



12 Bruce Street, Stanmore, NSW 2048

02-9569-6933 Office

02-9550-9227 House

02-9564-1653 Fax

saf@stretch-a-family.com.au

www.stretch-a-family.com.au

ABN No: 99 897 792 897

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Protocol & Guidelines for referral to "On Track"

ON TRACK REFERRALS

BEFORE MAKING A REFERRAL TO "ON TRACK: TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM", PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES

For more general information about Stretch-A-Family's programs please look at the website www.stretch-a-family.com.au

Young people who are suitable for referral to "On Track".

1. Males and females aged 14-18 who need long-term accommodation and who are ready to participate in a transition to independent living program. These young people must be in need of out of home care and are generally subject to Care Orders or Care Orders are pending.
2. Placements at On Track are restricted for young people who are supervised by a DoCS Community Service Centre (CSC) in the Metro Central Region. These currently include the Community Service Centres at Sutherland, St George, Eastern Sydney, Lakemba, Chatswood, Burwood, Central Sydney and Epping.
3. On Track residents must be willing to participate in a preparation for independent living program. Young people aged 14-15 will be considered as *pre-transitional* but must still be willing to follow an individual program. All young people at On Track have a SAF Caseworker and a Key Worker who will work with them to implement their Care Plan and individual program.
4. On Track is a moderate intensity service which provides for a moderate level of supervision and support. One worker is available for up to six young people except at peak times where there are two youth workers. A worker sleeps over every night but there is no night worker on duty. There may at times be brief periods (up to two hours) when young people are left unsupervised. It is acknowledged that most young people in care exhibit challenging and even high risk behaviours at times. However young people with a history of excessive violence or behaviours which could potentially endanger the safety of other residents or staff cannot be accepted. This is because the nature of the program implies that young people who are suitable for On Track have a demonstrated ability to benefit from the program's intended outcomes. Young people who require constant supervision may require accommodation in higher intensity residential care.

5. There must be no current drug and/or alcohol issues.
6. The young person must be willing to attend school or another educational facility, to seek work or attend a job training program.
7. Young people can continue to reside at On Track until they are ready to move to other long-term accommodation. The program aims to transit young people to an independent living arrangement after they turn 18 however, some young people may be ready to leave earlier and some later.
8. Suitable exit points from "On Track" may include:
 - restoration to family
 - supported boarding with approved carer/s
 - a long term group home for young adults
 - a semi independent or independent living situation

When a young person leaves On Track, outreach support will continue to be provided. The level and intensity of this support will be dependent on the individual needs of the young person and will become a part of the exit care plan.

PLEASE NOTE:

“On Track” IS NOT A CRISIS ACCOMMODATION SERVICE. YOUNG PEOPLE IN CRISIS MAY BE REFERRED, BUT THE REFERRING OFFICER WILL NEED TO ARRANGE TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION FOR THE YOUNG PERSON PENDING ASSESSMENT.

IF THE YOUNG PERSON YOU WISH TO REFER IS AGED 12-16 AND REQUIRES MEDIUM TERM ACCOMMODATION PENDING A MORE SUITABLE LONG TERM OPTION, A REFERRAL TO THE STRETCH-A-FAMILY STANMORE HOUSE MAY BE MORE APPROPRIATE. RING THE STANMORE CASEWORKERS ON (02) 9569 6933. A SEPARATE PROTOCOL EXISTS FOR THESE REFERRALS.

PROTOCOL FOR MAKING THE REFERRAL

1. Referrals to On Track are to be directed to the On Track Caseworker (Phone 02 9758 9378). If there is a suitable vacancy, the referring agency will be asked to supply written details about the young person including:
 - family background and history
 - history of Dept of Community Services involvement including name of the DoCS Caseworker
 - reasons for referral to On Track
 - details of current Care Plan
 - copies of court reports and psychological assessments need to be supplied with the written referral or immediately upon being available during the assessment process
 - details of other agencies involved with the young person and/or the family
 - details of education and training
 - medical history



(These details can also be faxed to the On Track Caseworker. Fax No: 02 9703 0521)

2. SAF staff and the Community Program Officer, Out of Home Care, DOCS Metro Central Office, will review all expressions of interest. If the young person appears to be suitable for On Track and a vacancy exists, an interview with the young person and the referring officer will be arranged. The CEO and On Track Caseworker attend this interview. The young person's wishes to move to a transition to independent living program will be given serious consideration.
3. If staff and the young person wish to proceed with the assessment, the referring officer will be asked to complete the "On-Track Intensive Referral" (LAC) forms. These forms, as well as other reports or assessments not previously submitted need to be returned to the On Track Caseworker before the referral can proceed.
4. The completed forms will be reviewed by the CEO of SAF and the Community Program Officer, Out of Home Care. Additional information will be sought if required. This should take no longer than three working days.
5. If the referral is still considered appropriate, the On Track Caseworker will contact the referring officer and make arrangements for the young person to commence a two week introduction at On Track. The referring officer will need to ensure that the current placement or an alternative placement is available to the young person at the end of the two week period. During the introduction, it is expected that the young person continues to attend the school or work/training or other day-time activity that s/he is involved with. At the end of the two week introduction period the young person will need to return to their current placement.
6. On Track staff will monitor the young person during the two week introduction. The young person will be consulted about his/her experience of the introduction and his/her desire to live at On Track. A report with recommendations will be forwarded to the referring officer and to all members of the intake panel.
7. A date will be set for the intake panel to convene. The referring officer (or other person who knows the young person) will be required to attend this meeting and present information about the young person. The panel will need to be satisfied that a placement at On Track is in the young person's best interests. The intake panel has the authority to approve or disapprove the placement based on all the information gathered.
8. If the panel recommends the young person for the placement, a case conference will be convened before the young person moves in. The young person will need to be present at the case conference as well and his/her DoCS Caseworker, Manager and other relevant people Staff from the Department of Community Services, Lakemba CSC will also be invited. A Care Plan will be formulated and a review date set. The young person will move to On Track on a date agreed.

