

Client Files, Child Protection and Family Support [and its predecessors]

1921 –

To access these records:

For access to records controlled by the Department of Communities and its predecessors, please contact the Department of Communities Freedom of Information Unit:

Postal Address: Freedom of Information, Department of Communities, Locked Bag 5000, Fremantle WA 6959

Phone: (08) 6414 3344

Email: foi@communities.wa.gov.au

Website :<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/department-of-communities-freedom-of-information-foi>

Records Location

These records are part of [Records of the Department of Child Protection and Family Support, and predecessors \(1894 - current\)](#)

Details

Client Files, Child Protection and Family Support [and its predecessors] is a series of records that include most of the key information collected on children during their contact with the Department. These client files date from 1921 to the present day, so they cover children who came into contact with the Child Welfare Department, the Department for Community Welfare, the Department for Community Services, Family and Children's Services, the Department for Community Development and the Department for Child Protection and Family Support. There is not a complete set of client files.

Access Conditions

Access to these records is restricted and confidentiality is protected by CPFS. If you believe the Department may hold records about you, or about a family member, you are encouraged to apply. Access is governed by the Freedom of Information Act 1992 and the Department has a form on their website which you must use to apply for records.

Records

Record-keeping practices have changed over time and governments didn't always realise how important it might be to preserve the records that were made when someone was a child. Even where client files exist, the amount and type of information they contain differs from child to child. It is not unusual for one child in a family of siblings who were all in 'care' to have a thick file while her brother or sister has no more than a name in a register. So often, the record-making and record-keeping depended on the officer doing the recording and/or culling.

The growing trend of administration and greater public accountability for finances was also a factor in how government was dealing with information. During the 1970s when new files were being created at the rate of around 10,000 per year, the department was concerned with the large amount of 'inactive', old files that it had in storage. A culling program started in earnest and the department's annual reports give the numbers of files destroyed each year. Sadly, some of those files would have been client files for children who had now 'grown up' and not been in touch with the department for some years.

By 1984, the department had started entering client records into a computer system. This system has changed over time, and there was still a lot of 'manual recording' until the 2000s when the department gradually brought in a State-wide, electronic system for creating, managing and preserving records which was fully implemented in February 2008. The Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA) s.128 requires that the department keeps records for every child who comes into its care.

It is disappointing to know that not all client files exist and that many of them have very little information of value to people in their adult years. However, particularly since the 1980s, record-keeping has improved and some files *may* contain:

- Family name
- Given names
- Age
- Date of birth
- Medical information
- Social work or psychological information
- Photographs
- Letters to or from a child
- Schooling information
- Legal information
- Official decisions relating to the child
- Placement information (where the child lived while in the care of the department)

More info

Organisations in these records

Related Organisations

- [State Children Department, State of Western Australia \(1 January 1917 - 22 December 1927\)](#)
Date: 1921 - 1927
- [Child Welfare Department, State of Western Australia \(22 December 1927 - 15 June 1972\)](#)
- [Department for Community Welfare, State of Western Australia \(1972 - 1985\)](#)
- [Department for Community Services, State of Western Australia \(1 January 1985 - 1 October 1992\)](#)
- [Department for Community Development, State of Western Australia \(1 October 1992 - 1 July 1995\)](#)
- [Department for Family and Children's Services, State of Western Australia \(1 July 1995 - 1 July 2001\)](#)
- [Department for Community Development, State of Western Australia \(1 July 2001 - 30 June 2007\)](#)
- [Department for Child Protection and Family Support, State of Western Australia \(27 May 2013 - July 2017\)](#)
- [Child Protection and Family Support, State of Western Australia \(July 2017 - current\)](#)

Resources

- [Searching for your family history](#), Department of Communities website, 2021

You can view this page online by visiting <https://findconnect.efront.digital/entity/client-files-child-protection-and-family-support-and-its-predecessors/>