



Become a Specialised
Foster Carer *with OzChild*



Contents

All you need to know about Treatment Foster Care Oregon (TFCO)

Specialised foster care 4

- What is specialised foster care?
- How does a child end up in TFCO?
- How does TFCO work
- What support does a specialised foster carer receive?
- Who can become a specialised foster carer?
- How is TFCO different to foster care?
- Service area map

The process 11

Frequently asked questions 12

Next steps 13



Thank You



For 170 years OzChild has been focussed on ensuring children and young people have every chance to shine, and our foster carers have played such a significant role in brightening the lives of so many.

Thank you for taking the first step in becoming a foster carer with OzChild. A specialised foster carer within our Treatment Foster Care Oregon (TFCO) program provides the support so desperately needed by children 7-17 of age who are at risk of being excluded from the benefits of a stable family environment, creating a cycle of worsening behaviour and negative outcomes.

The role of a TFCO carer is a very special one. And one which requires specialised support, that's why our recruitment team are here to guide you every step of the way and to answer any questions you might have about foster care.

Thank you again for choosing to take this step. While this is just the beginning and your journey ahead might feel uncertain right now, I can assure you it will be a rewarding one.

Yours in making a difference,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa J. Griffiths".

Dr Lisa J. Griffiths
Chief Executive Officer



Child acknowledges the First Peoples of Australia as the traditional custodians of the land on which we work. We acknowledge their cultures are living ones, which relate to their ongoing connection to all things living and non-living on land, sea and sky. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present. May the children of today lead us to a brighter tomorrow.

About Us



Who is OzChild?

We are a leading child welfare organisation, committed to improving the lives of at-risk children, young people and families in our community. We work hard every day to provide a better future for those in our care with the belief that every child and young person deserves the chance to shine.



Over 700 staff, carers & volunteers in VIC, NSW, QLD, SA & the ACT



Established in Melbourne in 1851



Supporting over 10,000 children, young people & family members each year



Caring for around 400 children on any given night

We welcome all carers. We don't care if you are young or old, religious or not, born here or overseas, LGBTQI+, single or in a relationship.

Agency support. You will have access to a whole team of OzChild people who are all there to support you. There is 24/7 support for you and your household.

Thriving Families Carer Strategy. We are committed to working in partnership with our carers.

Village of carers. You will have access to a whole village of foster carers who you can go to for support, share experiences with and ask for advice.

Use of technology. We have a foster carer mobile app, online training platforms, local community carer Facebook groups and run meetings virtually where possible.

Key words



Agency: the Non-Government Organisation (NGO), like OzChild, or Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) that provides services including foster care. As the agency we will guide you through the process of becoming a foster carer, provide you with training and support, and organise placements of children in your home once you're accredited.

Carer: this is you! As a specialised foster carer, you open your home to a young person, offering stability, security and support until that young person can return to their family. Children in your care can range from 7-17 years of age.

Family reunification: this refers to the goal of safely returning a child to the care of their parent, parents or kin. When a child first comes into foster care, the aim is to support the parents to have their child return to their care as soon as it is safely possible. As a specialised foster carer, you play a key role in supporting reunification.

The Department: DFFH: the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (formally known as DHHS).

Placement: when a child is placed with a treatment foster carer.

Residential Care: is care provided by the Department for Child Protection and NGOs in a residential building. These facilities are usually staffed by a rotating roster of youth workers, and house a number of children and young people of differing ages at one time.

TFCO: Treatment Foster Care Oregon. Also known as specialised foster care.

TFCO care team: a team of professionals who all share the responsibilities to keep the child in the program safe. The team consists of a Program Supervisor, Family Therapist, Child therapist, Skills Coach, Case Coordinator, teacher and a carer and they all work together to provide wrap-around support for the child in the program.



What is specialised foster care?



Treatment Foster Care Oregon (TFCO) is an evidence-based, specialised foster care program that is providing an alternative to residential care and getting children with complex behaviours back to a stable, family life.

How does a child end up in TFCO?

Children do best when in family, or family-like environments, however there are few options for these children when foster, kinship or birth family placements break down. The majority of children who can't stay with their birth parents due to safety concerns but also can't stay with general foster carers due to their complex behaviours or high emotional needs, end up in residential care. This means these kids are living in a residential unit with up to three other children with complex needs, supervised by youth workers on a rotating roster.

A child will be placed in residential care if they cannot stay with general foster carers either because their needs are too great or because the kinship or foster carers cannot keep them safe or simply because there are not enough foster carers. Residential care is often an option of last resort.

Children in residential care are likely to have suffered trauma resulting from past neglect and/or abuse. Often they experience the additional trauma of being placed in a residential care unit with a group of similarly traumatised children and young people. Without appropriate care and support the future for many of these kids is bleak.



This is where TFCO comes in!

How does TFCO work?



TFCO is the only known **evidence-based** proven therapeutic foster care model alternative to residential care. The program targets children who already live in residential care or are at risk of entering into residential care because of emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

If the child is suitable to participate in the TFCO program, they live with a trained specialised foster parent for a period of 9-12 months. At the end of the placement, the child is reunified with their birth parents, other family members, placed in lower intensity long-term foster care. Birth families or long-term carers are provided with training and support to ensure they can continue to support the child when they leave the TFCO program.



TFCO uses a behaviour modification program based on age-appropriate rewards. The child earns and loses points or rewards based on their daily behaviour, which influences their level of freedom from adult supervision.

The model teaches interpersonal skills and encourages participation in positive social activities including sports and hobbies. The child's treatment consists of a one hour weekly individual therapy session and two hour weekly individual skills training.

They are coached to develop and practice skills in community settings and supported to build a range of coping strategies and problem-solving skills to address areas of difficulty in their lives.

TFCO continues to support the birth family or long-term carer for approximately three months after the child has transitioned to their care (this can be extended in some circumstances).

What type of care can I choose from?



As a **full-time specialised foster carer**, you will:

- Care for a child aged 7-17 in your own home for around nine months
- Get full training and 24/7 support
- Receive a tax-free allowance of \$75,000 per annum (\$6,250 per month)
- At least one carer in the household must not be working part-time or full-time, working casually or studying is usually OK.

As a **respite specialised foster carer**, you will:

- Care for a child aged 7-17 in your own home one or two weekends a month only
- Get full training and 24/7 support
- Receive a tax-free carer allowance towards the living expenses (from \$205 per night)
- OK to work full-time or part-time

As a **long-term after carer**, you will:

- Provide a safe and loving home for a child aged 7-17 who has just graduated from the TFCO program and who needs a nurturing place to live until they turn 18
- Get full training and 24/7 support
- Receive ongoing tax-free reimbursements towards the living expenses (from \$435 per fortnight)
- OK to work full-time or part-time

What support does a specialised foster carer receive?



TFCO carers receive an abundance of support:

- General foster care and specialised TFCO training
- Daily phone call from the OzChild team to check in with you
- Weekly group meetings with other specialised foster carers
- 24/7 on-call service with a team of highly qualified professionals
- Respite once a month, where your foster child will spend a weekend with a respite carer, to give you time to recharge



What financial support does a specialised foster carer receive?

Specialised foster carers will receive a high carer allowance that reflects the intensity of the program they are operating within and the complexity of the child they will be caring for.

You will receive a tax-free carer allowance of \$75,000 per annum (up to \$6,250 per month)



I'm happy here and safest I have ever felt.
- 10-year-old after only a few weeks in TFCO



Who can become a specialised foster carer?



The TFCO program is suitable for individuals or couples who:

- Are at least 21 years old
- Have a current driver's licence
- Have a suitable living space including a spare bedroom
- Ideally don't work at all, however if your work is highly flexible and only minimal hours we could explore this with you. Please note this is only relevant for Fulltime carers. Respite carers are OK to work part-time or full-time.
- Be able and willing to
 - Be closely supervised and guided by the OzChild team
 - Take instruction
 - Follow an exact program of care
 - Learn new parenting skills. This sometimes means putting your own parenting style aside in order to care for children with complex behaviours
- Having experience in dealing with children or young people with complex behaviours is not mandatory but preferable
- Have a good support network



We are seeing change day by day, week by week. Their social skills are improved and they are motivated. We focus on one goal at a time and it builds up to make a big difference...

- Sammy (41) Specialised Foster Parent



How is TFCO different to foster care?



TFCO

An exact program guide

Specialised foster carers are closely supervised daily, directed and must follow the exact instruction in this highly prescriptive program. For TFCO to work however, it's vital that every member of the team, including the foster carer, follow the TFCO program exactly as planned.

Short term placements only

This program needs typically nine to twelve months to make positive changes in a child's behaviour, enabling them to live well in a stable family environment.

Specific age group

The Victorian TFCO program currently supports children aged between 7–17 years of age.

Work commitments

It is fine to foster whilst working full-time or part-time if you are interested in becoming a respite carer (one weekend a month). If you're interested in becoming a full-time carer, you can't have any other form of paid employment or running your own business by the time that first child comes into your care. If you are a couple, at least one of you must not be working.

High carer allowance

Carers in the TFCO program receive a tax-free carer allowance of \$75,000 per annum.

Children who need someone special like you

The children in the program have often spent lots of years in foster care, moving from foster family to foster family and most likely come from residential care. You have the opportunity to really turn their lives around, help them achieve positive outcomes and set them up for success for the rest of their lives.

General foster care

No exact program guide

In general foster care there is no exact program foster carers are required to adhere to.

Varied placement durations

In general foster care, the placement duration varies from one night, to one week all the way up to 17 years for long-term placements.

No specific age group

Children in general foster care range in age from newborn babies up to the age of 18.

You can work

Foster carers can work full-time, depending on the age range they are interested in.

Small reimbursements

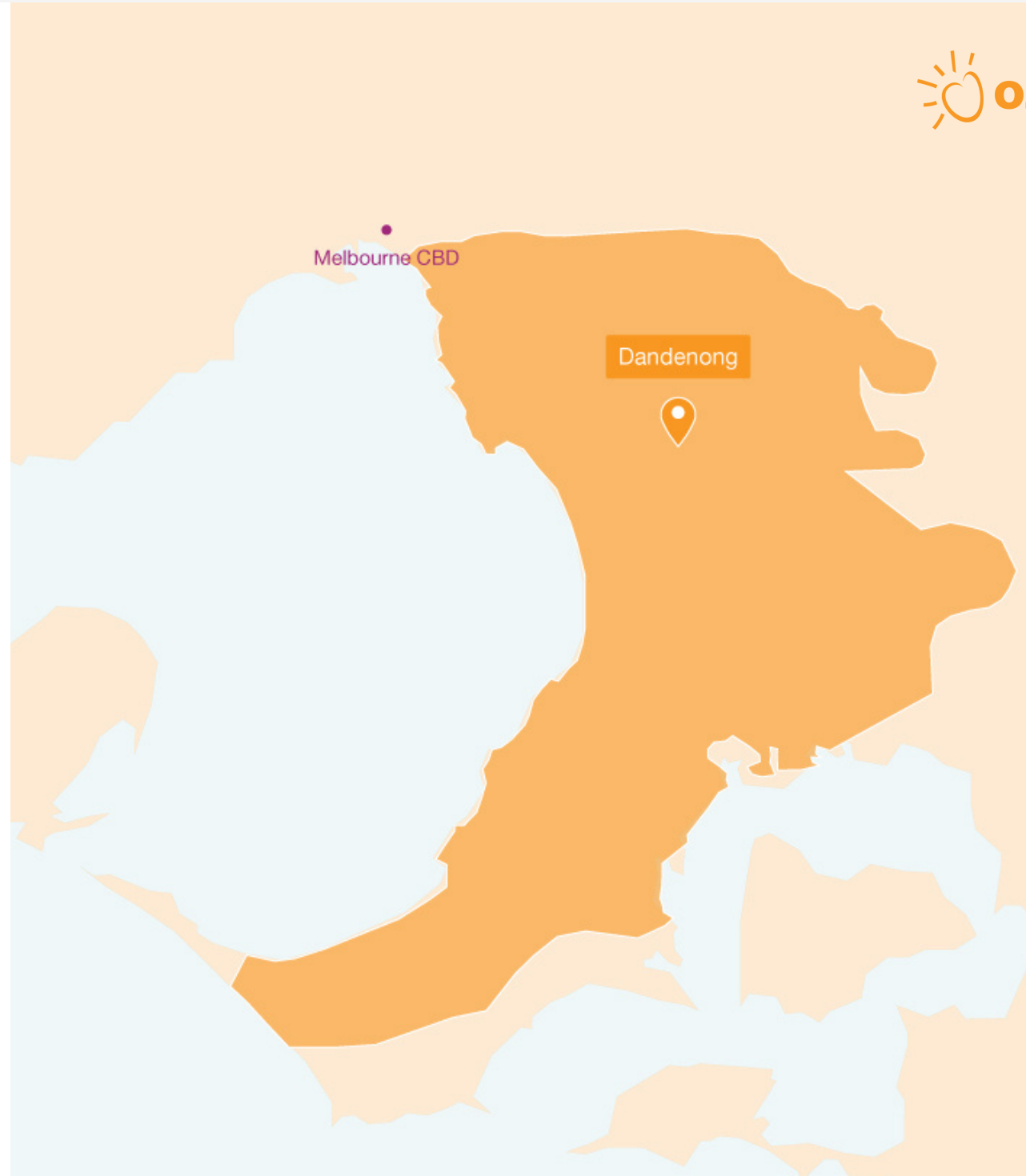
General foster carers receive a small tax-free fortnightly reimbursement.

Service area map

Due to the number of appointments the kids attend as part of this specialised program, it's important that you don't live too far from our office.

Please use the button below to ensure you live in our service area.

[Click here to view a detailed map](#)



The process



1

Virtual Q&A session

The session is designed to give you the knowledge to make an informed decision on becoming a specialised foster carer. Our small group virtual meetings, lasting 30 minutes, bring together 1-5 other households. You can participate from the comfort and convenience of your home. You will hear from one of our experienced specialised foster carers. What it is like to be a carer, including the rewarding experiences you will have and the challenges you might encounter as a specialised foster carer and of course, you can ask any questions you might have.

We encourage all members of your household to attend this information session.

2

Registration of Interest form

If you are still to learn more about the program, you will be asked to complete a quick online Registration of Interest form. This form asks questions about yourself, who is living with you, your background and what kind of behaviours you would feel comfortable with.

3

Home visit

Once you have completed the form, we will call you to organise a time to come and have a cuppa with you. During this visit we will tell you more about the program, the kids and the process.

4

Applications and checks

You will be asked to complete a number of forms and checks including:

- Working with Children Check
- Police check
- Medical check
- Referee checks

5

Training

All specialised foster carers complete 16 hours of compulsory foster care training as well as two full days of specialised TFCO training at no cost to you. The training will prepare you for the day-to-day responsibilities and challenges, parenting techniques and the TFCO methodology. The training is mandatory for everyone in the house with a caring role.

You will also be asked to complete a First Aid course, cultural training and a one day 'Child Safe Environments for Children and Young people' course.

6

Assessments

A qualified assessor will work through six formal assessment interviews at your home. During the assessment we will want to talk to all members of your household and we will perform a home and environment check to make sure you can provide a safe place to stay for a child or young person.

7

Panel

Upon completion of paperwork, checks, training and assessments, OzChild will discuss the progress of your application. If all the information demonstrates your household is suitable for fostering, OzChild will submit an assessment report to the Department for Child Protection recommending your approval as a specialised foster carer. The Department for Child Protection will make the final decision regarding the approval or non-approval of carers.

Frequently asked questions



What is foster care?

Foster care is the temporary care of vulnerable children and young people by members of the community, like you, who become trained and approved foster carers.



If I have a police record, am I still eligible to become a specialised foster carer?

All specialised foster parents undertake Police and Working with Children Checks as part of their approval process. We are required to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children in their care. Some offences, like sexual or physical abuse will rule out approval, while other offences may not. It is important to discuss any criminal history with us upfront. Minor historic issues may not impact your eligibility to be a carer, so please discuss your circumstances with us early on.

How long does it take to become a specialised foster carer?

On average it takes about four to six months to become an approved TFCO carer, depending how quickly you can get all the paperwork, training and assessments completed.

Can I start with general foster care and then do TFCO later?

Absolutely! You can always start off as a general foster carer with OzChild to gain some experience and then convert to becoming a TFCO foster carer later.

Next steps

What happens now?

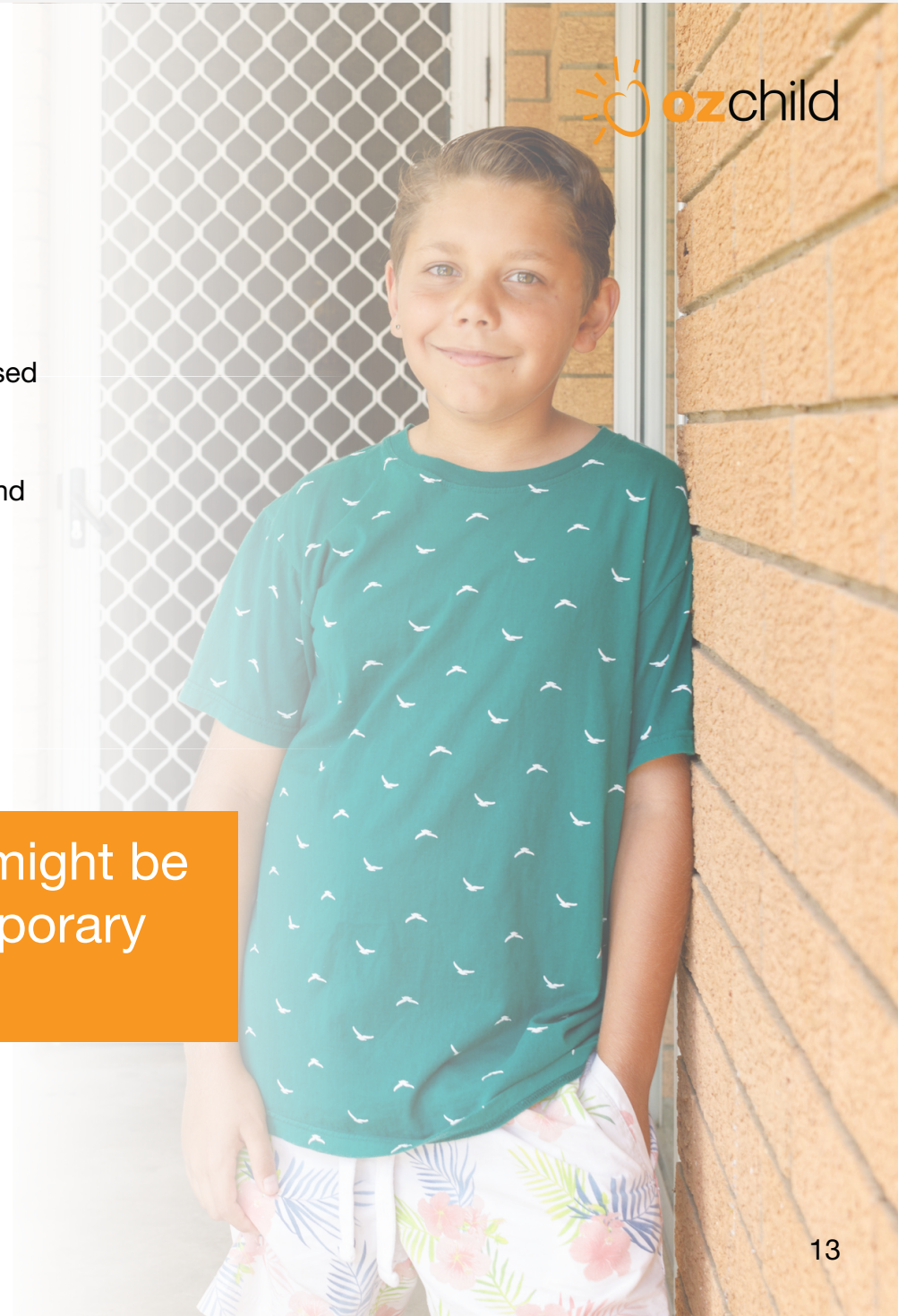
We'd love you and anyone else in your family who might be interested in specialised foster care to join us at one of our virtual Q&A sessions.

Email us at tfco@ozchild.org.au with your preferred Q&A session date and time and we'll send you instructions on how to join.

You will also hear directly from an experienced OzChild foster carer and have the opportunity to put your questions to them as they talk about their TFCO journey.

You might be temporary in their lives. They might be temporary in yours. But there is nothing temporary about the love or the lesson.

- Tonia Christle





[ozchild.org.au](https://www.ozchild.org.au)

tfco@ozchild.org.au

1800 954 550

