



POLICY ON CHILDREN ENTERING SECURE CARE

POLICY STATEMENT

The Department for Child Protection and Family Support (the Department) has a statutory role to provide secure care for children who are at immediate and substantial risk of causing significant harm to themselves or another person where there is no other suitable way to manage that risk and meet their needs.

The purpose of secure care is to keep the child safe, reduce the risk of harm to the child and others, and return the child to the community as soon as possible in a planned way. Secure care is intended for children aged 12 to 17 years of age.

Secure care provides planned, short-term intensive intervention in a therapeutic environment to contain, stabilise, assess and support the child's wellbeing.

The Department works in partnership with the child, his or her family and others to develop transition arrangements to support the child's return to the community, which include strategies to reduce the likelihood of re-admission to secure care. Transition arrangements are most effective when developed collaboratively; they require the ongoing participation and cooperation of other government and community sector organisations.

Placing a child in secure care should be an intervention of last resort after all other options to manage the risks the child presents to him/herself or another person have been fully utilised. The use of secure care is a significant form of statutory intervention given the mandatory containment of the child in a therapeutic environment.

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to promote a consistent understanding of the role and functions of therapeutic secure care.

BACKGROUND

The Kath French Secure Care Centre (secure care) is located in Stoneville, and can accommodate a maximum of six children from across the State.

Secure care provides a time limited 'circuit breaker' to stabilise the child's behaviours. This is achieved through a therapeutic model of care¹ that is individually tailored to the child's needs, culturally responsive and takes into account their views. The goals are to work with the child to prevent repeating a pattern of high risk behaviours, develop life skills, establish a network of proactive supports with the child's family and other agencies, and transition the child's return to the community.

A child who is in provisional protection and care, or the subject of a protection order (time limited) or a protection order (until 18), may be placed in a secure care facility under a secure care arrangement.

Only the Director General of the Department (the CEO, or delegate) can initiate a child's

¹ Residential Care (Sanctuary) Framework

admission to secure care, either through direct admission or by making an application to the Children's Court:

- Direct admission: For a child who is under a protection order (time limited) or protection order (until 18), the CEO may make a secure care arrangement - referred to as administrative admissions because they do not require a court decision.
- Application to the Children's Court: For children who are not under the care of the CEO, but are either already in or are taken into provisional protection and care, their admission to secure care is subject to an interim order (secure care), or a continuation order (secure care) for a child to remain in secure care. Admissions for children in provisional protection and care are referred to as judicial admissions because they are subject to a court order.

The length of time a child is placed in secure care should be as short as necessary and must not exceed 21 days. If there are exceptional reasons it may be extended once for up to 21 days.

Further admissions should not occur except in circumstances where there are new risks of the child causing significant harm to him/herself or another person or the risk of causing significant harm has not reduced.

It is not appropriate to place a child in secure care in the following circumstances:

- As a placement option in the absence of any alternative placement arrangement.
- The risk of harm to others is the only ground for admission to secure care. In cases of serious incidents involving physical harm to others and/or criminal offences these matters are to be referred to the WA Police. Where the Department has a child protection role, safety planning occurs to enable the child to remain at home with their parents or in an appropriate care arrangement.
- The child exhibits behaviours, signs or symptoms indicating possible mental illness, suicide risk or significant self-harm without the provision of a full discharge summary or letter, by a mental health professional outlining the level of risk to the child and confirming that the child does not require hospital admission. Where a mental illness is suspected, requiring medication and/or a possible inpatient admission, a referral to specialist service(s) is the first priority.
- As an alternative option for children remanded in custody or serving a period of detention. Secure care is not punitive detention and the criminal justice jurisdiction does not have the power to make a secure care arrangement for a child.
- Children with high medical needs who require 24 hours monitoring/supervision or those with severe disability, as secure care does not have the capacity to meet their needs.

LEGISLATIVE MANDATE

Children in secure care remain subject to the provisions of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*. The legislative mandate for secure care is provided under sections 88A to 88J and section 134(A).

THE DEPARTMENT'S ROLE

The Department's role in relation to secure care is to:

- provide therapeutic care interventions that are planned, short-term and intensive;

- manage the immediate and substantial risk the child presents to him/herself or another person;
- where appropriate, work in partnership with the child's family, carer and other agencies involved, to assess and coordinate responses to manage and reduce the risk the child presents;
- consult with appropriate specialists and undertake comprehensive care planning to enable the child to safely return to and remain in the community; or
- identify and transition the child to an appropriate placement arrangement (s.79 (2)(a)(b)).

Children residing in secure care receive a range of services onsite including education and health care. Where appropriate, education programs are provided in consultation with the child's school, district education office or other educational support liaison. Health care is provided in consultation with the child's general practitioner/health service. Other services to meet the child's special needs are considered on an individual basis.

Children in secure care also participate in daily activities and are supported to develop skills in areas such as effective communication, emotional regulation and healthy relationships, as well as pursuing recreational interests such as sports and hobbies.

To support the child's return to their community, secure care staff provide advice on appropriate strategies to relevant service providers and district staff, to enable them to more effectively manage the child's complex needs.

WORKING WITH OTHER AGENCIES

While the Department has the legislative mandate to provide secure care, all relevant government and community sector organisations have a shared responsibility to support the child when in secure care and contribute to ongoing service provision after the child leaves secure care.

In accordance with the Rapid Response framework, government agencies are to prioritise access to services for children in the CEO's care including those in secure care. A collaborative interagency response is critical to managing and reducing the risks the child presents to him or herself and/or others.

The allocated child protection worker undertakes the planning and coordination of services for the child, in conjunction with secure care staff and the relevant agency. Other agencies' role may include:

- WA Health: to obtain, assess and maintain relevant information in risk / medical assessments and implement treatment plans;
- Department of Education: joint planning to meet the child's educational needs during and post secure care including enrolment in an approved education arrangement;
- Department of Corrective Services: supporting the child to comply with Court orders or other penalties, and facilitate their participation in programs;
- Disability Services Commission: Local Area Coordinators to visit and provide support to the child with disability whilst in secure care, maintain relationships, engage in meetings and planning with secure care and district staff, and plan support services for when the child leaves; and
- Other agencies: provision of supports to the child to address the reasons for his or her admission to secure care.

The Department anticipates that agencies who are or need to be providing services for the child will participate in regular meetings so that effective interagency responses can be developed to meet the child's ongoing needs.

RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- The Signs of Safety Child Protection Practice Framework
- Aboriginal Services and Practice Framework 2016-2018
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Services Framework 2013
- Residential Care (Sanctuary) Framework
- Casework Practice Manual chapter, 'Secure Care Arrangements'
- Care Planning Policy 2016
- Rapid Response framework
- Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care
- Memoranda of Understanding between the Department for Child Protection and Family Support and Western Australia Police:
 - Transport of provisionally protected and protected children and young people under a secure care arrangement, and
 - An Agreed Process for Responding to a Young Person in the Care of the CEO of the Department for Child Protection and Family Support absconding from a Departmental Managed Residential Facility or Secure Care.

EFFECTIVE DATE: 2016

REVIEW DATE: 2019

OWNER:

Executive Director, Aboriginal Engagement and Coordination & Policy and Learning.

