

# Travel for Children in Care

## Policy

<b>Document title</b>	Travel for Children in Care	Version 1.4
<b>Contact details</b>	Territory Families, Housing and Communities Operational Policy <a href="mailto:tfhc.policy@nt.gov.au">tfhc.policy@nt.gov.au</a>	
<b>Approved by</b>	Executive Leadership Board	
<b>Date approved</b>	3/12/2020	
<b>Document review</b>	24 months from date of approval	
<b>TRM number</b>	61:F2020/6798	

<b>Version</b>	<b>Active from</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Changes made</b>
1.4	10/12/2020	Niki Patmios	Updates to align consent and approval information with corresponding content in the current Corporate Services Handbook and Financial Delegations.

<b>Acronyms</b>	<b>Full form</b>
CCIS	Community Care Information System
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
NT	Northern Territory
OOHC	Out-of-Home Care
TFHC	Territory Families Housing and Communities
the Act	Care and Protection of Children Act 2007

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Children in the care of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will often need to travel while in care. The travel can be for a range of reasons including attending routine appointments and day to day activities, Carer family day trips, interstate travel and international travel. This policy provides guidance for decision making, approval processes and consent for travel.

It is important to understand that:

- The CEO has an obligation to ensure that travel is safe, appropriate and in the best interests of the child;
- The CEO has an obligation to know where a child is and who they are with. When the Delegated Officer approves travel for a child they must ensure that they have sufficient information to satisfy this obligation;
- Proposed travel for a child in care should be identified and endorsed in the child's *My Care Plan*; and
- The reason, details, approvals and consents for travel must be recorded in CCIS and the InReach client file.

There are many reasons for travel by a child in care including:

- Contact visits;
- School trips and excursions;
- After school activities and sports;
- Travel for medical and other appointments;
- Transferring to a new placement;
- Day trips with their Carer; or
- Holiday travel with their Carer.

## 1. Considerations prior to travel

- Where the CEO has parental responsibility, the wishes of the family should be considered;
- Where the CEO has daily care and control, the parent's consent is required;
- The wishes and views of the child should be considered;
- The travel plan should be consistent with the child's Care Plan including any goals of reunification or long term stability and contact arrangements; and
- It must be identified whether the travel poses any risks for the child and an assessment made on the basis of this risk whether to approve the travel.

## 2. Travel arranged by Territory Families, Housing and Communities

Territory Families, Housing and Communities (TFHC) may arrange or provide travel for a child in care to attend day to day activities and appointments. For example, this may include a TFHC staff member accompanying the child and using a TFHCs' vehicle to drive them to a recreational or sporting activity, attend a medical appointment, or visit friends and family. The Case Manager will consult with the Team Leader and the Carer to decide who should accompany the child. It may also be determined that the child is able to travel unaccompanied. For example, arrangements could be made for a child to travel to an appointment by taxi (and be provided with a "Cab Charge").

### 2.1. When is TRIPS required?

Travel Request Information Processing System (TRIPS), is the NTG authorised travel approval system and should be used for seeking a delegate's approval for travel that requires a movement requisition.

Travel that requires a movement requisition is:

- Frontline employee travel that extends overnight;
- Office based employee travel where the trip is more than 50 kilometres away from the point of commencement;
- Same day travel involving payment of allowances or commercial travel costs such as airfares, charters or car hire; and
- Client travel where there is a related expense.

**IMPORTANT: Day trips taken by frontline employees which do not have a related expense beyond the use of a vehicle do not need to be entered into TRIPS.** The vehicle should be booked in the [Vehicle Booking System \(VBS\)](#) and all appropriate instructions regarding the use of the vehicle should be followed.

Client travel where there is no expense, should not be entered into TRIPS. Where a TRIPS movement requisition is required, it must be approved by a delegate in the system prior to booking and purchase. All staff with ePASS access are able to log into TRIPS.

### 3. Carers providing transport in a motor vehicle

A child in care may need to be transported to an appointment, activities, to and from school, family contact visits etc. When a child is in a kinship or foster placement the Carer is usually responsible for providing this transport. Carers may use their own car to provide transport. The Carer must have a current driver's licence and the vehicle must have current registration, and be in road worthy condition. Children must not be transported by motor cycle or motor scooter.

#### 3.1. Use of NT Fleet Vehicles within the Northern Territory

In some circumstances TFHC may provide an NT Fleet vehicle to the Carer, on either a temporary or ongoing basis, in order to support the child's placement and provide for their transport needs. If the child's placement changes the vehicle must be reallocated to the new Carer, in order to continue the support to the child. The Carer is authorised to drive the vehicle only within the Northern Territory.

#### 3.2. Use outside the Northern Territory

Carers provided with an NT Fleet Vehicle (as above) must be advised that they are not permitted to drive the vehicle outside the Northern Territory without the written approval of the CEO of TFHC. The Carer must request approval by contacting the Case Manager, who is then responsible for obtaining the approval and advising the Carer of the outcome of the request.

Carers should be advised to allow at least four weeks to obtain this approval.

### 4. Child car restraints

Case Managers must ensure that children in care are safely restrained in an appropriate child restraint when being transported in TFHCs' vehicles.

Carers also must ensure that children are restrained appropriately in their vehicles. If the Carer does not have a suitable restraint available or fitted to the vehicle, the Case Manager should make arrangements for this equipment to be loaned or purchased. For a short term placement, it is more appropriate to hire or loan a restraint to the Carer.

Refer to the child safety section of the [nt.gov.au](https://nt.gov.au) website for important information about child vehicle restraints. <https://nt.gov.au/emergency/child-safety/child-restraints>

## 5. Carer family holidays and outings

Authorised Carers can take a child in their care on trips by car anywhere within the Northern Territory. Prior approval may be required for some travel.

### 5.1.1. NOTE:

- If the trip includes up to four nights stay, approval is not required but the Case Manager must be informed prior to the travel.
- If staying more than four nights, the Manager's approval is required. Approval by the Director or above may be necessary in order to comply with Financial Delegation 5.4.1. If parental responsibility has been given to the CEO and another specified person, both must provide consent.
- If the trip will involve participation in activities that carry a high risk of injury (e.g. rock climbing, horse riding) permission must be obtained from the Case Manager to participate in the activity.
- The travel must not interfere with the child's normal routines, including contact arrangements, school attendance, planned activities, or any arrangements detailed in the child's care plan. The Carer may seek permission for the child to travel in these circumstances, and be approved by the Case Manager if in the child's best interests.

A Carer is expected to pay for the travel and accommodation costs associated with a child in care participating in family holidays and outings. The Case Manager must discuss the travel arrangements and associated costs with the Carer prior to travel. If a Carer is unable to meet the costs for the child in care, TFHC may consider making a contribution.

If the Carer intends to claim a reimbursement, this must be approved by the Financial Delegate prior to the travel commencing. The Carer must request financial support and provide the Case Manager with the estimated costs prior to booking or commencing any travel. (Refer to the table below for required consent and documentation).

**Note:** The Case Manager must document details of any travel undertaken in the child's electronic file. This includes information about the travel arrangements and any financial contribution by TFHC.

Refer to [Financial Delegations](#) the *Policy: Carer's Authority to Provide Consents*, the *Procedure: Carer's Authority to Provide Consents* and the *Guideline: Decision making for Carers*.

## 6. All other travel within Australia

TFHC consent must be obtained and the travel approved by the nominated Approver and the Financial Delegate (if required) prior all other travel within Australia ([refer Table 1](#)).

TFHC consent is required for:

- Any travel by air (including air travel within the Northern Territory);
- Any interstate travel whether by road or air;
- Trips that include more than four nights stay; or
- If the Carer requests TFHC contribute to the cost of travel.

## 7. International Travel

Approval and consent is required for all international travel. The process of obtaining approval and obtaining consent may be lengthy, therefore it is important that Carers submit requests for approval as early as possible and that this request is immediately actioned by the Case Manager.

Approval for international travel can only be provided by the CEO, whether or not TFHC is making a contribution towards the child's travel expenses. Consent must be provided by the person with parental responsibility for the child, which may not be the CEO in some circumstances. It is best practice to inform the parents of the child of the intended travel to seek their support, even when parental responsibility is held by the CEO or another specific person.

**When international travel is proposed, the following should be considered by the Case Manager and discussed with the Carer before progressing the request:**

### 7.1. Smart Traveller – Travel warnings and other advice

Case Managers should check the Smart Traveller website <http://smartraveller.gov.au> for advice on travel security and specific information regarding the proposed destination. If the Smart Traveller website advice is that travel to the destination is unsafe then the travel should not be approved.

### 7.2. Passport and visa requirements

A valid passport will be required (usually with at least six months validity remaining). If the child or young person already has a valid passport, the expiration date should be checked as soon as travel plans are proposed.

If the child does not have a passport, this must be obtained. The Case Manager is responsible for making a Passport application for a child in the care of the CEO. Refer to [Obtaining a Passport](#).

After obtaining a passport, travel to some countries will also require a visa. Up to date information on visa requirements and costs for the destination country or countries should be checked as early as possible and plans made to obtain necessary visa/travel documents.

**Note:** In some instances, a visa will be required for transit stopovers en-route to the final destination.

### 7.3. Immunisations and Health

It is the responsibility of the Case Manager to consider any health risks or immunisation requirements for the proposed destination of travel. The Case Manager must ensure any necessary immunisations are provided to the child.

### 7.4. Travel Insurance

If a child or young person is travelling with a Carer on a holiday, the Carer must be advised that travel insurance inclusive of a comprehensive health cover will be required. When travelling internationally, the child may need to be specifically nominated under the policy. It is important to check the insurance policy product disclosure statement (PDS) to ensure that the policy provides adequate coverage, and that the child in care can be included under the coverage. A copy of the PDS information should be provided by the Carer when they request permission to take the child on an international trip.

## 8. Table 1: Travel approval and consent requirements

	<i>Travel within the Northern Territory</i>	<i>Interstate Travel</i>	<i>International Travel</i>
<b>Approval</b>	<p>Approval is not required for day to day travel, day trips by car with the child's authorised Carer, or trips that include up to four nights stay. Travel details must be provided to the Case Manager before travel commences.</p> <p>If staying more than four nights, <u>Manager approval is required.</u> <u>Approval by the Director or above may be necessary in order to comply with Financial Delegation 5.4.1.</u></p> <p>Regional Executive Director must approve <u>any</u> air travel within the NT regardless of duration.</p>	<p><u>Approver: Regional Executive Director</u></p> <p>All interstate travel (including by air) for a child in care of the Chief Executive Officer must be approved by Regional Executive Director.</p> <p><u>Approver: Chief Executive Officer</u></p> <p>If the Carer has been allocated an NT Fleet vehicle to provide transport for the child, it must not be used for interstate travel without the written approval of the Chief Executive Officer.</p>	<p><u>Approver: Chief Executive Officer</u></p> <p>All international travel for a child in the care of the Chief Executive Officer must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer, whether or not a financial contribution is requested.</p>
<b>Required Consent*</b>	<p>Consent of persons with parental responsibility is not required for day to day travel, or day trips by car with the child's authorised Carer (including up to four nights stay as above). Travel details must be provided to the Case Manager before travel commences.</p> <p>If staying more than four nights, and for any air travel regardless of destination or duration, <u>consent of the Regional Executive Director and the person with parental responsibility (if this is not the Chief Executive Officer) is required.</u></p>	<p>Person/s with parental responsibility must consent.</p>	<p>Chief Executive Officer <u>and</u> person/s with parental responsibility (if this is not the Chief Executive Officer).</p>
<b>Required documentation</b>	<p>Determined by Regional Executive Director.</p>	<p>Determined by Regional Executive Director.</p> <p>For use of NT Fleet Vehicle for interstate travel: Memo to the Chief Executive Officer endorsed by Regional Executive Director.</p> <p>Carer provided with completed <a href="#">Authorisation for a Carer to travel with a child in care</a></p>	<p>Memo to Chief Executive Officer endorsed by Regional Executive Director. Chief Executive Officer must approve all international travel for children in care.</p> <p>Carer provided with completed <a href="#">Authorisation for a Carer to travel with a child in care</a></p> <p>Passport valid up to 6 months Visa(s) if required.</p> <p>Carer to be provided with a copy of the Court order and instructed to take this with them.</p>
<b>TFHC Financial Contribution - Additional approvals are required for any financial contribution towards the child's travel before expenses are incurred.</b>	<p>Any additional documentation as determined by Regional Executive Director to seek approval for financial support.</p> <p>Refer to <a href="#">Financial Delegations 5.4.1</a></p> <p>TRIPS approval for any client travel where there is a related expense.</p>	<p>Any additional documentation as determined by Regional Executive Director to seek approval for financial support.</p> <p>Refer to <a href="#">Financial Delegations 5.4.2</a></p> <p>TRIPS approval for any client travel when there is a related expense.</p>	<p>Any additional documentation as determined by Regional Executive Director to seek approval for financial support.</p> <p>Refer to <a href="#">Financial Delegations 5.4.3</a></p> <p>Memo to Chief Executive Officer seeking approval of travel and expenditure, endorsed by Regional Executive Director.</p> <p><b>Chief Executive Officer must approve</b> international travel and expenditure.</p> <p>TRIPS approval for any client travel when there is a related expense.</p>

**\*Note:** If a Carer has parental responsibility, the above consents are not required and the Carer can make travel plans without informing TFHC, however financial support is not provided by TFHC under these circumstances.