

Child Safety PROCEDURE

Title: Emergent accommodation

Procedure No.: 631-2

Purpose

This procedure guides staff in the use of emergent accommodation to provide temporary accommodation for a child or young person in care for whom no other care arrangement option is immediately available.

Emergent accommodation is the overnight and short-term use of commercial accommodation sites such as motels, hotels and caravan parks, to provide care and support to children and young people in circumstances where there is the unforeseen need for a care arrangement for a child and no other care arrangement option is immediately available. Refer to the associated policy for information on eligibility and scope.

Process

The Child Safety Practice Manual sets out the procedures for placing and supporting children and young people in care.

The following categories are part of the Emergency Accommodation procedure and show the associated General Ledger (G/L) Account Code:

- Emergency Placements - Accommodation (G/L Account Code: 530419)
- Emergency Placements - Support (G/L Account Code: 530421).

Emergency Placements - Accommodation (G/L Account Code: 530419)

This category is to be used for all accommodation costs only.

Emergency Placements – Support (G/L Account Code: 530421)

This category is to be used for all direct care worker costs and other child related costs associated with the emergency accommodation care arrangement.

Where emergent accommodation is utilised for a child or young person in care, the following procedures also apply:

1. Secure approval for placement in emergent accommodation

Emergent accommodation may be utilised as a temporary measure only where all alternatives have been exhausted, including:

- exploring the child or young person's family networks for a prospective kinship carer.
- care arrangement with a foster or kinship carer
- care arrangement with a grant funded non-government placement service (with additional support if necessary)
- a care arrangement with a non-government placement service funded through child related costs – placement funding.

To obtain approval for the use of emergent accommodation:

- the Child Safety Service Centre (CSSC) Manager will request approval from the Regional Director verbally or by-email
- the Regional Director will request approval from the Regional Executive Director for any children aged 11 years or younger, verbally or by e-mail.

The approving officer may grant approval either verbally or by e-mail.

Emergent accommodation may only be approved for up to seven consecutive nights. Extension beyond seven nights must be approved by the Regional Executive Director, regardless of the child's age, and may not exceed 20 nights in total. Extension beyond seven nights may only be approved where there is clear evidence that no suitable care arrangement for the child is available.

Where a child or young person requires a care arrangement in emergent accommodation after hours, the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre will request approval from the Duty Executive Officer. The period of emergent accommodation may only continue until the next business day, at which time the child or young person must be placed elsewhere or the CSSC must seek approval for the continued use of emergent accommodation.

Approval for the funding of care arrangements in emergent accommodation is a separate process (see below, *4. Secure approval for funding the use of emergent accommodation*).

2. Provide the child or young person with accommodation and direct care

Children or young people must be provided direct care for the duration of the care arrangement. The CSSC Manager will decide the level and nature of the care to be provided, taking into consideration the child's age, development, strengths and needs, and the presence of any risk factors.

Direct care may be provided by Child Safety officers or workers employed or contracted by the non-government placement service with which the child is placed. Direct care workers, who are not Child Safety officers, must hold a valid blue card or blue card exemption notice from Blue Card Services in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. As far as is practicable, Child Safety will consider the child or young person's views about the gender of direct care workers and give preference to workers with an established and positive relationship with the child or young person.

The accommodation chosen and the actions of direct care workers must respect the child or young person's right to privacy.

When emergent accommodation is being utilised for a child or young person, the CSO must:

- inform direct care workers of their role and obligations under the *Child Protection Act 1999* (in particular the Statement of Standards (section 122), the Charter of Rights for a Child in Care (Schedule 2) provide direct care workers with adequate information about the child or young person to enable them to fulfil their direct care roles
- provide support to direct care workers for the duration of the emergent accommodation
- provide the child or young person with information about all matters affecting them in the care arrangement and giving them opportunities to be involved in decision making
- monitor the child or young person's safety and wellbeing while in emergent accommodation, including the direct care and behaviour support strategies implemented by direct care workers
- record the details of the emergent accommodation care arrangement (see below)
- locate an appropriate alternative care arrangement for the child or young person as soon as possible, in collaboration with the Placement Services Unit, and support the child or young person's transition into that care arrangement.

3. Record the use of emergent accommodation

Record the care arrangement in a case note in a placement event in ICMS, and include:

- details of the non-government placement service with which the child or young person is placed (where applicable), including its license status
- details of all direct care workers, including full names, contact details, Blue Card number and expiry date (except for Child Safety officers), and the time periods for which they provided direct care of the child or young person
- the names of any other non-government placement services by which the direct care workers are employed or contracted, or with which they are affiliated.

4. Secure approval for funding the use of emergent accommodation

Care arrangements with non-government services using emergent accommodation will be funded through child related costs – placement funding. Procedures for the use of this funding are in the *Child related costs – placement funding policy and procedure*.

Where a care arrangement in emergent accommodation is approved after hours and is funded through child related costs – placements, the CSSC is responsible for seeking approval for the funding on the next business day.

Where direct care is provided entirely by Child Safety officers, and no non-government placement service has been engaged to care for the child or young person, the costs of the care arrangement will be met through child related costs (for expenses for the child) and through staff salaries (for labour costs). Refer to the relevant child related costs policies for expenses relating to the child's care.

5. Provide information to Child Safety After Hours Service Centre

Within 24 hours of a decision to use emergent accommodation for a child or young person, or where it is likely that a child or young person will require a care arrangement in emergent accommodation after hours, provide relevant information to the [Child Safety After Hours Service Centre via the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre: After hours referral form](#).

6. Respond to any Standards of Care

Any standards of care raised about the quality of care provided by the direct care workers of a non-government placement service will be responded to accordance with the 'Responding to concerns about the standards of care' policy and the Child Safety Practice Manual.

Any concerns raised in relation to the quality of care provided by Child Safety officers are not within the scope of Standards of care and will be addressed through the Child Safety's Human Resource processes.

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Office: Office of the Chief Practitioner
Help Contact: Child Protection Practice

Links

Policy:

Emergent accommodation (631)

Related Procedures:

Child related costs – in-home support (630)
Child related costs – placement funding (628)
Child related costs – placement support funding (629)
Child Safety Practice Manual

Related Legislation or Policy:

Child Protection Act 1999
Financial Accountability Act 2009
Human Rights Act 2019
Case planning (263)
Child related costs – in-home support (630)
Child related costs – placement funding (628)
Child related costs – placement support funding (629)
Residential care (606)

Rescinded Procedure:

631-1 Emergent accommodation

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Director-General