

Foster Care (Home Based Care)

Who is MacKillop Family Services?

MacKillop Family Services was formed in 1997 with the refounding of seven Victorian child welfare agencies of the Sisters of Mercy, Christian Brothers and Sisters of St Joseph.

We are one of the largest providers of specialist support services to vulnerable and disadvantaged children, young people and their families through five core areas of service:

- » Supporting Families experiencing disadvantage and crisis;
- » Supporting Families raising a child with a disability;
- » Education and training services for children and young people;
- » Services for children and young people who are not able to live at home; and
- » Services for the former residents of our founding agencies.

Our services are clustered in twelve Programs which are in turn grouped into three Divisions. The three Divisions are Barwon Services, Community Programs and Alternate Care. Some 400 staff and 400 volunteers are involved each fortnight in our services across Melbourne and Geelong.

About this Service

Home Based Care involves the care of children and young people (aged 0-18 years) in the home of a volunteer for a planned period of time while the child's parents or guardians are unable to provide that care. Home Based Care is part of an overall plan to strengthen and assist the family to reduce or resolve difficulties that prevent them from meeting their child's needs. Home Based Care is also known as foster care.

There are many reasons why a parent may be temporarily unable to care for their child such as:

- » A crisis brought about by sickness, emotional problems, homelessness.
- » Parents may need a planned short break from the demands of parenting. The child may have a disability, or the parent may be young and isolated.
- » The child may need a safe place to live while the Department of Human Services assesses the family's situation and works with the family to help resolve issues that resulted in the child needing protection, or whilst a case proceeds through the Children's Court.
- » The child and family may require "time out" from each other to defuse a tense situation.
- » Longer term care may be needed when a family faces chronic and ongoing problems of abuse, neglect, mental illness, substance abuse or domestic violence which may make parenting very difficult.

Examples of Home Based Care

Respite

Respite is usually provided for a child one weekend a month to give families a break. This service assists parents who don't have adequate support from family or friends.

Temporary / Emergency

This service is often provided to avert, or assist in, a family crisis. A voluntary agreement is made between the carers, agency and the parents and placements can vary from overnight to 8 weeks.

Short and Long Term Care

This is needed for children/ young people where return to their family of origin may not be possible and decisions in relation to their future care are being decided by the Children's Court. When appropriate, children continue to have contact with their biological family during this process.

Who are the carers?

Carers for children in Home Based Care are people in the community who are committed to helping families, young persons and children. Many different people can become carers from all ages, singles or couples, with or without children. Carers need to have strong desire to support families in their community. Carers should have patience, tolerance, some experience with children, a good sense of humour and a willingness to be involved with people who have needs, cultures and lifestyles that may be different to their own. They are people who can work as part of a team.

MacKillop seeks to provide foster care placements that represent the richness and diversity of the communities we live in. What is crucial is that carers are able to provide an environment that protects the child or young person and promotes their well being.





Each year my foster Mum reminds me how long I've been her little boy and each time she laughs and says '9 crazy years'. But it's only a joke and each year I tell her now it's going to be '10 crazy years'. We always joke with each other and we tell my sisters and brothers how many years she's been their Mum. I can't remember before I came to live with Mum. But now I want to be a bus driver or a disc jockey.

— Bevo (not his real name), Aged 12

Can you help? Contact details

Publicity & Recruitment Officer
Geelong, Barwon, Surf Coast and Colac areas
MacKillop Family Services
Helen Street, North Geelong 3215
Phone: 03 5278 9211
Fax: 03 5272 1781
ABN 79 078 299 288

What support is available?

- » Material support (beds, car seats, clothes) and tax free financial reimbursement for each child in your care.
- » A professional case manager who oversees the child's placement to help deal with difficulties when they arise and access to a 24 hour On Call worker.
- » Support from other carers.
- » Pre service / accreditation training and regular ongoing training sessions.

www.mackillop.org.au

