



## Newsletter | June 2019



### Welcome to the June edition of the My Forever Family newsletter.

This month we're pleased to inform you that the MFF Loyalty Rewards program has saved our carers over \$46,000 in just six months! If you haven't already signed up for the Loyalty Rewards program please do so today. Every dollar you save on your groceries, fuel, and outings with the kids – adds up to a significant amount over a year.

The NSW Carer Survey is now live and we'd love to hear from you. Please take a few minutes to give us feedback so that we can share results with FaCs and agencies to improve the system. Tell us what's working well, and what needs looking into – together we can strive for a better outcome.

My Forever Family has also launched a number of on-line training platforms and resources recently. Please take a look on our website.

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

### MEDIA UPDATES

#### Yes, we're everywhere

It's been a busy month, with lots of media buzzing – people wanting to know more about foster care and connect with great carers who can share their stories. We've had over 15 interviews in 5 weeks ranging from local newspapers and radio to national media.

We've included a couple of snippets for you:

[Sydney Morning Herald](#); [National families Week](#)

[ABC News](#)

### WESTERN ROADSHOW

Our last Western Roadshow takes place in **Griffith** on **June 26th**, wrapping up eight weeks of roadshows for our dedicated staff members. We'd like to extend a warm thank you to the foster agencies who advertised our roadshows for us, the media who wrote up stories, and most importantly, everybody who attended our sessions.



## NSW CARER SURVEY 2019

### My Forever Family seeks your help. Take the NSW Carer Survey today!

t's just 15 minutes and is completely anonymous.

My Forever Family NSW wants to help improve the lives of carers through advice, advocacy and training. To do this we need to hear from current foster carers, relative and kinship carers with a non-government agency or FaCS, guardians and adoptive parents. The results will help us understand your experience, the support you currently receive and how the sector can support you better.

My Forever Family NSW will report back to FaCS and non-government agencies on the survey results so that they can also work on improvements to the system.

Survey is closed on 5th July.

## LOYALTY REWARDS PROGRAM

### Reap the benefits with MFF discounts!

Did you know that from the program start in November 2018, we have saved our carers \$46,000 in total on their everyday living expenses?

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

[www.myforeverfamily.org.au/page/94/membership-information](http://www.myforeverfamily.org.au/page/94/membership-information)

**Join today!**



## MFF TRAINING CALENDAR 2019

Training to be provided in 2019/20 is being publicised on our website. The six months from July to December 2019 will be up by the end of July 2019. This includes the dates for our roadshows and webinars. Have a look at what training is available in your area and book your place online.

Missed out on a webinar? No problem, go to our pre-recorded link:

[www.myforeverfamily.org.au/page/102/online-training](http://www.myforeverfamily.org.au/page/102/online-training)

**Online training**

## GROWING YOUR FAMILY, GROWING YOUR HEART

Caring for kids was always a part of our plan – but no plan can prepare you for the unimaginable joy, challenge and reward of becoming a carer.

My husband had insight into the out-of-home care system through his work in human services. It was his experiences there that opened our eyes and challenged our hearts. Once we'd seen the reality of children removed from unsafe homes – with no one to turn to and nowhere to go – we knew we had to step up and step in for these kids in crisis. As a young married couple, we made a plan: When our biological children were old enough, we'd open our doors – and our hearts – to children in out-of-home care.

We started the process when our youngest was seven years old; completing the training, moving into a bigger house and even buying a bigger car! Our first year was relatively simple – we were respite carers, welcoming children for weekends or short breaks. We enjoyed having our 'special guests' come over and our family adapted well.

After 10 months, we were asked to open our lives even more by becoming long-term carers for a group of four siblings. With three biological children already, this was a whole new world for our family. We've had phenomenal support from our community and extended family – our church even put together a meal roster to get us through those first few months – but it's been a huge adjustment!

The challenges of out-of-home care are very real – the system isn't always simple and the emotional burden is rarely light. But, while there have been struggles, the joy we've discovered in expanding our family is immeasurable.

My husband and I have discovered new levels of love and strength in our lives, learning more about resilience and empathy than we ever thought possible. Our biological children have stepped up beyond expectation too. They quickly learned that their lives had been protected and safe, and not all children get to experience that. Through sharing their parents, their belongings and their home, they became compassionate and caring mentors to their new siblings. It is my greatest joy to see their hearts expand along with our family.

The last few years with our family of nine have been filled with priceless reward. We've had the privilege of seeing these kids learn their worth and grow to trust again. Hearing their whispered feelings and fears after years of being emotionally shut down; seeing the smiles on their little faces when they achieve something new; watching them play in security and freedom... it's a profound and beautiful thing to witness.

# PARENTING FEATURE

## Anxiety in children needs calm understanding and reassurance

Anxiety is just one way exposure to trauma can manifest itself in children in out-of-home care.

Your child might be agitated, restless, throw tantrums, refuse to go places or avoid difficult situations. These are all signs they may be experiencing anxiety.

“The most important thing you can do to support a child with anxiety is to recognise these behaviours as anxiety and not misbehaviour,” says Cynthia Mifsud, Manager of Specialist Psychology Services at the Department of Family and Community Services.

### How to help

As a carer there are things you can do to help.

Staying calm is very important.

Understanding what’s behind anxiety may also assist a carer when dealing with the situation, says Cynthia.

“Anxiety is the brain’s way of keeping us safe. A fight or flight response is normal in humans in the presence of perceived risk. When the anxiety response is triggered it may cause someone to try to avoid similar situations in future,” says Cynthia

“Children in OOHC may have had past traumatic experiences that affect their ability to regulate the fear response and other emotions. So you need to understand anxiety may be more difficult for them to manage.”

### Breathe

During a state of anxiety or panic a child has trouble reasoning, so get them to manage their bodily feelings first through slow deep breathing or muscle tension exercises, Cynthia says. “Then when they are calmer encourage them to talk about their fears and explore different ways to think about the problem.”

Don’t force the child into a situation they fear, to face their fear, she says. This can make things worse.

A better way is to support the child to recognise their fear and encourage them to face a small part of what they fear.

### Get help

If anxiety continues to impact your child’s day-to-day functioning and persists it’s a good idea to get professional help.

A psychologist can help support children with appropriate interventions. Literature suggests that the use of cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) can help with anxiety. If necessary, a child psychiatrist or paediatrician may recommend medication.

## MYTH BUSTING!

**MYTH:** If a current authorised carer wants to change to another Permanency Support Program provider the new agency must complete all steps of the authorisation process again.

**TRUTH:** Agencies may use the results and outcomes of the checks completed by a previous designated agency as part of their assessment process. However, the authorising agency must review the outcome of these previous checks and make its own determination about suitability based on this.

For further clarification view the Office of the Senior Practitioner fact sheet here:

[www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/541/OCG\\_Carers\\_Register\\_fact\\_sheet\\_5.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y](http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/541/OCG_Carers_Register_fact_sheet_5.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y)

## TELL US 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) via [evelyn.santoro@myforeverfamily.org.au](mailto:evelyn.santoro@myforeverfamily.org.au)



## 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) please email us.

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

**CARER**  
SUPPORT   
[enquiries@myforeverfamily.org.au](mailto:enquiries@myforeverfamily.org.au)  
[myforeverfamily.org.au](http://myforeverfamily.org.au)

### INSTAGRAM

If you don't follow us on Instagram, you really should! Not only do we post training and webinar updates, but it's also where you'll catch our office shenanigans, foster care myths and get a chance to learn more about the team behind My Forever Family.

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.

