



CASE PLANS

Case plans and case plan reviews are required under the Act. A case plan outlines the significant decisions for the child or young person. A case plan is different to a care plan, which supports the day-to-day care of the child or young person.

A case plan occurs:

- within 21 days following the substantiation of child protection concerns, or
- six weeks after the making of a protection order,
- when there are significant changes to the child or young person's circumstances.

A case plan must include one of the objectives, which are listed in order of preference, being:

- family preservation – ensuring that a child or young person who is in the care of a parent remains in their care
- family reunification – ensuring that a child or young person who has been removed from the care of a parent is returned to their parent's care
- adoption – a child or young person's adoption under the Adoption Act 1984 (there are very few adoptions in Victoria)
- permanent care – arranging a permanent care placement of a child or young person with a permanent carer or carers
- long-term out-of-home care – placing a child or young person in a stable long-term placement with a specified carer or carers, or another suitable long-term care arrangement if this is not possible.

A case plan outlines what is required to meet the needs of the child or young person. It covers the significant decisions about their:

- care arrangements
- contact with their parents and siblings, and other family members
- cultural support
- childcare, education or employment
- healthcare
- developmental needs
- financial decisions
- other significant decisions, such as crisis management.

Children and young people placed in out-of-home care must have a case plan and these are reviewed annually at a minimum. The case plan is prepared following substantiation – when a child or young person is found to be in need of protection.

The child or young person's case manager is responsible for developing the case plan, which is then endorsed by the case planner. Where appropriate, the child or young person, their parents, you the carer, the agency and relevant professionals have input into developing the case plan with child protection or the authorised Aboriginal agency.

The Act states that you should be consulted as part of the decision-making process and given an opportunity to contribute to the process. Your role in contributing to the case plan is particularly important where you have vital information about the child or young person in your care.

The child or young person's case manager must, according to the Act, provide information to the parents about the child or young person, unless they are over 12 years old and do not consent to this, or it is not in the best interest of the child or young person to do so. There are also times when the Court orders against this

REQUESTING A REVIEW OF CASE PLANNING DECISIONS BY CHILD PROTECTION

- **The review process applies to all decisions made by child protection as part of the decision-making process for children and young people involved with child protection, including case planning decisions. This does not apply to decisions of a Court, such as court ordered access arrangements, which must be appealed to a higher Court.**
- **A parent, a child or young person, or a person directly affected by a child protection decision, who has a significant relationship with the child or young person, may request access to the internal departmental review process.**
- **This can include carers, in some instances, and may involve a review of decisions around care arrangements, contact arrangements, and involvement of other agencies and services with the child or young person.**
- **To request a review of a case planning decision by child protection, you should speak to the child or young person's child protection worker or agency case manager or their manager.**