

Transferring to a different carer support agency



Government of South Australia
Department for Child Protection

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As a carer, you must be affiliated with a carer support agency. This is in line with departmental policy. In certain circumstances, you may want to transfer to a different support agency. This could be for a variety of reasons, including:

- moving to a new geographical location
- changing support needs for you and/or your current placement
- you are interested in providing a different type of care
- your preference is to be linked to a different support service (subject to any existing disputes being resolved, see below)

Agency transfers are generally initiated by carers, but they could also be requested by the current support agency or a Department for Child Protection (DCP) office. No matter who requests the transfer, everyone follows these practice guidelines.

Before a transfer can take place

Your current support agency is required to resolve any outstanding matters that relate to your approval status before a transfer is accepted by the new support agency. Depending on the nature of these unresolved matters, this can impact how long it takes for a transfer to be finalised.

Unresolved matters can include:

- Care concerns
- Lapsed clearances
- Any matter that has meant your approval status has been subjected to conditions preventing new placements.

Where there is an existing dispute of any nature, it is highly recommended this is resolved prior to the transfer taking effect but this will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

If you are a general foster carer wishing to transfer to a specialist service, you are required to undertake any new assessments and training prior to approval as a specialist carer. This will be organised by the new specialist support agency and must be approved by DCP prior to the transfer being finalised.

What should I do first?

If you are seeking to transfer to a different support agency, you should first discuss your intention to transfer with your current support agency and determine if there are any outstanding matters that need to be addressed.

If there are, you should work with your support agency to address any matters, remembering timeframes will vary depending on the nature of the matter.

If there are no unresolved matters, you (or your support agency on your behalf) can make contact with your preferred new support agency to find out more about them, including any new requirements for assessment and training.

You will also need to provide written consent for the exchange and release of information between your existing and new support agency.

What will my current support agency do?

Your current support agency will make sure the latest review of your carer household provides a current picture of your circumstances.

If a review is due in the next three months, the review report will be completed as part of the handover to your new support agency.

They will also make sure:

- your approval is active and not subject to conditions preventing new placements from being made
- screening clearances are in place for all adults in your household
- all mandatory training is up to date and in line with approval requirements
- you are provided with ongoing support until the transfer process is completed and accepted by the new support agency.

What can I expect from my new support agency?

Your new support agency will meet with you and your household to discuss the transfer request.

They will make sure you have provided written consent for information sharing between support services and will obtain a carer reference (or a summary of caring history) from your current support service if a review is not due within the next three months.

They will also make sure there are no unresolved matters relating to your approval.

If you have a child currently placed in your care, they will consider the funded capacity of their service to take over the support of any existing placement/s as well as any contractual conditions in their current service agreement.

They will also review your current approval conditions with you to make sure these match your capacity and will support you to meet their specific requirements like assessments or training.

Once your new support agency is satisfied that all requirements have been met, they will:

- negotiate transfer arrangements, including the secure transfer of your file from your current support agency
- provide details of the transfer to the DCP Carer Approval and Review Unit (CARU) including any requests to amend the carer approval conditions (if applicable).

DCP Carer Approval and Review Unit (CARU)

The Carer Approval and Review Unit will:

- process properly made transfer requests within one business day
- provide written advice to your existing support agency
- provide updated Approval Confirmation documentation to your new support agency, including a copy to you.

There are instances where support agency transfers are not deemed suitable, either by a support agency or DCP CARU. If this is the case, the reasons why the transfer is not suitable will be clearly communicated by your support agency.

What if my support agency recommends transferring to a new service?

On rare occasions, a support agency might be unable to continue providing support to you.

Before informing the department, the agency must try to resolve the issues affecting your working relationship.

The support agency will communicate these issues with you via a face-to-face meeting and provide you with a rationale for why they recommend your transfer in writing. You will have time to respond and address these issues – sometimes mediation might be needed to resolve these differences.

If these issues cannot be rectified, your agency will need to demonstrate to the department that exceptional circumstances exist and that these are unable to be resolved between you.

They will then help you to identify a new support agency and will continue to support you until the transfer is complete.

Who can I speak to if I have questions?

If you need further clarification or support to explore a transfer to a different support agency, please make contact with your current support worker or agency in the first instance.

If you are unable to gain clarification or support from your current agency, please make contact with your DCP case worker who will consult with DCP CARU on your behalf to gain further advice.