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| Birth registration and certificates |
| Information for carers |
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# Background

It is important that every child has their birth registered and have 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.

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.

Further information about registering a child’s birth and applying for a birth certificate can be found on the child protection manual.

## The role of carers

The role of the carer for children in care is a very important one. It is anticipated that from time to time you may require a copy of the birth certificate for a child in your care.

If you require a copy of a birth certificate for a child you are caring for to assist in the day-to-day care you provide for the child, please discuss this with your case manager or agency (if applicable) or with Child Protection.

Keep in mind that when a child first enters care, the process of obtaining a birth certificate will take some time. Child Protection will be able to assist with appropriate documentation to support making care and educational arrangements for the child in the meantime.

Child Protection retain the birth certificate issued to it by Births, Deaths and Marriages. Then, where a birth certificate is required, your agency can provide you with a certified copy. If you do not have support from an agency, the child’s allocated child protection practitioner can provide you with a certified copy.

A certified copy of a birth certificate is a legal document that can be used in place of an original document. If you experience any difficulties when using the certified copy, please alert your agency or Child Protection.

At the end of the placement, you will need to return the copy of the birth certificate to your case manager or agency (where applicable), or directly to Child Protection. Where a care agency is no longer providing a placement for a child, they will need to return the copy of the child’s birth certificate to Child Protection.

For children subject to long-term care orders, carers will receive a certified copy of the child’s birth certificate as a matter of course. Where a child leaves care at 18 years, the birth certificate issued to Child Protection will be provided to the young person.

Where a permanent care order is made for a child, the permanent care parent will be given the birth certificate issued to Child Protection.

## The role of Child Protection or Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care

When a child is in parental care or in care with the permanency objective of family reunification, Child Protection will support or arrange support for parents to obtain a birth certificate for their child when they do not already have one.

When a child has been in care for 21 days subject to any order, Child Protection will, within the next 30 days, apply for a birth certificate for the child and retain this on the child’s CRIS file. Further information can be found in Applying for a birth certificate procedure. The birth certificate issued to Child Protection will be retained by Child Protection on the child’s paper file with a copy scanned and uploaded to CRIS.

Where it is found the birth of a child in care has not been registered, Child Protection will, to the fullest extent possible, engage the child’s parents and support them to fulfill their responsibility to register their child’s birth. However, if parents are unable or unwilling to do this, where the child is in care under a Children’s Court order, Child Protection will apply to register the child’s birth.

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

Where a CSO or ACCO is working with a family when a child resides at home, it is appropriate for them support parents to apply for a birth certificate for their child if they do not have one.

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 or ACAC, the practitioner will arrange for this to occur as soon as possible following the relevant procedure.

#### It is the role and responsibility of Child Protection or ACAC providers to register and apply for birth certificates for children in care. This function cannot be performed by CSOs or ACCOs.

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