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| Birth registration and certificates |
| Information for child protection practitioners  |
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# Background

It is important that every child has their birth registered and has a birth certificate. This is a human right and is an identity document that is required for official purposes such as enrolling a child in childcare or school. It is the first step in establishing identity and becomes part of a child’s history.

For some children in care, a birth certificate may form part of their connection to their birth family and cultural identity and can tell them things they may not know, for example where they were born.

Most Victorian children are issued with a birth certificate after their birth is registered by their parents. Following a child’s birth, the hospital, medical facility, or midwife gives parents a Birth Registration Statement. Parents then use the Birth Registration Statement to register their child's birth and apply for a birth certificate.

However, for some children, their birth has never been registered, while others do not have their birth certificate.

## The role of Child Protection

Child protection practitioners, as early as possible, should ask parents if they have registered their child’s birth and ask to see a copy of the birth certificate. If this is not possible in the context of the investigation, then child protection practitioners must ask parents early in protective intervention phase if the child’s birth has been registered and ask to see a copy of the birth certificate.

It is important to have these conversations early.

If parents have not registered their child’s birth, child protection practitioner is to encourage and support, or arrange support for parents to do this as soon as possible. If a parent is unable or unwilling and the child is in care, child protection practitioners must register the child’s birth. Further information can be found in the Registering a child’s birth - procedure, this includes how to record this information in CRIS.

If parents do not have a copy of their child’s birth certificate and child protection are working with the family by agreement, or the child is under an interim accommodation order to parent, or a family preservation order or the permanency objective is family reunification, practitioners are to support parents to obtain a copy of the child’s birth certificate. Alternatively, this support may be provided by a community service organisation (CSO) or Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) if they are working with the family.

When a child has been in care for 21 days under a Children’s Court order (of any type), Child Protection will, within the next 30 days, apply for a birth certificate for the child and retain this on the child’s file. Further information can be found in Applying for a birth certificate procedure.

Only Child Protection (including Kinship Engagement teams), Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC) or a person who holds parental responsibility for a child can apply for a birth certificate for a child in care or to have the child’s birth registered (where required).

### Community Service Organisations (CSOs) and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)

Where CSOs or ACCOs are working with a family when a child resides at home, it is appropriate to seek their agreement to support the parents to apply for the birth certificate.

If a CSO or ACCO becomes aware of a child in care who does not have their birth registered or have a birth certificate and informs Child Protection, the child protection practitioner is to arrange for this to occur as soon as possible following the relevant procedure.

#### Carers

If a carer requires a copy of a birth certificate for a child they are caring for, the child protection practitioner is to provide a certified copy to the relevant agency which will provide it to the carer and retrieve it at the end of the placement. For kinship carers without agency involvement, Child Protection will provide the copy to the carer and arrange for it to be returned at the end of the placement. Child Protection will retain the original. For children subject to long-term care orders, a certified copy of the child’s birth certificate is to be provided to the long-term carer as a matter of standard practice.

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