



Support and Supervision

A guide for Carers

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Support and supervision is an opportunity and a responsibility

Having an intentional approach to support and supervision for you helps us work together in the best interests of children, young people and families. It is consistent with the Life Without Barriers values of building relationships, using our imagination, being courageous, responsive and respectful. It's a responsibility we all share, and an opportunity to reflect, learn and help children do well.

The Life Without Barriers key worker who supports you and the child or young person in your care is your supervisor (you might know them as a case manager, case coordinator, or child and family practitioner). In this document and in other resources about Carer support and supervision, we refer to this staff member as a 'Carer supervisor'

The Four Functions of Support and Supervision

SUPPORT

The support function is about supporting you in your caring role. For example: talking through difficult times and linking you to peer support.



ACCOUNTABILITY

Being a carer is a huge responsibility. Support and supervision helps to prioritise goals so you know where to focus. It keeps us all accountable to the rules that exist for carers throughout Australia and most importantly to the children and families we support.



TEAMWORK

You are not alone caring for the children that live with you. We need to keep you well informed and listen to your opinions so we can work together to achieve better outcomes for children.



LEARNING

Supervision creates opportunities for learning and exploring new ways of doing things. For example: developing the skills you need to apply our practice models – CARE and Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Families.



When's your next supervision?

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What might Support and Supervision look like in real life?

All of the four tasks or functions of support and supervision are important. You might be someone who enjoys the learning function such as reading and doing training. Other people may value emotional support. You and your supervisor can adapt the focus to make sure your needs are met, and all four functions are included in your support and supervision over time.

This table gives you a bit more information about what the four functions are and some things for you to think about in preparation.

SUPPORT	ACCOUNTABILITY	LEARNING	TEAMWORK
<i>Children need me to be supported so I can give them my best.</i>	<i>There are rules to follow and tasks to get done.</i>	<i>What do the children need me to know and practice?</i>	<i>Are we all working together in the best interests of children?</i>
Supervision gives me time and permission for self-care. It's about emotional support e.g. talking through difficult times and linking to peer support.	Being a carer is a huge responsibility. Supervision helps prioritise tasks and keeps me and other team members accountable to the rules that exist for carers and most importantly, to children and families.	Supervision creates opportunities for me to learn and explore new ways of doing things e.g. developing skills to apply concepts from our CARE model or practicing crisis intervention responses from TCI-F.	I am not alone – I'm part of a team. Supervision keeps me informed about initiatives and changes. I can also give feedback about what is working well for children and what needs to change.

You might like to think about:

- How am I feeling?
- How are my energy levels?
- Do I need some self-care?
- What do I need from LWB to make things easier?
- Are there some tough times or successes to talk through?
- What's my social support network like at the moment?
- Is my home meeting the house safety requirements?
- Are there any changes in my household I need to share?
- Is the child's case plan on track?
- Do I need any resources?
- What are my strengths and what can I build on?
- Do I need any training?
- Do I need to practice CARE or TCI-F skills to build my confidence?
- What experiences do I want to 'unpack' and reflect on?
- Are the expectations of me as a Carer clear to me?
- Do I feel well informed about organisation changes?
- Do I need to give or receive feedback?
- Do I feel like a valued member of the team?



Making the most of support and supervision



It's all about relationships

Support and supervision at LWB is designed to be a respectful relationship-based process.

Routine emails, phone-calls and catch-ups are all opportunities to work together and are part of the supervision relationship. It is your supervisor's job to be available to you to ask questions, discuss issues and provide you with information.

There will also be time (about once a month) for more structured, in-depth conversation that will usually take place during home visits.

What gets written down?

Much of what is discussed in supervision is not written down and stored by LWB. However, we do need to record that supervision has happened and any agreed actions.

These notes help us keep track of agreements and inform your annual Carer review. You can read supervision notes and of course you can also read and comment on reviews. You might also choose to keep your own notes.

Explaining supervision to children

Children may be curious about supervision or they may feel excluded or anxious. Their age and level of understanding will influence how supervision is explained. One suggestion is to explain that it's about how important they are and making sure we are all doing our best to take care of them.

As children mature their participation in decision making is important. Participation can be encouraged in a range of ways, e.g. they can suggest things that you or LWB may need to learn or change. Children and young people will also be asked their views about carer reviews and other processes such as case planning.

What if you feel the support and supervision is not helpful?

Have a think about what you need, then have an honest conversation with your supervisor. Carer supervisors need to be open to feedback and there are resources to help you provide this constructively. If you feel you can't approach your supervisor, then you can ask their manager or another senior LWB staff member. You can also make a complaint or raise a concern through our website or email lwbcarers@lwb.org.au.

Your feedback is important and valued by LWB.



CARE & TCI-F

At LWB our practice model for all our work with children and families is CARE. CARE helps us create the conditions for children to heal, develop and grow. Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Families (TCI-F) gives us the tools and skills we need to support children in a way that reduces their stress and increases their sense of safety. It also helps us to teach children new ways to regulate their emotions and behaviours.

Below are some examples of possible support and supervision discussion topics and how the six CARE principles and TCI-F fit.

Topic	CARE Principle	TCI-F Skill
Home routines	Ecologically oriented	Preventing crisis by creating a safe and secure environment
Relationships with child's family	Family involved	Understanding that families are the most influential people in children's worlds
Carer learning opportunities	Competence centred	Developing strategies to help children when they are using pain based behaviours.
Building discussions on pain-based behaviour	Trauma informed	Understanding triggers and what children's behaviours tell us about their needs.
Building an attachment with children	Relationship based	Building safe and trusting relationships to help children learn, heal and do well.
Realistic expectations for children	Developmentally focussed	Teaching children skills through negotiating experiences

Keep the four functions in mind while you work with your supervisor. If you feel you are not getting a balance of all four functions, please say so. For example, you may feel you need more support or that you are not getting the opportunity to learn new knowledge and skills that will help you care for children. Of course you won't address each function every time you meet or talk with your supervisor, but good support and supervision has a balance of all four functions over time.



What other supports are available for Carers?

Carer supervisors are not the only support that Carers have. In fact, it's important you have support from a range of places. Other supports open to LWB Carers are:

- the Hub Home Provider or constellation member if you are part of a Mockingbird Family™
- 24-hour on call assistance from your local team
- access to information 24/7 via [The Caring Space](#)
- peer support forums – face to face and online; internal and external to LWB
- [Foster Care Associations](#) in your state or territory
- Information and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people including [SNAICC](#) and [AbSec](#)
- your own personal social and family support networks
- confidential counselling through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

When is your next support and supervision session?

