



Phases of care for children

Permanent decision-making for children

Early permanency decisions for children provide certainty and stability from which a positive life can be built. Early permanency decisions are therefore vital in supporting children to thrive in their childhood and have the best possible life outcomes.

When a child comes into out-of-home care, the first permanency priority is always to safely reunify children with their parents. If this is not possible within a reasonable timeframe, the next best option is a permanent care arrangement with a family carer, foster carer or other care arrangement.

Given the importance of early decision-making for children, it is important that all members of a child's care team (including the child's parents and family, carer, case worker and others) have a clear understanding of a child's position on their permanency journey.

What is happening?

From 31 August 2016, all children in out-of-home care (OOHC) will be referred to as being in either *temporary care* or *permanent care*.

From this time, every child will have their phase of care identified in the Department for Child Protection and Family Support's *Assist database*. The child's phase of care will also be auto-populated into important Assist documents such as referral forms.

Phase of care	Definition	Orders included
 Temporary care	The phase of OOHC where the Department is assessing if reunification with the parents is likely and no court decision has been made for the long-term care of a child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provisional Protection and Care • Protection Order (Time-Limited) • Negotiated Placement Agreements • Placement Service • Pre-Adoptive Placement
 Permanent care	The phase of OOHC where a court order has been made for a child to remain in the long-term legal care of the Department, or with people other than their biological parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection Order (until 18) • Protection Order (special guardianship) • Adoption Order

How will this benefit children in out-of-home care?

- Support a child's care team to plan for that child on their permanency journey.
- Further reinforce the importance of early decision-making for children.
- Reduce care arrangement changes by supporting the matching of children with carers who are motivated and able to provide temporary and/or permanent care.
- Support the increase of permanent carers in the OOHC system, by clearly articulating the children that require permanent care.

What do I need to do?

Be aware of the changes, and start using the language.

You can find more about temporary and permanent phases of care in the Casework Practice Manual in Chapter 10.1.

For information about the reforms, please refer to the Reform page on the Department's website (<http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/ChildreninCare/Pages/OOHCReform.aspx>).