

Policy and Practice Advice:

The use of baby-sitters for children in out of home care

Approved By:

Effective From:

Review Date:

Legal requirement/s

- There are no legal requirements.

Practice Requirement/s

- Carers of children in out of home care are expected to exercise sound judgement when arranging for a baby-sitter for a child in their care. Carers are expected to make the same sound assessments of a baby-sitter's maturity, experience and character integrity as any good parent would do in similar situations.
- Carers must take into consideration the age, number and maturity of the children in their care, and the directions stated in their Case and Care Plans.
- The carer must consider what information the baby-sitter may need to know about the child. A baby-sitter does not need to know why the child has been placed in care or what the long term plan for the child is. However, the baby-sitter does need to know about the child's routine behaviours; likes, dislikes or phobias; any medical needs including allergies; and appropriate strategies for supporting positive behaviours.
- If the baby-sitting is to be provided in the baby-sitter's home, the out of home care provider must complete a standard home safety check on the baby-sitter's home before baby-sitting episodes occur.

Key points:

- The carer has the primary responsibility for selecting the baby-sitter. However, where possible the selection of a suitable person must include a discussion with the child about who the child feels comfortable with.
- The baby-sitter must be able to contact the carer during the babysitting period.
- The baby-sitter must also be aware of how to contact Child Protection Services if there is an emergency.
- The child's case manager must approve care by a baby-sitter that exceeds ten hours over the period of one week.
- Any costs associated with the use of a baby-sitter to care for a child in care are covered by the standard board payments for the child.

Considerations for Good Practice

- The best interests of the child must be the primary consideration if care by a baby-sitter is being considered. The child's age, length of time in the placement and capacity to be cared for by another person are factors that must be considered.

Procedures

- The case and care planning process should include discussions about the child's experiences during periods that a baby-sitter has cared for the child.

Research/History/Information

- The Victorian Child Safety Commissioner developed the information booklet Proper care when you are not there or parents and carers in 2007.

http://www.ocsc.vic.gov.au/publications/parents_resources.htm