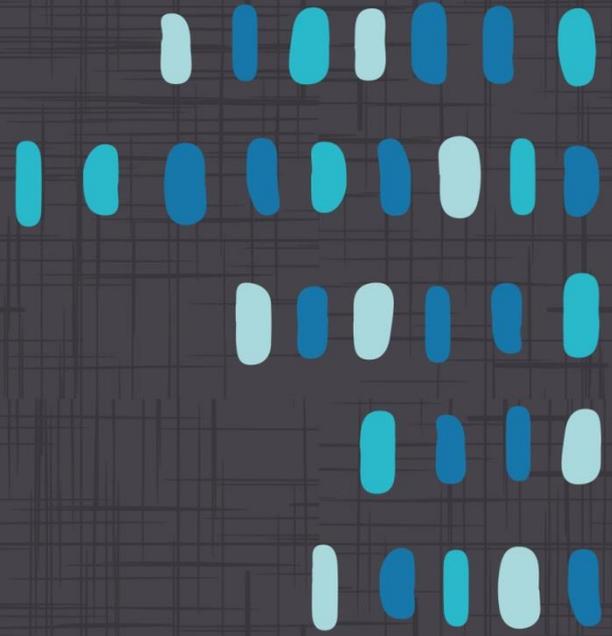




Government of Western Australia
Department of Communities



POLICY -

Establishment Payment for relatives to support an informal arrangement

Revised August 2019

POLICY STATEMENT

The Department of The Department (the Department) can provide assistance, including an Establishment Payment, to grandparents and other relatives caring for related children in an informal arrangement, when the child may have otherwise entered the Chief Executive Officer's (CEO's) care.

This policy applies to situations where the Department has been working with the family due to concerns for a child's safety and wellbeing, a child safety investigation (CSI) has been undertaken and the parent/s and family have resolved that to ensure the child's safety, the child will be cared for by relatives for a period. This decision, made independently by the parent/s and family, will be considered by The Department when finalising the CSI and developing a safety plan that considers the family's new living arrangements¹ for the child. The parent/s of the child must readily agree for the child to reside with the relative and to the steps set out in the safety plan.

Where parents do not agree for a child to reside with a relative, statutory action may be required to safeguard the child's safety and wellbeing. In these circumstances the Establishment Payment would not apply.

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to outline the support and financial assistance that may be provided to a grandparent and other relatives who take on the care of a child in their family where the Department has had prior involvement due to concerns for a child's safety and wellbeing.

BACKGROUND

In Western Australia (WA) some children live with grandparents or other relatives under an informal arrangement that was initiated by the family when the Department was involved with the child's family to undertake a CSI regarding concerns for the child's safety and wellbeing.

Grandparents and other relatives who raise children under formal arrangements, such as a court order (i.e. approved carers), receive a subsidy from the Department to cover the normal, ongoing costs of maintaining a child in their care. Grandparents and other relatives that take on the care of a child in their family informally don't receive this financial assistance. They may be eligible for assistance from the Australian Government through the Department of Human Services and some WA State Government assistance may also be available as per the criteria for all families.

When a child first goes to live with their relatives under an informal arrangement there may be some basic items required to accommodate the child, such as furniture, bedding, clothing and age appropriate toys and equipment.

The Establishment Payment was introduced in January 2011 by the then Department for Child Protection and Family Support to assist relatives with these initial set up costs.

¹ The Department has assessed that there are no concerns for the child's safety in the informal family care arrangement. The child is not in the care of the CEO. Parental responsibility remains with the child's parent/s.

LEGISLATIVE MANDATE AND PRINCIPLES

The principles of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* (the Act) place a high priority on supporting and assisting families in fulfilling their responsibility in terms of a child's care and protection, in preference to formal proceedings under the Act.

The Department is guided by the overall principle that the best interests of the child are paramount (s.7 of the Act). Section 8 of the Act provides for matters that must be considered when determining what is in a child's best interests.

Section 9 of the Act includes several principles which identify that:

- *“parents, family and community of a child have the primary role in safeguarding and promoting the child's wellbeing; and*
- *the preferred way of safeguarding and promoting a child's wellbeing is to support the child's parents, family and community in the care of the child”.*

Under s.13 of the Act (Principle of self-determination), Aboriginal people should be allowed to participate in the protection and care of their children with as much self-determination as possible.

THE CHILD SAFETY INVESTIGATION AND SAFETY PLAN

The CSI should be informed by the *Signs of Safety Child Protection Practice Framework*.

A Signs of Safety meeting including parents, extended family, a safety network and the Department will be used to develop safety goals and a written safety plan agreement that outlines how the child will be kept safe and what living arrangements are required to create safety for the child.

For a child's living arrangements to be changed in an informal manner without statutory intervention, it is crucial that the parents of the child agree to and endorse the change. Parental responsibility remains with the parents.

The Department will consider the child's views and wishes and enable them to participate meaningfully in the decision-making process, having due regard to their age and capacity. The Department will consider the family's decision for the child to live with a grandparent or other relative in finalising the CSI and safety planning for the child. This will be documented.

Safety planning must include steps and actions to be taken if the situation changes after the child has moved into the care of their relative. For example, if the parents withdraw their support for the living arrangement, or the relative is unable or unwilling to continue to provide care for the child.

PROVISION OF PAYMENT

The decision to provide an Establishment Payment for a child going to reside with their relative as a result of the family's decision must be endorsed by the team leader and approved by the district director prior to the payment being made.

The payment is provided for each child that lives with their relative under such an arrangement. The recipient will receive the Establishment Payment for a child only once. For example, if a child moves in and out of an arrangement with a relative, the Establishment Payment will only be paid on the first arrangement with that relative.

The payment is \$1,000 per child.

INTENSIVE FAMILY SUPPORT

Family support underpins the Department's work with vulnerable children and families, from the duty process through to supporting reunification. Child protection workers provide support to families across all areas of contact with the Department. The degree to which family support is provided depends on the protectiveness of the family and the extent of risk to the child.

The intensive family support approach ensures the provision of social services are offered to assist the child as the paramount consideration and, if appropriate, to the child's parents or relative.

When a child lives with their grandparents or other relative under an informal arrangement during a CSI, they must be given information on the services and supports that may be available to help them in their caring role. This might include information on services available in the community to support the family, such as parenting support and financial counselling services, and non-government agencies, such as Wanslea Family Services.

Where a child has particularly challenging behaviours or additional needs, the child protection worker should assist the family to plan for how these needs will be addressed and provide support to ensure that appropriate referrals have been made.

RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- Casework Practice Manual
- *Building Safe and Strong Families – Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy*
- *Assessment and Investigation Processes Policy*
- *Aboriginal Services and Practice Framework 2016-2018*
- *Signs of Safety Child Protection Practice Framework*

GUIDELINES

The Casework Practice Manual will provide guidelines based on this policy.

EFFECTIVE DATE

1 August 2019

REVIEW DATE

1 August 2021

OWNER

General Manager, Policy and Service Design (Children and Families)