



SSI multicultural foster care

Become a foster carer

strengthening children through culture

SSI 
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international

Every child has a right to a safe, happy and permanent home.

Usually, the best place for them is with their family; however, there are some children and young people for whom it is not safe to live with their families.

SSI Multicultural Foster Care provides support for children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds who can't live with their families and are in out-of-home care.

While we have a focus on recruiting foster carers from CALD backgrounds, we are always interested to hear from people of any background who have a genuine interest in providing a safe, caring and stable home for these children and young people.



What is a foster carer?

Foster carers provide a safe environment for vulnerable children and young people in out-of-home care by making them a part of their own family and home.

There are more than 18,500 children and young people in out-of-home care in NSW. Foster carers play a vital role in helping to provide a stable home and family for many of these children.

Being a foster carer is an opportunity to help a child or young person who has experienced difficult circumstances. This may be through supporting them while they wait to be returned to their parents' care, or by providing a caring, safe and stable home for them to grow up in.

By providing guidance, patience, support, stability and encouragement, foster carers make a real difference to the lives of children and young people in their care.



empathy
caring

stability

patience

perseverance

commitment

What qualities make a good foster carer?

Each foster carer brings different skills, qualities and family circumstances. All carers are provided with information and training and are assessed and authorised to provide foster care.

The main quality that makes an effective foster carer is to have a genuine interest and focus on the child's wellbeing and future. Other strong attributes include:

- empathy and good listening skills
- perseverance when things get tough
- commitment to support the child with a stable and caring home, and family
- flexibility and adaptability
- patience and a sense of humour
- stability and consistency in your personal and family life
- a willingness to work with other people in the child's life such as birth parents, siblings or extended family
- an ability to guide and discipline children without the use of physical punishment
- looking after the physical and mental health of yourself and your family members
- a willingness to work with caseworkers in making decisions
- a willingness to support the child to develop a sense of identity that may include their culture, language and religion, and connection to community.

Why do some children need foster care?

Every child is different and the reasons they need care are also different.

Children and young people who need care have been removed from their birth parents and families' care because they have been in a very unsafe situation.

There are many different reasons why parents are not able to look after their children. Sometimes it is as a result of a parent's depression or other mental health concerns, domestic violence, or because of alcohol and drug issues. Sometimes it is a combination of many reasons.

When children and young people come into care they need a great deal of time and support to help them understand their circumstances. This can include talking with them about the reasons they are in care and the decisions being made to help them live in a safe, stable and permanent home.

Why is it important to help maintain cultural connections?

Children have many and different needs, including the right to good health care, education, and information about their identity, family and culture.

Children in foster care who are supported to learn about and maintain a connection to their culture, religion and language have better outcomes as they grow up than those who are not supported in this way. These connections help children to understand where they have come from and to develop their sense of belonging, and cultural, religious and linguistic identity.

Helping children stay connected with their culture, language and religion also helps if and when children are returned or reconnected to their birth parents and/or extended family.

SSI Multicultural Foster Care has a strong focus on helping children to maintain these connections. Together with the support of a caseworker, foster carers will be committing to helping the child placed with them to learn about and remain connected with their culture, religion and language.

For carers who are not from the same cultural background, the SSI Multicultural Foster Care team works with the carers, the child and their birth parents and, where needed, culturally specific workers.

Together they develop and put in place a cultural care plan that will assist the carer to meet the child's cultural needs.

culture/
language/
religion
=
identity/
belonging

Foster care options

The type of foster care provided for a child will depend on their individual needs and circumstances. They include:

Emergency care

Emergency care is for children who need an urgent placement because there are immediate concerns for their safety. The duration of this type of care can range from a few nights to a few weeks.

Short- to medium-term care

Short- to medium-term care can last from anywhere between a few weeks to a number of months. Where it is in the child's best interests, and it is safe to do so, SSI Multicultural Foster Care works with the Department of Family and Community Services and families to restore a child to their parents' care during this time.

When restoration to the birth family is not the goal for the child, short-term foster care is required while the child's extended family is assessed to provide for his or her long-term care.

If this is not an option, short- to medium-term care is needed until a suitable foster carer is found to provide for the child's long-term permanent care.

Respite care

From time to time, birth parents or foster carers need a break from their caring role. Respite care involves looking after children for short periods of time to allow their birth parents or foster carers to have a break, for example, over school holidays or weekends.

Long-term or permanent care

Long-term or permanent carers are foster carers who take on the responsibility and commitment to care for a child or young person on a permanent basis. For some children permanent care may include a guardianship order or open adoption.

The child or young person becomes part of the foster carer's family at least until they turn 18 years old, and often for many years after.

The unique qualities of long-term foster carers include the capacity to provide for the child's long-term care and support them to meet their needs. This can include helping them maintain contact with their birth family.

What to expect as a foster carer

What are the rewards of providing foster care to a child?

Opening your home to a child or young person in need of care and protection is a big decision and commitment. While challenging at times, the rewards outweigh any difficult times.

Following are some comments from foster carers about their personal experiences:

“Our lives have changed for the better since we started being foster carers. Friends often tell us that our foster children are blessed to be in our care, but we think we are the ones who are blessed to have them in our home and family.”

“You give them your love and give them what they have missed out on. Treat them as though they are part of the family.”

“With the challenges come the highlights of knowing that I have helped these children to stay connected with their religion and their culture, and this has helped them become strong and happy people...I have given them the love and security they needed, until they were ready to return to their family, so I know that I have been successful in my role as a foster carer.”

What will the children be like?

Like all children, those in foster care will have unique personalities, strengths and qualities. It is important to note, however, that these are children who have experienced abuse or neglect, and have been removed from their birth families' care. As a result, it is not uncommon for the children to be insecure, and feel sadness, distrust, anxiety, grief and even anger. The age of the child and his or her individual history will influence their behaviours.

It can be challenging to look after children who feel this way. SSI Multicultural Foster Care caseworkers work closely with foster carers and children in care to work through difficulties. Children in foster care can be aged from 0–18 years. Many children are part of a sibling group, but some come into care on their own.

What support will I receive?

SSI Multicultural Foster Care provides a range of support services to foster carers, children and young people in care, the foster carer's family and the child's birth family.

This support includes:

- regular phone contact and monthly visits
- initial and ongoing training
- access to 24 hour on-call phone support for crisis situations
- respite care
- referrals to a range of support services.

Foster carers receive a fixed fortnightly allowance based on the age of the foster child. This allowance is to meet the cost of clothing, food, education and other needs of the child or young person in their care.

Will I get training?

All new foster carers are trained to care for children and young people. Training is mandatory and part of the assessment and authorisation process. Training includes one-on-one discussions and a short training course. This can be arranged at a time to suit you.

There is ongoing training once you become a foster carer and all training is free of charge. There are also opportunities to meet, and be supported by, other foster carers.

Am I eligible to become a foster carer?

Anyone can apply to become a foster carer as long as they meet the conditions set out below.

Applicants must be:

- over 21 years of age
- an Australian citizen or permanent resident
- in good physical and emotional health without any medical condition that may affect their ability to care for a child or young person.

Foster carers come from all walks of life. They can be:

- single, married, or in a same sex or de facto relationship
- a renter or home owner
- working or not working
- a parent already, or someone who has a strong interest in helping children.

How do I apply to become a foster carer?

If you are interested in becoming a foster carer with SSI, contact us on (02) 8713 9200 or email fostercare@ssi.org.au

We will arrange a time to come and speak with you and your family about foster care, what it involves, and how to apply.

You will be provided with written information about our service and an application form. Once you have gathered the information you need and you decide you want to proceed, the next step will be to submit the application form to us.

You will then be invited to participate in an assessment process that will help us determine whether you are eligible to become a foster carer with our service.

The initial process includes:

- a safety inspection of your home
- a request for medical and personal references
- checks for Working with Children and criminal records for all adult members of your household
- participation in training
- assessment interviews with you and members of your household.



About SSI

Settlement Services International (SSI) is a community-based not-for-profit organisation providing a range of services in the areas of humanitarian settlement, housing, asylum seeker assistance, multicultural foster care, disability support and employment services in NSW.

SSI is also the state-wide umbrella organisation for 11 Migrant Resource Centres and Multicultural Services across NSW.

Our vision is to achieve a society that values the diversity of its people and actively provides support to ensure meaningful social and economic participation and to assist individuals and families reach their potential.

Contact us:

SSI Multicultural Foster Care

t: (02) 8713 9200

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www.ssi.org.au

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