

Provision of Information to Care Leavers Guideline

Overview

If you are a care leaver, you are able to get information about you or your time in care from the Department for Child Protection (DCP).

Care leavers are people who lived in out of home care, including foster care or residential care, when they were children.

If you are a grandparent, parent, child or grandchild of a care leaver who has passed away, you can also access information about your relative and their time in care.

DCP understands the importance of having access to your personal information or information about your family members. We will work with you or your representative to help you obtain it.

This guideline will help you get the records or information you would like from DCP. It contains general information about the process and links to the forms you need to complete so that we can help you with your request.

It is important to have support

Searching for information about your time in out of home care can sometimes be a difficult experience. The documents you obtain may contain information that you find upsetting. Sometimes, these records contain words and opinions of people that we all now consider to be hurtful and wrong.

We strongly encourage all care leavers to seek support as part of this process. There are good professional support services available to help you, including free post care support services. You can find out more about those services [here](#).

Further assistance

If you have any questions about the process or you need assistance in seeking information, please contact the DCP Freedom of Information Team:

Telephone: 82264399

Email: DCP.FOI@sa.gov.au

Postal address: Freedom of Information Team
Department for Child Protection
GPO Box 1072
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Alternative accessible formats of this information are also available upon request.

Application process

Who can apply to access documents and information held by DCP?

You can apply to DCP to access documents and information if you are a:

- care leaver over the age of 18
- grandparent, parent, child or grandchild of a care leaver who has passed away
- a representative of a care leaver who has the care leaver's permission to apply (an 'authorised representative').

What documents or information can I request?

DCP may hold a range of documents or information relating to you or your time in care. This might include:

- birth certificate or passport
- religious certificates
- certificates of achievement
- education and training reports
- correspondence addressed to you
- medical or health information
- photographs
- other reports or records.

In your application, you are able to describe the documents or information you would like and we will try to find it for you.

How do I make an application?

To make an application, please fill out an [application form](#) and send it to the DCP Freedom of Information team by [email](#) or by post. You can also send a written request in a different form stating that you are seeking documents and information pursuant to section 153 of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*.

Along with your application form, you will also need proof of your identity. If you are applying for information about a deceased family member, you will have to provide evidence of your relationship to that person and evidence of their death. If you are applying as an authorised representative, you will need a signed consent to act on behalf of a care leaver or close family member and provide us with proof of identity of the care leaver on their behalf.

Will I have to pay for this service?

No. This service is a free service provided by DCP.

What happens when DCP receives an application?

After DCP has received your application, DCP will send you a confirmation letter and let you know how long we expect the process will take. If we need more information or we assess that your application will take a significant amount of work to process, we will contact you as soon as possible to discuss your application further. When we are clear about your application, we will search our records to find the relevant documents or information.

How long will my application take to process?

DCP aims to process all applications received within 30 days. However, an application may take up to 90 days to process due to the:

- size of the request
- need to undertake further research or retrieve records from our archives
- need to seek further information or clarification of the request.

DCP will process applications in the order they are received. However, applications will be treated as a priority if:

- you are seeking information to support a National Redress Scheme application
- you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander on your application form
- there are important medical, compassionate or legal reasons for prioritising your application
- provision of documents or information are necessary for you to access other services.

If your application is urgent, please contact the Freedom of Information team directly to discuss it so that we can help you.

Release of documents and information

How will I receive my documents or information?

All original documents such as birth certificates, passports, certificates, reports, correspondence and photographs will be provided to you as originals. Copies will be retained by DCP for our records. Other documents will be provided to you in paper or electronic form (ie by email or USB), depending on your preference.

We will also provide you with a decision notice that will tell you about the search process and give you a full list of all documents and information released to you.

What happens if documents or information relating to my application cannot be found?

If documents or information related to your application cannot be found, we may contact you to seek further information so that further searches can be conducted. If we still can't locate relevant documents, we will contact you to discuss the possible reasons why they are unable to be located.

Reasons for not providing information or documents or providing information in redacted form

While we will do our best to provide you with as much information as we can, sometimes we may be unable to release certain documents or we will need to redact (ie block out) parts of documents before giving them to you. This is done for important reasons, such as protecting the privacy of other people.

When we provide you with the information you have requested, we will tell you if this has happened and provide you with reasons in the decision notice. If you have questions about this, you can contact the Freedom of Information Team and we will discuss it with you.

Review and complaints

If you are unhappy with a decision made by officers of DCP in relation to your application, you are able to seek a review of the decision by the Chief Executive of DCP or make a complaint about the service you have received.

Review

To apply for a review of the decision, you must submit the internal review form within 30 days of receiving the decision notice and set out your reasons for disagreeing with the decision to the Freedom of Information Team:

Email: DCP.FOI@sa.gov.au

Postal address: Freedom of Information Team
Department for Child Protection
GPO Box 1072
ADELAIDE SA 5001

After you have made an application for review, the Chief Executive may confirm, vary or reverse the decision.

Complaints

If you would like to make a complaint about the service you have received, you can make a complaint to:

DCP Feedback and Complaints Unit

You can make a complaint directly to DCP by completing our [online complaint form](#) or by contacting us directly:

Complaints and Feedback Management Unit
Department for Child Protection
GPO Box 1072
Adelaide SA 5001
Telephone: 1800 003 305

Ombudsman SA

You can make a complaint to Ombudsman SA by filling out the [online complaint form](#) or by contacting the office directly:

Ombudsman SA
PO Box 3651
RUNDLE MALL SA 5000
(08) 8226 8699 or 1800 182 150 (outside metro SA only)