Teachers...

Chances are that you have at least two young carers in your class

*1800 242 636 is a free call, except from mobile phones. Calls from mobile phones are charged at mobile rates.

Freecall: 1800 242 636*

www.youngcarers.net.au
About this resource

This education resource has been produced for Australian primary school teachers by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. It is in response to the growing number of children or young people who have additional responsibility for a high level of care in their home because of a family member’s disability, illness, mental health status or alcohol or drug dependence. Children or young people providing care to a family member or friend in this way are referred to as young carers.
This resource has been designed to create awareness of some of the needs of these young carers and suggest how these children can be identified, understood and supported.

Young Carers - background information

At least one in ten children in Australia has some level of responsibility as a carer in their home. This equates to there being, on average, two or three young carers in every classroom in Australia.
Young carers often perform tasks not normally undertaken by children of their age. Responsibilities may include preparing and cooking meals, looking after younger siblings, providing emotional support and taking care of medications or dressings.
These children need to know that help is available to them and be given information and support in accessing it. They also need to be able to have ‘time out’ from their responsibilities to enjoy activities with their peers.

How might teachers identify a young carer?

For various reasons, young carers are often reluctant, or unable, to identify themselves. Some children feel that they shouldn’t discuss their family’s problems, others find it hard to ask for help, some are afraid of the ramifications of identifying themselves, and some may not even realise that they are young carers.
Following are some indicators that may suggest that a child is a young carer:

✦ Knowledge that a member of the child’s family has an illness or a disability.
✦ Persistent lateness or absence from school.
✦ Tiredness and an inability to concentrate.
✦ Oversensitivity, particularly about family members.
✦ Incomplete, lost or disorganised homework.
✦ Untidy or unwashed appearance.
✦ Not having any lunch or lunch money.
✦ Underachievement.
✦ Parents not attending school events.
✦ Depression or anxiety.
✦ Challenging behaviours.
✦ Complaining about a sore back or neck.
✦ Difficulty in forming and maintaining relationships with peers.
✦ Reluctance to attend out-of-school events, school camps etc.
✦ An unusually strong understanding of an illness or disability.
✦ Reluctance to talk about their home life.
✦ Financial difficulties.
✦ A child tells you that they are a young carer.
Did You Know?

- Young carers report that teachers can make a huge impact on their lives just by being aware, by listening to them and believing their stories.
- When adequately supported, young caring can be a positive experience for children, giving them opportunities to develop skills and confidence, strengthen relationships with family members, and increase their self-esteem and feelings of self-worth.
- Many young carers may not ask for help because they may feel that what they are doing is 'normal' or they are afraid of being seen as different from their peers.
- Young carers will often experience educational difficulties due to their caring responsibilities.
- Many school absences are a result of caring responsibilities.
- Many young carers may not ask for help because they are afraid that someone will think they are not coping and that they should be removed from home.
- Young carers are often not identified until a crisis occurs. Some of these crises might have been avoided if a young carer had been given support at an earlier stage.
- There is a wide range of support and services available to young carers in Australia.

A message from ACHPER

The Australian Council for Health Physical Education and Recreation Inc. (ACHPER) is the peak body advocating for the health of children and youth within the school setting. ACHPER supports the professionals who work with young people and many of its members are teachers who deliver the health and physical education curriculum in schools across Australia.

ACHPER believes that an educated nation comprising active and healthy young people is the best investment that can be made in Australia’s future. We also believe that there are groups within our community that need particular support as they are asked to take on roles and responsibilities in their developing years. Young carers are one such group and schools in particular can support and assist them.

Young carers take on huge responsibilities that often restrict them in pursuing the activities necessary for them to maintain good health. They can be particularly vulnerable if they are not regularly active and do not have a healthy diet.

Teachers can assist young carers by being aware of this situation and ensuring that they are included in, and benefit from, physical activities within the school curriculum/syllabus and in school-organised recreation and sport activities out of school hours.

Sometimes, due to their responsibilities, young carers are unable to commit to or participate in after-school activities on a regular basis. Allowances need to be made for this by fitting them in whenever possible. They should not be discouraged from participation in team sports because they cannot commit to a full season.

Young people look for certain outcomes in their leisure time and young carers are no exception. They seek:

- Opportunities to reaffirm friendships
- Variety, and a break from study/stresses
- Challenge to their skills
- Personal involvement
- Action
- Fun
- Equality

Finding time for a break from the stresses of their responsibilities is very important because research has shown that the mental health of young people is enhanced when they are involved in both organised and informal physical activities. Young carers can also miss out on the social benefits of being part of a group or a team and special vigilance is required in schools to maximise these opportunities.

Young carers also need a good general knowledge of nutrition and healthy eating for the preparation of meals. They need to be aware of the health risk factors associated with overweight and inactivity and the illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease that can occur as a result. Teachers can do a great deal to ensure that young carers in their classes are well informed about the good health status necessary if they are to meet their extra workload and responsibilities at home.

The health and well-being of our young carers is paramount.
Young Carers need to know...

- They are young carers.
- How their school can support them.
- They do not have to manage on their own.
- There are many other children like them.
- Often there are services available to help them take a break from their responsibilities.
- There is additional support that may be available to them outside the school.
- Information about their family member's condition.
- How to look after themselves and ensure they stay fit and healthy.
- How to let others know they are young carers without negative repercussions.

Where can teachers go for assistance?

- Check to see if your school has policies and procedures relating to the identification of young carers and strategies to provide ongoing support to young carers within your school environment and adopt these practices.
- Contact the carers association in your state. There are people there who will be able to provide professional advice and details of the support available for young carers. Some of this assistance could include:
  - Referral to health professionals.
  - Support groups for young carers.
  - Financial help for families in need.
  - Respite care for both the ill or disabled person and the young carer.
  - Camps and other recreational activities especially for young carers.
  - Websites and other information services.
  - Referral services.

Following are the web addresses of the carers associations in each state:

National Office - Carers Australia: www.carersaustralia.com.au

- Carers ACT: www.carersact.asn.au
- Carers NSW: www.carersnsw.asn.au
- NT Carers Association: www.ntcarers.asn.au
- Carers Queensland: www.carersqld.asn.au

- Carers Association of SA: www.carers-sa.asn.au
- Carers Tasmania: www.carerstas.org
- Carers Victoria: www.carersvic.org.au
- Carers WA: www.carerswa.asn.au

Support is available for young carers through the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre.

**freeCall: 1800 242 636***

An information pack has been developed for young carers. Contact the carers association in your state for a free copy.

An excellent website is now available with information for teachers and young carers. Visit the Young Carers website: www.youngcarers.net.au

*1800 242 636 is a free call, except from mobile phones. Calls from mobile phones are charged at mobile rates.
What else can teachers do to support young carers?

- Be aware that a child’s family member has an illness, disability, mental health or drug or alcohol issue.
- Encourage young carers and their parents or friends to approach the school and ask for assistance.
- Identify someone within the school with whom a young carer can talk to in confidence.
- Be aware of the help and support services and networks available for young carers.
- Incorporate caring issues into subject areas such as Health and Physical Education and Society and the Environment so young carers are understood and supported by their peers.
- Provide information regarding health issues and local community services for young carers on a dedicated noticeboard within the school.
- Invite representatives from local carer and disability/mental health organisations to visit the school and promote positive attitudes towards young carers and the work they do.
- Ensure that disabled or unwell parents feel part of the school and are included in special events.
- Make home visits or phone calls to communicate with parents whose disability or illness makes it difficult for them to attend open nights or school interviews.
- Provide lesson notes, catch-up times and flexibility with homework for young carers who miss school or are having difficulty in keeping up with their workload.
- Provide access to a telephone at school for young carers to keep in contact with home.
- Develop a buddy system among young carers in the school.
- Raise awareness about the support offered to young carers and their families through school newsletters.

About the classroom activities

- Caring Word Search - Designed to raise awareness of some of the words associated with caring for someone special. The statement - 'CARE, UNDERSTAND, THEN HELP' - created with the leftover letters can be used to generate class discussion.
- I Care Crossword - Designed to raise awareness of what a young carer is and to make every student in the class realise that 'caring' for someone is normal but that some people have greater caring responsibilities.
- The Young Carers Website - There is some excellent information and fun activities for young carers on the new website which has been designed just for them. Visit: www.youngcarers.net.au

Caring Wordsearch

```
O C R N N E R T N U
C H A N A R I T A B L E
C E O R A T E E L T
O R B S T E A T I T E
U G E N T H R O U G H S S
N H E T N D X M E T Y N I
T D N U A E X A L E T Y
A F O N L S R A A T E N D E R
B U C I P B A I N R A D O R E
L D K T W Y H N E N M H E P
R E F S C H E R L A Y O L U
L B S U P P R T T R U S T S
P A U S E E N C O U R A G E M I T
P R S G E N T E C T E R O P
T E Y E L B A D N E P E D N E L
A F F E C T I O N T E K E E P
```

I Care Crossword

```
C O N F I D E N C E
L O M U K
A R P M L A
S O M E O N E
S A R O N U
R L T M Y R
O N A R O L E S
O U N W S I
A M N U T R I T I O U S
F F A R C H F
H E A L T H L K H O E
I K O M R E
C A R I N G A L O N E N
O L E N
O M E E T
R E W A R D I N G
```

Care, understand, then help.
I Care Crossword

Across
1. If you tell someone something in ________, they are not suppose to tell anyone else.
7. Young carers often need ________ they can talk to.
8. It is important that young carers stay fit and ________.
9. Young carers have important ________ within their families and communities.
10. Everyone should ________ a hand with the chores at home.
13. Young carers need to eat ________ meals.
17. Teachers, doctors and ________ professionals can help young carers.
18. ________ is about understanding and helping one another.
20. Young carers should never feel as if they are ________.
21. You are likely to ________ a young carer soon because one in ten of Australia's young people is a carer.
22. Caring for a relative or friend can be very ________.

Down
1. There are lots of ways in which ________ teachers can help young carers.
2. Being a young carer is quite ________.
3. If you are a young carer it is ________ to take time out for yourself.
4. Sometimes people from other ________ may not speak perfect English but they still might need help.
5. If you are a young carer it is ________ to ask for help.
6. There are ________ carers associations in Australia that provide help to young carers.
8. Young carers may have trouble finding time to do their ________.
11. We all need to be sensitive towards the ________ needs of others.
12. It's ________ to bully someone just because they might not be able to play after school.
14. It is good to ________ about your problems with someone you trust
15. There are probably lots of young carers at your ________.
16. Sometimes an illness, disability or mental health issue means that a young family member helps out lots at ________.
19. Feeling ________ about yourself is important.
Caring Word Search

Search for words that are associated with caring for someone or something that is very special and close to you. When you have found all the words, place the letters that are left over - reading from left to right, from the top left-hand corner - in the spaces below to reveal a message about caring for someone.

ACCOUNTABLE    DEPENDABLE    LOVE    SUSTAIN
ADORE          ENCOURAGE      LOYAL    SYMPATHETIC
AFFECTIONATE   FAITHFUL       PAUSE    TALK
AID            FRIENDLY        PROTECT   TELL
ASK            GENTLE         RELAX    TENDER
BUSY           HELP           RELIABLE  THOUGHTFUL
CARE           INVITE         REST     TIME
CHEER          KEEP           STAY FIT  TRUST
CONCERNED       KINDNESS       SUPERVISE  TRUSTWORTHY
CONSIDERATE    LEND           SUPPORT  UNDERSTAND
DEFEND

A T D C F A D N A T S R E D N U
C H E C A I N A R E L I A B L E
C O N S I D E R A T E R L L E T
O U R S T T F E S T A Y F I T E
U G E E H U E N U D Y E R R S S
N H C N F T D H S H E T I V N I
T T N D U A E AT X A L E R T V
A F O N L L S R A A T E N D E R
B U C I P K O A I N P A D O R E
L L D K T W H V N E N M L H E P
E R E S T C H E E R L A Y O L U
L C B S U P P O R T T R U S T S
P A U S E N C O U R A G E M I T
P R S G E N T L E T C E T O R P
T E Y E L B A D N E P E D N E L
A F F E C T I O N A T E K E E P
Your feedback is important to us

We would like to ensure that teachers have the resources they need to assist them to understand and support young carers at school, so thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

Please photocopy and post to:

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Box 7576, Canberra Mail Centre ACT 2610
Attn: Respite and Other Carer Support Section

1. How useful did you find the information in this resource?
   - [ ] Very useful
   - [ ] Useful
   - [ ] Not very useful

   Why? ______________________________________

2. How did you hear about this resource?
   - [ ] I borrowed it from our resource centre
   - [ ] It was given to me
   - [ ] It was photocopied for me.

3. Did you use or do you intend to use either of the student activity sheets in your classroom?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] Maybe
   - [ ] No

   If no, please comment.

4. Before reading this resource, were you aware that there were so many young carers in primary schools?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

   If yes, please state briefly how you became aware of this.

5. Do you now think that you are better informed about young carers than before reading this resource?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

   If no, please comment.

6. Do you have any suggestions for other education resources that might assist teachers to help and support young carers?

   ______________________________________

7. What format would you like to see this/these resources take?
   - [ ] Web
   - [ ] Print
   - [ ] CD-ROM
   - [ ] Video

   Other Comments ______________________________________

I would like to receive information about future FREE education resources that assist teachers to understand and support young carers. Please include me on your mailing list.

Title ____________________ First Name ____________________ Street ____________________
Surname ____________________ Suburb ____________________
Position ____________________ State ___________ Postcode ___________
Year Level/s Taught ___________ Email ____________________

School Name ____________________

Privacy Statement: The personal information you provide to the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs will be used for the purpose of completing your request and will not be used for any other purpose or added to any mailing without your consent. Any feedback you provide will be treated as confidential and will only be used by the department to evaluate the resource. All personal information and feedback provided will be destroyed once your request has been processed and the publication has been evaluated.