

Sharing Information with Family and Child Connect

Information for Professionals about sharing information with Family and Child Connect



Family and Child Connect is an easily accessible referral point for professionals working with children and families who need support.

Sharing information with consent

Before sharing any information about a child or family with Family and Child Connect, the family's consent should be sought. If the family has given their consent, their information may be shared with whoever they consented to share the information with and for the agreed purpose.

Sharing information without consent

If the family has NOT consented, information may only be shared for the specific purposes outlined in the information sharing provisions in Chapter 5A, Part 4 of the *Child Protection Act 1999*.

Specialist service provider

The Child Protection Act 1999 now includes a category of 'specialist service provider'. 'Specialist service providers' are defined as non-government entities funded by the Queensland or Commonwealth Government to provide services that have the primary purpose of helping children in need of protection or decreasing the likelihood of children becoming in need of protection. Family and Child

Connect services and Intensive Family Support services are considered specialist service providers.

The Act allows 'specialist service providers' to share information with each other for particular purposes, for example, a service providing support to a family will be able to share information with another service in the event that the family moves from one part of the state to another. It also means that a service that was previously working with a family to provide support such as a Family and Child Connect service will be able to share information with another service, such as an Intensive Family Support service when it begins to work with the family.

In all cases, a service must reasonably believe the information they are sharing will help with the particular purpose for which they are sharing the information. Decisions about information sharing need to be made with consideration of the individual circumstances of the child and family.

Prescribed entity

Prescribed entity means each of the following entities—

- a) the chief executive of a department that is mainly responsible for any of the following matters—
 - i. adult corrective services
 - ii. community services;
 - iii. disability services;

- iv. education;
- v. housing services;
- vi. public health;
- b) the police commissioner;
- c) the chief executive officer of Mater Misericordiae Ltd;
- d) a health service chief executive within the meaning of the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011;
- e) the principal of an accredited school under the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2001;
- f) a specialist service provider;
- g) the chief executive of another entity that—
 - i. provides a service to children or families; and
 - ii. is prescribed by regulation.

As FaCC and IFS services are specialist service providers they are also prescribed entities.

Service provider

Service provider means—

- a) a person providing a service to children or families; or
- b) a licensee; or
- c) an independent Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander entity for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child.

Information sharing with Family and Child Connect

Information that is shared with Family and Child Connect or another support service when making a referral should assist in determining the needs of the family and any risks to the child, so that a family can be offered a service.

Types of information that may be shared with Family and Child Connect may include, but are not limited to:

- the progress of a child or family towards achieving the goals of the service you provide
- the views and wishes of the family members, including the child
- any known history of the child suffering harm
- any periods that the child has been cared for by other people
- any significant issues relating to the child's siblings
- the child's physical health, including any medical treatment and needs
- any psychological and emotional difficulties the child may have
- the child's education, including any special educational needs
- any disabilities the child may have, including any special care they may need
- any known allergies and dietary requirements of the child
- any significant health problems of the child's parents
- whether a parent has a mental illness, substance abuse problem, disability or a history of domestic and family violence
- whether a parent is receiving treatment or accessing support for any of the above issues and outcomes, if so
- information about a person who may pose a risk to the child.

Although the legislation allows information sharing without consent between professionals from prescribed entities and Family and Child Connect, it is important to recognise that better outcomes are often reached when the family gives their consent, or they are at least aware of the referral.

Disclosing your identity

When referring to Family and Child Connect, the referrer's identity is not legally protected; however, the service will keep it confidential unless the referrer has agreed to the

disclosure of their identity or is legally required, for example, by the direction of a court or tribunal.

Sharing information about pregnant women and unborn children

Chapter 5A, Part 4 of the *Child Protection Act 1999* allows information to be shared without consent between prescribed entities. The sections enable broad information sharing about children and also unborn children, where they may be at risk after they are born.

Prescribed entities are allowed to share information relating to unborn children without the consent of the pregnant woman for specific purposes. Prescribed entities and service providers may share information with each other to decide whether to inform Child Safety about concerns relating to an unborn child after birth. They can also give information to Child Safety to enable Child Safety to investigate whether an unborn child will need protection after birth.

Child Safety can also give information to entities to help them decide whether or what information to give to Child Safety. Information may also be shared to enable Child Safety to offer help and support to a pregnant woman.

Further information

For more information about sharing information, contact the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women on **3225 8740** or go to www.qld.gov.au/strongerfamilies