

MEDIA RELEASE

14 January 2021



OzChild's Treatment Foster Care Oregon program in Melbourne's South East is not only saving vulnerable kids from a lifetime of disadvantage, but is the first in Australia to receive certification.

Treatment Foster Care Oregon (TFCO) is changing life outcomes for some of Victoria's most vulnerable children. Children who, through no fault of their own, have ended up in residential care or alternative accommodation such as hotels following kinship or foster care placement breakdowns, often after many previous placement changes.

Launched in April 2017 in partnership with the Victorian Government, OzChild's TFCO team based in Dandenong have so far supported 11 children under the age of 12 through the program, seeing them returned safely to the care of family, or placed with a permanent, long-term foster carer.

"Kids belong in homes, not in residential care facilities. To see our TFCO-C team in Victoria certified by Treatment Foster Care Consultants Inc in Eugene Oregon, really cements the incredible outcomes being achieved, this is an exciting step and means they are the first Australian team to be certified," says OzChild Chief Executive Officer, Dr Lisa J. Griffiths.

"All OzChild TFCO teams are showing increased proficiency in the delivery of this evidence-based model and this team in particular are achieving tremendous stability with staff, carers and placements, not to mention the profound difference being made for the children placed in the program," adds Michelle Van Doorn, National Executive Director of Services at OzChild.

"It is not surprising to see some really promising and sustained results emerging from this program given its strong evidence base. Benefits for the children extend further than just preventing residential care placements, children experience improved health and wellbeing, positive inclusion in community activities and enhanced pro-social behaviours, alongside greater attendance, and participation at school. These are just a few of the life changing benefits children and young people are experiencing," says Ms Van Doorn.

In Victoria close to 10,000 children and young people are currently placed in out-of-home care. OzChild's In-Home Care programs play a critical part in supporting the child protection system, TFCO, in particular, plays a crucial role in reunifying children with family.

"Sadly, for some children in out-of-home care the effects of childhood trauma, neglect or abuse make it difficult to manage their feelings, thoughts and behaviour. This can put those children at risk of being excluded from the benefits of a stable family environment, creating a cycle of worsening behaviour and negative outcomes," says Dr Lisa J. Griffiths.



[Treatment Foster Care Oregon](#) is ‘breaking the cycle’ for Victorian children who have previously bounced around the child protection system. The long-term cost savings of a program like TFCO¹ are convincing when compared to youth justice, out-of-home care², residential care³ and a lifetime of disadvantage.

TFCO is a behaviour modification program based on age-appropriate rewards that teaches children interpersonal skills and encourages participation in positive social activities including sports and hobbies. The young person is coached through supported practice in community settings and supported to build a range of coping strategies and problem-solving skills to address areas of difficulty in their lives.

“This program is achieving results consistent with randomised control trials conducted internationally and is demonstrating a significant return on investment reflecting cost savings of 50-65% when compared with residential care, representing an average saving of \$900 per day reported by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services South Division⁴. Importantly 70% of children graduating from the TFCO program have exited residential care and sustained placement in a home-based care environment.

“This demonstrates the very real need for continued investment into the program in Victoria,” explains Ms Van Doorn.

Victorian Government funding for OzChild’s TFCO program is set to cease in June 2021 – failure to provide additional funding will result in immediate winddown of the program, ceasing any new referrals and the loss of specialist evidence-based roles from the child services system.

Continued investment into TFCO will not only affirm the government’s commitment to family preservation and restoration but ensure the retention of OzChild’s dedicated specialist trained staff and carers, developed under the initial investment, enabling the continuation of positive outcomes for children.

-ENDS-

Interview opportunity:

- OzChild Chief Executive Officer, Dr Lisa J. Griffiths is available for interview upon request
- Case study stories of OzChild TFCO children and carers are available upon request
- OzChild National Director of Services, Michelle Van Doorn is available for interview upon request

¹ A complete TFCO placement costs approximately \$240,000 per child, including carer reimbursement rates. (OzChild, 2020)

² Cost per placement night in care services should be considered in conjunction with expenditure on care services per child (and by placement type). The cost of the provision of out-of-home care and other supported placements services at 30 June 2019 in Victoria was \$193.00/night (Report on Government Services 2020, Table 16A.24).

³ Real expenditure per child in care (Residential care services) in Victoria at 30 June 2019 was \$771,563.00 (Report on Government Services 2020, Table 16A.34).

⁴ DHHS South Division (2020) “TFCO Cost Comparison Case Studies”, Reform and Service Development



Become a TFCO foster carer

OzChild is currently looking for individuals or couples in Victoria, NSW and Queensland interested in participating in this internationally proven foster care program. Carers will receive comprehensive training, a generous tax-free reimbursement of \$65,000 in Queensland and \$75,000 in Victoria and NSW (per annum pro-rata) along with 24/7 on-call support and specially trained staff to support your carer journey.

With a placement duration of 9 to 12 months, you would be required to care for and support a child or young person between the ages of 7-17 years in your home.

Want to know more? Visit ozchild.org.au today

ABOUT OZCHILD

For nearly 170 years OzChild has been committed to delivering quality services which make a real and lasting difference to Australian families to ensure all children and young people are safe, respected and nurtured to reach their full potential.

OzChild is committed to improving the lives of at-risk children, young people and families in our community, delivering evidence-based programs to achieve better outcomes, strengthen and repair relationships to build a brighter future for young Australians.

ABOUT TREATMENT FOSTER CARE OREGON

Treatment Foster Care Oregon (TFCO) is a foster care model for children and young people who have problems with chronic antisocial behaviour, emotional disturbance, and delinquency. TFCO in Victoria is a targeted intervention for children aged 7-11 who exhibit complex and extreme behaviours that impact on their ability to live in family-based arrangements. These children have often experienced multiple placement breakdowns. TFCO helps them return to a stable, family environment.

TFCO focusses on five key areas:

- A consistent, reinforcing environment with mentoring and encouragement
- Daily structure with clear expectations and specific consequences
- A high level of supervision
- Limited access to negative peer influences along with access to prosocial peers
- An environment that supports daily school attendance and homework completion.

ABOUT CERTIFICATION

The certification process is intended to assess a program's ability to implement the TFCO-C model as recommended and maintain adherence to the model over time. TFCC Inc. uses seven criteria to evaluate certification status. Together, these criteria provide a comprehensive assessment of a program's progress towards successful implementation of the TFCO-C model.

For further information please contact [Rebecca Swinton](mailto:Rebecca.Swinton@tfcc.org.au) 03 9695 2230 / 0439 472 281



The results of this review for each of the seven criteria are as follows:

Minimum standard met?

- Criterion 1: Outcomes for Youth Yes
- Criterion 2: Therapy Components Yes
- Criterion 3: Behavioural Components Yes
- Criterion 4: Foster Parent Meetings Yes
- Criterion 5: Clinical Meetings Yes
- Criterion 6: Staff Structure Yes
- Criterion 7: Training Plan Yes

Program certification confirms that OzChild's Treatment Foster Care Oregon – Child program meets model fidelity standards and produces treatment outcomes that are like those of the model program as measured in the scientific evaluations that have been conducted of the model.

This initial certification is valid for two (2) years with certification period expiring on January 4, 2023. Subsequent evaluations, if obtained by the date of the expiration of the previous certification will be valid for a period of three (3) years.

For more information visit: ozchild.org.au