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## FACT SHEET FOR SCHOOLS

## SUPPORTING students who are YOUNG CARERS

## background

Did you know we have at least 560 young carers attending ACT Public schools? These are young people who have identified their carer status. There may be other young carers who have not identified that they are a carer. They may not understand they are a carer or understand the impact caring is having on them until they reach a crisis point. Young carers may fear being bullied or that their family may be split up.

We need your help to identify and provide flexible support to these students, so they remain engaged in their education while balancing their carer responsibilities.

ACT Schools and the Education Directorate recognises that many students in the ACT may be caring for a family member or friend, and that this can be for a range of reasons. For example, the person being cared for may have a long term or terminal illness, be frail and/or aged, might be a baby or young child, or a person with a disability.

As we know, young carers may struggle to engage with their education, not because they are uninterested or lack ability, but because their caring role can place intense demands on them physically, emotionally and mentally. They are less likely to have time to devote to their education as other students.

Schools and the Directorate are committed to develop or strengthen options to ensure young carers are well supported. This is evident in, for example, the Continuum of Educational Supports that addresses the diversity of needs for students so that each high school responds flexibly to provide supports to young carers to help them attend school and remain engaged in their learning.

## Who Is a young carer?

Every young carer’s situation is different. ‘Young Carers’ are people up to 25 years old and often perform tasks not normally undertaken by children of their age. Caring responsibilities can sometimes impact on a young person’s ability to attend school. It can also change their childhood experiences making them different from their peers.

The impacts are clear when you understand the responsibilities a young carer may undertake including tasks such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, looking after siblings, managing finances, helping with showering and dressing, taking care of medications and providing emotional support.

Young carers may not feel able to confide that they are caring for someone and that they need extra help and understanding. They may not want to appear to be different or may not be aware that they can ask for help. A young carer may feel embarrassed about their home situation, particularly if they are caring for someone with alcohol dependency, substance misuse, mental health issues or a learning disability.

Each school community is responsible for identifying and responding to the needs of young carers in order for them to remain engaged in education. Early interventions are essential, and support can be flexible and collaborative. This may include:

* Flexible learning options for students who require personalised/adjusted curriculum, pedagogy and/or wellbeing supports to facilitate engagement/re-engagement, and,
* Alternative Education Provision for students requiring highly individualised and targeted support.

Give young carers a voice by asking *them* what they need and advocate for them. Other things you might like to consider and discuss with students include:

* permission to stay home from school or classes when the student needs to;
* permission to use their phone to call home;
* options for catching up on work from home, such as catch-up lessons, take-home work, e-learning or note-taking services; and
* flexibility with deadlines for assignments.

## Resources

‘Doing the right thing well in schools’ is a good practice guide for working with young carers in schools.

<https://youngcarersnetwork.com.au/Portals/0/I%20Am%20A%20Teacher/Doing%20the%20Right%20Thing%20Young%20Carers%20School%20Guide%20(UK).pdf?ver=2019-02-26-092928-650>

## A Guide for teachers

<https://www.carersact.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Young-Carers-Factsheet-Teachers-Guide.pdf>

## More Information

For further information please email Student Wellbeing at [ETDStudentWellbeing@act.gov.au](file:///C:\Users\bronwyn%20mcnally\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\SB2XLD0J\ETDStudentWellbeing@act.gov.au)