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| What’s New in Step by Step Victoria 2020 |
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## What’s new in Step by Step Victoria 2020

The updated assessment tool includes:

* + A new mandatory registration process for Victorian assessors to be completed prior to using Step by Step.
	+ Strengthened assessment of an applicant’s cultural competency and ability to provide culturally safe care for Aboriginal children
	+ Updated policies about Working with Children Checks, applicant minimum age and eligibility for applicants undergoing fertility treatment or applying to the adoption or permanent care program.
	+ Emerging issues are addressed including use of social media and gender identity issues.
	+ A different report format, consisting of a summary section at the beginning of the report, followed by clear documentation of evidence of competency elements.
	+ More guidance about report content
		- subheadings, rather than boxes, are used to guide the assessor to document relevant evidence in a report that is easy to read and follow.
			* clearer links are provided between information gathered in the assessment conversations, and the information documented in the report.
* Nuanced recommendations
	+ - * assessors’ recommendations must include recommendations with rationales for approval conditions and types of placement.
	+ Emphasis on the unique role of foster caring
		- incorporates assessment of ability to provide trauma informed nurture
			* highlights the importance of birth family (including siblings)
	+ Conversation with children of carers
		- * The children of carers can make or break a placement so an understanding of their response and the inclusion in the report is very important. The views of the adult children of applicants can provide good information so there is now a conversation guide for talking to children of carers.
	+ More verification of information
		- Prompts for third party reporting e.g. members of support network
		- Tasks for applicants: to get information about applicant’s ability to respond in a timely manner to reasonable requests
			* Very little emphasis on hypotheticals which do not provided reliable evidence of how a person will respond to a ‘real life’ situation

## What will not change about Step by Step?

Step by Step will continue to be:

* A purposeful conversation and engaging process with applicants – not a rigid interview schedule.
* Competency based, with clearly articulated and transparent benchmarks against which to assess an applicant’s suitability to be a carer
* A tool for both gathering information (using the Manual for Assessors), and documenting information (using the Assessment Record)
	+ A Comprehensive assessment, providing all the resources and forms required to conduct a thorough assessment that meets Victorian policy and legislative requirements.