's placement that it supervises.