

## Change to the allowance for carers who adopt a child in statutory out-of-home care

### What will change and why?

From 1 January 2012 there will be a change in the financial and other assistance available to new adoptive parents who adopt a child in statutory care. Financial assistance will be provided through an annual lump sum payment of \$1500 which will replace fortnightly allowances and contingency payments.

Carers who adopt children in their care do so because they love and want to make a formal, legal commitment to their child – not for financial reasons.

### How does this affect families that have already adopted a child?

Carers who have adopted a child and have been receiving a fortnightly allowance will continue to receive the fortnightly allowance until their adopted child turns 18 years of age. Payments to existing carers who have adopted will not change.

### What about families that have not adopted the child in their care but have started the process?

Community Services knows there are families whose applications to adopt are already in the system, and also families who have been waiting to proceed with the adoption process. The initiative will not affect:

- carers whose adoption applications have been filed or finalised in the NSW Supreme Court before 1 January 2012
- carers whose adoption applications are currently being assessed by Community Services or their respective agency but not yet approved, or filed in the NSW Supreme Court
- carers who formally expressed an interest to adopt the child in their care before the budget announcement on 6 September 2011 but have not yet proceeded to an assessment.

This is where a carer or child has contacted their caseworker and enquired about adoption, and Community Services has made a decision that it is reasonable to pursue this permanent option. Alternatively, the caseworker may have identified adoption as a suitable permanent option and has discussed this with the carer and/or the child.

## **What about support for carers who want to adopt a child who has a significant disability?**

Families who adopt children with a disability have priority of access to Government operated and funded specialist disability services. So for carers considering adoption of a child with a disability, Community Services will work closely with families, carers and Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) to provide priority support.

ADHC offers a wide range of services including family support programs, early childhood intervention, respite and therapy to assist children and young people with a disability and their families and carers.

In addition, parents may be eligible for the range of Commonwealth services and financial supports available to assist with raising a family where a child has a disability.

For further information about respite and other ADHC services, families and carers should contact the ADHC Information, Referral and Intake office in their local area.

## **What if a family leaves NSW?**

The payment is not portable and has not been in the past. It can only be paid to families living in NSW. Should a family relocate to another Australian state or territory, the payment will not continue.

## **Who can you speak to about this change?**

Carers who have adopted, whose adoption applications are being processed, or carers wishing to adopt the child in their care should discuss this change with their Community Services or agency out-of-home care case worker or out-of-home care duty officer at the nearest Community Services Centre.

Alternatively you can contact Community Services Adoption and Permanent Care Services on 02 9716 3006. If you are a Community Services carer wishing to adopt, inquiries on the new policy can also be made to Connecting Carers NSW on 1300 794 653.