



Role overview - Child Safety Officer

Qualification

Child Safety Officers (CSO) must hold a bachelor level qualification from an accredited tertiary institution in a relevant human services field. This includes (but is not limited to):

- social work, psychology, child and family studies, behavioural science, social welfare.
- social science, child protection, arts, counselling, criminology
- law, community, education, policing, health and nursing

CSOs must hold a Class C driver's licence.

Refer to 'Qualification requirements' for further information.

Responsibilities

CSOs are responsible for delivering statutory child protection services including assessment, intervention, casework and case management.

A CSO:

- supports and guides families to safely care for their children, to ensure meaningful family participation in child protection
- is guided by a strengths-based and safety-oriented practice framework
- undertakes collaborative assessment, case planning and safety planning

- delivers best outcomes for children and families by partnering with peak bodies, service providers and communities
- works in partnership with the independent entity or person to support Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children
- committed to understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures

Personal attributes

A CSO:

- understands children and young people
- has excellent planning, organisational and casework skills
- has a strong sense of justice
- possesses excellent verbal and written communication skills
- can work in difficult situations and within multidisciplinary teams
- is open-minded, grounded and emotionally mature, and enjoys a challenge

Case study

It is 2pm Friday afternoon. You are a Child Safety Officer in a Child Safety Service Centre and you are looking forward to the weekend.

Your Team Leader has just received information from the Regional Intake Service about suspected abuse of a child from a local school - nine year old Sarah has told her teacher she is afraid to go home.

Sarah says her stepfather has been hitting her and her mother does nothing to stop it. The teacher says Sarah appears to have bruises on her arms and legs.

Listening, assessing, planning

Following a briefing by your Team Leader and negotiations with police and the Department of Education, you are at the local school with police officers, preparing to interview Sarah about why she is too scared to go home.

You know how important it is to gain Sarah's trust - you need as much information as possible to understand how Sarah got the bruises on her arms and legs and to be able to assess the risks she might be facing at home.

Liaising, negotiating

Between the information provided by the school and Sarah, you are getting a good picture of the concerns - it is now time for you and the police to speak with Sarah's mother and stepfather. They need to know that you have spoken to Sarah and they need the opportunity to respond to the concerns that have emerged. You know they are likely to be angry or upset and maybe difficult to engage, but you also know that Sarah's safety is your first priority - especially if it is possible that her parents cannot or will not ensure this.

Partnership, investigation, safety

You have managed to get Sarah's parents to agree for her to have a medical assessment and the results confirm suspected physical abuse. Sarah's mother and stepfather maintain they do not know how the injuries were caused and who might have caused them. However, Sarah has told you that her stepfather was responsible. You discuss this with her parents and start talking about the options for ensuring Sarah's immediate safety. Options include other family members or foster careers.

Conflict resolution, problem solving

By around 7:30pm you have established that Sarah's immediate safety needs are best met by a temporary placement with a foster carer. Her parents have consented to this and have agreed to see you on Monday to discuss the issues further. After discussion with your team leader and staff at the after-hours Child Safety Service

Centre, a placement has been arranged and you drive Sarah to the foster carer's home. You provide the foster carer with some basic details — enough so that the carer can provide the best possible care for Sarah over the weekend.

Complex, emotional, tough

You head back to the service centre with your police partners, looking forward to being able to get into your own car and head home for the weekend. You make sure your notes are comprehensive and up-to-date so that you can complete the necessary paperwork on Monday and you are relieved that you did not need to apply for a temporary assessment order through the local magistrate — at least not this time.

Accountable, focused, responsible

You have done some great work and you are exhausted, but you know that this is just the beginning for Sarah and her family and that the real work with them will start on Monday.

End Case Study.

Professional, satisfying, important

CSOs work with vulnerable children and families to ensure they have the supports they need to care safely for their children at home. When children have been harmed or may be at risk, they will work with the families to build on their strengths and ensure their children will be safe from further harm.

Child focus

CSOs need to know about children. They need to know how children grow and develop. They need to know about risk factors associated with abuse and neglect of children and the range of impacts children experience when they have been harmed or are at risk of harm within their family. They also need to know the impacts children experience as a result of statutory intervention. CSOs need a strong commitment to working positively with children and their families no matter how difficult or confronting the circumstances.

Communicate effectively

CSOs need to be able to modify their style to ensure communication is effective with the range of people they contact on a day-to-day basis. This can include children of all ages, colleagues,

professionals, parents, and carers - all from a range of cultural backgrounds. CSOs need to be able to sensitively manage communication in difficult circumstances. They need to know what to ask, how to ask and who to ask in order to establish enough information and evidence to make thorough child safety assessments.

Team oriented

In an environment of competing priorities and complex demands, CSOs need to know they can rely on their team. They support each other to make sure the job gets done and to build a work environment that is rewarding and rich.

Statutory environment

CSOs are responsible for working with children and families within the boundaries of relevant legislation including the *Child Protection Act 1999* (Qld) and departmental procedures including the Child Safety Practice Manual and child protection continuum.

Accountable

CSOs make critical decisions about children and their families based on evidence and good case management. Decisions are based on thorough assessments and are culturally appropriate. These decisions and the processes used must be transparent – accurate and thorough documentation is vital.

Professional

CSOs are self-aware and know what they bring to the role. They know that they are constantly growing and learning. They are comfortable working autonomously but they also know the importance of consultation, professional development and reflecting on their practice.

Child Safety Service Centre teams

Child Safety Service Centres are structured to meet the varying demands in child protection work which is based on the child protection continuum. As a CSO you could be expected to work in any team in a service centre. Each team has a different purpose and focus. Child protection cases are allocated to particular teams based on the child protection plan developed for each child and their family.

Regional intake service

You will receive information about child protection concerns. It will be your role to inform the person providing the information (the 'notifier') about the role of Child Safety Services and other relevant service providers. You will be required to screen the information to decide the appropriate response. This may be referral to another government or non-government agency for early intervention and support or determining that an investigation and assessment is required when a child may be at risk of harm.

Investigation and assessment

In this team, you will investigate concerns received about harm and risk of harm. This involves assessing the child or young person's immediate safety by conducting interviews with the child and family members to assess the level of future risk of harm. After this, you will determine whether a child is in need of protection and determine the appropriate type of ongoing intervention.

Intervention with parental agreement

You will work intensively with children, young people and their families to meet their protection and care needs while they remain in the family home for all or most of the intervention period. These cases are only used when parents are willing and able to actively work with the department to reduce the level of risk in the home.

Children under orders

You will work with children, young people, and their families (including foster carers) where children and young people are subject to either short-term or long-term child protection orders. This involves using case management skills to ensure the ongoing care needs of children and young people are met.

Placement services unit

You will identify and process placements for all children and young people that require out-of-home care. As the Placement Services Officer you will work collaboratively with service centre colleagues to locate and secure out-of-home care placements.

Kinship and foster care team

You will plan, coordinate and participate in foster carer recruitment and retention activities. This involves planning, developing and implementing procedures for recruitment, screening, training and assessing of foster carer applicants. Your role is also to provide foster carers with training and resources.

Location

CSOs are located throughout Queensland.

Rural and remote locations may attract incentives such as additional income and recreation leave, as well as subsidised accommodation and airfares.

Refer to [Child Safety Service Centres](#) for further information about locations and service centre contact details.