



SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE POLICY

Policy & Guidance

- Children and young people who cannot live in their family home may access out-of-home care as a temporary, medium or long-term living arrangement.
- Out-of-home care includes both statutory and informal out-of-home care.
- Schools are required to meet defined obligations under the Partnering Agreement for all students in statutory out-of-home care. These obligations aim to support the educational achievement of every child and young person in statutory out-of-home care.
- Under the Partnering Agreement, schools must meet certain obligations to students in out-of-home care. The Partnering Agreement details the obligations in relation to students in Statutory out-of-home care.

Purpose

- This policy provides an overview of out-of-home care and to outline Footscray North Primary School's obligations under the [Out-of-Home-Care Education Commitment: a Partnering Agreement 2018](#) (the Partnering Agreement)

Definitions

Out-of-home care is a temporary, medium or long-term living arrangement for children and young people who cannot live in their family home. Out-of-home care most commonly refers to statutory out-of-home care, where a child or young person cannot live in their family home and a legal order is in place to support the arrangement.

Out-of-home care does not include children or young people who have transitioned to family reunification or adoption.

Statutory out-of-home care includes foster care, kinship care, permanent care, residential care and lead tenant arrangements. In Victoria, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has oversight of these arrangements.

Informal Out-of-Home Care refers to an arrangement in which a child or young person is living with someone other than their parent or legal guardian, without an out-of-home care legal order in place. DHHS usually does not have oversight of these arrangements. When a student is living in an informal out-of-home care arrangement, the carer should be asked to complete an [Informal Carer Statutory Declaration form](#) (login required). The declaration is a written statement that sets out the care arrangements for the child or young person. A completed declaration is required to allow the school the student attends, or where they are seeking enrolment, to work with an informal carer.

Types of statutory out-of-home care

foster care: a child or young person is taken into care by a foster carer who has been trained and approved to look after children and young people

kinship care: a child or young person is taken into care by a relative or family friend allowing them to remain within the family or local network

permanent care: refers to situations when a child or young person is placed with approved permanent care parents by Adoption and Permanent Care Teams, or when an existing foster care or kinship care placement is converted to permanent care by the granting of a permanent care order

residential care: a young person is placed into a home staffed by carers

lead tenant: an out-of-home care placement option providing medium-term accommodation and support to young people aged 16 to 17 years

Partnering Agreement background

The Partnering Agreement is a commitment between:

- the Department of Education and Training
- the Department of Health and Human Services
- the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria
- Independent Schools Victoria
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
- the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

The Partnering Agreement strengthens the shared commitment between partners to improve education and health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people in out-of-home care.

The agreement aims to ensure that:

- processes are in place to actively support the educational achievement of every child and young person in out-of-home care
- a strongly coordinated approach exists to support the needs of children and young people in out-of-home care
- all parties understand each other's roles and responsibilities and work cooperatively
- strategies are implemented to improve outcomes related to student enrolment, attendance, achievement, case planning, retention and school completion

Implementation

- The school will meet its obligations under the Partnering Agreement.
- These obligations include:
 - appointing a learning mentor
 - assigning a student support group
 - developing an individual education plan
 - developing an educational needs analysis
 - nominating a designated teacher

For further information, the school will refer to the Guidance tab at the website below.

Informal out-of-home care

The school notes that generally, an informal carer who has provided the school with a completed Informal Carer Statutory Declaration may make school-based decisions for the child and may access school information ordinarily provided to a parent.

However, generally, a parent's decision overrides any decision made by an informal carer. Other factors that might be relevant to decision-making and information-sharing for the child include a consideration of whether the child is a mature minor or any safety and wellbeing concerns. Refer to the Department's policy on [Mature Minors and Decision-Making](#) for further information.

- Please refer also to the school's *Student Wellbeing & Engagement Policy* and the *Decision-Making Responsibilities for Students Policy*.

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle or if guidelines change (latest DET update mid-July 2020).

School Council Approval No Longer Required

Reference:

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/supporting-students-out-of-home-care>