PROCEDURE

Title: Emergent accommodation
Number: CPD631-1

Purpose
This procedure guides staff in the use of emergent accommodation to provide temporary accommodation for a child in out-of-home care for whom no other placement option is immediately available.

Emergent accommodation is the overnight and short-term use of commercial accommodation sites such as motels, hotels and caravan parks, to provide care and support to children in circumstances where there is the unforeseen need for an out-of-home care placement for a child and no other placement option is immediately available. Refer to the associated policy for information on eligibility and scope.

Process
The Child Safety Practice Manual, chapter 5, Children in out-of-home care, sets out the procedures for placing and supporting children in out-of-home care. Where emergent accommodation is utilised for a child in out-of-home care, the following procedures also apply.

1. Secure approval for placement in emergent accommodation

Emergent accommodation may be utilised as a temporary measure only where all alternatives have been exhausted, including:
- exploring the child’s family networks for a prospective kinship carer
- placement with a departmentally supported carer
- placement with a grant funded non-government placement service (with additional placement support if necessary)
- a placement with a non-government placement service funded through child related costs – placement funding.

To obtain approval for the use of emergent accommodation:
- the CSSC Manager will request approval from the Regional Director verbally or by-email
- the Regional Director will request approval from the Regional Executive Director for any children aged 11 years or younger, verbally or by e-mail.

The approving officer may grant approval either verbally or by e-mail.

Emergent accommodation may only be approved for up to seven consecutive nights. Extension beyond seven nights must be approved by the Regional Executive Director, regardless of the
child’s age, and may not exceed 20 nights in total. Extension beyond seven nights may only be approved where there is clear evidence that no suitable placement for the child is available.

Where a child requires placement in emergent accommodation after hours, the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre will request approval from the Duty Executive Officer. The period of emergent accommodation may only continue until the next business day, at which time the child must be placed elsewhere or the CSSC must seek approval for the continued use of emergent accommodation.

Approval for the funding of placements in emergent accommodation is a separate process (see below, 4. Secure approval for funding the use of emergent accommodation).

2. Provide the child with accommodation and direct care

Children must be provided direct care for the duration of the placement. The CSSC Manager will decide the level and nature of the care to be provided, taking into consideration the child’s age, development, strengths and needs, and the presence of any risk factors.

Direct care may be provided by departmental officers or workers employed or contracted by the non-government placement service with which the child is placed. Direct care workers, who are not departmental officers, must hold a valid blue card or blue card exemption notice from the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. As far as is practicable, the department will consider the child’s views about the gender of direct care workers and give preference to workers with an established and positive relationship with the child.

The accommodation chosen and the actions of direct care workers must respect the child’s right to privacy.

When emergent accommodation is being utilised for a child, the CSO must:

- inform direct care workers of their role and obligations under the Child Protection Act 1999 (in particular the Statement of Standards (section 122) and the Charter of Rights for a Child in Care (Schedule 2))
- provide direct care workers with adequate information about the child to enable them to fulfil their direct care roles
- provide support to direct care workers for the duration of the emergent accommodation
- provide the child with information about all matters affecting them in the placement and giving them opportunities to be involved in decision making
- monitor the child’s safety and wellbeing while in emergent accommodation, including the direct care and behaviour support strategies implemented by direct care workers
- record the details of the emergent accommodation placement (see below)
- locate an appropriate alternative placement for the child as soon as possible, in collaboration with the Placement Services Unit, and support the child’s transition into that placement

3. Record the use of emergent accommodation

Record the placement in a case note in a placement event in ICMS, and include:

- details of the non-government placement service with which the child is placed (where applicable), including its license status
• details of all direct care workers, including full names, contact details, Blue Card number and expiry date (except for departmental officers), and the time periods for which they provided direct care of the child
• the names of any other non-government placement services by which the direct care workers are employed or contracted, or with which they are affiliated.

4. Secure approval for funding the use of emergent accommodation

Placements with non-government services using emergent accommodation will be funded through child related costs – placement funding. Procedures for the use of this funding are in the *Child related costs – placement funding* policy and procedure.

Where placement in emergent accommodation is approved after hours and is funded through child related costs – placements, the CSSC is responsible for seeking approval for the funding on the next business day.

Where direct care is provided entirely by departmental officers, and no non-government placement service has been engaged to care for the child, the costs of the placement will be met through child related costs (for expenses for the child) and through staff salaries (for labour costs). Refer to the relevant child related costs policies for expenses relating to the child’s care.

5. Provide information to Child Safety After Hours Service Centre

Within 24 hours of a decision to use emergent accommodation for a child, or where it is likely that a child will require an placement in emergent accommodation after hours, provide relevant information to the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre via the *Child Safety After Hours Service Centre: After hours referral* form. Include the information listed above under Recording requirements, as far as it is available at the time.

6. Respond to any matters of concern

Any matters of concern raised about the quality of care provided by the direct care workers of a non-government placement service will be responded to accordance with the Assessing and responding to matters of concern policy and the *Child Safety Practice Manual*, chapter 9, *Matters of concern*.

Any concerns raised in relation to the quality of care provided by departmental officers are not within the scope of matters of concern and will be addressed through the department’s human resource processes.
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Office: Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
Help Contact: Child Protection Development

Links

Legislation
Child Protection Act 1999
Family Services Act 1987
Financial Accountability Act 2009

Policy and procedure
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