

Aboriginal Case Management Policy

Aboriginal Community Controlled Mechanism

ACMP Overview

The Aboriginal Case Management Policy (ACMP) is designed for all practitioners working with Aboriginal children and families. The ACMP was developed by AbSec in collaboration with Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), through an extensive engagement process involving Aboriginal communities and key stakeholders. The ACMP is designed to achieve safety and wellbeing for vulnerable Aboriginal children by keeping them with or returning them to family and connected to community, culture and country. The ACMP is holistic, culturally responsive and embeds the values and perspectives of Aboriginal people.

The ACMP applies across the entire support continuum, from Aboriginal Community Response (Early Intervention), Aboriginal Family Strengthening, (Family Preservation) to Aboriginal Child Safety (Out-of-Home Care). It applies to the delivery of programs and services by a range of stakeholders including DCJ case workers, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and non-Aboriginal service providers.

Aboriginal Community Controlled Mechanisms Overview

Aboriginal Community Controlled Mechanisms (ACCMs) are one of the four key enablers that underpin the ACMP. The other key enablers are Aboriginal Family-Led Decision Making (AFLDM), Aboriginal Family Led Assessments (AFLA) and Active Efforts. This factsheet has been designed to promote discussion amongst Aboriginal communities and service providers about how they could effectively introduce an ACCM at the local level. Local communities are unique and the consultation mechanism will be determined by community to capitalise on the strengths and needs of local children and families.

ACCMs oversee decision making processes and systems

ACCMs are a key component of the ACMP. While ACCMs are not responsible for making decisions about individual

children, they will ensure local casework practice and processes are culturally appropriate and meet the best interests of children and their family.

ACCMs are a way Aboriginal communities can oversee case management processes for Aboriginal children and families within their area. ACCMs use local Aboriginal standards, expectations and experiences to ensure these processes are designed to care for and protect Aboriginal children and young people.

ACCMs work with DCJ to ensure Aboriginal children and families are supported and cared for in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles (sections 11–13) in the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* and the core principles of the ACMP.

ACCM Principles

ACCMs operate with the following principles:

- culturally appropriate approaches are the foundations for the care and support provided to Aboriginal children and young people, and their families
- Aboriginal understandings of health and wellbeing
- holistic understandings of a child or young person's circumstance
- strengths-based, family centred and trauma-informed approaches are applied in practice to achieve best interests for the child
- open and collaborative relationships are established among family, communities, service providers and DCJ
- each community is unique and processes may vary.

ACCM Role

ACCMs use the cultural expertise of trusted community members to ensure local Aboriginal expectations, views and practices are included across the continuum of support. This is in line with the principle of self-determination (see below). This engagement promotes greater transparency and accountability to communities about decisions regarding case management and the provision of support to their children and young people.

ACCMs operate across the entire care and support continuum from Community Response (Early Intervention), Aboriginal Family Strengthening (Family Preservation) to Aboriginal Child Safety (Out-of-Home Care).

For further reading on self determination:

<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/rights-and-freedoms/right-self-determination>

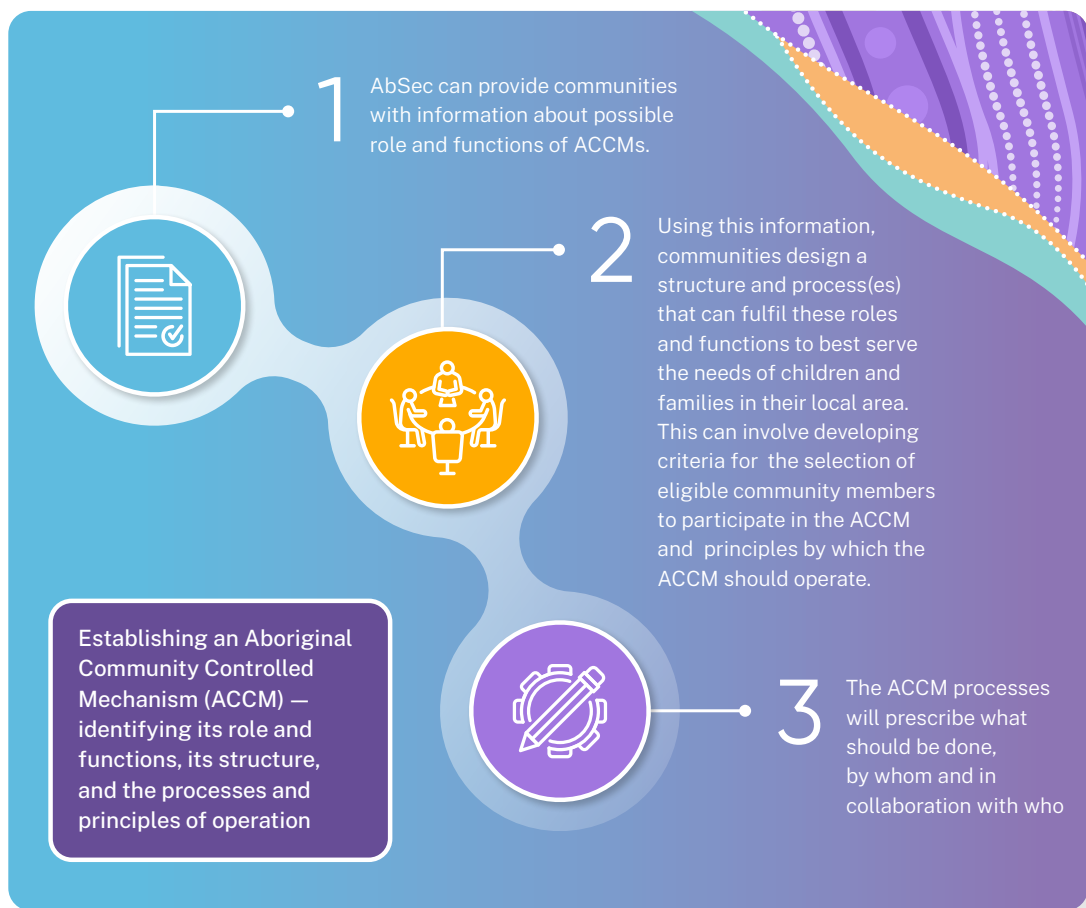
<https://www.absec.org.au/working-together-towards-self-determination.html>

ACCMs provide opportunities to strengthen casework practice and systems

ACCMs provide opportunities to strengthen casework practices and systems at the local level. ACCMs do not make casework or case management decisions relating to individual cases or case management, they oversee DCJ systems, processes and practices using local Aboriginal standards, expectations and experience, and

work with districts to ensure these are culturally safe. They do this by:

- identifying how prevention and early intervention services can be better utilised to support Aboriginal children and families at risk
- identifying, raising awareness of, and addressing systemic practice and process issues that are detrimental to the care and support of Aboriginal children and young people
- reviewing local case planning and management processes to ensure that the ACMP is actively applied
- working with DCJ to identify options with parents that can bring about sustainable, culturally appropriate restoration opportunities
- responding to issues or concerns identified by the community
- building and maintaining positive and respectful working relationships with communities when dealing with complex child protection issues
- ensuring culture is embedded in discussions and ongoing dialogue with DCJ and service providers.



◀ Establishing an Aboriginal community controlled mechanism – identifying its role and functions, its structure, and its processes and principles

ACCMs and accountability

ACCMs are accountable to the local Aboriginal community. They should be aware of the child protection system and practices, early intervention and family strengthening services and local stakeholders (ACCOs, service providers, DCJ and other community and support resources).

ACCMs

- oversee decision making processes regarding practice
- allow communities to oversee the delivery of local case management processes
- apply local Aboriginal standards, expectations and experiences
- are accountable to the community
- have knowledge of the child protection system and practice
- have knowledge of local stakeholders
- are not decision makers.

ACCMs must be community led

ACCMs are designed by and implemented by Aboriginal people, in line with self-determination. It is important then that ACCMs are community driven and are designed and implemented by Aboriginal people who are trusted within the community.

ACCMs are how local communities have input into the supports provided by DCJ and service providers in the care of their children. They are based on local community and cultural knowledge. As each community is unique, structures and processes may vary from community to community. ACCMs provide oversight across the service sector and continuum of support, from Community Response (Early Intervention) and Aboriginal Family Strengthening (Family Preservation) to Aboriginal Child Safety (Out-of-Home Care).

What an ACCM could look like in community

DCJ and AbSec remain available throughout the initial development stage to assist and support communities to progress their local ACCM. In some local areas there may already exist structures that can readily take on the role and functions of an ACCM.

Communities are diverse, therefore each ACCM will be unique, according to the skills, experience, structures and framework already existing in community and ideally will include strong representation from across the community. It is vital that ACCMs consist of people who have experience, knowledge and understanding of the support continuum across Aboriginal Community Response (Early Intervention), Aboriginal Family Strengthening, (Family Preservation) Aboriginal Child Safety (Out-of-Home Care).

Some examples of an ACCM structure are:

- a panel of five or six community experts
- a pool of 20 to 30 community members (with the required expertise) who could be called upon to make a quorum and bring particular knowledge at certain times
- an individual (with the required expertise) who could be called upon to represent the community
- based on existing structures within community including existing panels or committees that could simply assume the role of the ACCM as required.



This factsheet was developed by AbSec, and commissioned by DCJ, to support the implementation of the ACMP. It is intended as a living document and will continue to be updated as necessary to effectively support the implementation of the ACMP and improve outcomes for Aboriginal children, families and communities.