Chapter 8. Regulation of care

Purpose

This procedure outlines the process for approving carers who can provide a child with a safe and acceptable standard of care, when Child Safety intervention with a child and family requires that a child is placed away from their parent’s care.

The purpose of regulating foster and kinship carers, including provisionally approved carers, is to ensure that an individual who provides care for a child placed with them by Child Safety, is suitable to care for the child and continues to meet suitability requirements for the duration of their approval.

Key steps

1. Pre-application
2. Assessment
3. Approval
4. Renewal

What ifs - responding to specific regulation of care matters

Standards

1. Consideration is given to placing the child with kin, as a first option.
2. All persons must be considered 'suitable persons', prior to being issued with a certificate of approval as a foster or kinship carer or provisionally approved carer.
3. Applications for approval, or renewal of approval, are decided within legislative timeframes.
4. Personal history checks are undertaken by the CSU for all applicants and adult household members.

Practice skills (Key areas for reflection)

- Have I accessed all sources of relevant information in undertaking the assessment?
- Have I applied the five elements of the child placement principle during engagement, assessment and review processes, where relevant?
- Did I include in my assessment report relevant, factual and concise information, including evidence and professional opinion, which supports the recommendation for approval or refusal of an application?
- Have I undertaken the assessment in an open, accountable and transparent manner and treated the applicant fairly, with courtesy and respect?
• Have I addressed issues of concern with the applicant during the assessment process?
• How did I facilitate the applicant’s participation in decision-making?

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**Authority**

- *Child Protection Act 1999*
- *Child Protection Regulation 2011*
- *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*
- Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service
- *Information Privacy Act 2009*
- *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994*
- *Public Service Act 2008*
- Policy No. 457: Carer learning and support
- Policy No. 460: Carer participation
- Procedure No. 460: Carer participation
- Policy No. 608: Child related costs - Long-term guardian support
- Procedure No. 608: Child related costs - Long-term guardian support
- Policy: Conflict of interest
- Policy No. 383: Foster care training
- Policy No. 632: Kinship care
- Policy No. 594: Permanency planning
- Policy No. 36: Placement of children with departmental employees
- Policy and procedure: Recordkeeping
- Policy No. 607: Supporting children in the care of long-term guardians
- Procedures and guidelines for Quality Care: Foster care training
Key steps - Regulation of care

1. Pre-application
   1.1 Record an expression of interest/application
   1.2 Distribute an information kit
   1.3 Invite the person to an information session
   1.4 Conduct the initial interview
   1.5 Provide the home safety checklist
   1.6 Regulated home-based services
   1.7 Address identified concerns about suitability
   1.8 Lodge the application

2. Assessment
   2.1 Complete pre-service training
   2.2 Facilitate personal history checks
   2.3 Conduct a household safety study
   2.4 Conduct assessment interviews
   2.5 Discretionary information checks
   2.6 Assess the application for approval
   2.7 Complete the assessment report

3. Approval
   3.1 Decide the outcome of the application for approval
   3.2 Extend the timeframe for deciding the initial application
   3.3 Approve the application
   3.4 Refuse the application
   3.5 Complete a foster carer agreement

4. Renewal
   4.1 Standard and advanced training
   4.2 Invite an application for renewal of approval
   4.3 Lodge the application for renewal
   4.4 Facilitate personal history checks
   4.5 Conduct a household safety study
   4.6 Conduct medical checks, if applicable
   4.7 Assess the application for renewal
   4.8 Complete the renewal assessment report
   4.9 Decide the outcome of the application for renewal
   4.10 Approve the application for renewal
   4.11 Review support arrangements
   4.12 Review the foster carer agreement
What ifs - responding to specific areas of regulation of care

1. What if the applicant requires provisional approval?
2. What if there is a change in carer circumstances?
3. What if a carer or carer applicant is also a Child Safety employee?
4. What if a review of carer suitability is required?
5. What if one spouse is not able to participate in the assessment and approval process?
6. What if a carer applicant resides interstate?
7. What if the foster or kinship carer decides to cease being a carer?
8. What if a carer requests access to their personal information?
9. What if a foster or kinship carer’s certificate of approval requires amendment, suspension or cancellation, other than on blue card or exemption card grounds?
10. What if a foster or kinship carer’s certificate of approval requires suspension or cancellation, on blue card or exemption card grounds?
11. What if a provisionally approved carer’s certificate of approval requires amendment, suspension or cancellation?
12. What if a spousal relationship ends during the renewal of approval for the carer couple and only one carer wishes to continue as a carer?
1. Pre-application

The purpose of the pre-application phase is to provide a person with advice and information about the role and responsibilities of a foster or kinship carer, and to assist the person to make an informed choice about whether to proceed with lodging an application.

For a comparison of the key steps for each carer type, refer to the practice resource Comparison of the key steps for carer approval.

Steps 1.1 to 1.6 in the pre-application phase may not occur sequentially, however, usually occur prior to an application being lodged and ‘properly made’. The actions outlined may be undertaken by a Child Safety officer or by staff of a foster or kinship care service. The initial interview or the household safety study may also be completed by a contracted fee-for-service professional, where they are undertaking the assessment of the applicant.

Additional requirements for the approval of an applicant who is a Child Safety employee are outlined in 3. What if a carer or carer applicant is also a departmental employee?

While the activities outlined in the pre-application phase are not listed as assessment activities, the information gathered and observations made will inform the assessment of the applicant, should they proceed with an application.

For further information about the regulation of care, refer to the practice resources Approved carers - an overview and Key concepts for the regulation of care.

For information about the roles and responsibilities of the CSSC and PSU in relation to the carer enquiry and application process, refer to the Foster carer enquiry and application checklist or Kinship care enquiry and application checklist. Note: There may be a variance in roles across regions which are not captured in the checklists.

1.1 Record an expression of interest/application

When an initial foster carer enquiry is received by the CSSC, PSU or a foster and kinship care service, forward the information to the Foster Carer Recruitment Team (FCRT). The FCRT will:

- create a person record for the primary applicant, where the record does not already exist in ICMS
- create an ‘Expression of Interest (EOI)/Application’ in ICMS and select ‘Yes’ to the enquiry prompt
- record enquiry information in ICMS
- allocate the ‘EOI/Application’ to the relevant PSU.

Where the PSU receives a local carer enquiry, PSU staff may undertake the steps outlined above.

Where Child Safety has approached a person to provide kinship care, CSSC staff will:

- create a person record for the primary applicant, where the record does not already exist in ICMS
- create an ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS and select ‘No’ to the enquiry prompt to progress to pre-application stage.
1.2 Distribute an information kit

When an initial enquiry is received about becoming a foster or kinship carer, or where Child Safety has approached a person to provide kinship or short break care for a child:

- have a timely discussion with the person and respond to any questions or issues raised
- create the ‘Covering letter for the information kit’ in ICMS and send the letter, along with relevant carer information sheets, to the person.

Following a person’s initial enquiry and allocation of the EOI/Application to the relevant PSU:

- where person records for the secondary carer and any household members exist, add them as ‘Relevant parties’ to the EOI/Application
- for a potential kinship carer, or where provisional approval is sought, record all kinship children for which the EOI/Application applies, in the ‘Pre-application’ tab in ICMS.

1.3 Invite the person to an information session

The purpose of an information session is to provide information about foster care, and to enable a person to ask questions, to assist them in deciding whether to proceed with an application to become a foster or kinship carer.

Where Child Safety or a foster and kinship care service provides information sessions for potential carers, determine whether the person would like to attend an information session and if so, invite them using the ‘Invitation to information session’ in ICMS and complete the invitation and attendance details following the session, in the ‘Pre-application’ tab in ICMS.

Attendance at an information session may occur before or after an initial interview with the person, or instead of an initial interview.

1.4 Conduct the initial interview

The purpose of the initial interview is to commence discussions about a range of factors such as a person’s interest and motivation in becoming a foster or kinship carer, the realities of providing foster care, the legislative and policy requirements to be met and the likely impact of becoming a foster or kinship carer.

Where a person wishes to proceed, invite them to participate in an initial interview. Arrange a time with the person and, for potential foster carer applicants, complete the ‘Invitation to initial interview’ letter, in ICMS.

Where possible, conduct the initial interview prior to the person’s commencement of Pre-service training.

Prior to conducting the initial interview, for a potential kinship carer applicant only:

- obtain the views of the child and of their family about the proposed kinship carer placement, and consider these views in the decision-making process
- seek advice from the senior team leader, should it become apparent that the views of the child, or their family, conflict with the proposed kinship carer placement.
During the initial interview with a potential foster or kinship carer applicant:

- provide information about the roles and responsibilities of a foster or kinship carer, and the range of supports available
- provide a copy of relevant ‘Carer information sheets’
- discuss the different levels of need for children in care, or for a proposed kinship carer, the needs of the specific child
- assess whether the possible kinship care placement is consistent with the agreed case plan for the child
- provide information about the requirement and the process for the conduct of personal history checks, including obtaining a positive prescribed notice (a blue card or exemption card for a registered teacher or police officer), from Blue Card Services as a prerequisite to approval
- ensure the applicant is aware of and has read the Child Safety’s Disclosure Statement and Privacy Notice which is included on forms that they have or will complete as part of the assessment process. Advised the applicant that the Disclosure Statement and Privacy Notice’ outlines Child Safety’s obligations to manage their personal information, and the circumstances where Child Safety may share this information with others, including the legal requirement to disclose information in the Children’s Court. This duty is applicable to Child Safety staff and the Director of Child Protection Litigation (DCPL), and means that there is a legal requirement to disclose, to each party to the proceeding (including the child’s parents), all documents that may be relevant in a case before the Children’s Court. (refer to and provide a copy of the Duty of disclosure – a fact sheet for carers)
- request that the person discloses any criminal, domestic violence, traffic or child protection history that they are aware of for themselves, or any adult member of their household
- ask if they provide any regulated services from their home (these include: family day care and stand-alone care services).
- ensure the applicant is aware that as part of the assessment process, discretionary information can be requested and considered under the Child Protection Act 1999 and the Child Protection Regulation 2011 as requested by the Child Safety Service Centre Manager as the delegated officer. This information will inform the suitability decision regarding whether the applicant is suitable to be issued with a certificate of approval as a foster or kinship carer (refer to 2.4 Conduct the assessment interview and 2.5 Discretionary information checks)
- conduct the household safety study in accordance with 2.3 Conduct a household safety study
- where any significant concerns arise during the interview, discuss the concerns with the person, in accordance with 1.6 Address identified concerns about suitability
- explain that an approved foster carer is required to renew their approval one year from the date of initial approval and every two years thereafter
- provide information about the additional processes required if the potential applicant is a Child Safety employee, as outlined in 3. What if a carer or carer applicant is also a departmental employee?
- determine whether the person would like to proceed with an application.
Following the interview:
- complete the 'Form 1: Foster carer intake' in ICMS for a potential foster carer applicant only, and attach the form to the 'EOI/Application' in ICMS
- document relevant information about a potential kinship carer applicant and attach the information to the 'EOI/Application' in ICMS
- record the initial interview details in the 'Pre-application' tab in ICMS.

The 'Form 1: Foster carer intake' does not need to be completed in the one interview, and there will be times when the entire form will not be completed due to the person choosing not to continue with the process.

1.5 Provide the home safety checklist

The ‘Home Safety Checklist’ will be provided to the potential applicant during the initial home interview. Although not specifically designed for carer applicants the purpose of the checklist is to:
- raise awareness about the importance of safety within the home environment
- allows for the early identification of common home and property for possible safety hazards
- enables changes to be implemented that will lessen the risk of avoidable injuries to children.

It is important to discuss home safety with the potential applicant during the initial interview, particularly the mandatory requirements of part 1 of the Household Safety Study, which requires full compliance with:
- pool safety legislation
- electrical switch safety requirements
- smoke alarms laws
- hot water system requirements and
- firearms storage.

These five mandatory areas are legislatively required for all Queensland homes. Specific information about these requirements can be accessed from the Queensland Government website.

Advise the potential applicant that if they decide to lodge an Application for approval - Form 3 APA, they will be required to:
- provide a completed copy of the home safety checklist to the assessor at the time of the assessment
- be fully compliant with the mandatory requirements of the Household Safety Study prior to approval.

1.6 Regulated home-based services

Some applicants may be providing, or may be intending to provide, other regulated home-based services such as family day care or stand-alone care.
Where an applicant discloses any regulated services they provide from the home, or when it becomes apparent at any stage during the application process, it is important to discuss this with the applicant, in accordance with 1.7 Address identified concerns about suitability. This is to determine any likely impacts that the provision of other regulated services could have on the applicant’s ability to meet suitability requirements as a foster or kinship carer.

1.7 Address identified concerns about suitability

Significant concerns about the applicant’s ability to meet suitability requirements may become apparent at any stage during the carer application process.

Concerns prior to application

Where, prior to an application being lodged, it is considered likely that an application would be refused based on the legislative restrictions on granting an application:

- discuss the identified issues or concerns and the likely outcome for an approval decision, with the applicant
- assist the person to make a realistic choice about whether to proceed with an application or self-select out.

Where the person decides to self-select out prior to lodging an application, record the pre-application outcome as ‘Self-select out’ and the reason in the ‘Pre-application’ tab in ICMS.

Where significant issues are identified:

- discuss the identified issues or concerns, as they arise
- provide the applicant with an opportunity to withdraw their application, where the issue or concern is likely to result in a refusal of the application
- should the applicant wish to proceed with the application, despite significant issues being brought to their attention, the assessment is to be recorded and a decision made by the CSSC manager.

Should a person insist on lodging an application, despite significant issues being brought to their attention, they cannot be prevented from doing so, as this would deny them their right to natural justice. Where the application is subsequently refused, the applicant has the right to have the decision externally reviewed by the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT).

Withdrawal of application

Once an application is ‘properly made’, the CSSC manager must approve or refuse the application, unless the application is withdrawn by the applicant. At any time during the assessment process, significant issues likely to lead to the refusal of an application may be brought to the applicant’s attention, and the applicant may subsequently choose to withdraw their application.

Where the applicant decides to withdraw their application:

- request that they provide written advice to this effect, to the PSU or foster and kinship care service
- immediately advise the CSU
- record the application withdrawal details in the ‘Lodgement/Withdrawal’ tab in ICMS.
1.8 Lodge the application

An application for initial approval must be decided within **90 days** of the application being ‘properly made’, unless an extension is granted. To be ‘properly made’ an application:

- is completed, signed and dated by the applicant and each adult member of their household
- includes all appropriate identification documents
- is lodged at the CSSC or PSU.

A person should only submit an application once they have decided to commit to the application and assessment process, and in consideration of the most appropriate time for lodging the application, given:

- the mandatory requirement, for foster carer applicants only, to complete pre-service training prior to a decision about their approval (except for an absent spouse, refer to **2.1 Complete pre-service training**)
- the next available pre-service training date is likely to influence whether the application is able to be assessed and decided within the required 90 day legislative timeframe
- the likely timeframe required for the CSU and Blue Card Services to undertake and provide information about personal history checks and blue card or exemption card outcomes to the CSSC and PSU.

Where a person decides to proceed with the application and assessment process, record the pre-application outcome as ‘Lodge an application’ in ICMS.

Complete the application documentation

When the person commits to the application and assessment process, use the **Application for approval - Form 3 APA - Guide to completion** and:

- request that the applicant and all adult household members complete:
  - the ‘Application for approval - Form 3 APA’ (APA form) - (Part A), created in ICMS
  - a Volunteer foster/kinship carer or adult member blue/exemption card application or, Link an applicant/cardholder to this organisation for a carer or adult member form
- determine the applicant’s adult household members by referring to the **Adult household member guidelines**
- attach the ‘APA form’ (Part A), ‘blue card application’, ‘blue card validation’, or ‘exemption card application’ form to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS
- ensure that documents verifying the identity of the applicant and adult household members are sighted and where possible, photocopied or scanned, and attached to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS
- ensure the applicant completes the ‘Carer applicant health and wellbeing questionnaire’, created in ICMS, refer to **2.5 Discretionary information checks** and returns the completed form to the CSSC or PSU
- attach the completed ‘Carer applicant health and wellbeing questionnaire’ to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS and record questionnaire details under ‘Additional sources of information’ in the ‘Assessment’ tab in ICMS
• create person records for the secondary carer and all household members, where applicable, and add them as ‘Relevant parties’ to the EOI/Application.

Where consent has been given by the applicant on the ‘Carer applicant health and wellbeing questionnaire’ to share medical information, provide a copy of the completed questionnaire to the foster and kinship carer service, or fee-for-service professional.

Note: Where an adult household member has an appointed guardian as a result of a disability, the forms will be completed with the household member’s details and signed by their guardian.

**Verify identity - application for approval**

Whenever a ‘blue card application’ or ‘exemption card application’ is completed, the identity of the applicant or the adult household member completing the form must be verified by sighting **two** original identification documents, as listed on the ‘blue card application’ and ‘exemption card application’.

If the applicant already holds a current, valid blue card or exemption card at the time the ‘APA form’ (Part A) is completed, the identity of the applicant must be verified by sighting their blue card or exemption card and **one** other form of identification, as listed on the ‘APA form’ (Part B).

There is no need to verify identity if an adult household member already holds a current, valid blue card or exemption card.

Where possible, photocopy or scan each of the original identification documents and attach to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS. Complete the verification of identification details in ‘Lodgement/Withdrawal’ tab to assist the CSU in the process of conducting personal history checks.

Note: If a person is unable to supply the necessary identification documents, liaise with the CSU about the options for alternative forms of identification.

**Verify identity - application for renewal of approval**

There is no need to verify the identity of an applicant or an adult household member upon application for renewal of approval, **unless** a ‘blue card application’ or ‘exemption card application’ is to be completed as part of the application process.

Any person completing the ‘blue card application’ or ‘exemption card application’ is to have their identity verified, as outlined above.

**Persons able to verify identity**

The requirements for verifying identity depends on the nature of the form being completed.

The **blue card application** requires that a Child Safety officer verifies the person’s identity. Where this is not possible, because of distance or a disability impacting on a person’s mobility, a prescribed person may verify the person’s identity. Prescribed persons include:

• a Justice of the Peace
• a Commissioner for Declarations
• a lawyer
• a police officer.
Note: Child Safety staff must comply with the requirement under the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000, to inform all blue card applicants that it is an offence for a disqualified person to sign a blue card application form. This requirement applies even when a prescribed person has verified an applicant’s identity. For further information, refer to the practice resource Mandatory advice to blue card applicants.

The ‘APA form’ (Part B) requires that a Child Safety officer or a staff member of a foster and kinship care service verifies the identity of an applicant who already holds a current, valid blue card or exemption card.

**Ensure the application is ‘properly made’**

The **90 day period** for deciding the initial carer application commences from the date the application is ‘properly made’. Once the application has been ‘properly made’, record the date in the ‘Date Application Lodged’ field on page 11 of the ‘APA form’ (Part B), or for a renewal of approval, page 19 of ‘APA form’ (Part D). This date becomes the ‘properly made’ date and the application is then considered to be ‘properly made’.

Where an application is incomplete at the time it is submitted, ask the applicant or the adult household member to supply the additional information before accepting the application and recording the ‘Date Application Lodged’ on the APA form.

If the application is subsequently found to be incomplete by the CSU and returned to the PSU, obtain the missing information and record a new lodgement date on page 11 of the ‘APA form’ (Part B), or page 19 of the ‘APA form’ (Part D). The amended date then becomes the date the application is ‘properly made’. The documentation is then re-attached to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS and the CSU immediately advised of the update.

When the application has been ‘properly made’, record details in the ‘Lodgement/Withdrawal’ tab in ICMS and attach a copy of the completed:

- ‘APA form’
- ‘blue card application’ or ‘blue card validation’
- verified identification documents, where available.

Conduct personal history checks in accordance with 2.2 Facilitate personal history checks.

**Information management**

All information about a person’s carer application must be filed in a secure location, in accordance with Module 5: Maintaining client files. In addition, if a carer applicant is a Child Safety employee, classify electronic and paper files as sensitive - for further information, refer to 3. What if a carer or carer applicant is also a Child Safety employee?

**2. Assessment**

The purpose of the assessment of an applicant is to ensure that the care provided to children in care meets the standards of care in the statement of standards, and to ensure that applicants meet suitability requirements under the Child Protection Act 1999, section 135, and the Child Protection Regulation 2011, sections 22-26.
During the assessment process, the assessor will gather evidence relating to the applicant’s experiences and actions in other contexts, and draw conclusions as to how this will impact on their ability to provide foster care in accordance with legislative and policy requirements.

The assessment of a foster or kinship carer applicant may be undertaken by Child Safety, staff of foster and kinship care services or by a contracted fee-for-service professional.

If the foster or kinship carer applicant is a Child Safety employee, refer to 3. What if a carer or carer applicant is also a departmental employee?

For information about the roles and responsibilities of the CSSC, PSU and CSU in relation carer assessment processes, refer to the Foster carer assessment and approval checklist or the Kinship carer assessment and approval checklist. Note: There may be a variance in roles across regions which are not captured in the checklists.

2.1 Complete pre-service training

The aim of pre-service training is to equip a foster carer applicant with the necessary skills and knowledge required, to enable them to meet the legislated statement of standards when caring for a child placed in care.

A foster carer applicant is required to complete Pre-service training which consists of four modules, each of three hours duration, which may be undertaken prior to, or following, an application being ‘properly made’. If feasible, pre-service training occurs over a four week period, however, the content of the modules may be delivered in a range of flexible ways, including one-to-one in the applicant’s home, if necessary.

For more information, refer to the Procedures and guidelines for Quality Care: Foster Care Training.

A kinship carer applicant’s participation in pre-service training is optional, however, where appropriate the applicant is to be encouraged to participate in Quality Care training sessions, to assist them in meeting their support and learning needs. In addition, support the orientation of a kinship carer by using relevant Carer information sheets and the Foster and kinship carer handbook.

For further information about Child Safety’s kinship care program and the additional and unique factors that impact on kinship carer assessments and the learning and support needs of kinship carers, refer to the Kinship care program description.

Note: Where the partner of a foster carer applicant is genuinely unable to participate in pre-service training due to the nature and location of their employment, for example, those employed by the defence forces or mining industry and working interstate or overseas, both applicants may be granted approval, with the condition (recorded on the certificate of approval) that the applicable partner completes pre-service training when their circumstances change. In exceptional circumstances, the CSSC manager may waive the requirement for pre-service training entirely.

Following an applicant’s participation in pre-service training, record the training participation and competencies details in the ‘Assessment’ tab in ICMS.
2.2 Facilitate personal history checks

Prior to issuing a certificate of approval or provisional approval to an individual who has made an application to be approved as a foster or kinship carer, the chief executive must be satisfied that the individual is a suitable person. The undertaking of personal history checks is an important aspect of determining suitability.

Personal history checks

All applicants applying for approval, or renewal of approval, and all adult members of their household, will be subject to personal history checks. This includes adults joining the household of an applicant or carer after an application is lodged.

Personal history checks include:

- criminal history checks conducted as part of blue card screening process
- checks undertaken by the CSU, which include:
  - child protection history checks within Queensland, interstate and New Zealand
  - domestic violence and traffic history
  - criminal history checks only where provisional approval is required
  - child protection history checks for any children residing in the applicant household
    (including any children who meet the definition of ‘household member’ under the
    Child Protection Act 1999, Schedule 3).

The purpose of personal history checks is to ensure that people who will have regular and ongoing contact or involvement with a child placed in an approved carer’s home do not pose a risk to the safety of a child. The outcome of personal history checks is one aspect of determining overall suitability. Personal history checks will be:

- conducted by the CSU to determine whether the applicant or an adult household member is not suitable based on personal history, or whether the application is eligible to be progressed
- provided to the assessor to be considered in assessing the overall suitability of the applicant.

The CSAHSC conducts criminal history checks if provisional approval is required urgently after hours.

Request personal history checks

Personal history checks on the applicant and adult household members will only be commenced by the CSU when an application is ‘properly made’ and all necessary documentation is attached in ICMS. Once the application is ‘properly made’, immediately email the CSU to advise that the following documentation is attached in ICMS:

- the completed ‘APA form’
- the blue card application or blue card validation
- a copy of the verified identification documents, where available.

Note: The conduct of personal history checks should not delay the commencement of the assessment of the application.
If there is a need to undertake urgent or after hours personal history checks, refer to 1. What if the applicant requires provisional approval?

An applicant or an adult household member who cannot satisfy the identification requirements of Blue Card Services must complete the *Request to consider alternative identification* form. Attach the completed form in ICMS, along with the relevant ‘blue card application’, ‘blue card validation’ or ‘exemption card application’ form, prior to advising the CSU that the application is ‘properly made’.

An applicant or an adult household member who requires a support person to assist them through the blue card application process (for example, where language or communication barriers exist) may complete the *Authority to liaise with an authorised person* form. Advise the applicant or adult household member that the form authorises Blue Card Services to discuss certain information about the blue card application with the nominated person, including the progress of any application, requests for additional information, police information including changes in police information and investigative information, disciplinary information, the assessment process including the request for submissions, reference and other supporting material, medical information, the outcome of the application and relevant personal information such as the person’s name, address and employer details. When completed, attach the form to ICMS along with the other application documentation outlined above.

**Interstate and international personal history checks**

For all applicants or adult household members who have previously resided interstate or overseas for six months or more:

- interstate and New Zealand child protection history checks **must** be undertaken by the CSU
- other international child protection history checks will be undertaken at the discretion of the CSSC manager
- criminal history checks for all international jurisdictions (including New Zealand) will be undertaken at the discretion of the CSSC manager.

The table below outlines the process for requesting international child protection and criminal history checks.
### International child protection history checks

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<th>Other overseas jurisdictions</th>
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| Undertaken by CSU as part of the screening process. | The CSSC manager will request that Data Management Services (DMS) facilitate international child protection history checks by emailing the following to DMS via #SDIS_DMS_Checks:  
- the ‘Request for interstate/overseas child protection history’ form  
- a copy of the ‘APA form’ (consent pages only) indicating the applicant/adult household member’s consent for the checks*. |

*International child protection and criminal history checks may not be able to be obtained from some jurisdictions. Furthermore, international checks may indicate that no concerning history exists, however, the CSSC manager should be aware that some jurisdictions may not recognise certain abuses against children and therefore whilst no history is recorded, concerns may still exist.*

Where considered necessary and as a last resort, the CSSC manager may request criminal history checks by International Social Services (ISS). However, checks undertaken by ISS are costly and there is no guarantee that ISS will able to obtain checks from international jurisdictions.

The CSSC manager has the discretion to proceed with the application without international child protection and criminal history check information, or to decide that a full assessment is unable to be undertaken without the completion of international checks.

### International criminal history checks

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<th>New Zealand</th>
<th>Overseas jurisdictions</th>
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|              | The CSSC manager will request a copy of international criminal history checks directly from the carer applicant or adult household member as this information would have been provided to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship as part of the person’s immigration process*.  
Note: Not all Visa processes will require history check information to be provided, therefore the applicant or adult household member may need to obtain a copy of their own personal history where considered necessary by the CSSC manager. |
**Conduct personal history checks on new adult household members**

Where an adult person intends to join the household of an applicant, prior to joining the household, the person must:

- complete a New adult household member form
- complete a blue card application or blue card validation form
- have their identity verified, for a ‘blue card application’ or ‘exemption card application’ only.

Attach the completed forms and other documents to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS and **immediately** email the CSU to request personal history checks be conducted.

**Decision-making based on personal history check outcomes**

While the CSSC manager has the delegation to make the final approval decision, based on all of the suitability requirements, the CSU manager has the delegation to determine that either an applicant or adult household member **is not suitable** based on their personal history, or that the assessment of the application is eligible to be progressed.

Note: the issuing of a certificate of approval **must not occur** until the CSU has advised the CSSC of the outcome of the personal history checks for all persons included on the ‘APA form’, unless a regional director or duty executive officer has granted provisional approval to an applicant, prior to the CSU finalising personal history checks. Refer to 1. What if the applicant requires provisional approval?

**Application for approval is to be progressed**

Where the CSU manager determines that, based on the outcome of the personal history checks, the application is able to progress, the CSU will:

- advise the CSSC and PSU, and the application will be progressed
- record the personal history checks details in the CSU system so that they populate into the ‘Assessment’ tab in ICMS
- record the blue card details in the CSU system so that they populate into the ‘Blue card’ tab for each applicant and adult household member in ICMS
- attach all relevant documentation to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS.

**Not suitable based on personal history**

Where the CSU manager determines that the applicant or an adult household member is not a suitable person, based on personal history checks, the CSU manager will:

- refuse the application
- advise the applicant and the CSSC manager of the decision in writing **within 10 days** - the letter will include a statement of reasons and information about review rights.

The CSU will record the personal history checks details in the CSU system, which populate into the ‘Assessment’ tab in ICMS, and will attach a copy of all written advice provided to the CSSC and the applicant in ICMS.

In this circumstance, it is the responsibility of the CSSC or PSU to record the refusal decision in ICMS and create an alert on each applicant’s person record - refer to 3.4 Refuse the application.
Where a child has been placed with a provisionally approved carer prior to personal history check results being provided by the CSU, and the CSU subsequently determines that an applicant or an adult household member is not suitable, remove the child from the placement immediately and cancel the 'Certificate of Approval - Provisionally approved carer' in accordance with 11. What if a provisionally approved carer’s certificate of approval requires amendment, suspension or cancellation?

Where the person applies for a decision review by QCAT, re-open the closed EOI/Application and record ‘Reviewable decision’ details in the 'Approval/Refusal' tab in ICMS.

Where QCAT overturns the refusal decision and the carer is subsequently approved:

- provide relevant approval documentation to the approved carer, the foster and kinship care service, if applicable, and Carepay, as outlined in 3.3 Approve the application
- record the QCAT decision in ICMS
- advise the CSU of the amended decision
- close the alert that was created when the application was refused.

Provide relevant personal history to the assessor

Information may be provided to an external (non-Child Safety) assessor where it is necessary to perform functions under, or in relation to, the administration of the Child Protection Act 1999. External assessors include staff of foster and kinship care services and private contractors.

Where the CSU manager determines that an application is eligible to progress, but there is personal history that may assist the assessor in conducting assessment interviews and completing the assessment report, the CSSC will provide the following personal history information to the assessor:

- child protection history
- domestic violence history
- traffic history.

Where criminal history is obtained by the CSU as part of the provisional approval process and it is necessary for this information to be considered and assessed by an external assessor, refer to What if 1. What if an applicant requires provisional approval?

The CSSC manager may decide not to provide information to an assessor if it is irrelevant or of a sensitive nature. For example, information provided to an assessor must not include:

- any information that identifies, or is likely to identify, a notifier
- a person’s youth justice history, unless by an exemption under the Youth Justice Act 1992, part 9.

Where the assessment is to be conducted by a private contractor, provide the assessor with a copy of Confidentiality and privacy information for private contractors and panel participants before providing them with an applicant’s personal history information.

Impacts of a failure to obtain a blue card or exemption card

If the applicant or an adult household member is denied a blue card or exemption card by Blue Card Services, this is referred to as a prohibiting event (Child Protection Act 1999, section
140AB). In this circumstance, it is the responsibility of Blue Card Services to advise the persons affected about the decision and the processes for review.

If an applicant or an adult household member is given a negative prescribed notice or negative exemption notice by Blue Card Services, and the affected individual intends to appeal the decision, the CSSC manager may temporarily suspend any further assessment of the application for approval, until the outcome of any review process under the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening Act 2000. The application for approval must be refused if:

- no review process is initiated
- Blue Card Services’ decision is upheld following a review by QCAT.

**Record a failure to obtain a blue card or exemption card in ICMS**

Following the refusal of a blue card or exemption card for an applicant or an adult household member, the CSU manager is to ensure:

- an alert of a ‘blue card declined’ is recorded on the applicant’s and adult household member’s ‘person record’ in ICMS, with a review date of two years, as a person can apply to have a negative notice cancelled by Blue Card Services if the notice was issued more than two years ago
- Blue Card Services decision is recorded as a ‘Negative notice - Application declined’ in the CSU system so that the decision is reflected in the blue card tab on the ‘person record’ of the applicant and adult household member in ICMS.

Note: After the ‘blue card declined’ review date passes, leave the alert open in the event that the person makes a future application as a carer or an adult household member.

**Change in carer circumstances**

When a completed ‘Change in carer circumstances form’ is received by the CSSC or PSU, attach a copy to the ‘ESI/Application’ in ICMS and immediately advise the CSU, unless it relates to the carer’s health or employment status. This allows any relevant changes to be noted, for example, a change in the address of a blue card or exemption card holder, or a change in household membership, and where applicable, personal history checks undertaken.

For further information about the changes to be brought to the attention of Child Safety by an approved carer, refer to 2. What if there is a change in carer circumstances?

**2.3 Conduct a household safety study**

A household safety study is the process of assessing the safety of the potential applicant’s household premises and their commitment to safe practices around children. The intent of the household safety study is to prevent injury to children in out-of-home care by identifying potential risks in the proposed applicant’s household.

To conduct the household safety study:

- request a copy of the completed ‘Home Safety Checklist’ provided to the applicant at the initial interview
- explore all areas identified in the Home Safety Checklist that the applicant has identified as requiring further attention, and discuss the action that has been taken to address these
• undertake a general check of household safety (for example, checking the pool gate self-latches, sighting how any firearms are stored, sighting the fire safety home escape plan etc
• discuss water safety and supervision with the carers, as outlined in ‘The ABC of pool safety’ and provide a copy of ‘The ABC of pool safety’, regardless of whether or not they have a pool
• where safety risks are identified, develop a plan to address these risks with the applicant, for consideration by the CSSC manager
• complete the ‘Form 2: Household safety study’, based on direct observations of the household, the completed ‘Home Safety Checklist’ and information obtained during discussions with the applicant
• attach the completed ‘Form 2: Household safety study’ and the to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS
• record the household safety study details in the ‘application’ tab in ICMS.

An applicant is not expected to meet all requirements of the household safety study in the early stages of the assessment process but is expected to make any necessary changes to enable the mandatory safety requirements to be met by the time a decision for approval or re-appraisal is required.

It may be necessary for a subsequent household safety study to be undertaken when the carer changes address or has undertaken home modifications since the previous approval or renewal of approval.

2.4 Conduct assessment interviews

The focus of the assessment interviews is the applicant’s demonstrable knowledge, skills and abilities, as well as the applicant’s ability to reflect on how their experiences, views and behaviour may impact on their ability to provide care for children in care, or for a kinship carer, a specific child.

The interview process should be interactive, with observations and reflections being shared with the applicant. The applicant is also to be provided with sources of information and support, such as referrals to other agencies, including QFKC and where applicable, foster and kinship care services.

An applicant living in a spousal relationship must be jointly assessed and if approved, issued a joint certificate of approval.

Note: Where the partner of a foster or kinship carer applicant is genuinely unavailable to be assessed and approved jointly with their spouse, due to the nature and location of their employment, for example, those employed by the defence forces or mining industry and working interstate or overseas, refer to 5. What if one spouse is not able to participate in the assessment and approval process?
Foster carer applicants

A foster carer is approved to care for any child in the care of Child Safety and only requires one certificate of approval, regardless of the number of children in the placement. The assessment interviews for a foster carer applicant will consist of:

- an initial joint interview with both applicants, if a joint application
- an individual interview with each applicant
- where possible, a further joint interview with both applicants
- an interview with all children and adults who form part of the applicant's home environment.

At least one assessment interview must be held in the applicant's home.

If possible, schedule interviews no less than two weeks apart, to afford the applicant the benefit of time for reflection, time to fully explore issues as they are raised and an opportunity to learn more about fostering during the assessment period. Where the two week timeframe between interviews is not possible, particularly in rural and remote areas, the timeframe may be shortened.

Prior to conducting assessment interviews:

- peruse all available information about the applicants and adult household members, including the outcome of personal history checks and other considerations such as the provision of other regulated services from the home, where applicable
- discuss the purpose and process of interviews with the applicant
- agree on a schedule of interviews, including dates, times and venues. Assessment interviews may also involve adult children residing away from home.

Personal history must be discussed sensitively with applicants, and the assessor will prompt the applicant to raise relevant personal history matters themselves. Where personal history relates to only one partner of a joint application, care should be taken to speak individually with the relevant person about their history.

Where one applicant's history is likely to impact on the outcome of the joint application, encourage that applicant to disclose their history to the other applicant. If the applicant is unwilling to share their personal history, the reluctance to share and the impact of an applicant's history must be discussed as part of the assessment.

Other considerations, such as the applicant's provision or intent to provide other regulated services from the home, such as family day care or stand-alone care, should be discussed to assess the applicant’s capacity and commitment to provide quality of care to children placed with them.

During assessment interviews, include discussions with the applicant about the information and recommendations to be included in the final assessment report.

For specific information about the legislative requirements for approval, and the factors to consider and discuss during assessment interviews with a foster carer applicant in relation to each assessment domain, refer to the Form 3A - Guidelines for completing assessment report - Initial approval only, and the practice paper Assessment of foster carer applicants. The guidelines also refer to a range of 'Interview resources' that are accessible in the resource list at the end of this chapter.
Kinship carer applicants

A kinship carer may be a relative or another person of significance to the child. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, a kinship carer may include another Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander who is a member of, or compatible with, the child's community or language group.

A kinship carer is approved to provide care for a specific child or children.

The assessment framework for a kinship carer applicant is less structured, due to the family connection that already exists between the kinship carer applicant, the child and the child’s parents. Kinship care aims to maintain the child’s relationships with parents, siblings, extended family, community and culture, in a manner which best serves the well-being and interests of the child.

Assessment interviews with a kinship carer applicant may occur in a more flexible manner and would usually involve two assessment interviews, to assess the applicant’s:

- overall suitability based on legislative and policy requirements
- ability to meet the specific needs of the child.

Personal history must be discussed sensitively with applicants, and the assessor will prompt the applicant to raise relevant personal history matters themselves. Where personal history relates to only one partner of a joint application, care should be taken to speak individually with the relevant person about their history.

Where one applicant’s history is likely to impact on the outcome of the joint application, encourage that applicant to disclose their history to the other applicant. If the applicant is unwilling to share their personal history, the reluctance to share and the impact of an applicant’s history must be discussed as part of the assessment.

For further information about the assessment of kinship carers and the additional and unique factors that may impact on a kinship carer applicant’s suitability, refer to the Kinship care program description.

At a minimum, at least one interview will occur with each kinship carer applicant, although this may be a joint interview, and where practicable, other members of the household should be encouraged to participate in interview discussions. More interviews may be required for complex or sensitive kinship carer assessments. At least one assessment interview must be held within the applicant's home.

When a sibling group is to be placed with a proposed kinship carer at the same time, conduct one assessment process, which takes into account the applicant’s ability to meet the needs of each individual child. If approved, a certificate of approval will be issued for each child.

For specific information about the legislative requirements for approval of a kinship carer, and the factors to consider and discuss during interviews with an applicant in relation to each assessment domain, refer to the Kinship carer initial assessment report guidelines and the practice resources Legislative requirements for the approval of kinship carers and Assessment of kinship carer applicants.
Subsequent applications for approval as a kinship carer

Where a placement is being considered for a sibling or another child who is kin of an approved kinship carer, a new certificate of approval is required for each additional child.

As part of an assessment for a subsequent application for approval to be a child's kinship carer, consider the assessment information that was gathered as part of the assessment for the carer’s current certificate of approval, if the certificate of approval was issued within the last two years.

In these situations the following actions are required:

- the lodgement of a new ‘Application for approval – Form 3 APA, Parts A and B, with relevant details of the child proposed for placement
- a household safety study
- updated personal history checks, provided through the Central Screening Unit
- a Kinship carer initial assessment report must be completed for each additional subject child
- an approval or refusal decision by the CSSC manager, recorded on the ‘Form 4 Approval decision’ for each subject child
- a certificate of approval for each additional child.

The focus of the initial assessment for subsequent applications for approval to be a kinship carer for a child will be depend on:

- how long ago the previous kinship carer assessment was undertaken (to inform the current approval)
- the nature of any changes to the carer’s personal history, including any changes to adult household members
- the carer’s demonstration of their ability to provide care to all children in the placement in accordance with the Statement of Standards.
- the frequency and type of contact with the carer since the previous assessment – by the CSO and the foster and kinship care service

For information about the requirements for approval of a kinship carer, and the factors to consider and discuss during interviews with an applicant in relation to each assessment domain, refer to the Kinship carer initial assessment report guidelines and the practice resources Legislative requirements for the approval of kinship carers and Assessment of kinship carer applicants.

2.5 Discretionary information checks

Discretionary information can be considered under the Child Protection Act 1999 and the Child Protection Regulation 2011 as part of kinship and foster carer assessments and reassessments. Discretionary checks should be conducted when additional information is required to inform the delegated officer’s (the CSSC Manager) consideration of whether a person is able to meet the Statement of Standards (Child Protection Act 1999, section 122) for a child or young person in care, and is assessed as suitable to hold a certificate of approval as a kinship or foster carer.

Any discretionary information checks must relate directly to informing the suitability decision and must be clearly recorded in the applicant’s assessment. Some discretionary checks can be completed by assessors e.g. referee checks. However there are some discretionary checks that
The referee check provides general information about an applicant’s parenting practices and wellbeing. The purpose of conducting a referee check is to obtain a character reference about an applicant. The CSSC Manager’s ability to be satisfied whether the applicant is suitable to be a kinship carer either in Queensland or interstate.

If an applicant does not give consent for a discretionary check to be conducted, then the assessor must advise the applicant/s that this will also be discussed with them and recorded in their assessment for the CSSC Manager to consider. The assessor should also make the applicant aware that if discretionary information can’t be obtained, it may affect the CSSC Manager’s ability to be satisfied whether the applicant is suitable to be a kinship or foster carer.

**Conduct referee checks, if applicable**

The purpose of conducting a referee check is to obtain a character reference about an applicant. The referee check provides general information about an applicant's parenting practices and values, and the nature of their relationship with their own children.

The conduct of referee checks is discretionary and may occur at any point throughout the assessment process based on information available to the person undertaking the assessment, or at the request of the CSSC manager upon considering the assessment report. In either case, the referee check itself is conducted by the person undertaking the assessment. Referee checks are to be conducted by phone wherever possible.

Referee checks should be considered in circumstances where:
- concerns about the applicant’s suitability are identified
- inconsistent information is obtained during the assessment process.

Consider the following persons as potential referees:
- the applicant’s employer, where the applicant works or volunteers in child-related employment
- a non-relative of the applicant
- the applicant’s line manager, if the applicant is a Child Safety employee.
To conduct a referee check:

- contact the applicant to inform them of the decision and ask them to nominate referees and provide contact details
- phone the referee, explain that they have been nominated as a referee for the applicant and determine whether they are prepared to provide a reference about the character of the applicant
- inform the referee that any concerns raised about the applicant will be discussed, partially or in full, with the applicant, as part of the assessment process
- use the ‘Referee questionnaire for carer applicants’ or ‘Employer Reference for Carer Applicant’, created in ICMS, to guide the discussion with the referee, and record the information provided by the referee
- place the original, completed referee questionnaire on the applicant’s file and attach a copy to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS
- record referee questionnaire details under ‘Additional sources of information’ in the ‘Assessment’ tab in ICMS.

Where the referee check cannot be undertaken by phone, complete the ‘Letter to referee’ in ICMS, attach the ‘Referee questionnaire for carer applicants’ or the ‘Employer Reference for Carer Applicant’ and post the information to the referee, along with a reply paid envelope.

Where the nominated referee declines to provide a reference for the applicant, given that any concerns they raise will be discussed with the applicant, ask if they are willing to provide a reason for their decision. This may provide useful information for the assessment, as well as guide the referee check process.

When a nominated referee declines to respond, ask the applicant to nominate an alternative referee.

When assessing information obtained from the referee, consider:

- whether the information confirms or conflicts with the information already collected, and observations made, during the assessment process
- the relationship and length of time the referee has known the applicant.

Discuss any concerns raised by the referee with the applicant and where necessary, seek further clarifying information from the referee, or another referee.

Record the rationale for conducting the referee check and the outcome in the relevant section of the:

- ‘Form 3A: Foster carer applicant assessment and recommendation form - Initial approval only’ in ICMS, for a foster carer applicant
- Kinship carer initial assessment report, for a kinship carer applicant.

**Conduct medical checks, if applicable**

The conduct of medical checks is **discretionary**. The CSSC manager may decide that an applicant requires a medical check at any stage of the assessment process.
The purpose of conducting a medical check is to ensure that any physical or mental health issue for the applicant will not prevent them from fulfilling their responsibilities as an approved carer, and would not significantly impact on any child to be placed with them should they be approved.

Information obtained during assessment interviews, as well as the completed ‘Carer applicant health and wellbeing questionnaire’, provided by the applicant upon application, refer to 1.7 Lodge the application, will inform the decision as to whether a medical check is necessary.

Sufficient information must be gathered about the nature and potential impact of the medical condition, to enable an informed approval decision to be made.

**Conduct the medical check**

To conduct a medical check:

- discuss the health issue with the CSSC manager and request their approval for the conduct of a medical check
- inform the applicant of the decision and encourage them to openly discuss their health issues with their doctor
- check the contact details for the applicant’s doctor
- encourage the applicant to locate a doctor who will charge the scheduled fee for this service
- ensure the applicant has signed the ‘Carer Applicant Authority to Release Medical Information’ section of the ‘Carer applicant health and wellbeing questionnaire’ created in ICMS, to provide written consent to the doctor for the release of their medical information
- forward the following documents to the applicant prior to their medical appointment, and request that the applicant provides these documents to their doctor:
  - a photocopy of the completed ‘Carer applicant health and wellbeing questionnaire’
  - ‘Letter to general practitioner’, created in ICMS
  - ‘General practitioner’s report on carer applicant’, created in ICMS
- record the rationale for conducting a medical check.

Should additional costs be incurred by the applicant, Child Safety may reimburse the cost under account code 51020 - Medical/Dental - General.

If an applicant has provided written consent to the doctor for release of medical records, the doctor will **not** be liable for any breach of confidentiality. The signed consent however does not compel a doctor to release records or speak about the client. If a doctor is not co-operating in relation to such a request, it is the applicant’s responsibility to request that the doctor releases information on their behalf, for the purposes of the assessment.

Where consent has been given by the applicant on the ‘Carer applicant health and wellbeing questionnaire’, provide a copy of medical check results to the foster and kinship carer service, or fee-for-service professional.

Ensure that the original, completed doctor’s report is retained on the applicant’s file.
Following the medical check

Once the medical check has been completed:
  - consider the information available from both the health questionnaire, the doctor’s report and the applicant’s care plan if they have a communicable disease
  - where additional information is required, explore the health issue or medical assessment outcome in detail with the doctor or the applicant
  - where appropriate, request that the applicant provide any past medical assessments or records which will provide further detail or clarification
  - if necessary, seek a more detailed written or verbal report or care plan from a doctor with experience in treating either the applicant or the specific condition, including:
    - advice as to whether the condition will impact on the applicant’s capacity to provide care for children and if so, in what ways
    - the level of risk of transmission of a communicable diseases to others
    - any health precautions required by others in the household to minimise the risk of transmission of a communicable disease, for example, vaccination of children
    - a plan for the management of the condition, or communicable disease, should the applicant be approved as a foster or kinship carer.

Communicable diseases

Queensland Health is responsible for the surveillance, prevention and control of communicable diseases, for example HIV, Hepatitis A, B or C. In circumstances where a carer applicant has a communicable disease, the applicant **must** undergo a medical assessment by their treating medical practitioner or specialist to assist with the assessment and decision-making process for the application.

A report from the medical practitioner or specialist should include:
  - the type of communicable disease and related universal precautions
  - the level of risk of transmission to others
  - the impact of the communicable disease, if any, on the persons capacity to care for children, including the impact of any changes in health
  - any health precautions required by others in the household to minimise risk of transmission of the communicable disease, for example vaccination
  - a copy of the applicants care plan for the management of the condition, where developed
  - the applicants understanding of the communicable disease, compliance with their care plan and adherence to universal precautions.

A carer applicant cannot be refused approval to become a carer based solely on the existence of a communicable disease. The CSSC manager must take into account the medical report or care plan, the applicant’s understanding and compliance with universal precautions, the risk of transmission to others and the capacity of the carer to care for children, including periods of ill health.

The applicant’s willingness to share their health status with children and their parents, if they are approved, will also be considered in the assessment interviews.
Child Safety may reimburse the costs associated with any additional assessments or pay for any consultants contracted, under account code 51020 - Medical/Dental - General.

Infection control processes must observe the principles of Information Privacy Act 2009. Complaints regarding breaches of the standard must be dealt with through the complaints procedure outlined in Child Safety’s Information privacy statement.

Record the outcome of the medical check in the relevant section of the:
- ‘Form 3A: Foster carer applicant assessment and recommendation form - Initial approval only’, for a foster carer applicant
- Kinship carer initial assessment report, for a kinship carer applicant.

Attach a copy of the doctor’s report, or the care plan, to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS and record details of the report under ‘Additional sources of information’ in the ‘Assessment’ tab in ICMS.

### 2.6 Assess the application for approval

The assessment of foster and kinship carer applicants is a process of collecting information about the applicant’s abilities and potential to provide foster or kinship care to a child and formulate a recommendation about their suitability.

To assess and approve an applicant requiring provisional approval, refer to **1. What if the applicant requires provisional approval?**

To assess the application and determine whether the applicant meets all suitability requirements, consider all information obtained during the assessment process, taking into account:
- their ability to meet the statement of standards - refer to Standards of care
- the outcomes of personal history checks on the applicant and if applicable, adult household members
- any history of concerns about the quality of care provided by the applicant, if they have previously been an approved carer in Queensland or another jurisdiction
- information from the applicant’s participation in pre-service training
- the outcome of the household safety study and the completed ‘Carer applicant health and wellbeing questionnaire’
- referee reports, outcomes of medical checks or assessments and information from other jurisdictions, if applicable
- the views of the child and family about the proposed kinship carer for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child
- if providing another regulated services from the home, the applicants capacity to provide quality care to children placed with them
- any additional assessment required for a Child Safety employee.
2.7 Complete the assessment report

Once all the assessment activities have been undertaken, complete:

- ‘Form 3A: Foster carer applicant assessment and recommendation form - Initial approval only’ (Form 3A) created in ICMS, guided by the Form 3A - Guidelines for completing assessment report - Initial approval only, for a foster carer applicant.
- the Kinship carer initial assessment report, guided by the Kinship carer initial assessment report guidelines, for a kinship carer applicant.

These assessment reports are intended to be a brief summary of all the information gathered and assessed, as outlined in 2.6 Assess the application for approval, including:

- a few paragraphs relating to each topic
- any confidential information relevant to the assessment
- information about any proposed use of conditions on the certificate of approval, if applicable
- a recommendation to the CSSC manager about the applicant’s suitability to be issued with a certificate of approval and the rationale for the recommendation.

If the applicant is a Child Safety employee, also complete the Advice to regional director form and if applicable, the Conflict of interest declaration, as outlined in 3. What if a carer or carer applicant is also a Child Safety employee?

Where the assessment of a foster carer is undertaken by the PSU or the foster and kinship care service with whom the carer will be affiliated following approval, the relevant PSU or foster and kinship care service is responsible for developing a Foster Carer Agreement with the applicant as part of the approval process, where possible - refer to 3.5 Complete a foster carer agreement.

When considering the inclusion of conditions on a certificate of approval for a foster carer applicant, in the first instance, determine whether the condition can be included in the ‘Foster Carer Agreement’ - refer to 3.5 Complete a foster carer agreement. If conditions should change, a foster carer agreement can be updated without difficulty, whereas changing conditions on a certificate of approval is a more complex process and will require an amendment to the certificate.

Prior to finalising either the ‘Form 3A’ or the ‘Kinship carer initial assessment report’:

- share observations and reflections with the applicant and give them feedback about the conclusions being reached
- incorporate relevant comments and feedback from the applicant in the report.

Where the assessment is quality assured by another Child Safety officer, record any quality assurance details in the ‘Assessment’ tab in ICMS, where applicable.

Once the ‘Form 3A’ or ‘Kinship carer initial assessment report’, and ‘Foster Carer Agreement’, where relevant, is finalised:

- provide a copy of the final ‘Form 3A’ or ‘Kinship carer initial assessment report’, and ‘Foster Carer Agreement’, where relevant, to the applicant
- attach a copy of the ‘Form 3A’ or ‘Kinship carer initial assessment report’ to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS
- attach a copy of the ‘Foster Carer Agreement’, where relevant, to the carer’s ‘Monitor and Support’ screen in ICMS
• record ‘Assessment recommendation’ details in the ‘Assessment’ tab in ICMS
• inform the CSSC manager that relevant assessment information is available in ICMS and provide them with the ‘Form 4’ for a decision
• complete the ‘Form 4: Approval decision’ in ICMS
• record ‘Application submission details’ in the ‘Approval/Refusal’ tab in ICMS. Do not provide the applicant with a copy of the ‘Form 4: Approval decision’.

File copies of all interview records, reports, handouts and self-assessments on the applicant’s paper file.

3 Approval

3.1 Decide the outcome of the application for approval

To approve an application the CSSC manager must be satisfied that the applicant is suitable based on all aspects of suitability. When an applicant does not meet one or more aspects of suitability, the application must be refused.

Where reference is made to the CSSC or CSSC manager, this refers to the CSSC or CSSC manager in the geographical area where the carer resides, or the foster and kinship care service conducting the assessment is located. The exception to this is where the application is for a kinship carer who resides in another geographical area and the child’s case is to be transferred to the CSSC where the applicant resides. In this circumstance, the CSSC manager with case management responsibility for the child is responsible for the approval of the kinship carer, and any references in this procedure relate to the CSSC and CSSC manager with case management responsibility for the child.

If the applicant is a Child Safety employee, the regional director must decide the outcome of the application, as outlined in 3. What if a carer or carer applicant is also a Child Safety employee?

Unless an application is withdrawn by the applicant in writing, or refused based on an-personal history, the CSSC manager is delegated to approve or refuse the application and must decide:

• within 90 days of the application being ‘properly made’, or
• during the period of extension as agreed in writing, refer to 3.2 Extend the timeframe for deciding the initial application.

If a decision is not made within either of the above timeframes, the application is taken to be refused and the applicant is provided with written notice of the refusal decision, refer to 3.4 Refuse the application.

When deciding the outcome of an application for approval, the CSSC manager will consider all information provided and the legislative and policy requirements for suitability, including:

• the outcomes of all applications for a blue card or exemption card, or the validation of a blue card and all personal history checks, as recorded on the ‘Form 4: Approval decision’
• information in the ‘Form 3A: Foster carer applicant assessment and recommendation form - Initial approval only’ or ‘Kinship carer initial assessment report’
• whether the applicant is a suitable person to be an approved foster or kinship carer
the views of the child and family about the proposed kinship carer for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child.

The approval decision may be informed by the convening of an assessment panel however a CSSC manager must decide the outcome of the application.

For further information about the legislative and policy requirements underpinning approval, refer to the practice paper Assessment of foster carer applicants or the practice resources Legislative requirements for the approval of kinship carers and Assessment of kinship carer applicants.

Note: The CSSC manager may decide the outcome of an application, prior to the finalisation of personal history checks for a new adult household member that joined the household after the application has been lodged.

**Assessment panels**

Where assessment panels are convened to assist with deciding the outcome of carer applications, it remains the responsibility of the CSSC manager to make the final decision to approve or refuse an application.

Panel participants may receive personal history information about applicants considered by the panel. Prior to participating in assessment panels, provide panel participants external to the Child Safety a copy of Confidentiality and privacy information for private contractors and panel participants, which outlines their privacy and confidentiality obligations.

### 3.2 Extend the timeframe for deciding the initial application

Where an initial application is unlikely to be decided within 90 days of the ‘properly made’ date, it is possible to extend the timeframe once only. The extension is to be for the minimum amount of time required to decide the application, as agreed to by the applicant in writing.

When an extension is required, the following actions are required by the CSSC manager, before the 90 day period for deciding the application ends:

- contact the applicant and discuss the reason for the application not being decided within 90 days and the additional time required to decide the application
- seek the agreement of the applicant to the extension and new timeframe for deciding the application
- complete the ‘Letter requesting an extension to Form APA’, created in ICMS, and request that the applicant signs and returns the agreement
- record the ‘Application extension’ details in the ‘Lodgement/Withdrawal’ tab in ICMS to ensure the application expiry date is updated in ICMS
- place a copy of the letter and the signed agreement on the applicant’s file and attach a copy to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS.

### 3.3 Approve the application

To approve the application, the CSSC manager, or regional director for a Child Safety employee, will record the approval decision, along with any relevant comments, on the ‘Form 4: Approval decision’, and sign the form.
When the application is approved, advise the applicant:

- that their application has been approved
- that they are legally obligated to inform Child Safety of specific changes in carer circumstances and that copies of the ‘Change in carer circumstances form’, created in ICMS, will be posted to them, for their future completion, if necessary, refer to 2. What if there is a change in carer circumstances?

Following the provision of the above advice to the approved carer:

- record ‘Application outcome’ details in the ‘Approval/Refusal’ tab in ICMS, with a scheduled review date of three months prior to expiry
- provide the following to the approved carer:
  - a ‘Letter of approval as a foster carer’ or ‘Letter of approval as a kinship carer’, created in ICMS
  - a completed ‘Certificate of Approval - Foster carer’ or ‘Certificate of Approval - Kinship carer’, created in ICMS
  - copies of the Change in carer circumstances form, created in ICMS from the carer’s ‘Monitor and Support’ screen
  - the Carer Business Discount Card - Fact sheet
  - a copy of the Statement of Commitment between the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and the foster and kinship carers of Queensland
  - a copy of the Foster and kinship carer handbook, if they do not already have one
- attach final copies of the assessment report, the ‘Form 4: Approval decision’, the certificate of approval and the letter of approval to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS
- place the final assessment report and the ‘Form 4: Approval decision’ on the approved carer's file
- provide a copy of the certificate of approval and the letter of approval to the foster and kinship care service, if applicable.

For information about the certificate of approval, refer to the practice resource Completing the Certificate of Approval.

Note: A kinship carer requires a separate certificate of approval for each child for whom they are approved. A ‘Certificate of Approval - Kinship carer’ cannot be amended to change the child for whom the carer is approved.

**Following approval**

Following the issuing of a certificate of approval:

- hold discussions with the approved carer to negotiate support arrangements, where this has not already occurred
- provide the carer with information about:
  - the Foster and Kinship Carer Support Line, available on telephone 1300 729 309, Monday to Friday 5.00pm - 11.30pm and Saturday and Sunday 7.00am - 11.30pm
  - the role and contact details for the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre
  - the range of allowances they may be eligible for when caring for a child
• create a ‘Monitor and Support’ screen from the ‘Approval’ tab from the carer entity record in ICMS, to enable recording of the carer’s support needs during their time as a carer.

The support required for any approved carer, specific to the goals of the placement for a particular child, is negotiated with the carer and documented in the placement agreement for the child. For kinship carers, their support and development needs must be captured in a placement agreement as they are not required to have a ‘Foster Carer Agreement’.

For further information about developing a placement agreement, refer to Chapter 5, 1.9 Complete a placement agreement. For further information in relation to support arrangements, refer to Chapter 9, 1. Provide support to carers and the practice resources Negotiating support arrangements for approved carers and practice paper Carer support.

The general support needs of foster carers will be negotiated as part of developing the carer development and support plan within the 'Foster Carer Agreement', created in ICMS, refer to 3.5 Complete a foster carer agreement.

**Monitor carer availability**

During the period of the carer’s approval, the PSU is responsible for updating the carer’s ‘Carer entity status’ in ICMS to reflect periods of time when the carer is temporarily unavailable to provide placements but remains approved (‘inactive’ status). Extended periods of inactivity may be considered when reviewing a carer’s support needs and during the carer’s renewal of approval process, depending on the reasons the carer has been unavailable or unable to provide placements. For further information about updating a carer’s status, refer to Chapter 5, 1.4 Determine the most suitable placement type.

### 3.4 Refuse the application

**Refusal - not on blue card or exemption card grounds**

When an application for approval or renewal of approval is refused by the CSSC manager, or the regional director for a Child Safety employee, and the refusal is not on blue card or exemption card grounds:

• record the refusal decision on ‘Form 4’ and as ‘Not approved’ in the ‘Approval/Refusal’ tab in ICMS

• provide the applicant with written notice of the decision **within 10 days**, using the ‘Letter of refusal’, created in ICMS

• record an ‘alert’ on each applicant’s person record, refer to Chapter 1, 9. What if an alert needs to be recorded in ICMS?

• record the alert ‘start date’ as the date the decision was made to refuse the application.

For an application for **renewal of approval**, the carer’s approval status will automatically be updated and the end date will reflect the ‘Not approved’ decision date as recorded in the ‘Approval/Refusal’ tab in ICMS.

The CSU must be notified (by email, telephone or in writing) of the decision to refuse the application, if:

• the applicant does not seek a review of the decision within the required timeframe, or
they do seek a review of the decision and QCAT upholds Child Safety’s decision.

Where the person applies for a decision review by QCAT, reopen the closed EOI/Application and record ‘Reviewable decision’ details in the ‘Approval/Refusal’ tab in ICMS.

Where QCAT amends the decision and the carer is subsequently approved:
- provide relevant approval documentation to the approved carer, the foster and kinship care service, if applicable, and Carepay, as outlined in 3.3 Approve the application
- record QCAT decision in ICMS
- advise the CSU of the amended decision
- close the alert that was created when the application was refused.

**Refusal - on blue card or exemption card grounds**

When an application for approval or renewal of approval is refused by the CSSC manager and the refusal is due to blue card or exemption card grounds:
- provide the applicant with written notice of the decision within 10 days, using the ‘Letter of refusal’, created in ICMS
- explain in the letter the reasons for the decision and that there are no review rights under the Child Protection Act 1999, schedule 2, in relation to Child Safety’s decision to refuse approval or renewal of approval on blue card or exemption card grounds
- record the refusal decision in ICMS (see above).

**Refusal - when outcome of initial application is not decided within the required timeframe**

If an initial carer application is not decided within the 90 day period, or within the period of extension as agreed in writing, the application must be refused. In this circumstance, when an application for approval is refused by the CSSC manager:
- provide the applicant with written notice of the decision within 10 days, using the ‘Letter of refusal - expiry of application’, created in ICMS
- record the refusal decision on ‘Form 4’ and as ‘Not approved’ in the ‘Approval/Refusal’ tab in ICMS
- do not record an ‘alert’ on the applicant.

When an application for initial approval is not decided within the 90 day period, or within the subsequent extension period as agreed in writing, the proposed carers will need to submit a new ‘Application for approval - Form 3 APA’, if they wish to proceed with an application.

Note: Refusing an application due to the application expiring is a reviewable decision.

Where the person applies for a decision review by QCAT reopen the closed EOI/Application and record ‘Reviewable decision’ details in the ‘Approval/Refusal’ tab in ICMS.

For further information about the roles and responsibilities of the CSSC, PSU and CSU in relation the approval or refusal of a carer application, refer to the Foster carer assessment and approval checklist or the Kinship carer assessment and approval checklist. Note: There may be a variance in roles across regions which are not captured in the checklists.
3.5 Complete a foster carer agreement

Child Safety is responsible for the provision of support and effective management processes to enable approved carers to meet their legislative responsibilities under the Child Protection Act 1999, including enabling them to provide a level of care consistent with the legislated statement of standards.

Together, Child Safety, foster and kinship care services and foster carers, share the responsibility to actively identify, promote and address their support and training needs.

If a ‘Foster Carer Agreement’ was not completed with the carer as part of the approval process, it is to be completed with the foster carer as soon as possible following the issuing of the certificate of approval and prior to the carer commencing their first placement for a child. It is a written agreement, negotiated between each foster carer and Child Safety or a foster and kinship care service, that:

- sets out the terms, conditions and responsibilities of the relationship between the foster carer and the CSSC and PSU or the foster and kinship care service
- includes a plan for the carer’s ongoing development and support needs.

A foster carer agreement is not completed for a kinship carer, as their support needs are specific to the child placed in their care and are recorded in the placement agreement. Support activities that require follow up for a kinship carer will be recorded as a ‘Kinship care support’ follow up activity in the carer's ‘Monitor and Support’ screen in ICMS.

The PSU is responsible for developing the foster carer agreement with a foster carer who is affiliated with Child Safety. The foster and kinship care service is responsible for developing a foster carer agreement with a foster carer who is affiliated with a foster and kinship care service, however, the PSU or CSSC may also be involved in this process when a carer has a significant history of not meeting the standards of care.

For further information about quality of care issues, refer to Chapter 9, Standards of care.

If the approved carer is a Child Safety-employee, refer to 3. What if a carer or carer applicant is also a Child Safety employee?

Prior to completing the foster carer agreement with the foster carer, discuss and agree on:

- the type of care to be provided
- the placement types for which the carer family are not able to provide care, taking into consideration the assessment information documented in Form 3A (for initial approval) or Form 3B (for renewal of approval)
- the needs of the foster carer family
- additional supports required by a carer who is also a Child Safety employee
- additional supports and considerations required by a carer who provides other regulated care services from their home.

Following the discussion:

- complete the Foster Carer Agreement with the foster carer and include:
  - the carer’s placement considerations and capacity
• the carer’s development and support plan
• request that the foster carer signs the ‘Foster Carer Agreement’, to signify their agreement that the recorded information is a true and correct record of discussions held
• provide the foster carer with a copy of the final, signed ‘Foster Carer Agreement’
• attach a copy of the ‘Foster Carer Agreement’ to the carer’s ‘Monitor and Support’ screen in ICMS and file the original on the carer’s file
• provide a copy to the foster and kinship care service, where applicable.

Activities identified in the foster carer agreement may be recorded as ‘Foster Carer Agreement’ follow up activities created in the carer’s ‘Monitor and Support’ screen in ICMS.

4 Renewal

4.1 Complete standard and advanced training

Other than in exceptional circumstances, an approved foster carer must complete the following training:

• **Standard training**: three modules, each of three hours duration - **within the first 12 months** and, as a prerequisite for their first renewal of approval as a foster carer.

• **Advanced training**: minimum of 8 hours - **within two years** and as a prerequisite for their second renewal of approval as a foster carer – thereafter it is optional for subsequent renewals.

The content of the standard training modules may be delivered in a range of flexible ways, including one-to-one in the applicant’s home, if necessary.

The completion of associated learning journals is at the **discretion** of the foster carer. Following the completion of standard and advanced training, further participation in advanced training modules occurs at the foster carer’s **discretion**.

Kinship carers are **not required** to complete standard and advanced training, however, they may choose to participate in standard or advanced training, to assist them in meeting their support and learning needs.

Note: Where the partner of a foster carer is genuinely unable to participate in standard training due to the nature and location of their employment, for example, those employed by the defence forces or mining industry and working interstate or overseas, both foster carers may be granted renewal of approval, with the condition (recorded on the certificate of approval) that the applicable partner completes standard training when their circumstances change. In exceptional circumstances, the CSSC manager may approve an extension of up to six months for the completion of standard training, or if necessary, waive the requirement entirely.

Any suitable person who is granted the long-term guardianship of a child, may choose to participate in training as a support to the care arrangement. For further information, refer to Chapter 3, 1. What if the child has a long-term guardianship? and the Procedures and guidelines for Quality Care: Foster Care Training.
During a carer’s period of approval, the PSU will record the carer’s training participation and competencies details in the ‘M&S activities’ tab in the carer’s ‘Monitor and Support’ screen in ICMS.

When a carer decides to renew their approval, the training participation and competencies details will automatically appear in the ‘Assessment’ tab of the carer’s ‘EOI/Application’ for renewal in ICMS.

The renewal of approval is the process of assessing the continued suitability of the carer and any adult household members, taking into consideration whether the carer has met the standards of care for children placed with them during the preceding one or two year period, and their continued commitment to meeting the suitability requirements set out in legislation and policy.

Approved foster and kinship carers must make an application for the renewal of their approval prior to the expiry of the current certificate of approval, if they wish to continue as approved carers.

Where the existing certificate of approval has expired before the carer makes an application, the application cannot be progressed as an application for renewal of approval. In this case, the applicant will need to lodge an application for initial approval and complete the ‘Application for approval - Form 3 APA’ (Part A), created in ICMS.

### 4.2 Invite an application for renewal of approval

An approved foster or kinship carer is required to renew their approval one year from the date of initial approval and every two years thereafter.

Regardless of whether the assessment process will be undertaken by a foster or kinship care service, a private contractor or a Child Safety officer, the PSU is responsible for inviting a foster or kinship carer to renew their certificate of approval.

For further information about the roles and responsibilities of the CSSC, PSU and CSU in relation to the renewal of approval processes, refer to the Foster carer renewal of approval checklist or the Kinship carer renewal of approval checklist. Note: There may be a variance in roles across regions which are not captured in the checklists.

Commence the renewal assessment process at the ‘scheduled review date’, which is three months prior to the expiry of the current certificate of approval. This should allow adequate time for the renewal process to be finalised prior to the expiry of the current certificate. Applications for renewal must be lodged, and ‘properly made’, prior to the expiry date of the current certificate of approval.

For information about the definition of ‘properly made’, refer to 1.7 Lodge the application.

Three months prior to the expiry date of the current certificate of approval, complete and send the ‘Letter inviting application for renewal of approval’, created in ICMS, to the carer, along with the following attachments:

- the ‘Application for approval - Form 3 APA (APA form) - Part C’, created in ICMS
- the Fact sheet 5: Foster and kinship care - Legislative requirements for providing care
• if applicable, the ‘Carer applicant health and wellbeing questionnaire’, created in ICMS, only to be completed at renewal where there has been a change in health status during the preceding one or two year period.

Record the renewal invitation details in the ‘M&S activities’ tab in the carer’s ‘Monitor and Support’ screen in ICMS.

A long-term guardian or permanent guardian will only need to renew their approval if they intend to continue caring for other children in care.

Should the carer not wish to renew their approval status, they will need to inform Child Safety as soon as possible to ensure minimal disruption to the child, as the child will need to be placed with another carer prior to the current certificate of approval expiry date - refer to 7. What if the foster or kinship carer decides to cease being a carer?

If the approved carer is a Child Safety employee, refer to 3. What if a carer or carer applicant is also a Child Safety employee?

4.3 Lodge the application for renewal

If a carer wishes to renew their approval, create an EOI/Application for renewal in the ‘EOI/Applications’ tab from the carer entity record in ICMS.

The carer must complete the application, attach photocopies of identification documents, where available and lodge the application with the CSSC, so as to ensure the application is ‘properly made’, prior to the expiry date of their current certificate of approval.

Note: Referee checks are not required at renewal of approval.

Complete the application documentation

When the carer decides to apply to renew their approval, use the Application for approval - Form 3 APA - Guide to completion and:

• request that the applicant and all adult household members complete the ‘APA form’ - Part C, created in ICMS - refer to the Adult household member guidelines
• complete Part D of the ‘APA form’ in ICMS
• ensure the applicant completes a ‘Carer applicant health and wellbeing questionnaire’, created in ICMS, if applicable
• request that the applicant completes the Interview resource: Statement of standards, and attach a copy to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS.

Blue card application or blue card validation forms are only provided at renewal where an applicant’s blue card renewal date coincides with the renewal of approval – refer to 4.4 Facilitate personal history checks.

If a blue card application form is completed as part of the application for renewal of approval, Child Safety staff must inform the blue card applicant that it is an offence for a disqualified person to sign a ‘blue card application’, as required by the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000. This requirement applies even when a prescribed person has verified
a person’s identity. For further information, refer to the practice resource Mandatory advice to blue card applicants.

Note: Where an adult household member has an appointed guardian as a result of a disability, the forms will be completed with the household member’s details and signed by their guardian.

Where the applicant has changed address or undertaken home modifications since the previous approval or renewal of approval, ensure that a subsequent household safety study has been undertaken, and if not, complete a new ‘Form 2: Household safety study’ in ICMS, in accordance with 1.5 Conduct a household safety study. Attach the completed ‘Form 2’ to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS and record the household safety study details under ‘Additional source of information’ in the ‘Assessment’ tab in ICMS.

Ensure the application for renewal is ‘properly made’
Prior to accepting an application for renewal from the applicant, ensure that the application is ‘properly made’ - refer to 1.8 Lodge the application.

Record the ‘APA form’ lodgement in ICMS
Record the ‘Application lodgement’ and ‘Verification of identity’ details in the ‘Lodgement/Withdrawal’ tab and attach all relevant forms to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS.

4.4 Facilitate personal history checks
Once the application has been ‘properly made’ and the application lodgement details have been recorded in ICMS, email the CSU immediately, to advise the personal history checks can commence.

The conduct of personal history checks should not delay the commencement of the assessment of the application for renewal of approval.

The renewal of a blue card
The blue card requires renewal every three years. Blue card renewal does not occur as part of the application for renewal of approval process. Blue Card Services will notify existing blue card holders sixteen weeks before their cards expire. Approved carers and adult household members are required to lodge a renewal application at least 30 days prior to the expiry of their card using the Volunteer foster/kinship carer or adult member blue card application form.

4.5 Complete a Household safety study
The continued safety of the carer household is an important aspect of the renewal assessment. The purpose of completing the household safety study at this time is to ensure the carers continued commitment to the safety of children, and that the carer is maintaining a safe environment in accordance with the legislative requirements and safe practices.

The household safety study completed at this time should consider the ages and needs of the child who are already residing in the house, and the ages and needs of children that may be placed with the carer in the future, as outlined in the Foster Care Agreement.

Complete a new ‘Form 2: Household safety study’ in ICMS, in accordance with 2.3 Conduct a household safety study.
Attach the completed ‘Form 2’ to the ‘Application’ in ICMS and submit to the CSSC Manager as part of the assessment documentation.

4.6 Conduct medical checks, if applicable

The conduct of medical checks at renewal of approval is at the discretion of the CSSC manager. Where relevant, consideration should be given to any change in the applicant’s health status during the preceding one or two year period and whether this may impact on the capacity of the applicant to fulfil the foster or kinship carer role.

If required, conduct medical checks, on the applicant, refer to 2.5 Discretionary information checks. Conduct medical checks, if applicable and record the outcome of the medical check, in the relevant section of the:

- ‘Form 3B: Foster carer applicant assessment and recommendation form - Renewal of approval only’ (Form 3B) in ICMS, for a foster carer applicant
- ‘Kinship carer renewal assessment report’ in ICMS, for a kinship carer applicant.

Communicable diseases

Where the carer has a communicable disease, ensure that the carer has complied with their medical care plan, the recommended universal precautions and that they continue to minimise the risk of transmission of the disease to others in the household.

Relevant information can be obtained from assessment interviews, observations and the carer’s file and ICMS records. A health report or letter from the carer’s medical practitioner or specialist may be necessary to establish the impact of any significant changes in the disease, the health and capacity of the carer or risks of transmission of the disease to others.

To assist with the renewal of approval decision, where it is identified that a carer has contracted a communicable disease during the approval period, refer to 2.5 Discretionary information checks for the relevant information required in the medical assessment of the carer.

Attach any relevant forms to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS and record details of the general practitioner’s report under ‘Additional sources of information’ in the ‘Assessment’ tab in ICMS.

4.7 Assess the application for renewal

The assessment of an application for renewal of approval should be relatively straightforward in most cases, given that for the preceding one or two year period:

- the applicant has demonstrated an ability to provide foster or kinship care and to meet suitability requirements
- one or more Child Safety officers, or a staff member from a foster and kinship care service, will have been in regular contact with the applicant to provide support to the applicant and undertake case work with any child placed with the carer.

In these circumstances, the assessment of the application for renewal of approval is primarily a process of:

- conducting assessment interviews with each carer applicant, although this may be a joint interview. Where practicable, other members of the household should be encouraged to participate in interview discussions
• gathering relevant information from identified sources
• analysing the information to determine whether the applicant has met, and continues to meet, all legislative and policy suitability requirements.

The assessment of the application for renewal of approval will focus on changes since the previous assessment, and include demonstrated examples of how the applicant has provided care in a manner consistent with the legislated statement of standards, and met other suitability requirements.

Alternatively, where there has been limited or infrequent contact with the applicant for the preceding one or two year period, or there have been significant issues of concern regarding the quality of care provided by the applicant or their suitability, the assessment will need to be more comprehensive, and consist of more structured assessment interviews.

For specific information about factors to consider during the assessment of an application for renewal of approval, refer to the practice paper Assessment of foster carer applicants, or the practice resources Legislative requirements for the approval of kinship carers and Assessment of kinship carer applicants.

Consideration of change in circumstances

Where the carer has notified Child Safety of a change in circumstance, ensure that this information is documented and assessed. Other relevant information can be obtained from assessment interviews, carers file and ICMS records.

To assist with the renewal of approval decision, where it is identified the carer has a change in circumstance, for example providing other regulated services from the home, refer to 2. What if there is a change in carer circumstances? for relevant information required to assess suitability of the applicant to fulfil the foster or kinship carer role.

Attach any relevant forms to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS and record details of the change in circumstances under ‘Additional sources of information’ in the ‘Assessment’ tab in ICMS.

Assessing the application for renewal of approval

To assess the application and determine whether the applicant meets all suitability requirements, consider all information obtained during the assessment process, taking into account:

• their demonstrated ability to meet the statement of standards
• information obtained by reviewing the applicant’s ICMS records and file, speaking with the child’s case worker and having contact with the applicant
• the completed Interview resource: Statement of standards
• information from the applicant’s participation in standard or advanced training, including, where applicable, the applicant’s completed learning journals
• the outcomes of any standards of care reviews or harm report investigations and assessments which have been responded to for the preceding one or two year period
• the outcomes of personal history checks on the applicant and if applicable, adult household members
• information from additional sources, for example, an updated ‘Carer applicant health and wellbeing questionnaire’, ‘general practitioner’s report on carer applicant’, medical assessments or ‘Household safety study’
• the views of the child and family about the kinship carer for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child
• the kinship carer applicant’s ability to continue to meet the needs of the particular child in their care, by considering the progression of the child’s case plan and determining whether the applicant is facilitating the agreed case plan goals and actions.

The Form 3B - Guidelines for completing assessment report - Renewal of approval provides guidance for the renewal assessment of foster carers. The Kinship carer renewal assessment report guidelines only provides guidance for the renewal assessment for kinship carers.

If applicable, complete the additional assessment activities associated with an application for the renewal of approval of an approved carer who is a Child Safety employee - refer to 3. What if a carer or carer applicant is also a Child Safety employee?

4.8 Complete the renewal assessment report

Once all the assessment activities have been undertaken, complete:
• the ‘Form 3B: Foster carer applicant assessment and recommendation form - Renewal of approval only’, (Form 3B) in ICMS, for a foster carer applicant
• the Kinship carer renewal assessment report for a kinship carer applicant
• review of the ‘Foster Carer Agreement’, for a foster carer, refer to 4.11 Review the foster carer agreement.

The assessment reports are intended to be a brief summary of all the information gathered and assessed, as outlined in 4.6 Assess the application for renewal, including:
• a few paragraphs relating to each topic
• any confidential information relevant to the assessment
• information about any proposed use of conditions on the certificate of approval, if applicable
• a recommendation to the CSSC manager about the applicant’s suitability to be issued with a renewed certificate of approval and the rationale for the recommendation.

If the applicant is a Child Safety employee, complete the Advice to regional director form and if applicable, the Conflict of interest declaration, as outlined in 3. What if a carer or carer applicant is also a Child Safety employee?

When considering the use of conditions on the certificate of approval, firstly consider whether the conditions can be included in the ‘Foster Carer Agreement’, created in ICMS, refer to 2.7 Complete the assessment report and 4.11 Review the foster carer agreement.

Prior to finalising either the ‘Form 3B’ or the ‘Kinship carer renewal assessment report’:
• share observations and reflections with the applicant and give them feedback about the conclusions being reached
• include feedback about the assessment from the applicant, in the report.
Once the ‘Form 3B’ or ‘Kinship carer renewal assessment report’, and review of the ‘Foster Carer Agreement’, where relevant, is finalised:

- provide a copy of the final ‘Form 3B’ or ‘Kinship carer renewal assessment report’, and ‘Foster Carer Agreement’, where relevant, to the applicant
- attach a copy of the final ‘Form 3B’ or ‘Kinship carer renewal assessment report’ to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS
- attach a copy of the reviewed ‘Foster Carer Agreement’ to the carer’s ‘Monitor and Support’ screen in ICMS
- complete the ‘Form 4: Approval decision’, created ICMS, which includes the outcomes of the application for a blue card, for an exemption card or to validate a blue card, where applicable, and personal history checks conducted by the CSU
- record the ‘Assessment quality assurance’ details, where applicable, and the ‘Assessment recommendation’ details in the ‘Assessment’ tab in ICMS
- inform the CSSSC manager that the assessment report and relevant assessment information is available in ICMS and provide them with the ‘Form 4: A’ for a decision
- record the ‘Application submission details’ in the ‘Approval/Refusal’ tab in ICMS. Do not provide the applicant with a copy of the ‘Form 4: Approval decision’.

File copies of all interview records, reports, handouts and self-assessments on the applicant’s paper file.

4.9 Decide the outcome of the application for renewal

Prior to granting renewal of approval, the CSSSC manager, or the regional director for a Child Safety employee, must be satisfied that the applicant is suitable based on all aspects of suitability.

Unless an application is withdrawn by the applicant in writing, or refused based on an adverse personal history, the CSSSC manager, or the regional director where applicable, is delegated to approve or refuse the application. Where possible, the renewal decision should be made within three months of the date the application was ‘properly made’. If an application for renewal is unlikely to be decided within three months and more time is required, ensure the applicant is advised of the delay and the reasons for the delay.

Where the application for renewal is ‘properly made’ prior to the current certificate of approval expiry date, the current certificate of approval continues in force until the decision regarding the application for renewal of approval is made, regardless of the timeframe for the renewal decision.

When deciding the outcome of an application for renewal of approval, the CSSSC manager, or the regional director where applicable, will consider all information provided and the legislative and policy requirements for suitability, including:

- the outcomes of all applications for a blue card, exemption card or the validation of a blue card, where applicable, and all personal history checks, as recorded in ICMS and on the ‘Form 4: Approval decision’
- whether the applicant continues to be a suitable person to be an approved carer, including for a kinship carer, whether the ongoing placement of the child is consistent with the agreed case plan for the child and continues to be in the best interests of the child
• whether the applicant has demonstrated an ability to provide care to the child in a manner consistent with the statement of standards, for the preceding one or two year period, as outlined in the 'Form 3B: Foster carer applicant assessment and recommendation form - Renewal of approval only' or the 'Kinship carer renewal assessment report'
• whether the applicant is providing or intending to provide other regulated services from the home and the impact these could have on the capacity of the carer applicant to continue to provide quality care to children placed with them
• the views of the child and family about a kinship carer for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, if applicable
• the Advice to regional director form and if applicable, the Conflict of interest declaration, for an applicant who is a Child Safety employee.

The approval decision may be informed by the convening of an assessment panel, however, a CSSC manager must decide the outcome of the application.

Note: When a new adult has completed the ‘New adult household member’ form and a ‘blue card application’, ‘blue card validation’ or ‘blue card exemption’ form, after an application for renewal of approval has been ‘properly made’, the approval process for the applicant may be completed prior to the new adult household member being issued with a blue card or exemption card, or prior to Blue Card Services validating the new adult household member’s existing blue card (Child Protection Act 1999, section 135(2)).

4.10 Approve the application for renewal

To approve the application, the CSSC manager, or the regional director for a Child Safety officer, will record the approval decision, along with any relevant comments, on the ‘Form 4: Approval decision’, and sign the form.

Following approval by the CSSC manager, or the regional director where applicable:
• attach a final copy of ‘Form 4: Approval decision’ to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS
• record ‘Application outcome’ details in the ‘Approval/Refusal’ tab in ICMS, with a scheduled review date of three months prior to expiry.

When the application is approved, advise the approved carer:
• that their application for renewal has been approved
• that they are legally obligated to inform Child Safety of specific changes in carer circumstances and that copies of the 'Change in carer circumstances form', created in ICMS, will be posted to them, for their future completion, if necessary, refer to 2. What if there is a change in carer circumstances?

Following the provision of the above advice to the approved carer:
• complete the 'Letter of renewal as a foster carer' or 'Letter of renewal as a kinship carer', created in ICMS
• complete the 'Certificate of Approval - Foster carer' or 'Certificate of Approval - Kinship carer', created in ICMS
• provide the following to the approved carer:
  • their certificate of approval
• the letter of approval
• copies of the Change in carer circumstances form
• the ‘Foster and kinship carer handbook’, if the carer has not received one previously
• attach a copy of the certificate of approval and the letter of approval to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS
• provide a copy of the certificate of approval and the letter of approval to the foster and
  kinship care service, if applicable.

For information about the certificate of approval, refer to the practice resource Completing the
Certificate of Approval.

Note: A kinship carer requires a separate certificate of approval for each child for whom they are
approved.

Refusal
If the application for renewal of approval is refused by the CSSC manager, or the regional director
where applicable, refer to 3.4 Refuse the application.

4.11 Review support arrangements

Review the approved carer’s support arrangements as part of the review of the:
• ‘Foster Carer Agreement’, for a foster carer
• placement agreement for the child, for all carer types.

As a minimum, support options are to be reviewed when:
• changes are made to the case plan for a child
• there are significant changes in the approved carer’s circumstances potentially impacting
  on the children in their care
• there are dynamics which may escalate, or have already escalated, into a standards of
care review or harm report – refer to Chapter 9, Standards of care
• a review of the support arrangements is requested by an approved carer.

For further information about reviewing support arrangements, refer to Chapter 9, 1. Provide
support to carers.

4.12 Review the foster carer agreement

The PSU is responsible for reviewing the ‘Foster Carer Agreement’ with a foster carer who is not
affiliated with a non-government foster and kinship care service. The foster and kinship care
service is responsible for reviewing a foster carer agreement with a foster carer who is affiliated
with a foster and kinship care service. The CSSC or PSU may also be involved in this process
when a carer has a significant history of standards of care reviews and harm reports.

If the approved carer is a Child Safety employee, refer to 3. What if a carer or carer applicant is
also a Child Safety employee?
Review the foster carer agreement at least one year from the date of a foster carer’s initial approval and every two years thereafter, as part of the carer’s renewal of approval process. These reviews are referred to as ‘routine’ reviews.

Prior to conducting a review of the foster carer agreement, ensure that the foster carer is clear about the purpose of the review and ensure that the information necessary to inform the review has been obtained from available sources.

To review the foster carer agreement, meet with the carer to:

- ensure that the quality of care provided is consistent with the statement of standards
- identify any change of circumstances for the foster carer and their family and explore the impact of the change, if any, on the carer’s ability to provide care
- encourage the foster carer to raise any issues affecting them
- discuss the foster carer’s readiness for other types of placements
- consider whether the foster carer is being matched with the type of care and children appropriate to their circumstances
- assess the needs of the foster carer family and identify strategies to address these needs, including support arrangements
- assess the foster carer’s ongoing commitment to undertake the legislative roles and responsibilities of a foster carer
- assess any support needs, if applicable, associated with the approved carer’s dual role as an employee, including (where appropriate) strategies for managing or resolving conflicts of interest - for further information, refer to 3. What if a carer or carer applicant is also a Child Safety employee?

To complete the review of the foster carer agreement:

- complete the ‘Foster Carer Agreement’, created in ICMS, and include relevant information from discussions held with the carer
- request that the foster carer signs the ‘Foster Carer Agreement’, to signify their agreement that the recorded information is a true and correct record of discussions held
- provide the foster carer with a copy of the final, signed ‘Foster Carer Agreement’ and attachments, if applicable, and attach a copy to the carer’s renewal ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS
- file the signed, original ‘Foster Carer Agreement’ on the foster carer’s file, with the foster and kinship care service retaining a copy, where applicable.

Complete an additional, early review of the foster carer agreement when:

- there are ongoing concerns in relation to the quality of care provided to children
- when it is assessed that the carer has not met the standards of care, following the outcome of a standards of care review or the investigation and assessment of a harm report - refer to Chapter 9. Standards of care
- there is a change in carer circumstances that may require a review, for example, a change to personal history for the foster carer or an adult household member, such as a new criminal charge or conviction
• the foster carer intends to provide care for other children, for example, becoming a family
day care provider or caring for a relative
• the carer requests a review of their foster carer agreement.

Attach a copy of the ‘Foster Carer Agreement’ to the carer’s ‘Monitor and Support’ screen in ICMS.
Activities identified in the review of the foster carer agreement may be recorded as ‘Foster Carer
Agreement’ follow up activities created in the carer’s ‘Monitor and Support’ screen in ICMS.

For further information, refer to the practice resource Reviewing the foster carer agreement.

Between reviews, continue monitoring the quality of care provided, in accordance with Chapter 9_
Standards of care.
What if the applicant requires provisional approval?

Under the Child Protection Act 1999 and Child Protection Regulation 2011, a person who has made an application to be a foster or kinship carer may be provisionally approved if all of the following requirements are met:

- it is not possible, or not in the child’s best interests, to be placed with an approved foster or kinship carer or licensed care service
- the outcomes of child protection and criminal history checks, including self-disclosures, indicate the applicant does not pose a risk to the child’s safety
- the applicant is able and willing to protect the child from harm
- all members of the applicant’s household do not pose a risk to the child’s safety
- a brief assessment indicates the applicant is willing and able to meet the statement of standards.

Provisional approval is for 60 days with a possible further extension of 30 days. The substantive application to be a foster or kinship carer must be decided within this 60 day period, or where extended, 90 day period, if it is intended for the child to remain in the placement.

If the substantive application is not decided within the 60 day period, or where extended, 90 day period of provisional approval:

- remove the child from the placement, as provisional approval cannot be extended beyond 90 days
- negotiate an extension to the time frame for deciding the substantive application for approval, prior to the expiry of provisional approval (see below, 'Extension of the expiry date').

Provisional approval may only be granted once. If the 60 day period, and extension of 30 days where granted, has lapsed, further provisional approval cannot be granted, even if a new application for approval is lodged.

Key steps to obtain provisional approval

To obtain provisional approval of a foster or kinship carer applicant:

- provide a copy of Fact sheet 8: Foster and kinship care - Blue cards and Fact sheet 1: What is provisional approval? to the applicant
- the application as a foster or kinship carer must be ‘properly made’ and recorded in ICMS as outlined in 1.7 Lodge the application
- record ‘Yes’ to the provisional approval sought prompt in the ‘Lodgement/Withdrawal’ tab in ICMS and identify the relevant subject children applicable to the application
- immediately email the CSU to advise that the documentation required for the conduct of personal history checks is available in ICMS, refer to 2.2 Facilitate personal history checks, or the CSAHSC if urgent and after hours (see below)
- the CSU will conduct personal history checks and record the outcome details in the CSU system, so that they populate into the ‘Assessment’ tab in ICMS
- where an applicant or household member holds a blue card, the CSU will ‘authorise’ the validity of the blue card with Blue Card Services
• the CSU will conduct criminal history checks on applicants or adult household members who do not hold a blue card, or hold a blue card that is not yet authorised by Child Safety
• record the outcomes of personal history checks conducted by the CSU in the ‘Form 5: Approval Decision - Provisionally approved carer’ in ICMS
• meet with the applicant at their home and:
  • undertake a brief assessment of their ability to provide care in accordance with the statement of standards and to protect the child from harm - for further information, refer to the practice resource Meeting the statement of standards
  • ensure that the mandatory safety requirements will be met and complete page 1 of the ‘Form 2: Household safety study’, created in ICMS
  • ensure that any relevant health or medical issues of the applicant which may impact on the applicant’s capacity to provide care for a child are explored, and consider how this will be managed
  • explain to provisional applicants that they will need to undergo a full health check as part of their full carer assessment which occurs after they have been provisionally approved
  • attach the completed page 1 of ‘Form 2: Household safety study’ to the ‘EOI/Application’ and record the household safety study details in the ‘Pre-application’ tab in ICMS
• consider whether the placement of the child will pose any risks to the ongoing future safety of the applicant and any other children, including the applicant’s own children, in the household - for example, the parents or family members of the child being considered for placement have been identified as a safety risk for the applicants and children in the household
• record a brief assessment and make an approval recommendation to the CSSC manager, or regional director where criminal history results are not yet available from the CSU - the Provisional approval assessment form may be used to record the assessment
• attach the assessment and approval recommendation to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS and record the ‘Provisional assessment recommendation’ details in the ‘Assessment’ tab in ICMS
• the CSSC manager or regional director, where applicable, will record the approval decision, along with relevant comments if applicable, on the ‘Form 5 - Approval Decision - Provisionally approved carer’, created in ICMS, and signs the form
• attach the completed ‘Form 5 - Approval Decision - Provisionally approved carer’ to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS and record the ‘Provisional approval’ details in the ‘Approval/Refusal’ tab in ICMS.

Additional steps are required to obtain provisional approval of a foster or kinship carer applicant who is a Child Safety employee, as outlined in 3. What if a carer or carer applicant is also a Child Safety employee?

Note: Child Safety staff must comply with the requirement under the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000, to inform all blue card applicants that it is an offence for a disqualified person to sign a blue card application form. This requirement applies even when a prescribed person has verified an applicant’s identity. For further information, refer to the practice resource Mandatory advice to blue card applicants.
Request urgent personal history checks

When the conduct of personal history checks is urgent and within business hours, for example, when provisional approval is required so that a placement can be facilitated as soon as possible (within 48 hours) for a child:

- seek approval from the CSSC manager or a senior team leader to request urgent personal and criminal history checks
- contact the CSU via telephone and advise them of the need for urgent personal and criminal history checks
- immediately email CSU with a copy of the EOI/Application and associated ID documents refer to 2.2 Facilitate personal history checks.
- attach all completed forms to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS.

The CSU will provide the personal and criminal history check results back to the CSSC as soon as practicable, however, where there are unforeseen delays, the regional director may grant provisional approval, as outlined below.

Where, as part of the provisional approval process, an applicant or adult household member has criminal history that is obtained by the CSU, relevant details of the criminal history may be provided to an external assessor where it is considered necessary that the information needs to be considered as part of the assessment. For further information about providing personal history information to external assessors, refer to 2.2 Facilitate personal history checks.

Request urgent after hours personal history checks

Where an urgent placement is being made after hours (between 3:30pm and 8am, Monday to Friday and weekends), with a person who is applying for provisional approval as a carer, personal and criminal history checks will be conducted by the CSAHSC and will include child protection and criminal and domestic violence history checks. A rationale for why the check is urgent must be provided and meet one of the following criteria:

- A child is to be placed with a carer/parent on the same day as the request; or
- A TAO or TCO is taking place today, and a departmental officer requires this information to support their application; or
- Serious concerns of a criminal nature about a parent or household member likely to require a 24 hour response by the Department.
- A child is to be removed from a carer/parent on the same day as the request;

In this circumstance, complete all mandatory fields in the QPS - Urgent Request (After Hours) form and email, with the other necessary documentation, to CSAHSC. Phone to confirm receipt of the request and attach all completed forms to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS. Decisions required after hours about a person’s suitability and subsequent provisional approval will be made by the duty executive officer.
If your request falls outside this criteria, it is to be processed as a non-urgent check. In these instances, please complete the non-urgent spreadsheet and forward to the CSU for processing.

Where the duty executive officer approves an urgent placement, CSAHSC staff will complete the following in ICMS to create the carer entity and placement:

- create the ‘EOI/Application’ including all household members, where not previously created by the CSSC
- record the ‘Date application received’, ‘Date application properly made’ and ‘Verification of identity’ details (where available) in the ‘Lodgement/Withdrawal’ tab (note: these dates must be completed even though all requirements for an application to be ‘properly made’ may not be met)
- record the outcome of personal history checks and ‘Provisional assessment recommendation’ details in the ‘Assessment’ tab
- record the ‘Provisional approval’ decision details, made by the duty executive officer, in the ‘Approval/Refusal’ tab.

CSSC or PSU staff are responsible for **immediately** finalising the requirements for the application to be ‘properly made’ and sending all required forms and identification documents, where available, to the CSU on the following business day. In circumstances where a placement has been made by the CSAHSC, the ‘Date properly made’ will **not** be updated once all required documentation is completed.

**Approval of applicants**

The CSSC manager is delegated to grant provisional approval to a carer applicant, where the applicant or all adult household members are assessed as not posing a risk to the child’s safety, taking into account:

- the outcome of personal history checks undertaken by the CSU
- consideration of any self-disclosures by the applicant or adult household members as recorded in the ‘APA form’
- the brief assessment of the applicant’s ability to provide care consistent with the statement of standards, based on an interview in the applicant’s home
- the applicant’s ability and willingness to protect the child from harm
- any relevant information from Child Safety records
- whether the applicant meets the mandatory household safety study requirements
- the views of the child and family about the proposed kinship carer for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child
- whether the placement facilitates ongoing connections with the child’s kin or community
- whether the placement for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child provides for the optimal retention of the child’s connection to parents, siblings and other people of significance to the child under Aboriginal tradition and Island custom
- the views of the child about the placement and, where they do not support the placement, the reasons they provide (with due regard to the child’s age and developmental level).

The regional director, or the duty executive officer, if after hours, may grant provisional approval **prior to** the completion of personal history checks undertaken by CSU (child protection history,
criminal history, domestic violence history and traffic history) in urgent circumstances, taking into consideration the factors outlined above. In such circumstances, the CSSC is responsible for reviewing ICMS and providing the regional director with any relevant child protection history information about the applicant or household members to inform the decision to grant provisional approval. When the outcome of the personal history checks is received and indicates the carer does not pose a risk to the child’s safety, provisional approval continues. Where the CSU determines that the carer is not a suitable person to be a provisionally approved carer, refer to 11. What if a provisionally approved carer’s certificate of approval requires amendment, suspension or cancellation?

Note: Only the regional director, or if after hours, the duty executive officer, may grant provisional approval for an applicant who is a Child Safety employee.

Actions following provisional approval of applicant

Following a decision to provisionally approve the applicant:

- advise the applicant of the decision in writing, using the ‘Letter of approval as a provisionally approved carer’, created in ICMS
- issue a ‘Certificate of Approval - Provisionally approved carer’, created in ICMS, for each child to be cared for by the provisionally approved carer
- provide the provisionally approved carer with a copy of:
  - the Fact sheet 5: Foster and kinship care - Legislative requirements for providing care
  - other fact sheets relevant to the learning and information needs of the carer - refer to Carer information sheets
- advise the carer that the Foster and Kinship Carer Handbook is available online
- ensure the carer clearly understands:
  - their obligation not to disclose confidential information
  - their obligation to disclose a change in personal history for themselves or adult household members
  - their obligation to advise of any changes in carer circumstances, refer to 2. What if there is a change in carer circumstances?
  - complete the household safety study in full, refer to 1.5 Conduct a household safety study
  - complete a placement agreement for the child within three working days
  - once the placement event for the child is created in ICMS, create a vendor number for the carer by clicking Generate vendor number from the carer profile in Carepay
  - complete the online Vendor Master Data Maintenance form, using the carer’s vendor number from Carepay and forward the form to the Master Data Unit within Queensland Shared Services Finance.

The provisional certificate of approval has effect for 60 days from the date of initial approval, as recorded on the ‘Form 5: Approval decision - Provisionally approved carer’. For further information, refer to the practice resource Completing the Certificate of Approval.

Extension of the expiry date

Provisional approval can be extended past 60 days, once only, for up to a further 30 days if:

- the existing certificate of approval is current
• the extension is considered desirable and appropriate to meet the needs of the child named on the certificate
• the carer agrees to the amendment.

If the CSSC manager decides that an extension to the expiry date is warranted:
• record the ‘Provisional approval extension’ details in the ‘Approval/Refusal’ tab in ICMS
• provide the carer a new ‘Certificate of Approval - Provisionally approved carer’, created in ICMS, with all of the existing details and conditions, and the new expiry date
• the provisionally approved carer must deliver the original certificate of approval to the CSSC manager within two days
• attach a copy of the new certificate of approval to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS and provide a copy to the foster and kinship carer service, where relevant.

Where an extension is granted, the new expiry date for the certificate of approval is to be no more than 30 days from the expiry date on the initial certificate.

If the 60 day period, and extension of 30 days where granted, has lapsed, further provisional approval cannot be granted, even if a new application for approval is lodged.

For information about the roles and responsibilities of the CSSC and PSU in relation to the provisional approval of a kinship carer applicant specifically, refer to the Provisional approval for kinship carer applicant checklist. Note: There may be a variance in roles across regions which are not captured in this checklist.

**Interstate applicants**

Where an applicant resides interstate, careful consideration must be given to the feasibility of completing all necessary assessment requirements within the specified timeframes before deciding to seek the provisional approval of an interstate applicant.

**Rights of review**

Carer applicants who apply for provisional approval only have review rights in relation to their substantive application to become either a foster or kinship carer. The cancellation of a provisional certificate of approval does not affect the pending application for approval as an approved foster or kinship carer. If the substantive application is subsequently refused, this decision is reviewable.

**2. What if there is a change in carer circumstances?**

All approved carers, including provisionally approved carers, are required to notify Child Safety of any of the following specific changes that are considered relevant to determining their ongoing suitability:

• a change of address
• a change in spousal relationship, for example, separation, divorce, new partner or death of a partner
• a change in other personal circumstances, for example, significant health problems or excessive employment demands
• a change to the criminal or personal history of the carer or any adult member of their household (Child Protection Act 1999, section 141F and 141G)
• a change of persons living in the carer household, excluding children in care
• an intention to provide care for other children (for example, relatives)
• an intention to provide other regulated services from the home (for example, family day care, stand-alone care).

When any of these circumstances occur, the carer is to complete a Change in carer circumstances form and provide it to the CSSC or PSU. Upon receipt of the information:

• consider whether an additional, early review of the ‘Foster Carer Agreement’, created in ICMS, is necessary, refer to 4.11 Review the foster carer agreement
• consider whether a review of the carer’s suitability is required
• update records in ICMS, as appropriate
• forward a copy of the completed ‘Change in carer circumstances form’ to the CSU, except where the change relates to personal circumstances involving health or employment demands.

Address changes

When a carer has advised Child Safety that they have changed their primary place of residence:

• update the new address details in ICMS
• complete a ‘Vendor master data maintenance’ form located on the Queensland Shared Services website under ‘Master data’ and email the form to QSS Finance
• complete a household safety study, refer to 2.3 Conduct a household safety study.

Change in carer relationships - new spousal relationship

A carer living with their spouse may only hold a certificate of approval jointly with the spouse (Child Protection Act 1999, sections 132(3) and 136B). Carers must advise Child Safety when they intend to commence living with a spouse or wish to hold a joint certificate with another adult, for example, an adult child of the carer.

Prior to the spouse or another adult joining the household:

• ensure the carer and their spouse or other adult submit a joint application for approval as foster or kinship carers - the carer’s existing certificate of approval remains in place until the outcome of a joint application is decided
• progress the application in accordance with the usual assessment process, however, the original approved carer will not require personal history checks and will not need to repeat Pre-service training.

If the application is approved:

• issue the carers with a new joint certificate of approval
• request the return of the previous certificate of approval
• update the carers details in ICMS
• end the existing carer entity approval in ICMS with an end reason of ‘Surrendered’ as a new joint carer entity will automatically be created in ICMS upon approval
• ensure any existing placements in ICMS are updated to reflect placement with the new carer entity
• complete a new ‘Foster Carer Agreement’, where ‘applicable
• review the placement agreement for any child in the care of a kinship carer, where applicable, taking into consideration any changes to the support needs for the carer, refer to Chapter 9. 1. Provide support to carers.

Where a provisionally approved carer intends to live, or has commenced living, with a spouse, the provisional approval certificate continues to have effect until the earliest of either:
• the expiry day of the provisional approval certificate
• the day the provisionally approved carer is issued with a certificate as a foster or kinship carer
• the day the provisionally approved carer is given written notice that their application has been refused.

To facilitate urgent personal history checks for the spouse:
• request that the spouse completes the New adult household member form and either a blue card application, blue card validation or exemption card application form
• verify the spouse’s identity for a 'blue card application' only
• send the relevant forms to the CSU for processing.

Progress the foster or kinship application of the provisionally approved carer in accordance with the usual assessment process. However, the provisionally approved carer may only be granted approval as a foster or kinship carer if the spouse and all adult household members hold a current blue card or exemption card.

Advise the provisionally approved carer and spouse to complete a joint application for approval and create a new initial carer ‘EOI/application’ in ICMS for the applicant couple. The joint application must be ‘properly made’ prior to, or on the same day that the provisionally approved carer’s substantive application is decided. If the provisionally approved carer’s substantive application is approved, the approval remains valid only if a joint application for approval has been ‘properly made’ and the new spouse holds a current blue card or exemption card.

Progress the joint application in accordance with the usual assessment process, however, the original approved carer will not require new personal history checks and will not need to repeat Pre-service training.

If the joint application is approved:
• issue the carers with a new joint certificate of approval
• request the return of the previous certificate of approval
• end the existing single carer entity approval in ICMS with an end reason of ‘Surrendered’ as a new joint carer entity will automatically be created in ICMS upon approval
• ensure any existing placements in ICMS are updated to reflect placement with the new carer entity
• complete a new ‘Foster Carer Agreement’, where applicable
• review the placement agreement for any child in the care of a kinship carer, where applicable, taking into consideration any changes to the support needs for the carer, refer to Chapter 9. 1. Provide support to carers.
**Change in carer relationships - ending of a spousal relationship**

When a spousal relationship ends and only one of the carers wishes to continue as a carer, the carer must apply in writing to the CSSC manager for an amendment to their certificate of approval (Child Protection Act 1999, section 137), including situations where there is the death of a spouse. However, if a spousal relationship ends during the renewal of approval and the expiry data of the certificate would have otherwise lapsed if not for the renewal application, an amendment to the joint certificate cannot be progressed.

Where the ending of a spousal relationship coincides with the renewal of approval for the carer couple, refer to What if 12. What if a spousal relationship ends during the renewal of approval for the carer couple and only one carer wishes to continue as a carer?

Where a carer applies for an amendment to their certificate following the ending of a spousal relationship, Child Safety must make a decision on whether to grant or refuse the application for amendment within 28 days of receiving the request. If necessary, meet with the carer to discuss the matter before the 28 day period has lapsed. The existing certificate of approval remains in place until the application for amendment is decided.

To process the requested amendment:
- create a new EOI/Application for ‘Amendment to certificate’ from the existing carer entity record and select the relevant carer requesting the amendment
- assess how the new circumstances of the applicant will impact on any children in their care
- record assessment information and the ‘Assessment recommendation’ details in the ‘Assessment’ tab in ICMS
- record ‘Amendment submission details’ and ‘Amendment outcome’ details in the
- ‘Approval/Refusal’ tab in ICMS.

For an amended certificate, the new carer entity will automatically be created and the original carer entity approval status will automatically be ended with the end reason as ‘Surrendered’.

If the requested amendment is approved:
- the CSSC manager will provide written notice to the carer using the ‘Letter of outcome of application to amend’, created in ICMS, and advise:
  - that their request for an amendment has been granted
  - that a certificate of approval has been amended
  - that the amended certificate of approval takes effect on the day the CSSC manager gives notice to the carer that the amendment has been granted, or a later day, if stated in the notice
  - that the carer must deliver the original certificate of approval to the CSSC within a specified timeframe, which must not be less than seven days from the date of the notice (Child Protection Act 1999, section 141)
- provide the carer with a new certificate of approval - details, including date of expiry and any existing conditions, must match the details on the original certificate of approval
- retain a copy of the new certificate of approval on the carer's file and provide a copy, where relevant, to the foster and kinship care service
- ensure any existing placements in ICMS are updated to reflect placement with the new carer entity
• complete a new ‘Foster Carer Agreement’, where applicable
• review the placement agreement for any child in the care of a kinship carer, where applicable.

If the requested amendment is refused, written notice using the ‘Letter of outcome of application to amend’ must be provided to the carer within 10 days of the decision having been made (Child Protection Act 1999, section 137). The notice must:
• state the reasons for the decision
• advise that the carer has the right to have the decision reviewed by QCAT and that an application can be made to the tribunal within 28 days.

Where an amendment is approved and the carers are also long-term guardians or permanent guardians of one or more children:
• manually recreate the joint carer entity for the long-term guardians with an approval type of ‘Long-term guardian’ or ‘Permanent guardian’ in ICMS
• enter the original long-term guardianship or permanent guardianship start and end dates into the approval details in ICMS
• include a ‘Comment’ in the approval details explaining that the long-term guardianship or permanent guardianship approval was recreated due to it being surrendered following an amendment to the carer’s certificate.

Where both carers wish to continue as approved carers, both carers must submit a separate ‘Application for approval - Form 3 APA’. The existing certificate of approval remains in place until their individual applications are decided. The carers will not be required to repeat pre-service training. The approval decision will include an assessment of how the new circumstances of the applicant will impact on any children in their care.

If the application is approved:
• issue each individual carer with a new certificate of approval
• complete a new ‘Foster Carer Agreement’, where applicable
• review the placement agreement for any child in the care of a kinship carer, where applicable.

**Personal history changes**

Carers are required to advise Child Safety of:
• any changes to their personal history
• changes or suspected changes to the personal history of any adult household member.

**Changes in carer household membership**

Carers are required to advise Child Safety:
• that a person intends to become a member of the household
• that a person has stopped being a member of the household.
If another adult intends to join a carer household, or when any child who lives in the carer household is turning 18, including children placed by Child Safety:

- create a new EOI/Application for ‘New adult household member’ from the existing carer entity record for each adult who intends to join the carer household and manually add the person to the ‘Relevant parties’ in the application
- request that the adult completes the New adult household member form and either a blue card application, blue card validation or exemption card application form
- verify the person’s identity for a ‘blue card application’ only
- attach the completed ‘New adult household member’ form, ‘blue card application’, ‘blue card validation’ or ‘exemption card application’ form and associated identification documents, where available, to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS and immediately email the CSU to advise of the availability of documentation in ICMS so that personal history checks will be conducted
- consider interviewing the new adult household member in relation to their views about foster care, and their role within the carer household
- record the new adult household member application details in the ‘New AHM’ tab in ICMS
- record the ‘Suitability decision’ details in the ‘New AHM’ tab in ICMS, following the outcome of personal history checks undertaken by the CSU.

The suitability decision for a new adult household member is based on personal history check outcomes and other matters relevant to deciding suitability, such as the person’s employment, history, physical health or mental health. The process for decision-making about suitability has a number of decision-making points and whilst overall suitability is determined by the CSSC manager, the CSU manager is delegated to determine that an adult household member is not suitable based on their personal history, or that the overall assessment of suitability is eligible to be progressed.

For further information about decision-making about the suitability of a new adult household member, refer to the practice resource **Suitability decision-making for a new adult household member**.

For information about the roles and responsibilities of the CSSC, PSU and CSU in relation to a new adult household member, refer to the **New adult household member checklist**. Note: There may be a variance in roles across regions which are not captured in this checklist.

For further information about facilitating personal history checks, refer to **2.2 Facilitate personal history checks**.

**Provision or intention to provide other regulated services from the home (for example, family day care or stand-alone care).**

Foster or kinship carers may be approved to provide more than one regulated care services from their home, such as family day care or a stand-alone service. If a foster or kinship carer advises Child Safety that they are approved to provide another regulated services from their home, this information will be consider when assessing their initial or ongoing suitability as a foster or kinship carer.

If a carer advises Child Safety that they are approved to provide another regulated care services from their home, inform the carer that they are required to provide the following information to Child Safety:

- the type of regulated service (family day care, stand-alone care) being provided
name of the Family Day Care Provider that the family day care educator is affiliated with
number of children at the residence and the number of children they are approved for
ages of children at the residence, including the ages of the children they are approved to provide care for

This information will enable the identification, assessment and discussion of any likely impacts on the quality of services provided to children and on the ability of the applicant/s to meet suitability requirements.

In relation to providing other regulated care services, applicants can be approved to provide education and care for:

- family day care – no more than 7 children at any one time.
- stand-alone care – no more than 6 children under the age of 13 at the same time.
- in determining the number, no more than 4 children can be preschool age or under.

Additionally, for family day care educators, the educator’s own children and any other children at the residence are also to be taken into account if those children are under 13 years of age and there is no other adult present and caring for the children. Children being cared for in foster or kinship care would be included in these numbers of children.

When a carer has advised Child Safety that they are providing a regulated care services from the home:

- request the carer complete a Change in carer circumstances form – Form 39 CCC
- update change in circumstance details in ICMS
- assess the information provided by the carer and consider whether a review of the carer’s suitability and capacity to provide quality care is required
- contact the Family Day Care Provider that the family day care educator is affiliated with and advise them that the carer is also a foster/kinship carer and provide details of their approval status (foster or kinship carer), the number of children placed and their ages
- review the foster carer agreement (foster carer) or placement agreement (kinship carer), if required.

3. What if a carer or carer applicant is also a Child Safety employee?

A child subject to a care agreement or an order granting custody or guardianship to the chief executive, including a temporary custody order or a transition order, may be placed with a Child Safety employee who is an approved carer, including a person undertaking employment through a traineeship or a student placement.

For further information about when this may occur, refer to the Placement of children with Child Safety employees policy.

A Child Safety employee who submits an application for approval, or who is an approved carer is subject to:

- the procedures for provisional approval, where applicable
- the relevant procedures for pre-application, assessment, approval, monitoring and support and renewal of approval, as outlined previously in this chapter
• assessment, monitoring and support that takes into account their dual role as a Child Safety employee and an approved carer (refer to ‘Monitoring and supporting Child Safety employees who are approved carers’)

• the policies and procedures specific to public sector ethics and conflicts of interest, including the Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service.

A Child Safety employee who is an approved carer must not be directly involved in the case work or decision-making in their role as an employee, for any child placed with them. However, they are able to be involved in decision-making for the child, in their role as the child’s carer. To facilitate the separation of roles, case responsibility for the child will not be held in the CSSC where the Child Safety employee is in a direct service delivery role, where practicable.

If an immediate placement is required with a Child Safety employee, they must be provisionally approved by the regional director or the duty executive officer (if after hours) prior to the placement taking place.

A carer who is subsequently appointed to a position within the department, including a traineeship or student placement, is able to continue to provide care. If concerns arise about the quality of care provided to a child in care, refer to Chapter 9, Standards of care.

Key concepts

Kinship carers: any employee of Child Safety may apply to become a kinship carer, but only where they meet the legislative definition of kin. A Child Safety employee who has no connection to or relationship with the child prior to the intervention by Child Safety, does not meet the legislative definition of kin and cannot apply for approval as a kinship carer for the child.

Direct service delivery employees as foster carers: an employee in a direct service delivery role is any employee whose role, responsibilities and duties predominantly include personal, telephone or written contact with children and families in receipt of a Child Safety service.

A Child Safety employee in a direct service delivery role, who does not meet the legislative definition of kin for a specific child requiring placement, may be approved as a foster carer (including provisional approval) in exceptional circumstances, as determined, and where considered appropriate, by the regional director.

Exceptional circumstances may include, but are not limited to:

• the employee’s substantive position is in direct service delivery, however, they are currently seconded to a non-direct service delivery role

• a child in a rural and remote area has a placement identified, the placement is not immediately available and no other placement options are immediately available. An employee may undergo approval as a foster carer in order to provide short-term care for the child until the intended placement become available.

Non-direct service delivery employees as foster carers: an employee in a non-direct service delivery role is any employee whose role, responsibilities and duties exclude, or include only limited personal, telephone or written contact with children and families in receipt of a Child Safety service.

A Child Safety employee in a non-direct service delivery role, who does not meet the legislative definition of kin, may be approved as a foster carer, as determined, and where considered appropriate, by the regional director.
For further information, refer to the practice resource Child Safety employees as carer applicants or approved carers.

**CSSC or CSSC manager:** Where reference is made to the CSSC or CSSC manager, this refers to the CSSC or CSSC manager in the geographical area where the carer applicant or carer resides, or the foster and kinship care service conducting the assessment is located. The **exception** to this is where the application is for a kinship carer who resides in another geographical area and the child’s case is to be transferred to the CSSC where the applicant resides. In this circumstance, the CSSC manager with case management responsibility **for the child** is responsible for obtaining an approval decision about a kinship carer applicant from their regional director, and any references in this procedure relate to the CSSC and CSSC manager with case management responsibility for the child.

**Responsibility for conducting assessment, approval and support processes**

The assessment, approval, renewal of approval and monitoring and support processes for a Child Safety employee will be undertaken by a foster and kinship care service or a Child Safety officer who has no personal or professional relationships with the employee.

Where this is not possible, for example in rural and remote locations, a senior Child Safety officer, for example, a senior team leader or senior practitioner, will undertake the required procedures.

In this case, the CSSC manager will put in place strategies that also enable the Child Safety officer to clearly separate their two roles and to manage conflicts of interest. For example, the CSSC manager will request that another senior practitioner within the region sits on the assessment panel where a senior practitioner, known to the Child Safety employee, has assessed the carer application.

**Responsibility for completing the ‘Advice to regional director’ form**

The person undertaking the initial assessment, or renewal of approval assessment, is responsible for completing the Advice to regional director form during the assessment process, however, the CSSC manager is responsible for contacting the employee’s line manager to negotiate the line manager’s involvement in the completion of the form.

**Responsibility for completing the ‘Conflict of Interest Declaration’, if applicable**

Where an employee identifies that a conflict of interest exists, or will exist, in their dual role as an employee and an approved carer, the employee and their line manager are responsible for completing the Conflict of interest declaration. The employee is **required** to complete Section 1 of the declaration and provide this form to their line manager, who will complete Section 2. For further information, refer to the Conflict of interest procedure.

Note: The completed ‘Conflict of interest declaration’ is subject to strict storage and accessibility requirements.

**Classify electronic and paper files as sensitive**

The Child Safety employee's records as a carer applicant or as an approved carer will be classified as a sensitive person in ICMS.

A child placed with an employee who is an approved carer, may be classified as a sensitive person at the discretion of the CSSC manager.
If a Child Safety employee withdraws their application, is refused approval or decides to cease being a carer, or where the child in their care is subsequently placed in an alternative placement, there is no change to the sensitivity classification, however, the child’s sensitivity plan may be removed, if considered appropriate by the CSSC manager.

For further information, refer to Chapter 10.5 Recording sensitivity and the Integrated Client Management System (ICMS) Child Protection Participant Manual

Obtain the views of the child and parents

The regional director will consider the views of the child and the child’s parents about the proposed placement, when making the decision to approve or renew the approval of a carer who is a Child Safety employee. This information will be recorded on the ‘Advice to regional director form’, where applicable.

Carer application and assessment

Application

Prior to a Child Safety employee lodging an application for approval, the employee must be fully informed by the person undertaking pre-application processes about the potential challenges, risks and processes associated with the employee’s possible future dual role. This will include, but is not limited to, a discussion of:

- potential or actual conflicts of interest
- confidentiality issues
- the potential risk to professional reputation or livelihood, should a standards of care review of harm report arise in relation to the quality of care provided to any child placed in the employee’s care.

Relevant information to assist in undertaking this discussion is provided in the practice resource Child Safety employees as carer applicants or approved carers, the Conflict of interest policy and procedure.

Where the Child Safety employee decides to proceed with an application, inform the employee that they must inform their line manager about the application and that the line manager may be contacted as a referee - refer to 1.7 Lodge the application and 2.4 Conduct referee checks, if applicable.

Assessment

During the assessment interviews with the Child Safety employee, discuss and consider the impact of any conflict of interest, confidentiality issues and proposed management strategies, if applicable.

The CSSC manager is responsible, during the assessment process, for contacting the employee’s line manager, to negotiate the line manager’s involvement in contributing to the completion of the Advice to regional director form. Where the CSSC manager and the employee’s line manager is the same person the senior practitioner will also participate in discussions for the purpose of completing the ‘Advice to regional director’ form.

Record the outcome of related discussions in the ‘Advice to regional director’ form. Share observations and reflections with the Child Safety employee and give them feedback about the
conclusions being reached. Incorporate relevant comments and feedback from the employee in the ‘Advice to regional director’ form.

Once all carer assessment processes are completed, provide a copy of the ‘Advice to regional director’ form to the Child Safety employee, along with all other documents usually provided to the applicant - refer to 2.7 Complete the assessment report.

Approval

All assessment and approval documentation usually provided to the CSSC manager, is forwarded to the regional director and will also include:

- the ‘Advice to regional director’ form and where applicable
- the Conflict of interest declaration.

Ensure the completed ‘Conflict of interest declaration’, if applicable, is managed in accordance with the Conflict of interest procedure.

Where a decision about provisional approval is required after hours, CSAHSC staff will obtain a decision from the duty executive officer - refer to 1. What if the applicant requires provisional approval?

In making a decision about the employee’s application, the regional director will consider:

- the information provided in the Advice to regional director form
- the ‘Conflict of interest declaration’, where applicable
- all other procedural requirements for determining suitability - refer to 3.1 Decide the outcome of the application for approval.

The regional director will record any comments specific to the employee’s proposed or actual dual role in the ‘Advice to regional director’ form. In addition, the regional director will record their approval decision, along with any relevant comments, on either the ‘Form 4: Approval decision’ or the ‘Form 5: Approval Decision - Provisionally Approved Carer’, where applicable, and sign the form. The regional director is also required to complete the Conflict of interest declaration, Section 3, where applicable.

The timeframe for deciding the application may be extended by the CSSC manager, where considered necessary - refer to 3.2 Extend the timeframe for deciding the initial application, or 1. What if the applicant requires provisional approval?

Upon receipt of the regional director’s decision, the responsible CSSC or PSU resumes responsibility for attending to all remaining procedural requirements. This includes the provision of information about review rights, should the application be refused - refer to 3.3 Approve the application or 3.4 Refuse the application, or 1. What if the applicant requires provisional approval?

In addition, following the provision of advice to the employee about the regional director’s decision:

- inform the employee’s line manager of the decision
- provide a copy of the Advice to regional director form to:
  - the employee and their line manager
  - the CSSC or foster and kinship care service responsible for the ongoing monitoring and support of the carer
the regional director will provide, if applicable, a copy of the completed Conflict of interest declaration to the employee and their line manager, in accordance with required storage and accessibility requirements - refer to the Conflict of interest procedure.

**Note:** Where the child requiring placement is likely to be placed with a carer applicant who is a direct service delivery employee, and the employee does not intend to provide care to other children on an ongoing basis, the employee must withdraw their application if the child is moved to another placement prior to the final approval decision being made. Refer to 1.6 Address identified concerns about suitability.

**Actions required following the employment of an approved carer or carer applicant**

Where an approved carer or a carer applicant becomes an employee of Child Safety, the CSSC manager will ensure that a Child Safety officer or the foster and kinship care service:

- classifies relevant electronic and paper files as sensitive
- advises the employee of their obligation to inform their line manager of their dual role, or possible dual role, as an employee and an approved carer
- meets with the approved carer, or carer applicant, within two weeks of their commencement as an employee, to discuss the:
  - potential challenges, risks and processes associated with their dual role or future dual role - information to inform this discussion is provided in the practice resource Child Safety employees as carer applicants or approved carers and the Conflict of interest policy and procedure
  - roles and responsibilities of the Child Safety employee in the work context, including any anticipated impact on the employee’s work and conflicts of interest and proposed management strategies, if applicable.

Where the employee indicates an intention to continue in their role as an approved carer, or to proceed with their application, the CSSC manager is responsible, in the first instance, for negotiating the employee’s line manager’s involvement in contributing to the completion of the Advice to regional director form. Record the outcome of all related discussions in the ‘Advice to regional director’ form.

Where the CSSC manager and the employee’s line manager is the same person, the senior practitioner will also participate in discussions for the purpose of completing the ‘Advice to regional director’ form.

If the employee identifies a conflict of interest, the employee will also complete the Conflict of interest declaration, Section 1 and provide this form directly to their line manager for their completion of Section 2. For further information, refer to the Conflict of interest procedure.

Unless the employee decides to withdraw their application, or to cease being a carer:

- provide a copy of the completed Advice to regional director form to the employee
- forward the completed ‘Advice to regional director’ form to the regional director, either:
  - for their information only, where the employee has existing approval as a kinship or foster carer
  - to inform the final approval or renewal of approval decision
- forward the Conflict of interest declaration, if applicable, to the regional director, for their completion (Section 3).
Ensure the completed ‘Conflict of interest declaration’, if applicable, is managed in accordance with the Conflict of interest procedure.

Where there is no current application to be decided, the Advice to regional director form is for the regional director’s information only. That is, an approval or refusal decision is not required. However, the regional director may recommend a review of the foster carer agreement or the placement agreement and/or the addition of conditions on the carers certificate of approval, based on the information provided. For further information, refer to 3.5 Complete a Foster Carer Agreement, 2.7 Complete the assessment report or Chapter 5, 1.9 Complete a placement agreement.

Where there is a current application requiring approval or renewal of approval, the regional director will consider all relevant information and either approve or refuse the application, as outlined previously.

Following the consideration and completion of all relevant information and documentation by the regional director:

- the responsible CSSC or PSU resumes responsibility for attending to all remaining procedural requirements, if applicable - refer to 4.9 Approve the application for renewal or 3.4 Refuse the application
- inform the employee’s line manager of the approval or refusal decision, if applicable
- provide the completed Advice to regional director form to:
  - the employee and their line manager
  - the CSSC or foster and kinship care service responsible for the ongoing monitoring and support of the carer
- the regional director will provide, where applicable, a copy of the completed Conflict of interest declaration to the employee and their line manager, in accordance with required storage and accessibility requirements - refer to the Conflict of interest procedure
- the CSSC or foster and kinship carer service responsible for supporting the carer will implement any recommendations made by the regional director.

Where the employee decides not to proceed with an application for approval or renewal of approval, or they decide to cease being an approved carer - refer to 1.6 Address identified concerns about suitability and 7. What if the foster or kinship carer decides to cease being a carer?

Monitoring and supporting Child Safety employees who are approved carers

All approved carers who are Child Safety employees will be subject to usual monitoring and support processes - refer to Chapter 9, 1. Provide support to carers. In addition, during the development or review of a placement agreement (where the Child Safety employee is a kinship carer) or a foster carer agreement:

- remind the approved carer of their responsibility to ensure appropriate use and disclosure of official information - refer to the ‘Code of Conduct For the Queensland Public Service’
- seek information from the CSSC responsible for the child regarding any identified issues or concerns regarding the approved carers dual role as an employee and an approved carer
- review conflicts of interest and management strategies, as documented in the ‘Advice to regional director’ form, and where applicable, update management strategies.
For further information, refer to ‘Managing the dual role, renewal of approval and monitoring and support processes’ as outlined previously.

Note: The employee and their line manager are responsible for the ongoing implementation of the Conflict of interest procedure, including, where an employee’s relevant circumstances change, the completion of an amended Conflict of interest declaration.

Assessing an application by a Child Safety employee for renewal of approval

An application by a Child Safety employee for renewal of approval as a kinship or foster carer will be invited, assessed and decided in accordance with usual procedural requirements as outlined in 4. Renewal, and as outlined previously in ‘Application for and assessment of approval as a carer’. All assessment and approval documentation usually provided to the CSSC manager is forwarded to the regional director, along with the Advice to regional director form and if applicable, the Conflict of interest declaration.

Further, when assessing the application for renewal of approval, the person undertaking the assessment is to take into account, and document in the ‘Advice to regional director’ form:

- the approved carers management of confidentiality issues for the previous one or two year period of approval
- the approved carers management of conflicts of interest, if applicable, for the previous one or two year period of approval
- any other information relevant to the persons dual role as a Child Safety employee and an approved carer, for the previous one or two year period.

If the approved carer does not wish to apply for renewal of approval, refer to 7. What if the foster or kinship carer decides to cease being a carer?

Following the receipt of all relevant assessment and approval documentation, the regional director will make and record their approval decision, as outlined previously.

Upon receipt of the approval decision, the responsible CSSC or PSU resumes responsibility for attending to all remaining procedural requirements, as outlined previously.

Following the decision to grant renewal of approval, the foster and kinship care service or Child Safety officer responsible for supporting the carer will:

- review support arrangements with the approved carer - refer to 4.10 Review support arrangements and 4.11 Review the foster carer agreement
- continue monitoring the quality of care provided, including issues associated with confidentiality and conflicts of interest.

4. What if a review of carer suitability is required?

A comprehensive review of carer suitability may be conducted whenever there are serious concerns about the ongoing ability of the carer to meet and sustain the standards of care.

The purpose of the review is to assess the carers ongoing suitability and ability to meet the standards of care. The review will determine either:

- what action is required to support the carer and sustain the child’s safety, belonging and wellbeing on an ongoing basis, and avoid unplanned placement disruption for the child
• that the carer is unable to meet the standards of care and the carers approval requires suspension or cancellation.

When to initiate a review of carer suitability

A review of carer suitability may be initiated by the CSSC manager:
• at any time when there are general and ongoing concerns about the carers capacity to meet and sustain the standards of care, including as result of a change in carer circumstances - refer to 2. What if there is a change in carer circumstances
• following the completion of a standards of care review or an investigation and assessment, where outcome is that the standards are ‘not met', and a more detailed review is required.

In making the decision to review a carers suitability, the CSSC manager will:
• take into account the expiry date of the carers current certificate of approval
• consider previous standards of care reviews or investigation and assessments, irrespective of the outcomes
• consider the seriousness of the concerns and the impact on the safety and well-being of the child
• consider the presence of recurrent patterns or where the provision of supports or training has not resulted in sustained improvements to the care the child receives
• determine who will complete the review of carer suitability, taking into account that their availability, level of experience, and the required timeframe for completion.

Plan the review of carer suitability

Planning for the review will occur in partnership with the foster and kinship care service that the carer is affiliated with, and with the senior practitioner of the CSSC that is responsible for the carer. As part of the planning process, decide the following:
• the rationale for the review of carer suitability
• how the carer or carers will be advised of the decision to review suitability
• what information will contribute to the review, for example, seeking the views from another CSSC who has a child in the placement, or services who have provided support or intervention to the carer
• how the views of the child will be incorporated into the review
• any additional requirements to be considered by the reviewer.

The CSSC manager will approve the plan prior to the review commencing.

Complete the review of carer suitability

As part of the review of carer suitability, the reviewer will:
• review the issues and concerns identified in the most current foster carer assessment report or kinship carer renewal report, including the rationale for approval
• review previous standards of care reviews, investigation and assessments and action plans relating to either the carer or the child
• take into account the support and training that has been or is being provided to the carer, whether the carer has achieved the required competencies, and if not, explore the factors that prevented this
• consider the presence of extenuating factors that may be impacting on the standard of care provided to the child, such as, sudden changes in the carers household, serious illness in the carer family or a change in the service supports available to the carer.

The reviewer will prepare a report for the CSSC manager and make a recommendation about what action is required. The report will specifically identify the standards of care the carer is meeting and, if appropriate, the standards of care that the carer is not meeting.

Where difficulties are identified, the report will explore the contributing factors, the impact on the child, where appropriate, and propose what actions are required to improve the care to the child, and the capacity of the carer gain the knowledge and skills required to meet the standards of care. Where actions need to be undertaken to assist the carer, refer to Chapter 9, 5.5 Respond when the standards of care are ‘not met’.

In some circumstances a review of carer suitability may identify that the carer is unable to ensure the safety of the child or meet the standards of care, refer to 9. What if a foster or kinship carer’s certificate of approval requires amendment, suspension or cancellation, other than on blue care or exemption card grounds.

5. What if one spouse is not able to participate in the assessment and approval process?

Where the partner of a foster or kinship carer applicant is genuinely not available to be assessed and approved, along with their spouse, due to the nature and location of their employment, for example, those employed by the defence forces or mining industry and working interstate or overseas, the following process applies:

• the available applicant lodges an application as a single applicant
• the assessment and approval process proceeds according to the procedure
• the single applicant, where they meet the legislative and policy requirements for suitability, is approved and issued with a certificate of approval
• when the unavailable spouse returns to the carer household, the approved carer and their spouse immediately submit a joint application for approval, including a ‘blue card application’, ‘blue card validation’ or ‘exemption card application’ form - the carer’s existing certificate remains in place until the outcome of the joint application is decided
• progress the application in accordance with the usual assessment process, however, the original approved carer will not require personal history checks and will not need to repeat pre-service training.

If the application is approved:

• issue the carers with a new joint certificate of approval
• change the carer’s details in ICMS and add the details for the carer couple
• request the return of the previous certificate of approval
• complete a new ‘Foster Carer Agreement’, where applicable
• review the placement agreement for any child in the care of a kinship carer, where applicable, taking into consideration any changes to the support needs for the carer, refer to Chapter 9, 1. Provide support to carers.
6. What if a carer applicant resides interstate?

When a carer applicant who is proposed to provide care for a child resides in another state, territory or New Zealand (jurisdiction), and the child is subject to a court assessment, custody or guardianship order or proceedings in Queensland, the CSO will request that the relevant interstate jurisdiction undertake a carer assessment.

To facilitate the assessment of a carer applicant in another jurisdiction the CSO will:

- ensure that the applicant is aware of the intended assessment and has indicated a willingness to co-operate in the assessment process
- ensure that the applicant is aware of their need to meet legislative requirements under the *Child Protection Act 1999*
- provide the applicant with:
  - the ‘Carer applicant health and wellbeing questionnaire’, created in ICMS
  - the ‘Application for approval - Form 3 APA’ (APA form), created in ICMS
  - blue card application, blue card validation or exemption card application forms
- ensure that the applicant and all adult household members complete the ‘APA form’ - Part A and either the ‘blue card application’, ‘blue card validation’ or ‘exemption card application’ form and the ‘Carer applicant health and wellbeing questionnaire’ and attach completed forms to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS - the applicant and all adult household members can have their identity verified by a local doctor, solicitor, police officer or JP
- email the CSU to advise that the relevant forms are available in ICMS for processing, where the application has been ‘properly made’, refer to 1.7 Lodge the application
- at the same time as the above is being undertaken, contact the Queensland ILO, Court Services, and obtain the ‘Request for Interstate Assessment of Carer/s’ template
- complete the ‘Request for Interstate Assessment of Carer/s’ template and attach appropriate supporting documentation, for example, medical and psychological reports on the child and child protection and criminal history in relation to the proposed carers, if available - ensure that Section F of the template is edited and individualised to reflect all areas that require assessment.
- have the request signed by the CSO with case responsibility and the senior team leader
- fax or post all relevant documentation to the Queensland ILO.

Note: Upon receipt of any ‘blue card application’ forms, contact all blue card applicants to advise that it is an offence for a disqualified person to sign a ‘blue card application’ form. For further information, refer to the practice resource Mandatory advice to blue card applicants.

The Queensland ILO will forward the request and accompanying documentation to the ILO in the other jurisdiction.

If the CSU manager subsequently advises that, based on personal history checks, the applicant is not suitable, contact the Queensland ILO immediately, who will withdraw the assessment request from the other jurisdiction.

The interstate worker will complete the 'Form 2: Household safety study' on behalf of Child Safety and provide a written assessment report, addressing the assessment areas identified on the 'Request for Interstate Assessment of Carer/s' and including a recommendation about the proposed placement.
Attach all completed forms to the ‘EOI/Application’ in ICMS.

Where the carer assessment relates to a family contact visit refer to Chapter 5. 2.5 Facilitate and monitor family contact.

7. **What if the foster or kinship carer decides to cease being a carer?**

When a carer advises Child Safety of their decision to cease being an approved carer the PSU will:
- ask the carer to return their certificate of approval and the carer business discount card within a specified timeframe, which must not be less than seven days (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 141)
- inform the carer about available supports, for example, counselling or referrals, where the cessation occurs due to difficult personal circumstances
- record the reason why the carer is exiting the system and amend the carer’s approval status in ICMS to ‘surrendered’
- notify the CSU
- complete the ‘Advice to Queensland Foster and Kinship Care (QFKC)-: End of carer approval’ form, created in ICMS, and email the form to QFKC.

QFKC is responsible for contacting the former carer to offer them an exit interview, which is conducted by QFKC.

8. **What if a carer requests access to their personal information?**

If a carer requests access to their personal information held on Child Safety file, inform the carer that the release of file information is managed by Right to Information and Information Privacy.

Advise the carer that their request must be made in writing, through a completed Right to Information application, a letter or other written advice, and outline the details of the personal information sought.

Provide the carer with the contact details for Right to Information and Information Privacy.

9. **What if a foster or kinship carer’s certificate of approval requires amendment, suspension or cancellation, other than on blue card or exemption card grounds?**

Under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, a carer’s certificate of approval can be amended, suspended or cancelled in the following circumstances:
- the holder of the certificate of approval applies to the chief executive for an amendment of the certificate of approval or agrees to an amendment
- the holder is not meeting the standards required under the certificate of approval or a condition of the certificate of approval
- the holder has contravened a provision of the *Child Protection Act 1999*
- the certificate of approval was issued because of a materially false or misleading representation or declaration (either orally or in writing)
- it is considered necessary or desirable because of a circumstance prescribed under a regulation.
Note: A certificate of approval as a kinship carer cannot be amended to change the child for whom the carer is approved.

Amendment, suspension or cancellation decisions

Child Safety will consider whether there is a need for the amendment, suspension or cancellation of the certificate of approval of a carer, in circumstances where a carer is not meeting the legislated statement of standards or a condition of the certificate of approval, or alternatively, where an amendment of the certificate of approval is requested by the carer. The amendment, suspension or cancellation of a certificate of approval is to occur in a respectful and transparent manner.

Amendment requested by an approved carer - section 137

Any application by a carer to amend their certificate of approval must be made in writing. Child Safety must make a decision on whether the proposed amendment is necessary within 28 days of receiving the request. If necessary, meet with the carer to discuss the matter before the 28 day period has lapsed.

If the proposed amendment is decided to be necessary:
- the CSSC manager will provide written notice to the carer using the ‘Letter of outcome of application to amend’, created in ICMS, and advise:
  - that their request for an amendment has been granted
  - the details of the amendment that has been made
  - that a certificate of approval has been amended
  - that the amended certificate of approval takes effect on the day the CSSC manager gives notice to the carer that the amendment has been granted, or a later day, if stated in the notice
  - that the carer must deliver the original certificate of approval to the CSSC within a specified timeframe, which must not be less than seven days from the date of the notice (Child Protection Act 1999, section 141)
- provide the carer with a new certificate of approval that incorporates the amendment - all other details, including date of expiry and any existing conditions, must match the details on the original certificate of approval
- retain a copy of the new certificate of approval on the carer's file and provide a copy, where relevant, to the foster and kinship care service.

If the proposed amendment is not considered necessary, the application for amendment must be refused and written notice using the ‘Letter of outcome of application to amend’ must be provided to the carer within 10 days of the decision having been made (Child Protection Act 1999, section 137). The notice must:
- state the reasons for the decision
- advise that the carer has the right to have the decision reviewed by QCAT and that an application can be made to the tribunal within 28 days.

Amendment initiated by Child Safety - section 138

If the CSSC manager decides that an amendment to a carer’s certificate of approval is warranted:
- relevant Child Safety officers must meet with the carer to discuss the reason for the amendment and explain the process
the CSSC manager must provide written notice to the carer using the ‘Letter of proposed amendment’, created in ICMS, and state:
- the proposed amendment and the grounds for the amendment
- the facts and circumstances forming the basis for the grounds
- that the carer may make written representations to the CSSC manager within 28 days (or longer, if determined by the CSSC manager) to show why the certificate of approval should not be amended.

If, after considering any written representation by the carer, the CSSC manager still considers an amendment to the certificate of approval necessary, the carer must be provided with written notice of the decision within 10 days of the decision using the ‘Letter of amendment’, created in ICMS. The notice must:
- state the reasons for the decision
- advise that the amended certificate of approval takes effect on the day the CSSC manager gives notice to the carer of their decision, or a later day, if stated in the notice
- advise the carer that they must deliver the original certificate of approval to the CSSC within the requested timeframe, which must not be less than seven days (Child Protection Act 1999, section 141)
- advise that the carer may have the decision reviewed by QCAT if an application is made to the tribunal within 28 days.

After providing written notice to the carer of the decision to amend the certificate of approval:
- issue a new certificate of approval that incorporates the amendment and provides all of the details that were recorded on the original certificate, including the date of expiry and any existing conditions
- retain a copy of the new certificate of approval on the carer’s file and provide a copy, where relevant, to the foster and kinship care service.

If, at any stage of this process, the CSSC manager decides not to proceed with the amendment, they must provide written notice to the carer of their decision not to amend the certificate of approval.

**Suspension or cancellation of a carer’s certificate of approval - section 139**

A carer’s certificate of approval may be suspended or cancelled when there is reason to believe that the carer cannot provide care to a child that meets the statement of standards and that the issue of concern cannot be appropriately addressed through other means.

A carer’s certificate of approval must be cancelled when the CSU manager advises the CSSC manager of the decision to cancel the carer’s certificate of approval, where the carer is not suitable as a result of the outcome of personal history checks.

A suspension of the certificate of approval should be considered if the grounds for concern are likely to be temporary or if further assessment is required to determine whether the carer’s certificate of approval should be cancelled.

Where the CSSC manager is considering the suspension or cancellation of a carer’s certificate of approval, relevant Child Safety officers must meet with the carer to discuss the reason for the proposed suspension or cancellation and explain the process.
Where the decision is made, whether by the CSSC or CSU manager, that the suspension or cancellation of the certificate of approval is warranted, the carer must be provided with written notice using either a ‘Letter of proposed suspension’ or ‘Letter of proposed cancellation’, created in ICMS, which is to include:

- the proposed action and the grounds for the proposed action
- the proposed suspension period, for a suspension of the certificate of approval
- advice that the carer may make written representations to the CSSC manager or CSU manager within 28 days (or longer, as determined by the CSSC or CSU manager) to show why the certificate of approval should not be suspended or cancelled.

After considering any representation by the carer, where the CSSC manager or CSU manager still considers the suspension or cancellation of the certificate of approval to be necessary, the CSSC manager or CSU manager is to:

- suspend the certificate of approval for no longer than the proposed suspension period (where the action proposed in the notice was to suspend the certificate of approval), or
- cancel the certificate of approval (if the action proposed in the notice was to cancel the certificate of approval).

The suspension or cancellation of the certificate of approval takes effect on the day the CSSC manager or CSU manager gives notice to the carer of their decision, or a later day, if stated in the notice. Following the suspension or cancellation of the certificate of approval, the CSSC manager or CSU manager must provide written notice to the carer of their decision within 10 days of the decision using either the ‘Letter of suspension’ or the ‘Letter of cancellation’, created in ICMS. The notice must:

- state the decision to either suspend or cancel the carer’s authority
- state the reasons for the decision
- advise the carer that they must deliver the original certificate of approval to the CSSC manager within the requested timeframe, which must not be less than seven days (Child Protection Act 1999, section 141)
- advise the carer that they may have the decision reviewed by QCAT, if application is made within 28 days.

If the carer’s certificate of approval has been suspended, the certificate of approval must be returned to the carer at the end of the suspension period, unless the certificate of approval has been cancelled.

Following the period of review or if the Child Safety decision is upheld, the CSSC manager is to ensure that the CSU is notified of the suspension or cancellation.

**Record the suspension or cancellation in ICMS**

Following the suspension or cancellation of a carer’s certificate of approval, the CSSC manager is to ensure:

- the carer’s approval status is updated in ICMS
- an alert is recorded on the carer, refer to Chapter 1, 9. What if an alert needs to be recorded in ICMS?
At the end of the suspension, update the carer’s approval status in ICMS and where the certificate of approval is returned to the carer, close the alert. Where the certificate of approval is cancelled following the period of suspension, the alert remains in place.

**Referral for an exit interview - cancellation of a certificate of approval**

If the carer does not seek a review of the decision to have their certificate of approval cancelled within the required timeframe, or if they do seek a review of the decision and QCAT upholds the Child Safety decision, notify QFKC of the end of the carer’s approval so that the former carer will be contacted and offered an exit interview by QFKC.

To refer the former carer for an exit interview, complete the ‘Advice to QFKC: End of carer approval’ form, created in ICMS, and email the form to QFKC.

The PSU is responsible for ensuring that QFKC receives written notification of all carers who have had their certificate of approval cancelled.

**10. What if a foster or kinship carer’s certificate of approval requires suspension or cancellation, on blue card or exemption card grounds?**

**Change in status of a blue card or exemption card**

Blue Card Services issues blue cards and exemption cards and monitors the changes in criminal history of card holders on a daily basis. Blue Card Services, through the CSU, will advise Child Safety of any relevant changes to the criminal history of a carer or an adult household member, for example:

- a blue card or exemption card holder’s card has been suspended because they have been charged with an excluding offence
- a blue card or exemption card holder has a change in their criminal history which is relevant to child-related employment.

In the case of a suspension or refusal of an existing blue card or exemption card, the chief executive must suspend an approved carer’s certificate of approval, pending the outcome of any review process initiated under the *Working with Children Risk Management and Screening Act 2000.*

Where Blue Card Services makes the decision to issue an individual with a negative prescribed notice or negative exemption notice, it means that the person will not be issued with a blue card or exemption card, or, if they already have one, that their blue card or exemption card will be suspended or cancelled by Blue Card Services. This is referred to as blue card grounds.

In the above circumstances, the CSSC must take immediate action to suspend or cancel the carer’s certificate of approval.

The decision to suspend or cancel a carer’s certificate of approval on blue card grounds will be effective immediately, and does not require that the carer be given an opportunity to provide written representations to the CSSC manager, prior to the manager deciding to suspend or cancel their approval.

The CSSC manager however must inform the carer of the decision as soon as practicable after the decision is made.
Removal of a child - carer issues

When Blue Card Services suspension or cancellation relates to an approved carer, the carer’s certificate of approval must be suspended or cancelled, and any child in the placement must be removed immediately.

Should the carer subsequently be issued with a blue card or exemption card and the suspension ended, consideration will be given to whether it is in the best interests of any of the children removed, to be returned to the placement.

Removal of a child - adult household member issues

When the suspension or cancellation relates to an adult member of a carer’s household, a decision must be made about whether to remove a child. In this circumstance:

- hold an urgent meeting with the carer and adult household member to discuss what actions they are proposing to take
- ascertain whether the household member intends to leave the household and the proposed timeframe
- assess whether the carer had any knowledge or awareness of the criminal history or change in criminal history of the adult household member
- assess the immediate safety of any child in the placement and determine whether a standards of care review or harm report should be recorded. For example, the adult household member’s criminal acts may have resulted in harm or risk of harm to the child.

If the adult household member is not planning to leave the household immediately, any child in the placement must be removed and the carer’s certificate of approval suspended.

If the adult household member is planning to leave the household immediately, the decision about whether it is in the best interests of the child to remain with the carer is to include consideration of:

- the impact on the child, for example, is the child fearful of remaining in the placement
- any risk posed to the child because of the relationship of the household member to the carer
- the carer’s response to the suspension or cancellation of the adult household member’s blue card or exemption card and the carer’s ability to protect the child in the placement
- the likelihood of any further contact with the adult household member.

Removal of a child - review of decision

The carer is only entitled to have the decision to remove a child from the carer’s care reviewed if the chief executive has custody or guardianship of the child, and the carer is an approved foster or kinship carer, and either:

- the child is subject to a child protection order granting long-term guardianship to the chief executive
- the adult household member has left the household, due to the suspension or cancellation of their blue card or exemption card, however, it has been assessed that the carer is no longer a suitable person or the carer is no longer able to meet the standards of care in the statement of standards.

When this applies, provide written notice of the decision to the carer and the child, and ensure that the notice incorporates the information specified in the Child Protection Act 1999, section 90.
Cancellation of certificate of approval due to a prescribed provision - carer

A carer's certificate of approval must be cancelled immediately (Child Protection Act 1999, section 140AG(1)), when Blue Card Services cancels the carer’s blue card or exemption card in accordance with the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening Act 2000), sections 237 and 239.

The cancellation of the certificate of approval must occur as soon as practicable Child Safety is notified of the decision and the CSSC manager must:

- notify the carer in writing of the decision to cancel their certificate of approval using ‘Letter of cancellation - prescribed provision – carer’, created in ICMS
- notify the CSU of the decision.

There is no right of review to Blue Card Services for a cancellation of a blue card or exemption card under a prescribed provision or right of review to QCAT in relation to the decision by Child Safety to cancel the carer’s certificate of approval.

Suspension or cancellation of a carer’s certificate of approval due to a prescribed provision - adult household member

When Blue Card Services cancels the blue card or exemption card of an adult household member under a prescribed provision Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening Act 2000), sections 237 and 239 under the Child Protection Act 1999, section 140AC and 140AG, one of the following will occur:

- the carer’s certificate of approval must be suspended
- the carer’s certificate of approval may be cancelled immediately, where there is no likelihood of the adult household member leaving the carer’s home.

The suspension of the carer’s certificate of approval is an interim measure to allow an assessment of whether the adult household member has left or is likely to leave the household.

To suspend the carer’s certificate of approval, the CSSC manager will advise the carer of the decision and the reason for the suspension using the ‘Letter of suspension - prescribed provision adult household member’, created in ICMS.

Where the adult household member leaves the household and the CSSC manager makes a decision to end the suspension, the carer must be provided with a ‘Letter advising end of suspension’, created in ICMS.

If the household member does not leave the household, or is not expected to leave in the near future, the carer’s certificate of approval must be cancelled. To cancel the carer’s certificate of approval (Child Protection Act 1999, section 140AG(3)), the CSSC manager must notify the carer in writing using the ‘Letter of cancellation - prescribed provision - adult household member’, created in ICMS, and advise the carer:

- of the decision to cancel their certificate of approval
- the reason for the cancellation
- that they may apply to QCAT to have the decision reviewed, within 28 days.

Following the period of review or if the Child Safety decision is upheld, the CSSC manager must ensure that the CSU is notified of the decision.
Note: The CSSC manager must not suspend or cancel the carer’s certificate of approval if satisfied that the person is no longer a member of the carer’s household.

**Suspension or cancellation of a certificate of approval due to a prohibiting event**

A prohibiting event occurs when an approved carer or an adult member of a carer’s household:

- is issued with a negative prescribed notice or negative exemption notice (except under a prescribed provision under the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening Act 2000)*, sections 237 and 239, or except where a suspended blue card or exemption card is cancelled)
- has their blue card or exemption card suspended by Blue Card Services
- withdraws an application for a blue card or exemption card or it is deemed withdrawn by Blue Card Services.

**Prohibiting event - carer**

If the prohibiting event relates to the approved carer, the suspension of the carer’s certificate of approval must occur as soon as practicable after the CSU is notified by Blue Card Services. The CSU will advise the CSSC manager of the notice provided by Blue Card Services.

To suspend the carer’s certificate of approval, the CSSC manager must:

- notify the carer in writing using the ‘Letter of suspension - prohibiting event – carer’, created in ICMS, and advise the carer of:
  - the decision to suspend the certificate of approval under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 140AC
  - the reason for the suspension.

The suspension of the certificate of approval remains in place until one of the following occurs:

- the certificate of approval expires
- the carer is issued with a blue card or exemption card, and Child Safety ends the suspension of the certificate of approval
- the certificate of approval is cancelled under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 140AG.

When the certificate of approval expires, the CSSC manager is to ensure:

- that the carer is advised in writing
- that the CSU is notified.

Should the carer subsequently be issued with a blue card or exemption card, the CSSC manager is to ensure that the carer is advised in writing that the suspension of their certificate of approval has ended, using the ‘Letter advising end of suspension’, created in ICMS.

The carer’s suspended certificate of approval must be cancelled if Blue Card Services issues a negative prescribed notice or negative exemption notice and:

- the carer does not apply for a review of the decision by Blue Card Services about the blue card or exemption card, or the review period has expired
- the carer applies for a review of Blue Card Services decision and the decision is upheld.

The certificate of approval must be cancelled as soon as practicable and the CSSC manager is to notify the carer in writing using ‘Letter of cancellation - prohibiting event – carer’, created in ICMS.
A carer has no right of review regarding the decision to suspend or cancel the certificate of approval in these circumstances. The CSSC manager must ensure that the carer’s status and the alert is updated in ICMS and that the CSU is notified.

**Prohibiting event - adult household member**
If the prohibiting event relates to an adult household member, the CSSC manager must suspend the carer’s certificate of approval, unless the adult member has left or agrees to immediately leave the carer’s household.

The CSSC manager however must not suspend or cancel a carer's certificate of approval if they are satisfied that the person is no longer a member of the carer’s household and does not pose any risk to the safety of a child.

If the household member remains in the household, the CSSC manager must:
- immediately suspend the carer’s certificate of approval and provide written advice to the carer using the ‘Letter of suspension - prohibiting event - adult household member’, created in ICMS. The written advice is to inform the carer of:
  - the decision to suspend the certificate of approval under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 140AC
  - the reason for the suspension.

Where the adult member remains in the carer’s household, the CSSC manager cannot cancel the carer’s certificate of approval until:
- the 28 days in which the adult household member is able to seek a review of Blue Card Services decision has expired, and they have not applied for a review
- the outcome of the review is decided.

In these circumstances, the adult household member will be advised of their review rights by Blue Card Services, in relation to the decision to issue a negative prescribed notice or negative exemption notice.

If the adult household member is subsequently issued with a blue card or exemption card, the CSSC manager is to ensure that the carer is advised in writing that the suspension of their certificate of approval has ended using the ‘Letter advising end of suspension’, created in ICMS.

If the household member remains in the household and the period of review expires or the Blue Card Services decision is upheld, the CSSC manager will need to provide written advice to the carer using ‘Letter of cancellation - prohibiting event - adult household member’, created in ICMS. The written advice is to inform the carer:
- of the decision to cancel their certificate of approval
- that they may, within 28 days of receiving the notice, apply to QCAT to have the decision reviewed.

Following the period of review or if the decision by Child Safety is upheld, the CSSC manager must ensure that the CSU is notified of the decision.

**Suspension or cancellation of a foster or kinship carer’s certificate of approval - failure to apply for a blue card or exemption card, or renew a blue card**
When a carer or adult household member fails to apply for a blue card or exemption card, or to
renew their blue card, the carer’s certificate of approval may be suspended or cancelled (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 139(5)). In this situation, an assessment of the circumstances may be undertaken to inform the decision about whether to suspend the certificate of approval, to allow time for the carer or adult household member to apply for a blue card, exemption card or the renewal of their blue card.

Prior to any decision to suspend or cancel the certificate of approval, the carer must be provided with information about the proposed action (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 140) and the CSSC manager is responsible for notifying the carer in writing using ‘Letter to carer - show cause notice’, created in ICMS.

A carer has review rights to QCAT about the decision by Child Safety to suspend or cancel the carer’s certificate of approval on these grounds.

At the end of the 28 day show cause period, if the decision is to proceed with the suspension of the certificate of approval, the CSSC manager is to notify the carer in writing **within 10 days** of the decision, using ‘Letter of suspension- failure to apply for a blue card or exemption card, or renew a blue card’, created in ICMS.

If, within the 28 days, the carer or adult household member is subsequently issued with a blue card or exemption card, the CSSC manager is to ensure that the carer is advised in writing that the suspension of their certificate of approval has ended and their approval is reinstated, using ‘Letter advising end of suspension’, created in ICMS.

At the end of a 28 day show cause period, if the carer or adult household member has still not applied for a blue card, an exemption card or the renewal of their blue card, or has not left the carer’s home, the CSSC manager must cancel the carer’s certificate of approval. The CSSC manager **must** provide written advice to the carer **within 10 days** of the decision, using ‘Letter of cancellation - failure to apply for a blue card or exemption card, or renew a blue card’, created in ICMS, and ensure that the CSU is notified.

**Record the suspension or cancellation in ICMS**

Following the suspension or cancellation of a carer’s certificate of approval, the CSSC manager is to ensure:

- the carer’s approval status is updated in ICMS
- an alert is recorded on the carer, refer to [Chapter 1, 9. What if an alert needs to be recorded in ICMS?](#)
- the blue card or exemption card details on the carer’s ‘person record’ are updated in ICMS.

At the end of the suspension, update the carer’s approval status in ICMS and where the certificate of approval is returned to the carer, close the alert and update the blue card or exemption card details. Where the certificate of approval is cancelled following the period of suspension, the alert remains in place.

**Referral for an exit interview - cancellation of a certificate of approval**

If the carer does not seek a review of the decision to have their certificate of approval cancelled within the required timeframe, or if they do seek a review of the decision and QCAT upholds Child Safety’s decision, notify QFKC of the end of the carer’s approval so that the former carer will be contacted and offered an exit interview by QFKC.
To refer the former carer for an exit interview, complete the ‘Advice to QFKC: End of carer approval’ form, created in ICMS, and email the form to QFKC.

The PSU is responsible for ensuring that QFKC receives written notification of all carers who have had their certificate of approval cancelled.

11. What if a provisionally approved carer’s certificate of approval requires amendment, suspension or cancellation?

Child Safety will consider the amendment, suspension or cancellation of a provisionally approved carer’s certificate of approval in circumstances where the carer is not meeting legislative requirements under the Child Protection Act 1999.

Amendment (other than expiry date)

A provisionally approved carer’s certificate of approval can be amended if:

- the carer agrees to the amendment
- the carer is not meeting the statement of standards or a condition of the certificate
- the carer has contravened a provision of the Child Protection Act 1999
- the certificate was issued because of a materially false or misleading representation or declaration, orally or in writing
- further information has been obtained about the carer’s application
- it is considered necessary or desirable because of a circumstance prescribed under a regulation.

A certificate of approval for a provisionally approved carer cannot be amended to change the child for whom the carer is approved.

If the CSSC manager decides that an amendment is warranted and the provisionally approved carer has not applied for the amendment:

- relevant Child Safety officers must meet with the provisionally approved carer to discuss the reason for the amendment and the process
- the CSSC manager must provide written notice to the provisionally approved carer, stating:
  
  - the proposed amendment and the grounds for the amendment
  - the decision to amend a provisional certificate of approval is not a reviewable decision
- the amendment of a provisional certificate of approval does not affect the carer’s pending application for approval as a foster or kinship carer
- a request that the provisionally approved carer delivers the original certificate of approval to the CSSC manager. The stated period in the written notice must be no less than two days after the notice is given (Child Protection Act 1999, section 141).

Following provision of the written notice:

- issue a new ‘Certificate of Approval - Provisionally approved carer’ that incorporates the amendment and provides all of the details that were recorded on the original certificate, including any existing conditions
- retain a copy of the new certificate of approval on the carer file.
If, at any stage of this process, the CSSC manager decides not to proceed with the amendment, they must provide written notice to the provisionally approved carer of their decision not to amend the certificate of approval.

**Suspension or cancellation**

A provisionally approved carer’s certificate of approval will be suspended or cancelled if:

- the outcome of criminal checks conducted by the QPS indicate that the carer or adult household member is not a suitable person (including circumstances where approval was granted by the regional director prior to the outcome of personal history checks)
- the CSU determines that a carer or adult household member, based on the outcome of criminal checks conducted by the QPS, is not a suitable person (including circumstances where approval was granted by the regional director prior to the outcome of personal history checks)
- the carer is not a suitable person to be a provisionally approved carer for the child to whom the approval relates
- an adult household member is not a suitable person to associate on a daily basis with the child to whom the approval relates
- the application for approval as a foster carer or kinship carer has been refused
- the carer or other adult household member is issued with a negative prescribed notice or negative exemption notice, an application for a blue card or exemption card is withdrawn, or a current blue card or exemption card is suspended or cancelled.

If the CSSC manager decides to suspend or cancel a certificate of approval as a provisionally approved carer:

- relevant Child Safety officers must meet with the carer to discuss the reason for the suspension or cancellation
- the CSSC manager must provide the provisionally approved carer with written notice, using ‘Letter of suspension/cancellation (PAC)’, created in ICMS, and include:
  - the reasons for the decision to suspend or cancel the certificate of approval
  - that the suspension or cancellation, in and of itself, does not affect the carer’s application for approval as a foster or kinship carer
  - that there is no right to seek review by QCAT
  - that the provisional certificate of approval must be returned to the CSSC manager.
- The stated period in the written notice must be **not less than two days** after the notice is given (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 141).

The CSSC manager must ensure that written advice of the decision is forwarded to the CSU manager.

The former carer will not be referred to QFKC at this stage, for an exit interview, as their substantive application is still to be assessed and decided.

A provisionally approved carer has no right to seek a review by QCAT, of the Child Safety decision to amend, suspend or cancel their certificate of approval or to remove a child from their care. The provisional certificate of approval is a temporary certificate and the holder retains their right of appeal to QCAT if the holder’s application to be a foster or kinship carer for a child is refused.
Record the suspension or cancellation in ICMS

Following the suspension or cancellation of a carer’s certificate of approval, the CSSC manager is to ensure:

- the carer’s approval status is updated in ICMS
- an alert is recorded on the carer, refer to Chapter 1, 9. What if an alert needs to be recorded in ICMS?

At the end of the suspension, update the carer’s approval status in ICMS and where the certificate of approval is returned to the carer, close the alert. Where the certificate of approval is cancelled following the period of suspension, the alert remains in place.

When the substantive application to become a foster or kinship carer is decided close the alert, or change the nature of the alert if the application is refused.

12. What if a spousal relationship ends during the renewal of approval for the carer couple and only one carer wishes to continue as a carer?

Where a carer couple separate whilst a joint renewal application is in progress and the following circumstances apply:

- the expiry date of their previous certificate would have otherwise lapsed had the renewal application not been properly made prior to its expiry and
- only one carer wishes to continue caring.

The carers’ joint renewal application is no longer valid due to the carers’ separation. To obtain approval for the carer who wishes to continue as a carer:

- ensure the carer submits an initial application as a carer
- progress urgent provisional approval of the carer to enable the placement of any children to continue, where applicable
- progress the initial application in accordance with the usual assessment process, however, the carer will not need to repeat mandatory training that had previously been completed as a requirement for their approval as a carer
- leave the joint renewal EOI/application open in ICMS until the carer is granted provisional approval and withdraw the renewal EOI/application once the carer is provisionally approved.

The approval decision for the carer will include an assessment of how the new circumstances of the applicant will impact on any children in their care. The assessment should not require the gathering of completely new initial assessment information as previously gathered assessment information should be used to inform the new approval decision.

If the application is approved:

- issue the carer with a new initial certificate of approval
- complete a new ‘Foster Carer Agreement’, where applicable
- review the placement agreement for any child in the care of the carer, where applicable.

Where both individuals wish to continue caring as individual carers, refer to 2. What if there is a change in carer circumstances?
Resources

Forms and templates

- Advice to regional director
- Change in Carer circumstances form
- Conflict of interest declaration
- Consent to discuss information
- Foster carer enquiry and application checklist
- Foster Carer Agreement
- Foster carer assessment and approval checklist
- Foster carer renewal of approval checklist
- Link an applicant/cardholder to this organisation for a carer or adult member
- Kinship carer enquiry and application checklist
- Kinship carer assessment and approval checklist
- Kinship carer initial assessment report
- Kinship carer renewal assessment report
- Kinship carer renewal of approval checklist
- New adult household member
- New adult household member checklist
- Provisional approval assessment
- Provisional approval for kinship carer applicant checklist
- QPS - Urgent Request (After Hours)
- QPS - Urgent Request (Business Hours)
- Request to consider alternative identification
- Volunteer foster/kinship carer or adult member blue/exemption card application

Departmental resources

- Adult household member guidelines
- Advanced training
- Application for approval - Form 3 APA - Guide to completion
- Carer information sheets
- Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service
- Confidentiality and privacy information for private contractors and panel participants
- Duty of disclosure – a fact sheet for carers
- Fact sheet 1: What is provisional approval?
- Fact sheet 5: Foster and kinship care – Legislative requirements for providing care
- Fact sheet 8: Foster and kinship care – Blue cards
- Form 3A - Guidelines for completing assessment report - Initial approval only
- Form 3B - Guidelines for completing assessment report - Renewal of approval only
• Foster and kinship carer handbook
• Carer Business Discount Card - Fact sheet
• Information privacy statement
• Interview resource: Childhood experiences
• Interview resource: Ecomap
• Interview resource: Family relationships
• Interview resource: Genogram
• Interview resource: Instructions
• Interview resource: Interview with child
• Interview resource: Interview with other household member
• Interview resource: Interview with young person
• Interview resource: Lifeline
• Interview resource: Motivation to foster
• Interview resource: Parenting styles
• Interview resource: Statement of standards
• Interview resource: Support in times of stress
• Interview resource: Teamwork
• Interview resource: Use of time
• Kinship care program description
• Kinship carer initial assessment report guidelines
• Kinship carer renewal assessment report guidelines
• Module 5: Maintaining client files
• Practice paper: Assessment of foster carer applicants
• Practice paper: Carer support
• Practice resource: Approved carers - an overview
• Practice resource: Assessment of kinship carer applicants
• Practice resource: Comparison of the key steps for carer approval
• Practice resource: Completing the Certificate of Approval
• Practice resource: Child Safety employees as carer applicants or approved carers
• Practice resource: Key concepts for the regulation of care
• Practice resource: Legislative requirements for the approval of kinship carers
• Practice resource: Mandatory advice to blue card applicants
• Practice resource: Meeting the statement of standards
• Practice resource: Negotiating support arrangements for approved carers
• Practice resource: Reviewing the foster carer agreement
• Practice resource: Suitability decision-making for a new adult household member
• Pre-service training
• Procedures and guidelines for Quality Care: Foster Care Training
• Standard training
• Standards of care
• Statement of Commitment between the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and the foster and kinship carers of Queensland

External resources
• Information Privacy Act 2009
• Home safety checklist
• The ABC of Pool Safety