

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Frequently asked questions for people interested in applying to be foster carers with South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation (SCMSAC)

Who can be a foster carer at SCMSAC?

SCMSAC provides children in care with placements that reflect the richness and diversity of the communities in which we live and work. This means that our carers come from different types of families and a wide range of cultures, religions, and age groups.

Will I need to be assessed before I become a carer with your agency?

Yes. We will visit you at your home, talk with you about your motivation to be a carer, and talk about the complete assessment process. We will ask you to complete some forms including an application form, working with children check, and application for community services check.

How often will I be asked to meet with agency workers?

At SCMSAC, most carers meet with their caseworker at least once a month. To help us decide how frequently we will meet with you, we will talk with you about your needs and the needs of children placed with you. We will also talk about SCMSAC's responsibilities as a designated agency. We will then agree on how often we will meet, and how you will keep us informed about how things are going.

Will I be included in the decision making process for issues related to the children I care for?

Yes, at SCMSAC, carers are an important member of the 'care team'. This is the group of people that has a responsibility for planning and coordinating all of the things that parents ordinarily do for their children. The care team includes you, your SCMSAC caseworker and several other key people in a child's life. As a member of the care team, you will always be included in decision making processes. We might not always agree, but we do listen to you and respect your views. Together, we will make a decision that is in the best interests of the child that you care for.

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What kind of support can I expect from your agency?

At SCMSAC, we work in partnership with carers to ensure that you receive the most relevant information, resources and support. You will receive:

- Tailored support from your SCMSAC caseworker including regular home visits and phone calls;
- Access to a team of specialist professionals
- Emergency support from an afterhours on call service;
- Regular opportunities to participate in planning your child's care;
- Support to access respite care when you need a break;
- Access to innovative and ongoing training including information about therapeutic care, trauma and attachment, our child's developmental stage and how to best respond to their needs;
- Support to access the carer support network of your choice; and
- Links to peer support networks of SCMSAC carers in your area.

Is ongoing training compulsory? What are the requirements?

SCMSAC is committed to being a 'learning organisation'. We believe in growth and change, and open communication; so we will talk with you about the pre-authorisation training and ongoing training needs. We will discuss your needs and your goals; and agree on an approach that will support you in providing the best possible care. We will also support you to continue accessing training through the carer support organisation of your choice.

How will your agency support me financially?

At SCMSAC, carers are provided with a fortnightly tax-free financial reimbursement to cover the day-to-day expenses associated with caring for a child. The carer payment is based on a child's needs and age and is determined by the government. In certain circumstances, SCMSAC will make a financial contribution towards expenses that are linked to your child's case plan but not adequately covered by the carer payment. We will talk with you about your particular situation and come to an agreement about how to proceed.

What is your agency's approach to respite?

SCMSAC will support you to access respite care when you and your family need a break. If available we will link you with a SCMSAC respite carer who has the right skills and experience to care for the child.

You will continue to receive your carer payment while your child is in respite, as per the approved amount of respite. Respite carers will also receive a carer payment.

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• **My child is Aboriginal, what will this mean for us?**

SCMSAC is an Aboriginal Agency and we are committed to working with children in care in our communities. To support this commitment we have formed a partnership with MacKillop Family Services to build capacity of Aboriginal community controlled organisations to provide out of home care services to Aboriginal children and young people. This partnership is focused on building our capacity to grow our out of home care services and provide a high quality out of home care service on the Far South Coast.

• **Are there limits on the number of children I can care for?**

Yes, sometimes there are limits. We will talk with you about your particular situation and come to an agreement about what is in the best interests of the children you care for and your circumstances.

• **Do I need a separate bedroom for each child that I care for?**

This is our preference but we understand that children may sometimes have to share a room (particularly sibling groups). We will discuss with you and come to an agreement about what is in the best interests of the children.

• **Can I choose to use a support organisation?**

Yes, SCMSAC will support you to access the carer support organisation of your choice.

• **What if I move to another area and your agency does not cover this area?**

We will support you to transfer to the agency of your choice.

• **What is your agency's complaints policy and procedure?**

SCMSAC's suggestions and complaints brochure is included with this information package.

• **How can I contact you?**

Phone: 02 4448 0200

Email: psintake@southcoastams.org.au