Choosing a service

# **Voluntary out-of-home care checklist for families**

Parents arranging voluntary out-of-home care (VOOHC) for their child can choose organisations that best suit the needs of the child and their family. When choosing a service, families should consider the questions outlined in this checklist. The Office of the Children’s Guardian regulates voluntary out-of-home care agencies to support them to be child safe.

Agencies should take active steps to keep children and young people in their care safe. The Child Safe Standards below provide a framework to help them do this:

1. Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
3. Families and communities are informed and involved
4. Equity is upheld, and diverse needs are taken in to account
5. People working with children are suitable and supported
6. Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child focused
7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
9. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe.

The checklist on the next page suggests questions and actions that parents and guardians can use when deciding whether an agency takes child safety seriously and is suitable for their child. If you have doubts about an agency’s commitment to keeping children safe, please contact the Office of the Children’s Guardian on 02 8219 3798 or [voohc@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au](mailto:voohc@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au).

## Voluntary out-of-home care Registration

You can confirm that an organisation is registered with the Office of the Children’s Guardian to provide or arrange voluntary out-of-home care by visiting the [Find a service provider near you](https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/voluntary-out-of-home-care/find-a-service-provider-near-you) page on our website. You can also find further fact sheets about voluntary out-of-home care, the [Working With Children Check](https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/working-with-children-check) and [Child Safe Standards](https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/become-a-child-safe-organisation/child-safe-standards) on our website, including as well as [resources to help parents and carers choose people or organisations to work with their children.](https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/become-a-child-safe-organisation/child-safe-resources/parents-carers-children-disability)

If you suspect that an unregistered organisation is providing or arranging voluntary out-of-home care, please contact the Office of the Children’s Guardian on 02 8219 3798 or [voohc@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au](mailto:voohc@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au)

## Checklist

Below is a list of questions parents and carers can ask of potential voluntary out-of-home care agencies to help them determine if they are child safe.

## Confirmation of registration

Agency is registered on the [Office of the Children’s Guardian website](https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/voluntary-out-of-home-care/find-a-service-provider-near-you)

## Policies

Confirm the agency has provided information about its:

Child Safe policies

Complaint and feedback processes

Commitment statements

Staff code of conduct

Service agreement with you as a parent

## Environment

Does the care environment:

Have rooms and places that allow easy supervision by carers

Have a clean, homelike atmosphere

Have a first-aid kit, and signs explaining emergency procedures

## Staff

Does the agency

Employ staff with relevant training and experience

Provide regular supervision to support staff

Provide regular staff training

Does the agency speak with you about:

Your child’s likes and dislikes

Your child’s routines

How your child communicates

The types of support your child needs

Your child’s disability

Activities your child likes

Emergency contacts and instructions

Things your child may have difficulty with and ways to support them

How they can meet your child’s needs

How they will involve you and your child in planning and decision making

How they will respond to any incidents

How they will assess whether your child gets on with other people in the care environment (i.e. placement matching)

How your child will be inducted into the care environment

How they will communicate with you about any events that involve your child

Only employ staff to work with children if they have a Working With Children Check clearance

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## For more information about voluntary out-of-home care:

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[www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au](http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au)