

Children's Out of Home Care Advocacy Service

Legal Aid NSW

INFORMATION SHEET

What is the Children's Out of Home Care Advocacy Service?

We are an interdisciplinary team at Legal Aid NSW (LANSW) who work with children and young people in out of home care (OOHC). The Children's OOHC Advocacy Service¹ includes specialist youth caseworkers, an Aboriginal Field Officer and lawyers with expertise in civil and care and protection law. The pilot service has been established to provide specialist socio-legal services to meet the needs of Children and Young People in OOHC. We are initially focusing on prioritising assisting children and young people in Alternative Care Arrangements (ACA), Individual Placement Arrangements (IPAs) and other High Cost Emergency Arrangements (HCEA). However, we may also be able to assist young people in other OOHC placements and arrangements depending on their needs and our team capacity.²

DCJ recognises that children and young people in OOHC have a range of rights,³ including the right: to be safe; to be connected to family, community and culture; to make choices about everyday matters and actively participate in decisions affecting their life; to access services which promote health and wellbeing; and to ask for help.

The Children's OOHC Advocacy Service is a free, voluntary, independent, confidential service for children and young people in OOHC. The service is designed to work in partnership with caseworkers, DCJ and OOHC providers to support children and young people to improve their experience in OOHC and enhance their wellbeing. It is not our aim to duplicate or replace the work the caseworkers are already doing, but to work together with caseworkers and other service providers to improve the outcomes and experiences for children and young people living in out of home care.

What can we help children and young people in OOHC with?

The service is designed to help and support children and young people to understand their rights, actively participate in decision-making about their lives, and to advocate for their needs and rights to be met and upheld in OOHC. Our work is guided by children and young people.

Some of the things we could help with include: negotiating contact with their family members, advocating for access to the things or services they may need (including for example, NDIS, aftercare planning or income support) or assisting to address any issues they may have with their placement.

¹ Name subject to change following consultation with children and young people with lived experience.

² Please contact us by phone or email to discuss the young persons needs and our capacity.

³ [Your rights as a child or young person in care | Communities and Justice](#)

How does it work?

We work in consultation with and are led by our clients. We encourage children and young people to connect with us to understand what we do and explore whether we can help them.

When a child or young person contacts us or is referred to us for assistance, we meet with them to identify and explore any legal issues or wellbeing concerns they may be experiencing in OOHC and explain how we can assist.

We aim to support children and young people to make informed decisions about options for resolution. We focus on working collaboratively with the child or young person to find creative solutions and recognise that resolution will not always be reached through legal advocacy, or legal advocacy alone.

Children and young people may be assisted by an Aboriginal Field Officer and/or a specialist youth caseworker as well as a lawyer.

If there are issues we can't help with, we will try to find someone else who can help.

Children and young people are not obliged to have any ongoing involvement with the service after the initial appointment and can end their involvement with us at any time.

How can I refer a child or young person?

If you are working with a child or young person in OOHC who has an unmet legal need or is expressing concern about their experience in OOHC you can refer them to us with their agreement. You do not need to define the exact legal issues or problem in the referral form or email.

There are a few ways you can refer a child and young person to us:

- Fill out our referral form and send direct to the HCEA Squad who will forward to us. The email to forward the referral form to is: AllocationsHCEASU@dcj.nsw.gov.au.

If you are not sure if we will be able to assist a child or young person you are working with, please reach out to us - we are happy to talk to you about possible referrals in more detail on the phone.

Our contact details

If you have any enquiries, please contact the service direct on:

Email: YourVoiceAdvocacyService@legalaid.nsw.gov.au

Phone: (02) 9068 1789