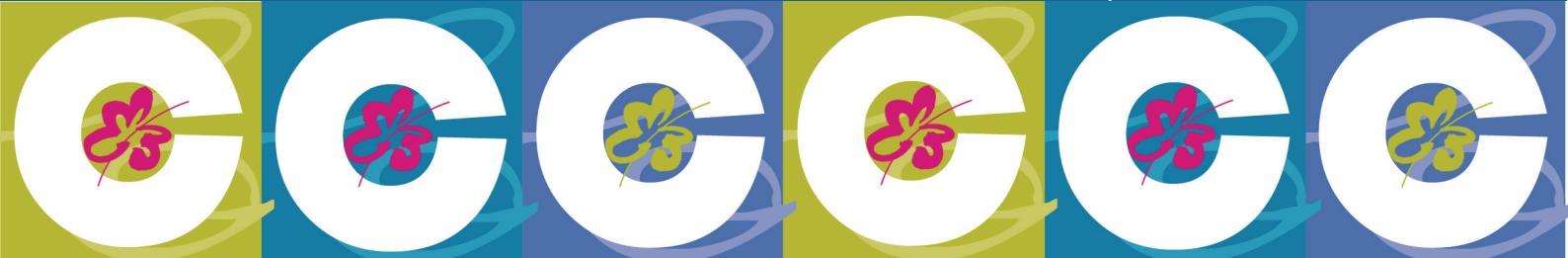


A Victorian charter supporting people in care relationships



Fact sheet for foster, kinship and permanent carers and children and young people in out-of-home care

Carers are a vital part of the out-of-home care system because no-one else does what they do. One thing all carers have in common is being in a *care relationship*. *Care relationship* includes the relationship between Victorian home based carers (foster care, kinship care and permanent care) and the children and young people for whom they care. Sometimes there may be more than one carer providing care, and more than one child or young person being cared for. Caring is one of the most important jobs around, and yet sometimes it seems carers are invisible.

Carers and children and young people should be as healthy and content as possible. Caring can be tough, so supporting carers can make a big difference to their lives, and the lives of the children and young people they care for. Needs of carers and those of the children and young people being cared for may be different; however supporting the care relationship can help both.

What is the charter?

The charter recognises and respects the vital role carers play in the Victorian community. It respects everyone in a care relationship, both carers and those being cared for, and their individual differences and backgrounds. The charter includes foster, kinship and permanent carers, carers of people with a mental illness, carers of people with a disability, and carers of frail older people and people with dementia.

The charter supports home based carers and children and young people in care, and is a reminder of the valuable role carers have in the lives of vulnerable children and young people. The charter encourages everyone involved in the care of children and young people, to support the care relationship.

The charter aims to empower carers and children and young people to take part in care planning, and to use available services. Carers and children and young people are the direct users of out-of-home care services and their ideas and input are valuable to help shape those services. The charter makes this clear.

'[The charter] is a guideline to lead Victoria in the right direction regarding relationships between those in care, those caring, organisations and government'
(John, foster carer).

How can people in care relationships use the charter?

It is vital for carers and workers to form a respectful working relationship. A relationship based on mutual respect and the best interests of children and young people. The charter seeks to protect the rights of people in care relationships (carers and children and young people) by recognising, respecting and supporting relationships. Carers can use the charter to better support interactions with service providers, to reinforce or confirm expectations of quality services and to help explain what services carers need to fulfil the care role.

What services and support are available for carers and the children and young people for whom they care?

CREATE Foundation (for children and young people) 1800 655 105

The peak body representing all children and young people in out-of-home care.

Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) (03) 9489 9770

The peak body for foster carers and foster carers who have converted to permanent care.

Grandparents Victoria (03) 9372 2422

A state-wide non-profit community organisation of grandparents working together with the aim of linking the generations to shape a positive future for all grandchildren and to support grandparents in their role.

Mirabel Foundation (03) 9527 9422

An Australian Children's Charity assisting children who have been orphaned or abandoned due to parental illicit drug use and are now in the care of extended family (kinship care).

Post Placement Support Service 1300 760 566

An early intervention support and training service for anyone with a personal or professional connection to permanent care, adoption, kinship care and/or foster care.

Carer card 1800 901 958

A discounts and benefits card providing recognition, understanding and support for Victoria's primary, kinship and foster carers. Carer card application forms are available through Centrelink offices, disability support agencies or the Victorian Carer Card program on 1800 901 958.

What happens next?

To help awareness and implementation of the charter, an information kit has been developed for all organisations supporting care relationships.

Tips for carers:

- use the charter to support relationships with Community Service Organisations (CSOs), the Department of Human Services (the department) and other services involved in the care of children and young people
- keep the charter handy as a reminder of its role in supporting and recognising care relationships
- provide feedback regarding the charter to organisations supporting the care relationship.

How can people in care relationships get a copy of the charter?

The charter and other information are available from organisations supporting out-of-home care relationships or can be downloaded from the web at: www.cyf.vic.gov.au

How can people in care relationships raise a concern about services?

The best way for carers to address concerns is to talk with the relevant people involved, using the charter to guide discussion. There are other mechanisms or structures within CSOs or the department for carers to have concerns addressed, such as complaints procedures.

If the issues remain unresolved, other organisations may be able to help. FCAV is a peak body service for foster carers and foster carers who have converted to permanent care. FCAV can provide people in these care relationships with an independent referral and assistance point.

Other fact sheets supporting the charter:

- Fact sheet for out-of-home care organisations.