

Statutory out-of-home care and adoption Accreditation and Monitoring

Accreditation Renewal: Information for agencies

Accreditation to provide statutory out-of-home care

Agencies must be accredited by the NSW Children's Guardian to provide statutory out-of-home care (OOHC) services for children and young people in NSW. It is illegal for an organisation to provide or arrange statutory or supported OOHC services in NSW unless it holds current accreditation from the NSW Children's Guardian.

In order to gain or maintain accreditation, agencies must provide evidence to demonstrate that they meet the requirements of the *NSW Child Safe Standards for Permanent Care 2015* ("the standards"). Evidence assessed includes direct and indirect evidence.

For agencies that are already accredited, this document provides a guide through the accreditation renewal process.

For information about the assessment of evidence, please also refer to *Fact Sheet: Assessment by the Office of the Children's Guardian*, available on the Office of the Children's Guardian's website <https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/statutory-out-of-home-care-and-adoption/fact-sheets>

Name of agency	
Expiry date	
Application for accreditation	
Indirect evidence submission	
Agency to provide information for onsite Visit 1	
Direct evidence onsite assessment 1	
Agency to provide information for onsite Visit 2	
Direct evidence onsite assessment 2	



Important Dates

Application for Accreditation

Application for Accreditation form should be provided including attachments listed on the last page and signed by the Principal Officer and agency signatory (whoever can sign legal documents on the agency's behalf).

Indirect evidence

Your agency's Indirect Evidence and Evidence Index should be provided in both electronic and hard copy format.

Examples of indirect evidence include (but are not limited to):

- policies and procedures
- template documents used to implement policies and procedures e.g. forms, letters, checklists and training
- service agreements such as funding agreements, header agreements, interagency guidelines, contracts with other human service providers
- publications such as annual reports, strategic plans, publications for clients, induction and orientation kits, brochures, media releases and articles.

Please refer to the Accreditation Guide on how to complete the Evidence Index, where an example is also provided.

Direct Evidence - Onsite Assessments

Assessors from the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) will visit the agency at least twice during the accreditation renewal process. The dates times and locations of the visits will be arranged in advance with the Principal Officer of the agency. The purpose of the onsite visits is to assess the practice of the agency in providing out-of-home care services, and to confirm that the practice is in keeping with the agencies policies and procedures, legislative requirements and NSW Child Safe Standards for Permanent Care 2015.

The focus of Assessment 1 is child protection, the safety and suitability of placements, monitoring and case planning. The focus of Assessment 2 is recruitment, selection, authorisation and supervision of carers and staff, management practices and board processes. This is subject to Agency organisation and will be discussed as part of the Onsite Assessment planning process as the initial meeting.

Assessors will discuss the agency's procedures and systems with the staff and/or management of the agency. The particular staff or managers involved in the discussions can be decided by the agency. Please see **Annex 1** for a list of questions that discussions at assessment 1 and 2 will be based around.

Assessors will then review information provided by the agency to confirm that the systems and procedures outlined in the discussions are implemented in practice. Where information reviewed does not confirm policies and procedures, or does not meet the legislative requirements and standards, the assessors will seek further information from the agency, if available, for review.

The assessment seeks to confirm that the agency has appropriate systems in place for the care of children and young people and that the systems are implemented consistently. The assessment is strengths based and collaborative. This is an opportunity for the agency to showcase areas of practice they consider to be their strength, and areas where they want to improve.

At the end of the assessment the OCG assessors need to answer the questions in the table provided in **Annex 2** before finalising recommendations to the Children's Guardian.

Information provided to OCG prior to onsite assessment

Two weeks prior to each direct evidence onsite assessment, your lead assessor will request the following information which you must provide to the team on the commencement of the first day of assessment – this information is required for your assessment to be conducted:

- An updated staff list for each site. Including;
 - Employment commencement date
 - Job/position title
 - Any allegations, current or historical
 - Any performance management that has occurred in the last 12 months
- A list of current children and young people for each site. Including;
 - Date of birth
 - Names of carers placed with
 - Date of entry /placement with the agency
 - Cultural background
 - If the child or young person has a behavior management plan in place
 - It would also assist to include;
 - Whether case managed by your agency or another agency (e.g. CS)
 - Whether placement was a new entry of case management transfer
 - Kinship placement
 - Whether the child or young person has moved in care in the last 12 months
- A list of children and young people who have left care in the last 12 months for each site. Please include the date and reason the child or young person left care (for example restored, turned 18, moved to another agency)
- A list of Carers for each site. Including;
 - Current authorised carers
 - Carer applicants who were not authorised and de-authorised carers (within the last 12 months)
 - Date of authorisation, de-authorisation or decision not to authorize
 - Adult household members
 - Any allegations, current or historical

On the first day of the second onsite assessment please provide the OCG assessors with the following information;

- Staff who have commenced in the past 12 months
- Any staff that are subject to, or have been subject to performance management within the past 12 months

Some agencies complete a second Evidence Index for the Direct Evidence to make sure that OCG Assessors don't miss anything that the agency wants them to see at the onsite visit. For example, "see section 5 of CYP files" or "view files for John Smith and Jane Brown" instead of directing to a page of the policies and procedures.

During onsite assessment

OCG assessors will liaise with your agency to arrange locations, details and timeframes of the onsite assessments. The assessors will assess the agency's evidence at agreed upon times generally between the hours of 9:00am and 5:00pm each day.

The first day of the assessments will commence with discussions with management and staff. Please allow approximately 3 hours for these discussions.

During the visit OCG Assessors will want to speak to;

- Principal Officer
- A representative from the board (this will be ok via phone)
- Relevant team managers e.g. social work team manager, recruitment and panel manager
- Any other staff member you identify as relevant
- OCG assessors can talk to a foster carer or child if they would like to, however this is not a requirement

Assessors will then spend time reviewing the agency's direct evidence to confirm the agency's practice meets the standards, legislative requirements and aligns with the information provided in discussions.

During the onsite assessment OCG assessors will review

- CYP and carer files
- Staff files (recruitment, supervision, training, performance reviews and management)
- Team and management meeting records
- Reportable allegations and complaint records
- Board meeting minutes, agendas, reports
- Any registers/databases e.g. complaints, incidents, training
- Any other records you would like to show us

In preparing for these assessments please ensure that you have sufficient evidence to support your practice. Assessors will seek additional evidence or hold further discussions during the assessment as needed.

Further information and resources

Legislation

- *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*
- *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Regulation 2012*
- *Adoption Act 2000*
- *Adoption Regulation 2015*
- *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012*
- *Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013*
- *Child Protection (Working with Children) Amendment (Miscellaneous) Regulation 2013*
- *Ombudsman Act 1974*

Please use <http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/> to ensure that policies and procedures meet current legislative requirements.

Legislation can change regularly and therefore guidance may be out of date.

General resources

Office of the Children's Guardian website – statutory OOHC Application Package

<http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/Out-of-home-care/Statutory-out-of-home-care/application-package>

Application Package includes:

Accreditation Guide

This Guide explains step-by-step what your agency needs to do to participate in the accreditation program.

Accreditation Self-assessment Tool

Use of the Accreditation Self-assessment Tool is recommended, but is not a requirement for accreditation. The Tool provides a guide for the agency to evaluate and assess its policies, procedures and practice against the Standards and is designed to identify opportunities for continuous improvement. This Tool is for the agency's own use and is *not* submitted to the Children's Guardian.

Application for Accreditation Form

Your agency is required to complete this form when it applies for accreditation. Please ensure that documents listed on the last page are attached as part of your agency's application.

Evidence Index

The Evidence Index lists the standards as part of the *NSW Child Safe Standards for Permanent Care* and the indicators of compliances against which your agency's evidence will be assessed. Your agency is required to use the Evidence Index to identify and locate evidence which complies with the assessment criteria for each Standard. This document is required to be completed when you submit evidence to the Children's Guardian.

NSW Child Safe Standards for Permanent Care

The Standards are used by the Children's Guardian for the accreditation of statutory out-of-home care services and adoptions services in NSW. The Standards establish minimum requirements for accreditation and also provide a framework for continuous improvement in the quality of statutory out-of-home care and adoption services. Please note that agencies must comply with the indicators of compliance for each Standard including all relevant sections of legislation referenced at the top of the page for each Standard.

Office of the Children's Guardian Fact Sheets and Guidelines

<http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/statutory-out-of-home-care-and-adoption/fact-sheets>

<http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/working-with-children-check/resources>

<http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/statutory-out-of-home-care-and-adoption/nsw-carers-register/fact-sheets>

<http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/out-of-home-care/nsw-carers-register/carers-register-user-guide>

<http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/out-of-home-care/statutory-out-of-home-care/guidelines>

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/convention-rights-child>

Family and Community Services

<http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/>

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/reforms/children,-young-people-and-families/safe-home-for-life>

<http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/kts>

Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care in NSW

<http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/parents,-carers-and-families/for-young-people/are-you-in-care/charter-of-rights>

NSW Ombudsman – Child protection resources

<https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/news-and-publications/publications/fact-sheets/child-protection/reviewing-child-protection-policies-an-agency-self-assessment-checklist-cp08>

More information

If you have a question, please call the OCG's Accreditation team on (02) 8219 3600 or email accreditation@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au.

For information about the Office of the Children's Guardian's other regulatory responsibilities, including the Working With Children Check, Child Safe Organisations, registration and monitoring of voluntary OOHC services, and accreditation and monitoring of adoption services, please visit www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au.

Disclaimer: The material provided in this fact sheet is for guidance only. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information is accurate, current and not misleading. However, this cannot always be guaranteed and no warranty is given that the information is free from error or omission. Users should exercise their own skill and care with respect to the use of the material. The information is also not a substitute for independent legal or other professional advice and users should obtain appropriate professional advice relevant to their particular circumstances.

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Annex 1

Questions for policy and practice discussions

Assessment 1

These questions focus on the care of children and young people.

The agency structure
Can you tell us how the organisation as a whole is structured? Where do the out-of-home care programs sit within the structure? Who has management oversight and supervision of the provision of out-of-home care?
General observations
Can you tell us what you think your good areas of practice are? Can you tell us what your weaknesses are, if any? Should we expect to see consistent systems being implemented across all sites?
Referral, initial assessment and placement
How does the agency receive referrals? Can you talk us through what happens when you get a referral? What consideration is given to the application of the permanent placement principles at the time of referral / initial assessment? Who has responsibility for the initial assessment? What matters are considered during the assessment? Can you talk us through placement matching? What information is given to the carer/staff? What information is given to the child/young person?
Care environment
What process does the agency use to assess the safety and suitability of the care environment? What strategies does the agency use to monitor placements? How are concerns about the care environment identified? How are concerns brought to your attention? Who is responsible for following up on concerns?

Case planning and review

Does the agency have case management responsibility for all CYP in the agency's care?

What are the agency's case planning processes?

How does the agency implement the **permanent placement principles** into case planning / casework practices?

Who attends case meetings and reviews?

How are children and young people involved?

When does leaving care planning commence?

What issues are considered in planning for leaving care?

Behaviour management

Are there any children on Behaviour Management Plans?

How are Behaviour Management Plans developed?

What are your processes where psychotropic medications are prescribed for a child or young person?

Birth family

How do birth families contribute?

Who is responsible for communication with birth families?

Who is responsible for managing contact arrangements?

What processes are in place to meet the Care and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 Section 149 B-K requirements?

How does the agency provide progress information in line with the Section 163 requirements of the same Act?

Child protection – Carer knowledge and responsibilities

How are carers made aware of their child protection responsibilities?

How are these responsibilities monitored?

Child protection – Management of concerns and allegations

Can you talk us through the process when an allegation is received?

Can you explain when child protection matters need to be reported to the NSW Ombudsman and/or the OCG and how this is done?

How are the records of allegations maintained?

What is the agency's complaints management process and who has responsibility for managing the process?

Assessment 2

These questions focus on the management of the agency

Carers and staff

What strategies are used for the recruitment of positions across the agency?
Can you explain the carer recruitment processes and the staff recruitment processes?
How are Carers Register requirements met and who has responsibility for this?
Who is responsible for the supervision and support of carers?
How are staff supervised?
What training does the agency provide and how is it arranged?
What type of concerns or issues has the agency received from or about carers and staff?
How are these managed and recorded?
Who is responsible for resolving issues of concerns?

Working With Children Check (WWCC)

Who has responsibility for verifying WWCC?
How are the WWCC records maintained?
How does the agency ensure WWCC's are renewed prior to expiry?
What is the process for ensuring all household members turning 18 have a WWCC prior to this date?
What is the process is the agency receives a Bar of Interim Bar for the following positions?

- Carers
- Adult household members
- Staff members
- Management
- Principal Officer
- Board members

Record keeping

How does the agency maintain children and young people's records?
How does the agency maintain carer and staff records?
Where are casework notes and files kept?
Is there any area of the agency's work with children and young people that would not be recorded?
Who has access to each type of record or file?
How is this access determined and managed?
Where are records and files kept?
How would the agency know if record security had been breached?

Governance and strategic planning

Can you explain the Board/Authority structure?

How are members recruited and elected?

How are probity issues (WWCC) managed?

When does the Board/Authority meet?

How are conflicts of interest managed?

How the Board/Authority does received information about operational matters?

The Principal Officer of an accredited agency has particular responsibilities under the legislation. As the accredited body, how does the Board know that the Principal Officer is upholding their responsibilities under the Act?

What matters relating to the out-of-home care program/s are referred to the Board/Authority for decisions?

How are the Board/Authority decisions communicated to staff?

What continuous improvement and quality assurance systems are in place?

What are the agency's processes for evaluating the provision of out-of-home care programs?

Do you have an example of changes implemented as a result of evaluation?

How does the agency know when improvement is required?

What matters are considered when planning for expansion?

Annex 2

Assessment outcome

	Y	N	Does practice match agency policy and practice discussions?
1. Current case plans			
Do the majority of children and young people have a current case plan?			
Are all care domains included in the plan and reviewed/updated with current information?			
Are case plans developed with the participation of all parties?			
Do the case plans include specific tasks and timeframes?			
2. Safe placements			
Is there a system to assess the safety and suitability of the care environment?			
Is this implemented for all placements?			
3. Monitoring			
Is there a system for the regular monitoring of placements, which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contact with children and young people? ▪ A focus on child protection? 			
Is this system implemented most of the time?			
4. Supervision			
Is there a system for the regular supervision of carers?			
Is this system implemented most of the time?			
5. Support			
Are there systems for the agency to identify and address the support needs of carers?			
Is there evidence this is implemented as needed?			

	Y	N	Does practice match agency policy and practice discussions?
6. Child protection/allegations			
Is there a system for identifying and managing child protection concerns?			
Are the agency's systems for reporting and investigating allegations compliant with the Ombudsman's requirements?			
Is there evidence of these systems in practice?			
Are there any outstanding child protection matters?			
7. Behaviour management and psychotropic medication			
Is the agency compliant with behavior support and psychotropic medication requirements?			
8. Family			
Is there a system for complying with s149 b-k and s163 which includes a risk assessment and consultation with carers and children and young people (where appropriate)?			
Is there evidence of this in practice?			
Does the agency support regular birth family contact for the majority of children and young people?			
9. Working With Children Check			
Does the agency have a system for ensuring all required WWCC are completed and verified?			
Is there a system for responding to bars/interim bars for carers, staff, adult household members, management and Board?			
Are there any outstanding WWCCs or related issues?			
10. Carers Register			
Has the agency entered all carers onto the Carers Register?			
Is the agency keeping Carers Register information current/updated?			

	Y	N	Does practice match agency policy and practice discussions?
11. Casework			
Are casework actions clearly documented and the records maintained?			
Is there evidence of follow-up actions when needed? For the majority of time?			
Is life story work evident for most children and young people?			
12. Governance			
Are board processes written, available for review and clearly explained? Are board processes generally compliant?			
Is there evidence of appropriate information flow to and from the board?			
Is there a process for the evaluation of the OOHC program?			
Are there appropriate planning processes for service provision and service expansion?			