



# Disability Services

## Information Sheet

### Foster Families/Carers

#### Alternative Care Therapeutic Team (for children with disability)

The Alternative Care Therapeutic Team (ACTT) is an initiative funded by Families SA in the Department for Families and Communities and managed by the Specialist Service for Children and Youth, in Disability Services.

#### Who we assist

The ACTT is a program for foster families who are experiencing stress and concern about continuing to care for their foster child/young person with intellectual or physical disability or a sensory impairment.

#### Why this assistance is important

Children with disability who enter foster care may struggle to understand the changes that have occurred in their lives. Many have experienced abuse and trauma along with difficulties with attachment and separation. These experiences frequently result in challenging behaviours which can place a great deal of strain on the foster placement.

For other children, their behaviour difficulties may be related to their disability, for example, a child with autism may have disturbed behaviour due to anxiety and lack of communication skills.

The ACTT works with foster families to help them understand the meaning of the behaviour and the effect of the disability and trauma on the child's development.

#### Our aims

We aim to work in partnership with foster families, carers and service providers to:

- ▶ Strengthen foster families' knowledge, skills and resources so that they are able to continue in their caring role
- ▶ Enhance the safety and wellbeing of children and young people with disability and challenging behaviour and their foster families
- ▶ Prevent the breakdown of a placement of a child/young person with disability.

#### Our team

The ACTT is a small team with a wide range of experience in providing support to children/young people with disability and their families. The team specialises in working with children/young people who have experienced trauma. Staff have backgrounds in psychology and disability studies.

Assessments from other allied health professionals such as speech therapists or occupational therapists can also be arranged.

The Families SA social worker, placement support worker and disability case manager will also be consulted on developing goals to ensure a coordinated approach to assisting the child/young person and foster family.

## What we provide

Depending on the key issues identified, the ACTT may assist by providing:

- ▶ A comprehensive assessment of the child, their behaviour and development
- ▶ Therapeutic interventions to enhance the relationship between the child and foster carer
- ▶ Information for foster families on factors contributing to challenging behaviour, and support to carry out specific intervention strategies
- ▶ Teaching the child new skills, for example relaxation or self-care
- ▶ Specific strategies to enhance the child's communication, social skills, play or other areas of development
- ▶ Practical tools to assist the child's learning such as schedule boards, video teaching and visual stories
- ▶ Consultation and information to schools and other services supporting the child.

## How we work

The ACTT undertakes a comprehensive assessment which may involve observing the child in a variety of settings and obtaining information from other services that are involved. Goals are set by the family and the team and a range of practical strategies developed to achieve the goals. The team then assist to help implement the strategies. The team can be involved for up to five months.

The ACTT also offers consultative services to carers and support agencies in rural and remote areas of South Australia.

## How to Refer

Referrals are made to the ACTT by a Families SA social worker. Once a referral is received, a preliminary meeting is arranged with the foster family and other key people to explain the service provided by the ACTT.

Any child in a long-term foster placement under the Guardianship of the Minister and registered with a disability agency can be referred.

## Further Information

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