

Fact Sheet - Operating a successful FDC business

Family day care (FDC) is home based business where care and education of under school age and school age children occurs in a family home. In Queensland the State Government has set a ratio of adult to children in all children services. In family day care the ratio is, no more than 7 children, with a limit of 4 under school age children, including your own under school age children.

Many carers have 4 children under school age each day and 3 before and after school, school age children, which does not include your own school age children as they are not included in the (ratio) numbers; for example you may have 2 under school age children in care and 2 of your own under school age children and 3 school age children plus your own school age children.

Providing school age care will require a vehicle with the capacity to deliver and collect children from school and can also cater for all other under school aged children to be seated in appropriate child restraints. Or if you live close to a school then the capacity to walk to and from school daily, taking into consideration the ages of under school aged children and weather conditions.

Carers in Queensland must be registered with a FDC Scheme able to service the region where they live. In some cases, more than one scheme in your region and it is suggested when determining which scheme you will become registered with that you investigate carer levies, resources and equipment availability cost involved, training offered and parent levy charges, as these aspects will impact on your starting costs and fees charged to your clients (parents).

It is the Scheme Coordination Unit staff that will determine your suitability as a family day care Carer with any scheme. Your request to join the scheme will be considered after the initial interview which will include the Coordination Unit Staff gaining an understanding of your experience with caring for children, your commitment to professional development and how well your values fit with the philosophical approach of the schemes mission and values, they will of course share with you some of the basic requirements needed to join their team of Carers.

If you are successful in this initial process and you feel confident with your decision to begin the induction process the staff will commence the next stage. The next stage is the induction process, this will differ from scheme to scheme however usually includes a preliminary in-depth interview with the prospective Carer, a visit to your home to ascertain suitability and provide you with feedback on any (safety) changes necessary so you are aware of requirements upfront, this is then followed by an interview with your family members to ensure they are fully aware of the commitment required by family members in operating a family day care business in your family home. This is a crucial part of the process as it is often the family members which most struggle with sharing their home and/or their mum and dad with other families and children. Once this is undertaken and both parties are comfortable with the outcome you will be guided by the time it takes to meet all the requirements below.



The 'must know's' before becoming a carer in FDC

BLUE CARDS

All Carers and all persons eighteen years of year living in the home where care is occurring, or who may visit regularly or come into contact with children in the care of individual carers outside the home are required in Queensland's Child Protect Act and Child Care Act 2002 to have a current positive Working with Children 'Blue Card' – this is an extensive criminal report check to ensure the Carer, her family and all persons children have regular contact with do not have any history of child abuse or other offence deemed to put children at risk of harm. For further information visit www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au – applications for cards are able to be downloaded from this site. This process takes up to 8 weeks in some cases.

SENIOR FIRST AID

It is also a requirement to hold a current senior first aid certificate before a Carer can commence operating a FDC Business.

HOME SAFETY

Home safety is a crucial aspect of operating a family day care business; each scheme will have a safety audit process. Some basic requirements include locks on cupboards where medicines, poisons, chemicals and tools are kept. You will need to consider a fire evacuation plan, water hazards safety, barriers where there are stairs and appropriate fencing of your yard.

ANIMALS

Separate or alternate area where animals are kept while children in using spaces.

GLASS & SAFETY

In some cases a glass audit is required before commencing care – you can contact True Blue – 18000672522 or another glazer companv

POOL FENCING

If you have a pool in your home you must have had the fencing certified by a surveyor and have a certificate to present to the Coordination unit.

QUALIFICATIONS

While it is not a requirement at this time to hold any qualification in the early childhood studies it is strongly suggested that carers undertake a minimum of Certificate III in Children's Services - for more information on study opportunities contact Helen Moorhouse at Source Education and Training – 38476907 .

Other requirements

- Fully stocked first aid Kit for home and vehicle.
- Safe Vehicle for transporting children, you may be required to have a safety check before commencing
- All car safety restraints must be fitted and tested before children can be seated in the vehicle
- Some schemes will have an induction process which requires Carers to attend a number of training sessions; these will help you with aspects such as child development, planning for children and understanding the legal aspect and obligations of caring for children.
- The Child Care Act 2002 requires all poisonous plants to be inaccessible to children. Check out the list of plants on following website. www.communities.ald.aov.au

Swimming Pools

- Many schemes will not allow the use of swimming pools including your own children swimming unless there is another adult supervising
- There is strict ratios applied to visiting any place where there is any body of water – Child Care Act 2002 & Regulation 2003

Business Considerations

- Training on the various business requirements is offered but is limited to how to complete a timesheet and marketing your business in most cases.

PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE

All FDC Schemes must ensure Carers have an appropriate level of Public Liability specific to operating a FDC business. There are several providers on the market – the scheme will have more information about this or you can visit www.fdca.com.au for more information. It is worth comparing the cost and policy conditions of the insurer before purchasing insurance.

SETTING FEES

In Queensland Carers are required to set their own fees. The scheme will assist you with information of the ranges of fees being charged across the scheme, however you will also need to consider the business costs associated with operating a FDC business – we suggest as a new Carer you speak to other Carers about business costs and taxation before you beginning the process of setting fees. It is always good marketing practice to investigate local fees at other FDC, long day care and out of school hour's services so that you are competitive in your charging practice.

There are some tools available to carers to help with fee setting and developing a budget worth considering – check on www.fdcaq.org for a list of the resources available to assist you in this task. Fees range from \$4.60 base to more than \$8.00 per child per hour depending on the socioeconomics, locality and skills of individual Carers.

INCOME

Your income will be determined by the number of children in care, hours worked and fees charged. Do not expect to have a full compliment of children from day one, this takes time and will vary due to unexpected vacancies. Ensure you make provisions in your budget for about 20% vacancy rate and you should be covered for this situation. Average figures show flexible carers can earn between \$45,000 to \$75,000 p.a

RESOURCES & EQUIPMENTS

Some schemes will have equipment available for hire or loan (fees will differ between schemes); this equipment might include prams, high chairs, cots and car seat restraints. However there are a growing number of schemes requiring carers to purchase these items before commencing care so you need to check this out prior to commencing the induction process. All equipment must meet Australian standards and in many cases the purchase of second hand equipment is prohibited as it may not meet the safety standards of FDC.

PLAYSESSION

Many schemes offer play session opportunities for Carers to attend and meet other Carers, this provides a great social experience for the children in care and networking for carers. The play session will be usually facilitated by a Coordination unit staff member, activities are based on children's interest which requires Carers input. The staff member is not there to care for children rather provide the Carer with great opportunities to see best practice in motion – role modelling the setting up of experiences, environments and will demonstrate creative ways to interact with children.

- Speak to the accountant about whether you should register for GST.
- Look at quarterly GST instalments and PAYG instalments as this helps you balance out the costs.

GRANTS

- There are grants available for FDC Carers to start up a FDC business – you will be able to find more about the criteria for funding by visiting the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations website. www.deewr.gov.au and searching for family day care start up grant.

HEALTH & AGE

The Child Care Act requires Carers to be eighteen years of age before they can be engaged by a scheme. Some services have a starting age of 21.

Carers are often required to undertake a medical check to ascertain fitness and general wellbeing before commencing and annually there after.



NETWORKING & SUPPORT

Many Schemes have the 'Buddy System' in place where new Carers are linked to more experienced Carer who may provide advise, support and suggestion with issues in the initial months relating to operating a FDC service. They will also provide role modelling and support new Carers through the first few months to ensure the transition into FDC is a positive experience. During the initial months your Coordination unit staff will visit you weekly (in most cases) and are available via the phone and email to provide additional support and advice during office hours.

PEAK BODIES

STATE BASED: In Queensland Carers may choice to join the Queensland Care Providers Association – this association supports carers with resources, advice and is a state based association which represents Carer members in leaislative matters. Membership application is available from www.acpa.org.au

NATIONAL: Family Day Care Australia is the national peak body for FDC in Australia, membership ensures you are well informed of any changes on the horizon, provides opportunities to give feedback ensuring you have a point of view on issues that relate to your business. Membership Application is available from www.fdca.com.au

CO-ORDINATION UNIT

The Coordination unit is made up of qualified Children's Services Staff – the Coordinator, their role is complex in nature die to the dual role of supporting Carers, families and children and monitoring compliance of Quality Assurance (QA), Child Care Act 2002 & Regulations 2003 and Child Care Benefit.

Primary role for families is to help families to access appropriate care to meet their needs, placement of their children with a Carer, monitors the safety of the care environment and ensure planning for children occurs as well as supporting the Carer/children interactions and experiences. Primary role for Carers is to support them in providing training opportunities, advice, resources, and support in their supervision of care for children.

The Coordinators role is pivotal in the connection between the values of the service and policies and procedures, the Coordinator will support you in meeting and maintaining best practice and in the continuous improvement process of identifying strengths and working with you to overcome barriers.

The Coordinator will visit you regularly, these are spot visits without warning in most cases as it is expected that quality care is occurring for every child every day.

FAMILY DAY CARE

Carers welcome families and their children into their life every day, we support parent in their parenting role and provide an environment able to reflect the diversity of the community in which our carers live.

