



# Out-of-Home Care Guide for Birth-Families

## Reuniting with a Child



When your child or children are entered into the out-of-home care system, the priority in all states across Australia is that your children are safe, secure and provided for - this includes their medical, educational and development needs. The regulating authority in your state will determine if restoration to the birth-family is an option or a goal for the child or children in care. Where a child or children cannot return to their family home, the focus is on ensuring they are in a foster care home which provides stability and long-term care.

## The Emotional Toll



When children and birth-families are separated it can be traumatic for both the children and the parents. It is not unusual to feel guilt, shame, worry, frustration or sadness during this time. If you are an Australian medicare card holder, you may be eligible for a Mental Health Care plan through your GP where you can access professional support to manage and understand these feelings and the effects they may be having on you and your family.

## Maintaining Contact



The safety of your child or children is the paramount concern of all foster care agencies and their carers, where it is safe to do so you may be able to receive some updates on the progress of your child, contribute to discussions, participate in pre-arranged phone calls or supervised visits. This depends on your state. The process may take patience and will also depend on the stability and feelings of the child or children, who may require further support before they are ready for contact.

## Government Responsibility



Each state has a different state-government based department for the protection and care of children, in addition some states have legislative bodies and commissioners who assist with maintaining a standard of care for children in foster care in that state.

**Queensland:** Department of Child Safety, Youth & Women; Queensland Family & Child Commission

**New South Wales (and ACT):** Department of Communities and Justice; Office of the Children's Guardian NSW; the Office of the NSW Advocate for Children & Young People

**Victoria:** Department of Health & Human Services; Commission for Children & Young People VIC

**Tasmania:** Department of Communities; Commissioner for Children & Young People Tasmania;

**Northern Territory:** Territory Families; Office of the Children's Commissioner NT

**South Australia:** Department of Child Protection; Office of the Guardian; Commissioner for Children & Young People SA

**Western Australia:** Department of Communities; Commissioner for Children & Young People WA

We know that life is complex and there can be matters in your life that are impacting you and the welfare of your family. If you need support, there are local and national organisations who can help.



Domestic Violence and Abuse - call 1800RESPECT (1800 555 677 or 13 14 50 for interpreter) \* Lifeline - call 13 11 14 \* Kids Helpline - 1800 55 1800 \* Mensline - call 1300 78 99 78 \* Food, Clothing, Housing and Health Support- you can use AskIzzy to locate local services at [www.askizzy.com.au](http://www.askizzy.com.au)