FACT SHEET - Shared Stories Shared Lives Victoria and Step by Step Victoria (Familiarisation training).

What is Familiarisation training?
CSO staff undertaking the assessment and training of foster carers must participate in mandatory training about the appropriate use of Shared Stories Shared Lives Victoria (SSSLV) and Step by Step Victoria (SxSV).

The Department of Human Services has a licensed agreement to use these packages; this license requires all staff to complete ‘familiarisation training’ prior to use of the materials. Each familiarisation course is delivered over two days (four days in total) and ensures participants gain competency in the application of the packages prior to using them. This fact sheet provides an overview of SSSLV and SxSV and how to access familiarisation training.

What is Shared Stories Shared Lives Victoria?
Shared Stories Shared Lives Victoria (SSSLV) is the mandatory pre-service training course for all prospective foster carers (including adolescent community placements) in Victoria. The course consists of eight modules, and is delivered to foster carers over approximately 16 hours duration.
SSSLV compliments and provides the context for Step by Step Victoria (SxSV).

What is Step by Step Victoria?
SxSV is a competency-based assessment package including tools and a clear framework for making assessments of foster care applicants based on evidence of their skills. It provides a systemic way to engage an applicant and share information with them, and guides the assessor to reach an informed decision about the applicant’s suitability for fostering.

Why use these foster carer assessment and training materials?
It is mandatory for all registered providers of foster care in Victoria to use both of these packages.
Using common materials and a standard approach with applicant foster carers assists to ensure a quality introduction to fostering. It also provides for portability of accreditation and the sharing of resources between Community Service Organisations (CSOs) particularly in the delivery of foster carer training. Ultimately we aim to achieve improved outcomes for children and young people in foster care.

Who should attend Familiarisation training?
It is a requirement for CSO workers who deliver SSSLV to undertake SSSLV familiarisation training prior to delivering training to foster carers.
It is a requirement for CSO workers to undertake SxSV training prior to using it as an assessment tool.
It is strongly recommended that all foster care workers and team leaders attend both SSSLV and SxSV familiarisation training, regardless of whether their current task involves only assessments or only training.
Program and service advisors with foster care portfolios may also participate in this training.
Which session should I attend first?
Ideally staff should attend training in SSSLV familiarisation first. This provides perspective regarding the training experience of an applicant, and gives the context for staff who will go on to use SxSV to conduct assessments.

Where and when can I book in?
The Salvation Army (Westcare) is contracted by the Department of Human Services to provide a calendar of regular SSSLV and SxSV familiarisation training sessions each year.

These sessions are open to all foster care staff and are available at no cost to the CSO. For all training bookings and enquiries, including queries about refresher training please contact Westcare directly on (03) 9312 3544.

Who may deliver Familiarisation training?
In order to provide a comprehensive familiarisation training program to staff, familiarisation leaders must have completed the original ‘Train the Trainer’ sessions in SSSLV and SxSV. This ensures that in Victoria, our familiarisation leaders must:

- be experience foster carer trainers
- have undertaken a minimum of three assessments using SxSV material
- be experienced with the principles of competency-based assessment
- understand the principles of and have relevant experience in adult education
- have completed both SSSLV and SxSV familiarisation as a participant
- have a thorough understanding of the complexities and intended application of SSSLV and SxSV.

When can I commence assessing and training foster carers?
When you have completed the relevant familiarisation training session, you may commence assessing and training foster carers.

Ideally, two assessors should be present during assessment interviews. This provides for a more objective assessment. New workers who are yet to complete familiarisation training may only participate in the assessment processes together with an experienced assessor who will take the lead.

Foster carer training sessions should be presented collaboratively usually by two or more staff competent in SSSLV, and sometimes guest speakers (a foster carer, a parent or a young person). Trainers must also be familiar with the concept of foster care, and with the dynamics of effective adult learning. SSSLV allows a number of CSOs to jointly deliver foster carer training sessions if required.

Who should be contacted for further information and resources?
All registered CSOs providing foster care have been provided with complete SSSLV and SxSV kits. These kits must be safely stored by each CSO.

CSO foster care staff who have completed the SxSV familiarisation training and departmental staff may also access the SxSV material on-line at the department’s Step by Step web page.

These SxSV resources are available for staff to download and print as required. This site is password protected to ensure the material is only used for the purposes of assessing foster carers.

SSSLV material is not available on-line.

Further queries regarding foster carer assessment and training, SSSLV and SxSV materials, on-line passwords please contact the Home Based Care team on (03) 9096 7366.