

Setting up a Playgroup

Have you been thinking that it would be great to have the opportunity to connect with other families formed through permanent care and adoption? Somewhere you feel comfortable and accepted by other parents who can relate to the joys, challenges and stories in your family?

Permanent Care and Adoptive Families can help. We recognise that families formed through permanent care and adoption have unique needs; and are keen to assist families in establishing support groups or playgroups which help families to connect and build relationships and support. Permanent Care and Adoptive Families is offering sponsorship for eligible groups run by and for permanent care and adoptive families. This sponsorship entitles groups to financial and other in-kind assistance which could be used for a variety of purposes.

Where to start?

There are a number of things to think about when setting up a group, however the first thing is to connect with at least one or two other parents who are keen to be part of the group, and begin sharing your ideas.

Purpose of your group

It may sound obvious, but clarifying the purpose of your group is a useful starting point. It can be helpful to ensure everyone is on the same page, new members know what to expect, and as a group you know where to focus your limited resources. Think back to your initial motivation for wanting to set up a group specifically for families formed through permanent care and adoption. What needs were you hoping to meet?

Groups in Community Venues

If you are considering running your group in a community venue, your local Council can often offer suggestions. Council websites will have listings of council, community or church-owned facilities. If you are considering setting up a playgroup, then an easy way to begin is to negotiate using an existing playgroup venue which already has suitable facilities and equipment. One of the advantages of hiring Council facilities is that your program will be covered by the public liability insurance policy for the property.

Groups in the home

A support or play group can also be run from private homes, rotating between members involved. The advantages of doing it this way are that it is easy to organise, and remains a private arrangement. However, as a group you may wish to consider some of the implications of running it in private homes, such as, can you accommodate an increase in the numbers of participants? What would happen if someone was seriously injured in your home or if there was damage to your property? Would it be beneficial to have some general agreement about how to run the group so that there is some consistency around house rules; start and finish times; guidelines for children's behaviour; catering, and cleaning up?

Group Activities

Activities will be determined by the type of group you are planning, however the financial support offered through Permanent Care and Adoptive Families sponsorship could be very useful in resourcing these activities. Having a regular structure to what happens when you meet can give children a greater sense of continuity and sense of security.

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Group Activities cont/...

Planned activities and use of equipment allows children to be more engaged and parents more time to chat! The Playgroup Victoria website can offer some ideas of activities for younger children; or have a chat to us at Permanent Care and Adoptive Families.

Building a strong membership

Generally people join groups for two main reasons: because it meets their personal needs (to make friends, to belong, to have fun), and because they support the purpose of the group. So as a way of building stronger commitment consider how you can share the decision-making, encourage a sense of belonging and ownership; maintain a safe and confidential environment; and clearly communicate your purpose.

Costs

Costs can be an inhibiting factor when establishing a new group: costs can be associated with venue hire, replenishing consumables like refreshments or art materials; first aid kit; insurance; purchasing equipment, and administration costs. This is where Permanent Care and Adoptive Families can help. Having access to assistance in the form of promotional flyers or a small amount of funds can make a big difference in helping your group get off the ground, or in strengthening the membership of an existing group.

How can Permanent Care and Adoptive Families help?

Have a chat to the staff at Permanent Care and Adoptive Families if you are thinking of setting up a group; we are happy to advise you and suggest other resources and ideas. As a sponsored Permanent Care and Adoptive Families support or play group you will receive financial assistance of up to \$200 per year plus other in-kind support such as assistance with printing; and promotion and advertising through the Permanent Care and Adoptive Families website and newsletters.

Being more connected to Permanent Care and Adoptive Families can mean that your group has better access to information, support, training and resources such as our Fact Sheets and Bookstore. Permanent Care and Adoptive Families Book Store has a wide selection of carefully selected books which are relevant to the needs and experiences of permanent care and adoptive families.

Permanent Care and Adoptive Families resource sheets:

Dealing with Sensitive Issues in Support Groups - *call Permanent Care and Adoptive Families on 9020 1833*

Legal & Public Liability Issues for Support Groups - *call Permanent Care and Adoptive Families on 9020 1833*

Other resources

The Playgroups Victoria website has lots of helpful information on a wide range of topics, such as setting up new groups, different models of playgroups, things to consider when running a group, and much more. For help to start a playgroup, or to explore membership possibilities you can call Playgroup Victoria toll free on 1800 171 882, email newgroup@playgroup.org.au or www.playgroup.org.au

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