REFOCUS
REDIRECTING & EMPOWERING

Foster Care FAQs

1. What is the difference between the Department of Communities and a non-government fostering agency like REFOCUS?

In Queensland, foster carers must legally be approved by the Department of Communities (Child Safety Services). However, all foster carers must be affiliated with a non-government fostering agency for support and supervision. The role of a non-government agency like REFOCUS is to work in collaboration and partnership with the Department to provide high quality foster care services.
While a child is in a foster care placement, a non-government agency will provide the day-to-day support for foster carers. In Queensland, non-governmental fostering agencies are usually identified as either a 'generalist' agency or a 'specialist' agency. Due to the complex and demanding nature of our foster care placements, REFOCUS is a specialist Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Community & Kinship Care agency

2. Who can become a ATSI Community carer?

Only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can apply to become a foster carer with REFOCUS. We recruit foster carers who are single, married, co-habiting, divorced, gay, lesbian and heterosexual. We also recruit foster carers of different religions, cultural and ethnic groups.
To become a foster carer with us, you must satisfy certain requirements:

- You must have a spare room in your house to comfortably accommodate a child or young person, as well as their personal belongings.
- You must be over the age of 25.
- You must be able to commit to fostering on a full time or respite basis. (Exclusions may apply. Please contact us for further information.)

3. Can I foster with a criminal conviction?

A criminal conviction from your past would not necessarily disqualify you from fostering. It all depends on the nature of the conviction and when it occurred. It is standard procedure for us to check criminal records through the Working with Children (Blue Card) check with the Department of Communities at an early stage in the application process. For this, we would need you to discuss any convictions with us as soon as possible. All information shared with us remains strictly confidential at all times.

4. What checks are carried out on me and my household?

As a part of the application to foster, we work with the Department of Communities to carry out all checks on your household. These include Working with Children (Blue Card) checks on all adult members of the household as well as Suitability Checks through the State and inter-State government Child Protection Agencies, including New Zealand (if applicable).

A Health and Wellbeing questionnaire and medical examination by your GP will also be undertaken, with the report made available to our Agency Medical Advisor for their comments on your health. You will also be asked to provide three personal references, including one from a family member, who will provide written references and be interviewed as part of the assessment process. A standard Household Safety Study will be carried out in your home to ensure it is safe enough for a child or young person.

5. If I am the primary foster carer, do other members of the household need to be checked?

All couples living together are considered to be partners in the fostering process, so you will both have to undertake the necessary checks and training. You will also both have to apply to become foster carers. Even if you are the main foster carer, anyone sharing your home will have some involvement in and influence on the fostering task.
REFOCUS and the Department of Communities will also carry out checks on all adult members of the household.

6. Could a child I foster share a bedroom with one of my own children?

Some foster care agencies or Child Safety Services areas will allow birth children to share a room with children in foster care, especially when they are younger. At REFOCUS however, we will only place a child in a home where he or she will have their own bedroom (unless they are a young sibling group).

7. Can I still go out to work and be a foster carer?

At REFOCUS we think that the highest quality of care can be achieved by having a foster carer at home full time. It is the choice of the family and whether having a child in your care can be managed. Our foster carers are considered to be an integral part of a professional and dedicated team and the Department of Communities will provide financial support which reflects your commitment and the challenges of the role.

8. Can I choose how long I want children and young people to stay with me?

Before you are approved as a carer we will have discussed the different types of foster care placements that are needed for our young people. You can decide which types of placement would suit you best. If you would prefer emergency or temporary placements you do need to be aware that it isn't always possible to know at the beginning of a placement exactly when a child will move on.
Find out more about foster care placements with REFOCUS.

9. Can I choose which age group or sex I would prefer to foster?

Yes, you can. However, you are far more likely to have continuous placements if you are willing to take children of all ages. In Queensland, there is currently a shortage of foster carers particularly for teenagers and for children who have complex needs. REFOCUS will not be able to proceed with your enquiry if you are unable to consider children who are over the age of 7 years.

10. How much will I know about the child/young person before they are placed with me?

We discuss every placement with our carers and it is your decision as to whether to take a young person. We will provide you with as much information about the young person and his/her background as possible, including any difficult behaviour and how to manage it. However, you do need to be aware that sometimes we have very little information, especially in an emergency. We would always, however, seek to find out information as quickly as possible.

REFOCUS
REDIRECTING & EMPOWERING

11. Will I be taxed on the Fostering Allowances I receive?

The foster care allowances are exempt from taxation and are not cited as income for any purpose, including yearly tax returns, applications for Commonwealth benefits or when applying for loans from financial institutions.

For more information about fostering or to become a foster parent with REFOCUS, call us today on **1800 REFOCUS (1800 733 628)**