

Travel for Children in Care

Policy

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Document title	Travel for Children in Care	Version 2.0
Contact details	Department of Children and Families Agency Policy and Procedure dcf.policy@nt.gov.au	
Approved by	Executive Leadership Board	
Date approved	27/02/2025	
Document review	24 months from date of approval	
TRM number	61:F2020/6798	

Version	Active from	Author	Changes made
1.4	10/12/2020	Operational Policy	Updates to align consent and approval information with corresponding content in the current Corporate Services Handbook and Financial Delegations.
2.0	14/05/2025	Finance Services/Agency Policy and Procedures	Rebranded and added policy- purpose, scope, statement and detail. Included safety assessment for international travel, CEO memorandum template, and an update to child car restraints. The policy reflects change from CCIS to CMS, updates to practice terminology, and requirement that all child-related expenditure to be recorded in the CARE system. Reference to the CARE child travel request form template and child travel workflow.

Acronyms	Full form
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DCF	Department of Children and Families
NTG	Northern Territory Government
OOHC	Out-of-Home Care
PDS	Product disclosure statement
Practitioner	Child Protection Practitioner
the Act	<i>Care and Protection of Children Act 2007</i>
The Department	Department of Children and Families
TRIPS	Travel Request Information Processing System
TRM	Territory Record Manager

Term	Definition
Authorised officer	<p>A Department of Children and Families officer can only be appointed as an authorised officer under the Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 (the Act) when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are performing a role, or may be required to perform a role, that requires the use of authorised officer powers and functions as specified in the Act and • They have completed the core mandatory face to face pre-service training for frontline staff, as outlined in the appointment process. <p>Refer to Authorised officer procedure.</p>
Carer	Authorised foster and kinship carer
Child	A person less than 18 years or a person apparently less than 18 years if person's age cannot be proved.
Child in care	The child is under a temporary placement arrangement, provisional protection, CEO has daily care and control under an order of the Court (e.g. protection order).
Delegated officer	<p>The Act gives the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) the authority to protect children. The CEO can give specific powers and functions to Departmental staff. This delegation is done in writing through a legally signed document, along with a list (i.e. schedule) of the powers and the staff positions that have been assigned these responsibilities. Refer to Care and Protection of Children Delegations.</p>

1. Purpose

Children in the care of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) often need to travel. This policy outlines the Department of Children and Families' (the Department) expectations about decision-making, consent and the approval processes for children travelling within Northern Territory, interstate, internationally, or on day trips.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Departmental staff involved in assessing, facilitating, and approving travel for children in care. This includes carers who provide care and transport for children in their care.

The policy has been developed in alignment with three key documents, the [Carer's Authority to Provide Consent Policy](#), [Carer's Authority Consent Procedure](#) and the [Decision Making for Carers Guideline](#) which assists practitioners and carers to make travel related decisions.

3. Policy Statement

- The CEO's delegated officer makes decisions in a child's best interests. This responsibility includes travel arrangements for the child are appropriate and safe.
- When the delegated officer approves travel for a child, they must have enough information to satisfy this responsibility.
- If travel plans conflict with conditions of a child protection or youth justice court order, like contact arrangements, curfews, or exclusion zones, the authorised officer must seek Court approval for a variation unless the order permits discretion. For example, weekly contact with parents is required unless negotiated and agreed by the Department and parents.
- The proposed travel plan should be consistent with the child's Care Plan including any goals of reunification or long-term stability and contact arrangements. The wishes and views of the child should be considered.
- Where the child is Aboriginal, consultation should occur with an Aboriginal community worker regarding the proposed travel for the child.
- When the CEO has parental responsibility, the practitioner is to talk with the child's parents and family to discuss their views and wishes about their child's proposed travel plans.
- If the CEO has daily care and control, the parent's consent is required.
- The practitioner must assess whether there are any risks in the planned travel and decide to endorse the travel based on this assessment. This includes any cultural risks that may arise from the travel.
- The reason, details, approvals, and consents for travel must be recorded in the client management system (CMS/CARE).

4. Policy Detail

Children in care travel for different reasons. The Department is to identify the reason and who will be responsible for the child's travel. Common reasons include visits with their family, significant others and friends, attending cultural events, maintaining connection to country and culture, school and sport related activities, medical appointments, moving to a new placement and daytrips or holidays with their carer. For

further information refer to [Case Management of Child in the CEO's Care Policy](#) and [Child in Care Practice Guidance](#).

4.1. Travel arranged by the Department

The Department can arrange travel for a child to attend daily activities and appointments. Travel can be for multiple days within the Northern Territory (intrastate) or interstate. This may also include staff accompanying the child in a Departmental vehicle to activities, medical appointments, or visits with friends and family.

The Department will assess the best way to travel, and the level of supervision needed on a case-by-case basis. Consideration is to be given, though not limited to, the child's age, stage of development, cognitive ability and maturity. Also, the travel length and duration, the method of travel and the destination. Most decisions can be made through a discussion between a practitioner, team leader and Aboriginal community worker, remote family support worker, or Aboriginal practice advisor where the child is Aboriginal. However, more complex cases may need approval from a manager or director.

4.1.1. When is TRIPS required?

The Travel Request Information Processing System (TRIPS) is a web-enabled system that processes travel requests. Departmental staff must use TRIPS to seek a delegate's approval for travel that requires a movement requisition (e.g. Departmental staff travelling with a child using a commercial airplane, bus, train, car hire or overnighting) before booking and purchasing the travel. Refer to [TRIPS](#) and [Child travel workflow](#) for further information.

All staff with Northern Territory Government (NTG) Corporate Directory access can log into [TRIPS](#).

IMPORTANT: Frontline staff do not need to enter day trips into TRIPS if there are no expenses other than vehicle use. The vehicle should be booked in the [Vehicle Booking System \(VBS\)](#) and all appropriate instructions regarding the use of the vehicle should be followed.

4.1.2. When is a CARE service provision required?

All Departmental expenses directly related to a child must be documented in a service provision form and placed into the child's CARE profile. This includes all travel costs paid by the Department for the child to be escorted by a carer, family member, or a significant other person. The child's travel should not be entered into TRIPS. Refer to CARE: [Child travel request form template](#) and [Child travel workflow](#).

The costs for Departmental staff to travel with a child is not required to be approved in CARE.

4.2. Carers providing transport in a motor vehicle

Irrespective of placement type, the carer is responsible for providing transportation to meet the day-to-day care needs of a child placed with them. Carers may use their own car to provide transport or organise and pay for day-to-day transport. The carer must have a current driver's licence, and the vehicle must have current registration and be in road worthy condition. Children in care must not be transported by motorcycle or motor scooter.

4.2.1. Use of NT Fleet vehicles within the Northern Territory

If a child's needs exceed that of a conventional vehicle (i.e. requires a modified vehicle for a wheelchair), the Department may consider how best to support the child's transport needs. This may include a NT Fleet or commercially available loan vehicle. However, this is subject to a child's care planning and the delegate's approval.

4.2.2. Use outside the Northern Territory

Practitioners are to inform the carers who have a NT Fleet vehicle that they need the Department's CEO written approval before driving the vehicle outside the Northern Territory. To get this approval, the carer must contact the practitioner. The practitioner will request the approval and inform the carer of the delegate's decision. Carers should be informed that they need to allow at least four weeks to receive this approval. Refer to section 6 of this policy.

4.3. Child car restraint

Child restraint laws in the Northern Territory are based on the [Australian Road Rules](#) and national model legislation. All children under seven years of age must use a car seat when travelling in a vehicle.

4.3.1. Who is responsible for child car restraints

Departmental staff must make sure that children are safely restrained in an appropriate child restraint when being transported in Departmental vehicle and that the car seat is fitted by a person trained in fitting car seats.

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

Refer to the Northern Territory Government [child car seats](#) for more information.

4.3.2. Fitting a child car restraint

Child restraints are sold with the information about how to fit the child restraint. Further information can also be found in the vehicle owner's handbook and the child restraint manufacture's website. Departmental staff and carers must follow the vehicle and child car restraints' instructions. If in doubt about how to fit the restraint, Departmental staff/carers can seek help from:

- NTG MyLearning - online training module called 'TF seatbelt restraint'.
- An authorised child car restraint fitter or workshops/accredited training is available – the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics – [Road Safety NT](#) have advised that [Kidsafe NT](#) and Automobile Association of the Northern Territory (AANT) can assist with this.

4.4. Carer family holidays and outings

Authorised carers can take children on trips within the Northern Territory and make some decisions during the trip, under the [Decision Making for Carers Guideline](#). Carers can access guidelines on the Department's internet site. Refer to <https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/publications-and-policies/child-protection/information-for-carers-policies-guidelines-and-forms>.

Prior approval may be required for some travel. The following is to be considered:

- If the trip includes up to four nights stay, approval is not required but the practitioner 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 needed to comply with Financial Delegation. If parental responsibility has been given to the CEO and another specified person, both must provide consent. Staff are to consult with the Department's legal service if there are concerns about obtaining parental responsibility consent.

- If the trip involves taking part in activities that carry a high risk of injury (e.g. rock climbing, horse riding, or water sports) written permission must be given by the practitioner 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 practitioner if in the child's best interests.
- Travel must not go against court ordered conditions, which may include supervision directions. The court order conditions are to be reviewed before travel is granted.

Carers are responsible for the travel and accommodation costs for children participating in family holidays and outings. Before travel, practitioners must discuss arrangements and costs with the carer.

If a carer cannot cover these costs, the Department may consider providing financial assistance. Any reimbursement requests must be approved by the financial delegate before travel begins, and the carer must provide estimated costs to the practitioner before booking or commencing travel.

Practitioners must document all travel details in the child's CARE profile, including travel arrangements and any financial contributions from the Department. Refer to [Financial Delegations](#), the *Carer's Authority to Provide Consent Policy and procedure*; and the *Decision Making for Carers Guideline*.

4.5. All other travel within Australia

The Department's consent must be obtained, and the travel approved by the delegated officer and the financial delegate (if required) prior to all other travel within Australia ([refer Table 1](#)). The Department's consent is required for all:

- air travel (includes air travel within the Northern Territory)
- interstate travel whether by road, rail, boat, or air
- trips that include more than four nights stay
- requests by the carer for the Department to contribute to travel costs.

4.6. Carer's authority to provide consent during holiday travel

Practitioners must make sure that the carer understands their responsibilities and the types of activities they can authorise during interstate and international holidays. Carers are authorised to make decisions relating to a child's day-to-day care or provide consent for routine activities and services as per the [decision making for carer's guideline](#). The carer is to contact the practitioner if they are unsure about making a decision in any particular circumstances.

In urgent situations, immediate consent from the Department may be necessary for a child to receive medical or dental care. If the treatment requires the Department's consent and the practitioner, team leader, manager, or director is not immediately available, health practitioners and carers are to contact the Central Intake Team (ph: 1800 700 250). Refer to DCF internet [Carer's Authority to Provide Consent Policy](#) for further details.

4.7. International travel

Departmental consent and approval are required for all international travel and the process can take time. Therefore, carers should submit requests as early as possible, and practitioners must act on them promptly.

Approval must come from the CEO via a formal memorandum, even if the Department is not covering travel expenses. Consent is also needed from the person with parental responsibility for the child, who may not be the CEO.

The practitioner must make active efforts to inform the child's parents and or significant family members about the proposed travel plans and seek their views wishes about the travel. All active efforts made by the practitioner to inform the parents or significant family members about the travel must be documented on the child's file in CARE. Where a child is Aboriginal, consultation must occur with an Aboriginal community worker, remote family support worker or Aboriginal practice advisor regarding the proposed travel. Practitioners are required to assess the benefits and risks of international travel for the child and provide this information to the CEO. Refer to the [International Travel CEO Memorandum- Template](#).

4.7.1. Assessing the proposed international travel

The following should also be considered by the practitioner and discussed with the carer before progressing the request.

4.7.1.1. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: Smartraveller – travel warnings and other advice

Practitioners should check the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade - [Smartraveller website](#) for advice on travel security and specific information regarding the proposed destination. If the Smartraveller website advice is that travel to the destination is unsafe then the travel should not be approved.

4.7.1.2. Passport and visa requirements

A valid passport is required with at least six months of validity remaining. If the child has a passport, check the expiration date as soon as travel plans are made.

If the child does not have a passport, the practitioner must apply for one on behalf of the child in the CEO's care. Refer to [Obtaining a Passport Procedure](#).

Additionally, travel to certain countries may require a visa, electronic travel authority and/or evidence of onward travel. Check the latest visa requirements and costs for the destination as early as possible, and plan to obtain any necessary documents. **Note:** Some transit stopovers may also require a visa.

4.7.1.3. Immunisations and health

It is the responsibility of the practitioner to consider any health risks or immunisation requirements for the proposed destination of travel. The practitioner must make sure the child receives the necessary immunisations before travelling.

Not all medications that are available over the counter or by prescriptions in Australia are available or legal in other countries. Always check if the medication is legal in the proposed country.

4.7.1.4. Travel insurance

The practitioner must inform the carer about the need for comprehensive travel insurance for the child, which may require explicit inclusion in the policy. The practitioner should review the Product Disclosure Statement (PDS) to make sure that there is adequate coverage. When requesting permission for an international trip, the carer is to provide a copy of the PDS and the travel insurance quote or certificate. The insurance travel certificate must be in place before travelling.

4.7.1.5. Safety plan

Before seeking approval for a child in care to travel, the practitioner must establish or review an existing safety plan that includes a comprehensive risk assessment. This should consider transportation,

accommodation, supervision, communication, emergency response, any individual needs of the child, review current travel advice from the Australian Government's [Smartraveller](#) website and may recommend that the carer subscribes for updates. They should also discuss the location of the nearest Australian Embassy or Consulate to support emergency preparedness. Refer to [Subscribe for updates | Smartraveller](#).

4.7.2. Issues or concerns during international travel

Depending on travel duration or purpose, the carer or child may contact the practitioner and provide an update of their international travel. If there are any issues or concerns, the practitioner must advise their team leader and manager. If the child has not returned to Australia by the expected date and there are serious concerns for the child's safety, the practitioner is to immediately inform their manager, provide a Ministerial flash brief and consult with legal services.

5. Legislation and related sources

Care and Protection of Children Act 2007

Care and Protection of Children (Placement Arrangement) Regulations 2010

Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: Smartraveller – <http://smartraveller.gov.au>

Carer's Authority to Provide Consent: Policy

Carer's Authority to Provide Consent: Procedure

Child in Care: Practice Guidance

Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics – Road Safety

Department of Children and Families: Financial Delegations

Decision Making for Carers: Guideline

6. Table 1: Travel approval and consent requirements

Process	Travel within the Northern Territory	Interstate Travel	International Travel
Approval	<p>Approval is not required for everyday travel or day trips by car with a carer, including stays of up to four nights. Travel details must be provided to the practitioner before departure.</p> <p>If staying more than four nights, <u>manager approval is required. Approval by the director or above may be necessary in order to comply with Financial Delegation</u></p> <p>Regional executive director (RED) must approve <u>any</u> air travel within the Northern Territory regardless of duration.</p>	<p><u>Approver: Regional executive director (RED)</u></p> <p>All interstate travel (including by air) for a child in care of the CEO must be approved by RED.</p> <p><u>Approver: Chief Executive Officer (CEO)</u></p> <p>If the carer has been allocated a NT Fleet vehicle to provide transport for the child, it must not be used for interstate travel without the written approval of the CEO.</p>	<p><u>Approver: CEO</u></p> <p>All international travel for a child in the care of the CEO must be approved by the CEO, whether or not a financial contribution is requested.</p>
Required Consent*	<p>Person/s with parental responsibility consent is not required for everyday travel or day trips by care with a carer. If staying more than four nights, and for <u>any air travel</u> regardless of destination or duration, <u>consent of the RED and the person with parental responsibility (if this is not the CEO) is required.</u></p>	<p>Person/s with parental responsibility must consent.</p>	<p>CEO <u>and</u> person/s with parental responsibility (if this is not the CEO).</p>
Required documents	<p>Determined by RED.</p> <p>Timeframe: Completed CARE form to be submitted to RED, manager before planned travel.</p>	<p>Determined by RED.</p> <p>For use of NT Fleet Vehicle for interstate travel: Memo to the CEO endorsed by RED. Carer provided with completed Authorisation for a carer to travel with a child in care</p> <p>Timeframe: CARE/TRIP forms to be submitted to RED before planned travel.</p> <p>Memo for CEO approval must be submitted at least 4 weeks before the planned travel.</p>	<p>International travel CEO memo endorsed by regional executive director. CEO must approve all international travel for children in care.</p> <p>Memo must include advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, passport expiry, visa requirements, health issues and plans, safety plan, and confirmation that the carer has or will obtain comprehensive travel insurance inclusive of the child in care.</p>

Required documents			<p>Carer provided with completed Authorisation for a carer to travel with a child in care</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> <p>Timeframe: Memo for international travel must be with the CEO at least 4 weeks before the planned travel.</p>
DCF Financial	Refer to Financial Delegations . A CARE service provision must be approved for any client travel where there is a related expense.	Any additional documentation as determined by RED to seek approval for financial support. Refer to Financial Delegations . A CARE service provision must be approved for any client travel when there is a related expense.	<p>Any additional documentation as determined by RED to seek approval for financial support. Refer to Financial Delegations</p> <p>Memo to CEO seeking approval of travel and expenditure, endorsed by RED. CEO must approve international travel and expenditure.</p> <p>A CARE service provision must be approved for any client travel when there is a related expense.</p>
	Additional approvals are required for any financial contribution towards the child's travel <u>before expenses are incurred</u> . Timeframe: CARE/TRIP are to be acquitted in 10 days after the travel started.		