



NSW OFFICE FOR CHILDREN  
**the Children's  
Guardian.**

**OUT-OF-HOME CARE (OOHC) ACCREDITATION AND  
THE DoCS OOHC EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) PROCESS**

*This information sheet addresses some questions about the relationship between the DoCS EOI process and the Children's Guardian's accreditation and monitoring systems.*

*This information supports and expands upon information provided by DoCS at [www.community.nsw.gov.au/html/comm\\_partners/oohc\\_EOI\\_resources.htm](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/html/comm_partners/oohc_EOI_resources.htm).*

*Please do not hesitate to contact Ms Susan Nicolson, OCCG's Director, Accreditation, on 8219 3605 (ph) or if you have any further questions concerning this issue.*

**1. Must all organisations that provide OOHC services be accredited as designated agencies?**

All organisations that place or arrange the placement of a child or young person in OOHC must be a designated agency – that is, they must be accredited by the Children's Guardian or have interim accreditation as a participant in the Children's Guardian's Quality Improvement Program (QIP).

Organisations that provide support services for children and young people in OOHC, and that do not place or arrange the OOHC placement of children and young people, do not need to be accredited as a designated agency.

The EOI process is open to organisations that wish to provide only OOHC support services.

**2. Can organisations that wish to provide placement services in the future participate in the EOI?**

Organisations that wish to provide future placement services are not required to be accredited to participate in the EOI. However, they must apply for and be granted accreditation as a designated agency before they can provide, and receive funding for, placement services.

All agencies that wish to participate in the EOI to provide

placement services in the future should lodge an application for accreditation with the Children's Guardian as soon as is possible. It generally takes 12 months from the date of application for an agency to achieve accreditation.

**3. Can organisations that wish to provide only placement services or OOHC case management services participate in the EOI?**

Case management is considered to be an essential element in OOHC service provision and the DoCS Case Management Policy encourages case management to be located as close to the placement as possible.

In some circumstances outlined in that Policy, a designated agency may provide placement services and DoCS provide case management services for particular children and young people, or case management responsibilities may be shared between the designated agency and DoCS.

A non-government designated agency that provides placement services CANNOT enter into an arrangement where another non-government organisation is responsible for the case management of its OOHC clients.

Existing OOHC program funded services that do not currently provide case management and are successful in the EOI may need time to assume case management

responsibility. A transition stage will be negotiated with DoCS at the time the Service Agreement and service specification are signed.

The Children's Guardian's monitoring program will monitor whether the member of a consortium responsible for a placement is also responsible for the case management of that placement.

#### **4. Does the Children's Guardian accredit consortia?**

The Children's Guardian separately accredits all members of a consortium that provide placement services. The Children's Guardian does not separately accredit the consortium itself.

#### **5. How does entering into an incorporated alliance impact on accreditation?**

As has been advised by DoCS, where organisations enter into an incorporated alliance the new corporate entity will need to apply for accreditation. EOI funding to place or arrange the placement of children and young people in OOHC will be available after the new corporate entity is accredited.

Accredited agencies, and agencies in the QIP, need to be aware that they will lose their current accreditation or interim accreditation if they change their current legal personality through entering into an incorporated alliance. It is an offence for agencies without accreditation or interim accreditation to place or arrange the placement of children and young people in OOHC.

Similarly an agency that has applied for accreditation will need to reapply if it changes its legal personality through entering into an incorporated alliance.

Agencies that are considering changing their legal personality to participate in the EOI should discuss this issue with OCCG's Director, Accreditation.

#### **6. If an agency is accredited to provide one type of OOHC service, may it seek to provide the alternative type of OOHC service through the EOI process?**

The Children's Guardian separately accredits designated agencies to provide residential and foster (including other non-residential) care services. Agencies that are accredited to provide only one type of service have a condition placed on their accreditation that restricts them from providing the other type of service.

Similarly, agencies in the QIP only have interim

accreditation to provide the type of OOHC service they were providing immediately before the accreditation scheme commenced on 15 July 2003.

If an agency with accreditation or interim accreditation to provide foster care wishes to provide residential care under the EOI process, it must be accredited by the Children's Guardian to provide residential care. Similarly a residential care agency that wishes to expand its services to include non-residential care must be accredited to provide foster care.

The current requirements for accreditation for different service types do not extend beyond residential/foster care – there is no need for separate accreditation for each of the more specific service models recently published by DoCS.

All designated agencies that wish to participate in the EOI to provide an expanded service type should lodge an application for accreditation to provide that expanded service with the Children's Guardian as soon as is possible. Much of the evidence used in obtaining one type of accreditation will be able to be recognised in assessing any application for the alternative type of accreditation.

It is theoretically possible for an agency to be accredited to provide one type of OOHC and interim accredited to provide the other, although it is strongly recommended that an agency in the QIP that wishes to expand its OOHC service type seeks accreditation to provide both types of care. Otherwise, the agency will need to comply with two separate reporting systems, which would be administratively cumbersome for both the agency and OCCG.

Agencies that wish to be accredited to provide expanded OOHC services should discuss the best means of achieving this with OCCG's Director, Accreditation.

#### **7. What accreditation period applies to an agency that is accredited to provide expanded OOHC services?**

Where an agency is accredited to provide one OOHC service type and, during its accreditation period, is accredited to provide the other service type, the agency will be accredited to provide both types of care for the period of the first accreditation.

If an agency wishes to apply for accreditation to provide an expanded service type in the latter part of its accreditation period, it may be in the agency's interest to be accredited for both service types at the same time. This is likely to be more efficient than applying for accreditation to provide an expanded service only and soon after reapplying for accreditation to provide both types of service.