



**My Forever
Family NSW**

Newsletter | July 2019

Welcome to the July edition of the My Forever Family newsletter.

. In this edition you'll notice we have our training sessions set up until December 2019. Please have a look at the calendar below for sessions near you. We also have Online Training available, at your convenience.

We celebrated NAIDOC Week earlier this month, and were fortunate enough to support the Nuru Surf Gathering in Coffs Harbour – a fantastic event with very talented surfers!

Make sure you send in your story for your chance to win two books from our great library. We're always looking for stories to inspire people to take on various types of care. We want to hear from you no matter what type of care you provide.

We hope you enjoy this edition. Thank you for being part of the My Forever Family NSW journey, and caring for kids.

Peter Goslett

Head of Operations & Advocacy

NARU SURF GATHERING

The annual Nuru Surf Gathering is all about good vibes and grass roots Indigenous surfing. And that's exactly what happened on the weekend of the 6th July, as professional, and coming, surfers took part in the competition.

The annual Gathering began just two years ago to mark 20 years since the passing of passionate Aboriginal Surfer Eric Mercy who travelled worldwide representing Aboriginal Surfing in the 80s and 90s. The Nuru Surf Gathering is a community friendly NAIDOC event celebrating the ocean and all the benefits that come along with it.

My Forever Family was fortunate to support such a fantastic event, and we look forward to continuing to support community groups.

Image: Men's Winner, Otis Carey



TV SOAP SPARKS A CARING HEART

Watching TV soap 'Home and Away' as a 10-year-old seeing Pippa and Tom take in displaced and needy kids helped ignite South West Sydney man, Mohamed Ejje's, heart to care for children in foster care.

However, Mohamed is a highly spiritual man and is quick to add that he's no fan of 'Home and Away' now because unlike 25 years ago it is fairly loose on morality.

Mohamed begins his interview lamenting that his wife Lorraine was unable to join in because she was busy taking one of their seven daughters to an appointment with a speech therapist.

Lorraine is the love of Mohamed's life, they married when she was just 19 years old and he 20.

The couple, who are strongly committed to their Muslim faith, have been together for 17 years and during that time have had six biological girls and three years ago gave a permanent home to their five-year-old foster daughter.

Mohamed says the family started their journey as carers after a friend sent them a call out for a Muslim family to take three siblings in care and who were about to go to a non-Muslim family.

At first they found they were unable to apply because of a rule about not having a child of their own under the age of two. But they later went on to become authorised carers in June 2016 after the rules changed a few years later.

Since then Mohamed says the couple have had so many short-term placements and respite placements there are too many children to count. He said they opened their home to children from all backgrounds, Indian, Lebanese, Filipino and Anglo Australian – Muslim and non-Muslim.

But when a little girl came to them for a four-week placement, with nothing but the clothes on her back and shoes that didn't even fit, she captured the hearts of the whole family and didn't leave.

She was two when she came into care and had a significant speech delay, potentially due to having experienced trauma.

But since being with the Ejjes she has flourished.

"She's a special child in our house, all of us love her and her cheeky personality," says Mohamed.

He offers some words of encouragement to other carers about their fostering journey.

"Don't give up and give them the benefit of the doubt," he says.

He says he would be so proud and delighted if any of his daughters grew up and said they wanted to become carers.

"I would fully support it if they said they wanted to be carers just like mum and dad," he says.

COMMUNITY SERVICE CHECK UPDATES

Checking process

The process for the authorisation of carers requires the completion of a Community Services Check. Information Exchange within FACS carries out the CS check for all NGOs, except for carers who transfer from FACS to an NGO.

The check is comprehensive and must be thorough for the sake of the safety of children and young people.

A CS check includes:

- a check on their name and any aliases
- close spellings with similar histories
- last 10 years of addresses where people have lived
- any children associated with that person (either through birth or children in their care)
- FACS Reportable Conduct Unit (if they have been a FACS carer in the past)
- FACS Professional Conduct Unit (if they have been a FACS employee)

Some records can be released, but many cannot for legal reasons. FACS summarises these in a report.

FACS receives approximately 280 requests per month for CS checks from NGOs for new carers and their households.

What FACS looks for

Information Exchange look for any relevant information (including adverse and non-adverse) which could help an NGO make an assessment. This could include Risk of Significant Harm report, investigations, etc.

Time frames

- FACS have allocated extra staff to probity checking work and with the exception of a couple of complex matters, are now up-to-date with probity checks for OOHC providers
- Simple matters can be completed in a day, complex matters can take a long time
- FACS will prioritise something urgent (eg child needs to be placed with them today)
- Delays can occur if further information is required from an OOHC provider therefore providing all information on the request form is vital
- FACS works to respond within 25 working days

More information

Agencies can contact information exchange if needed on **97163488** or Information.exchange@facs.nsw.gov.au

WIN 2 BOOKS BY TELLING US YOUR STORY!

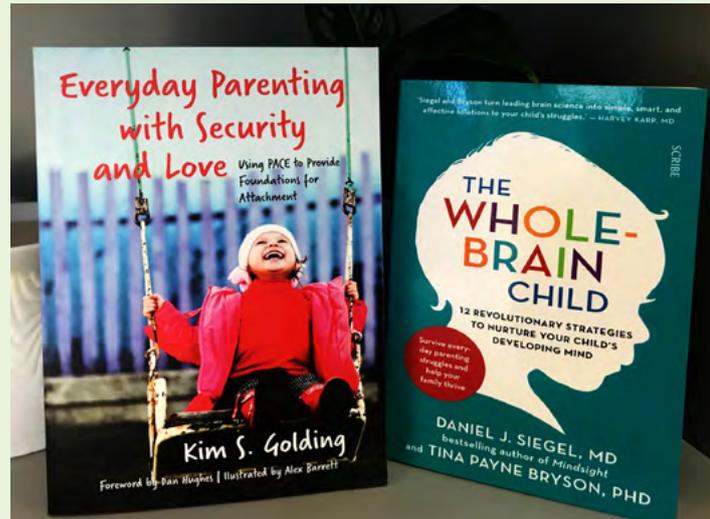
For your chance to win two books from our library, please send though your story.

Why did you become a carer? Do you speak another language? Are you a city carer? Regional carer? Do you have a child in care, or a sibling group?

We'd love to hear from you, whatever your story. Please tell us about your experience as a foster or kinship carer, guardian or adoptive parent.

We are looking for real stories from all types of people. Your story will inspire others to open their homes and their hearts to a child.

All stories will protect your identity and that of the child/children mentioned. Please send your story (up to 300 words) to: evelyn_santoro@myforeverfamily.org.au and your postal address for your chance to win!



PARENTING FEATURE

Why kids steal and how to help

When a child steals it can be concerning or even embarrassing, but if it happens it's important to remember it's not a reflection on your parenting skills.

Southern Highlands Clinical Social Worker and foster carer, Linda Burgess, says there's a host of reasons why a child may steal and if they do, it's a good idea to make them make amends for what they've done.

Why Steal?

Linda says the child in your care may steal to get attention and be noticed.

Or they may steal something that means a lot to you as a way to break the tie you have with it, or they may steal food because they fear not having enough.

"Children in care are known to steal and hide food even though they are safe and fed. It's an unconscious fear of not having enough," says Linda.

Younger children can steal as part of their natural ego centric phase – "You want it so you take it".

Sometimes anxiety can cause lack of impulse control which results in stealing.

Teens may steal for different reasons – they have a sense of entitlement, or they may want to impress their friends. There may even be a need to buy something they don't want you to know about like alcohol or condoms.

What To Do

Linda says restitution (or making them make amends) is a good way to start when dealing with stealing.

It might mean taking the item back, or if the item can't be returned getting the child to do some chores.

Don't humiliate the child, make them as secure as possible so they don't think that by stealing they may lose their foster home.

"It's more difficult with food," says Linda. "When you've been starving before and you can't feed yourself you fear hunger. You need to teach them what they can eat, how much they can eat and let them know they can eat as much as they want so they're not hungry."

You could even try to make the child feel more comfortable by providing a box of food to access so they feel some control over their food.

If the child steals things or money, talk to them about what it means and calmly explain the item has value, the person who owned it likely worked for it and they shouldn't take it away.

But if you get the child to make amends with chores ensure the punishment isn't excessive says Linda, especially for younger children.

"Don't make them pay it off over the next six months, children have a short attention span. If they pay something off for too long they may steal again," she said.

Most of all "don't give up, if they stay with you, you will see the rewards. Show them they are still loved and don't need to steal because they will always get love and approval from you," Linda said.



MFF TRAINING CALENDAR 2019

Take a look at the training sessions we have coming up – the full calendar is available until December 2019. Have a look at what training is available in your area and book your place online.

www.myforeverfamily.org.au/events

Would you like to explore Online Training? Take a look at what's available: www.myforeverfamily.org.au/page/102/online-training

[Online training](#)

FACs UPDATE: PERMISSIONS

Information regarding permissions is available at FACS' dedicated website for carers which can be found at www.caring.childstory.nsw.gov.au

Child minding and sleep overs

Carers do not need to seek permission for

- occasional baby-sitting or sleep overs at a child in their carer's friend's house. Working with Children Checks are not required in this situation.

FACS is aware that there is a misunderstanding among some carers that Working with Children Checks are required for one-off sleepovers. FACS is working with My Forever Family and through its direct communications channels to put out 'mythbusting' communications to carers and agencies to correct this misunderstanding.

Carers do need consent from their agency caseworker and/or FACS for:

- care that lasts longer than a week or that is regular in nature (eg one evening a week), whether it is professional carers, family or friends.
- care in child care service or out of school hours care if it is on a regular basis

Medical care

Carers do not need to seek permission for:

- most day-to-day medical and dental treatments for children in their care
- emergency surgery

Carers do need consent from their agency caseworker and/or FACS for:

- non-urgent surgery
- contraception and terminating a pregnancy for children under 14
- drug and alcohol rehabilitation
- end-of-life decisions
- psychiatric treatment, and
- many medical tests including DNA and HIV/AIDS.

Travel

Carers do not need to seek permission for:

- taking children on a holiday within NSW (as long as this does not interfere with family time - contact with birth family)
- day trips interstate

Carers do need consent from their agency caseworker and/or FACS for:

- travel that may interfere with family time (agency caseworker)
- overnight interstate travel (FACS)
- overseas travel and the arrangement of passports (FACS)

Education

Carers and caseworkers should work together when enrolling a child in school, whether this is the first time they are going to a primary school or high school, or if they are changing schools.

Carers do not need to seek permission for:

- most school excursions and other activities such as sporting activities and school camps

Carers do need consent from their agency caseworker and/or FACS for:

- changing the school of a child in their care
- high risk sport or activities
- school camps longer than one week.

Behaviour management

Carers cannot use 'restrictive practices' with the children in their care unless it is part of the child's behaviour support plan, for which consent is required. The behaviour support plan is developed by the caseworker in partnership with the carer and other professionals such as a psychologist. Restrictive practices include psychotropic medication, physical restraint and other disciplinary measures.

Media and photography

Carers do not need to seek permission for:

- children in their care to appear in the mainstream media, on social media, in school and other photographs (as long as it does not identify the child as being in care).

Carers do need consent from their agency caseworker and/or FACS for:

- media and photography which identifies the child as being in care

Carers must also take care that there are no safety risks to a child if they are to appear in the media. For example if a child's appearance in the media or social media may disclose their whereabouts and this information is protected, then the child or young person should not appear.

More information on permissions

A quick guide to who can make decisions in a child in care can be found at www.caring.childstory.nsw.gov.au/everyday-caring/a-quick-guide-to-decision-making

LOYALTY REWARDS PROGRAM

Reap the benefits with MFF discounts!

Authorised foster and kinship carers, guardians and people who have adopted children from out-of-home care are entitled to some great discounts when they shop!

If you sign up to the My Forever Family loyalty program you will receive discounts at major retailers – at over 1,000 retailers across NSW.

Stores include Woolworths, Coles, Caltex, Kmart, Target, Hoyts Cinemas, Bunnings, JB Hi Fi, Priceline, and David Jones to name a few.

The loyalty program with My Forever Family is open to carers from all agencies regardless of how long they have been a carer, provided they are an authorised carer at the time of registration.

www.myforeverfamily.org.au/page/94/membership-information

Join today!



SPREAD THE WORD IN YOUR COMMUNITY!

Help others to consider the foster carer path, we have over 17,000 children and young people in the foster care system in New South Wales.

Please download our posters and pin them on noticeboards in your local community groups. We also have ads you can include in school, community groups and local council newsletters. Grassroots action is the most effective!

If you need ads in picture format (jpg) just shoot Evelyn

CARER 
SUPPORT LINE
1300 782 975
Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm

CARER 
SUPPORT
enquiries@myforeverfamily.org.au
myforeverfamily.org.au

The My Forever Family NSW newsletter is produced by the Communications team.

Disclaimer: The information and advice provided in this document/website is general information. It may not apply to a particular case, and as such, must not be taken as legal advice.


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