



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Communities**




Standards Monitoring

Preparation Information For A Community Service Organisation

Contact Details:
Standards Monitoring Unit
Department of Communities
P 08 9222 2551 F 08 9222 2959
PO Box 6334 East Perth WA 6892
E smu@communities.wa.gov.au
W communities.wa.gov.au





**GUIDE FOR MANAGER AND ALLOCATED CO-ORDINATOR
PREPARING FOR A MONITORING VISIT**

Preface

A number of initiatives commenced in 2006 to enhance the ability of services providers across the sector to provide the highest quality services to children and young people.

In April 2006 the Department of Communities (the Department) commenced a project to develop a set of standards applicable to its protection and care services. Concurrent with the development of standards for the Department's protection and care services a partnership between the Department and out of home care sector was established to revise the *Out of Home Care Placement Services: principles and minimum service standards 1997, WA*.

As the work of the respective groups progressed, it became evident that the sector would be best suited by one set of standards applicable to all children in the CEO's care irrespective of who is providing their out-of-home care arrangement. The result was the **Better Care Better Services** Standards that apply to all children in the CEO's care supported by the Department or funded services with the exception of the Youth Supported Accommodation Assistance program services where specific standards already apply. The Standards were reviewed in 2017 in partnership between the Out-of-Home sector and the Department.

The twelve Standards have a primary focus on ensuring outcomes for children, young people, their families and carers that are consistent with the Objects and Principles of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*. The Standards are consistent with the principle that the best interests of the child are paramount in any activity. The emphasis within the sector is on using the Standards to encourage continuous improvement of services.

The Role of Standards in a Broader Quality Assurance Context

The sector is committed to improving the quality of services available to children, young people, their families and carers. Given this commitment, the sector sees the role of the Standards as:

- Empowering children, young people, their families and carers by clearly defining what standards they should expect when accessing children in care services.
- Providing a basis for service providers to improve service quality based on an objective assessment of their practice to identify opportunities for service improvement.
- Providing a means of satisfying government accountability requirements.
- Assisting staff by defining the expected standards of service provision relating to children in care services.

The Standards represent only one element of an effective quality assurance system that protects the rights and quality of life of children, young people, families and carers and drives continuing improvement towards excellence in service delivery. Meeting the Standards is only the first part of the process.

A comprehensive quality framework provides internal and external ways of assessing all aspects of service delivery and ensuring ongoing improvements within and across Community Service Organisations (CSOs). The Department and CSOs have a range of strategies in place to improve service quality.



Standards Monitoring Visit

The purpose of the monitoring visit is to assess whether the services provided by the Department and CSOs are meeting the Standards and where evident, identify excellence in service provision and opportunities for service improvement.

It provides the opportunity for monitors external to the CSO to:

- Hear the views of children and young people.
- Speak with families.
- Speak with carers.
- Speak with advocates.
- Meet with staff.
- Examine documentation about the services provided to children, young people and their families.
- Examine documentation about the policies and procedures of the CSO.
- Where appropriate, observe the CSO in operation.

An essential component of the monitoring visit is to obtain feedback from children, young people, their families and carers with respect to the services they have received from the CSO.

Steps in the Monitoring Process

Notification to the CSO

The Standards Monitoring Unit notifies the CSO that a monitoring visit has been scheduled. The date for the monitoring visit will be confirmed between the monitors and Service Manager. The CSO will nominate a contact person to coordinate the monitoring visit, complete the "Service Profile" and be the primary point of contact for the monitors.

Monitoring of placement services makes assessments against the Safety Standard, and Quality Standards 1 to 9.

If during a monitoring visit, the monitor identifies a significant issue not related to the Standards being assessed, the matter will be referred to the service management and the relevant Department work unit.

Preliminary On-Site Meeting

Approximately one week prior to the monitoring visit, a preliminary on-site meeting will be held and provides an opportunity for:

- The monitors to explain the process to staff.
- The monitors to provide information about the *Better Care Better Services* Standards.
- The monitors to gain a greater understanding of the operations of the CSO.
- Participants to ask monitors questions about the process.

The Monitoring Visit

The office visiting component of the monitoring assignment usually takes place between one to four days. The visit involves the monitors spending time at the Service talking to staff and



management. The monitors also examine documentation maintained by the Service including policies, procedures, individuals' files and organisational records.

In addition, the monitors will contact families and carers either in person or by telephone. Children and young people in the care of the CEO aged eight years or older, are invited to talk with the monitor or to complete a questionnaire facilitated by their carer or Key Worker if required.

If during the monitoring visit, a child, young person, their family, carer or any significant stakeholder raises a previously undisclosed allegation of abuse or neglect, the information shall be immediately forwarded to the Service Manager and the relevant District Director of the Department.

CHECKLIST

To assist Services with planning, the following checklist of tasks to be completed prior to the monitoring visit is provided below:

Upon Notification of Monitoring

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| 1 | Inform staff, carers and children and young people involved in the monitoring process and their opportunities to participate. | |
| 2 | Arrange staff attendance at preliminary on-site (metropolitan) or video conference (country) meeting and discuss monitoring dates with the SMU. | |

Before the Monitoring Visits

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| 3 | Book meetings between the monitor and staff participating in the monitoring visit. | |
| 4 | Confirm dates and times for the monitors to contact carers and young people (over 8 years). | |
| 5 | Request that staff organise relevant files to be made available for the monitor. | |
| 6 | Organise room/s for the monitors to use on the visit (note the monitors may need two rooms if the itinerary states the monitors will separate at certain times to interview staff or stakeholders. The rooms need permit confidential and private conversations). | |
| 7 | Ten days prior to the visit: complete the itinerary identifying the name of the Key Worker who will interviewed in relation to the sample child identified by SMU in the sample. | |

At the Preliminary On-Site or Video Conference Meeting

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| 8 | Identify the children, young people and carers who have agreed to speak with the monitors. | |
| 9 | Advise the monitors on any issues that may impact on the monitoring. | |

Monitoring Visits

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| 10 | Make room(s) available to the monitors. | |
| 11 | Be available to the monitors if there is an issue. | |
| 12 | Make certain staff are available to meet with the monitors. | |

Consultations With Other Interested Stakeholders

The monitors may also liaise with other interested stakeholders including support workers, advocates and staff of other relevant services including Child Protection Workers, to obtain their perceptions of the services being monitored.



Exit Interview

At the conclusion of the visit the CSO will be offered an exit interview. The exit interview is where the monitors meet with the CSO at an agreed location to discuss the initial findings from the monitoring visit.

The exit interview provides the monitors and the CSO with an opportunity to:

- Hear about the areas of commendation that stood out to the monitors.
- Hear about any initial concerns identified by the monitors and provides an opportunity for the CSO to respond to these.
- Provides an opportunity for the CSO to provide the monitors with any additional or new information that was not available at the time of the monitoring visit or to collect additional information following the exit interview to provide to the monitors within an agreed timeframe.
- Provides the monitors with an opportunity to clarify any duty of care obligations.

The Draft Report

The Draft Report is provided to the Service for their review and provides an opportunity for the monitors to correct any errors of fact and for the CSO to provide additional relevant information about special conditions or circumstances before the report is finalised.

The Draft Report is forwarded to a contact person nominated by the CSO.

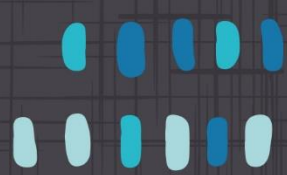
What is Included in the Draft Report?

The Draft Report provides an assessment of how a CSO is meeting the Standards. The report takes into account the views of children, young people, their families, carers, staff and interested others about the CSO; identifies areas where opportunities for improvement exist; and records the monitors' observations and examination of the CSO's policies and procedures. If a CSO has been monitored previously, the report will also include a synopsis of how the CSO utilised the report findings; and the CSO's response to the previously identified required actions and opportunities for service improvement.

In some situations, the monitors may identify required actions. For a CSO being monitored for the first time, required actions focus on the minimum satisfactory level of service and refer to action necessary to address matters that have implications for the safety, wellbeing and dignity of children, young people their families and carers. If a CSO has previously been monitored, required actions will focus the minimum satisfactory level of service as prescribed by the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* and may cover, but are not limited to, matters of duty of care, safety and compliance with legislation.

For each required action there will be a date specifying when the action must be completed. The CSO is responsible for notifying the Standards Monitoring Unit of completed action by close of business on the due date.

In the event that CSOs are unable to complete a required action within the specified timeframe, a request to extend the implementation date needs to be forwarded to the Standards



Monitoring Unit. The request should be lodged at least one week prior to the compliance date specified in the monitoring report.

The report may also contain opportunities for service improvement identified as part of the monitoring visit. These suggestions are often generated by children, young people, their families, carers, staff or the monitors' observations and have the potential to assist the CSO to better fulfil the Standards and improve the quality of service.

What the Draft Report Does Not Include

The purpose of the report is not to identify children, young people, families, carers or staff who are unhappy with the CSO. Consistent with this approach, any comments made by children, young people, families or staff included in the report are conveyed in a non-identifying manner.

The report does not comment on individual staff performance, rates of pay for staff or staffing levels. In addition the report does not comment on current unresolved complaints raised by children, young people, families, carers or staff.

Post Monitoring Meeting

A post monitoring meeting will be conducted when it is desired by the CSO or the monitors consider such a meeting is necessary. The Draft Report is discussed at the meeting.

Issues identified during the monitoring visit would generally have been already raised by the monitors with the CSO, children, young people, families and their carers. As a result, there should be no surprises for the CSO at the post monitoring meeting.

The objectives of the meeting are to:

- Table the key findings.
- Provide feedback about positive aspects of the CSO.
- Enable the CSO to provide additional information.
- Discuss the assessment and where there are required actions to negotiate realistic implementation dates.
- Discuss opportunities for service improvement.

The period leading up to the post monitoring meeting allows the CSO time to consider the Draft Report, to suggest corrections and offer additional information to the monitors, if relevant.

Final Report

The Final Report is produced by the monitors as soon as possible after the post monitoring meeting. It is then forwarded to the Child Protection Management Meeting within the Department for endorsement before being sent to the CSO, the Department's Child Carer and Connection Hub.

Appeal and Review

While the monitoring visit is designed to be a collaborative process between the CSO, children, young people, carers and the monitor, situations may arise where the CSO or those involved may want to raise issues about aspects of the monitoring visit. CSOs, children, young people,



families and carers may raise any concerns with the monitors or the Standards Monitoring Unit at any time during the visit.

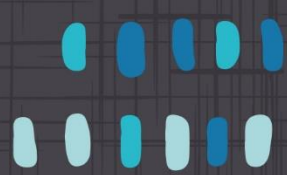
If a CSO has a significant concern with the findings of the Final Report but does not want to appeal the findings, they may forward a letter to the Standards Monitoring Unit to be attached to the report. This letter will be forwarded to the Assistant Director General of the Department.

In circumstances where CSOs strongly disagree with the findings of the report, an appeal and review panel can be convened to review the findings of the monitoring team. The panel will be convened by the Assistant Director General of the Department. Panel members will be people who have knowledge of, and experience in, matters relevant to protection and care services, and have no conflict of interest in the matters to be reviewed.

A decision resulting from this review process will be forwarded to the Assistant Director General.

Monitoring Evaluation

On completion of the monitoring assignment the Standards Monitoring Unit will seek feedback from the CSO about the monitoring process and performance of the monitors. The feedback will be forwarded to the relevant monitors and also be used in the Unit's continuous improvement process.



A Quick Guide to the Monitoring Visit

1. The CSO is notified that monitoring visit has been scheduled.
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2. A preliminary on-site meeting is held.
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3. The monitoring visit takes place, usually over one to four days.
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4. The monitors may contact other interested stakeholders.
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5. The monitors and CSO participate in an exit interview (optional).
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6. The monitors write a Draft Report that is checked for errors of fact.
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7. A Draft Report is provided to the Service Manager
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8. A post monitoring meeting may take place (optional).
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9. The Final Report is distributed to the CSO, the Department's Carer and Child Connection Hub and Non-Government Funding Contract Managers.
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10. CSOs have the opportunity to appeal the report findings.
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11. Service providers provide formal feedback on the monitoring process and monitors' performance.