



CARER SUPPORT DURING QUALITY OF CARE

Foster Care Association of Victoria Position:

When an allegation of abuse in home based care is made it is essential that appropriate support be offered to the carer during and following the QOC process. The FCAV strongly recommends that available supports be utilised by carers to manage what can be an extremely stressful and isolating experience. FCAV are also aware that the exact nature of the support roles will vary from foster care organisation (CSO) to CSO.

AVAILABLE SUPPORTS - LIAISON VS SUPPORT PERSON

Support needs of a carer will vary at different parts of the QOC process, however your CSO is required to provide you with access to a *Liaison Person* to help you understand the process as well as a general Support Person.

The role of the *Liaison Person* will be facilitated through the agency and will involve a staff member, normally a Team Leader or above, who has the capacity to negotiate with the Department to ensure process is being followed and within the specified timeframes. This person generally does not play an active role in the Investigation Planning Group, which is carried out by a more senior person within the agency.

The Liaison Person is responsible for:

- Ensuring that all persons are informed of the process that will be used to manage the QOC concern and the expected timeframe of that process
- Keeping parties informed of the progress in managing the quality of care concern
- Ensuring that all persons are aware of the importance of maintaining confidentiality
- Ensuring, as far as possible, that the person reporting the concern is not subjected to any harassment, victimisation, or threats of retribution; and
- Giving information about counselling or other support services.

The role of the *Support Person* is different to the *Liaison Person*. The *Support Person* role may include:

- Attending meetings with you as a support;
- Being present for reassurance during any interviews or meetings; and
- Taking notes at interviews and meetings.

Your agency should offer you a *Support Person* who may be your existing case manager, another staff member with whom you do not have day to day dealings, or alternatively a pastoral care representative from within the organisation. Alternatively, you may choose to nominate a support person outside your agency, eg: a trusted friend or relative, colleague, lawyer or possibly the FCAV.

Should you wish to access a support person from your agency, ensure you clarify what the nature and extent of support and how often you can expect to be contacted by this person. Some carers have advised FCAV that at critical times in the process, such as when the allegation is received and during the commencement of the investigation, daily communication is necessary. At other times, such as when waiting for an out come to the investigation, communication may be less frequent and there may be a number of days between required contacts.