



Identifying and supporting young carers

Why is it important to identify young carers?

It is estimated that there are 235,000 young Australians aged 12 to 25 who are in an unpaid caring role for family or friends.

As professionals that work with young people, this information will assist you to identify and support young carers.

Young carers often juggle school, employment, and their caring responsibilities, including providing emotional and advocacy support, assisting with medication, physically supporting with showering and other personal care tasks, household chores, and looking after siblings.

These additional responsibilities make young carers far more susceptible to social isolation, financial and educational disadvantage, unemployment, and poor physical and mental health. Since the beginning of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this further with young carers balancing online learning, increased caring commitments, and reduced social and community engagement opportunities.

When young carers are supported, acknowledged and respected in their own right they are able to achieve and participate more actively at school and in their community. This is critical in ensuring that young carers have every opportunity to thrive at school and beyond.

Supporting young carers will not only improve outcomes for these students, but can also help to improve school attendance, engagement and attainment levels.

What are some signs that a young person is a carer?

There are several signs that a young person may have caring responsibilities. These signs can also be indicators of other circumstances and it is important not to make assumptions. It is a good idea to use this as a guide to start a conversation that can lead to additional enquiry and support for each young person.

The following factors are signs that can assist in identifying young carers:

- **Punctuality:** arriving late to school or handing in assignments late with no clear explanation
- **Stress:** exhibiting signs that they are stressed or overwhelmed
- **Isolation:** appearing to be isolated from others or may be experiencing bullying
- **Low attendance:** frequently missing days from school with no clear explanation
- **Minimal parental involvement or engagement:** parents or guardians of the student do not attend parent teacher interviews or school meetings regularly
- **Attention:** not focusing or engaging during class and other activities
- **Academic performance:** underperforming or inconsistent performance
- **Fatigue:** difficulty concentrating and referencing being tired regularly

How can my colleagues and I identify young carers?

Identifying that a young person has caring responsibilities is an important step in supporting the young carer. Young carers can be in both primary school and secondary school.

Many young people with significant caring responsibilities do not see themselves as a 'young carer'. This is an important consideration for professionals when identifying young carers.

There are a number of ways schools and organisations can raise awareness, educate communities and support people to identify themselves and others as young carers, these include:

- Data collection during school enrolment, program referral or activity registration forms
- Celebrating [National Carers Week](#) and hosting activities that raise awareness and start conversations
- Hosting young carer specific [events](#) during key times like Youth Week or NAIDOC week
- Starting conversations with young people and their parents/guardians who have the signs of a young carer
- Display posters and materials from [Carers Australia](#) and the [National Carer Network](#) at your school or organisation
- Promote the Young Carers Network and [Young Carer Bursary](#) in your newsletter or on social media

What can I do after I have identified a young carer?

- Identify a staff member that the young person feels comfortable with
- Initiate an in-depth conversation with the young person and or their family (if appropriate) in a safe and confidential place
- Record if a young person is a young carer in your case notes within your internal IT system or within your internal record keeping procedure
- Provide resources that may be useful for the young person in a private setting
- Refer the young carer and/or their parent or guardian to the [Carer Gateway](#)