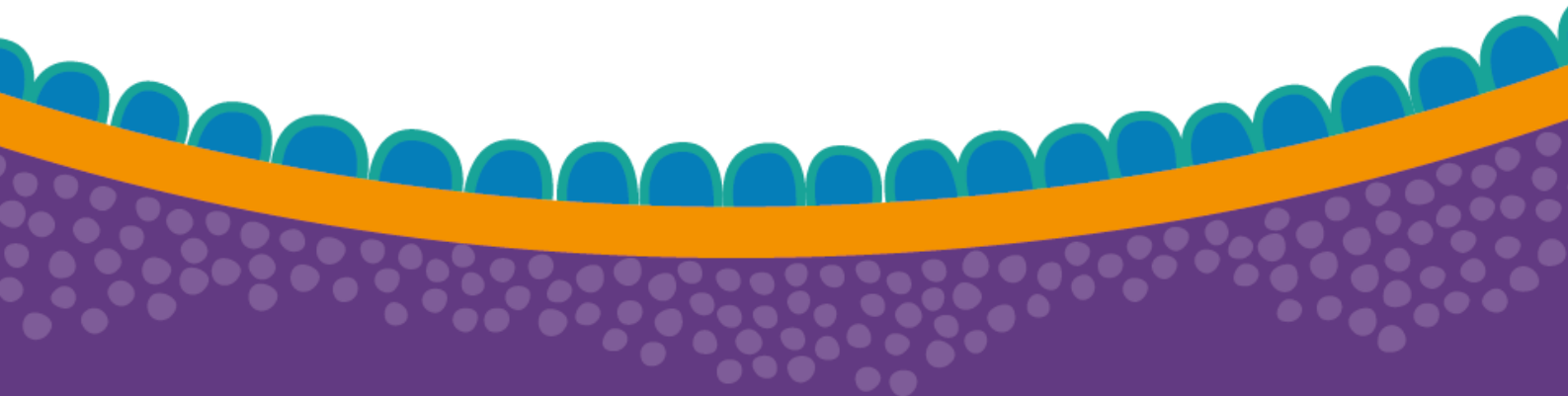
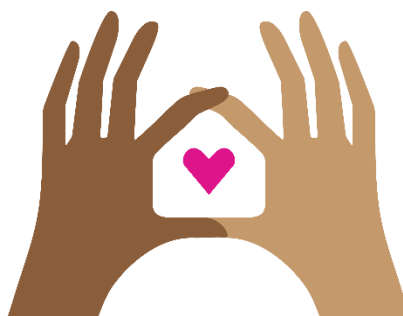


Factsheet

Early Intervention

Supporting practitioners to engage early with Aboriginal families to shape case planning and self-identify tailored solutions to keep children safe within their family and community



This factsheet was developed by the NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation (AbSec) in partnership with the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ).



Overview

This factsheet is designed to assist those service providers that deliver DCJ funded early intervention services, such as Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) and Family Connect and Support (FCS) services, in the implementation of best practice principles of the Aboriginal Case Management Policy (ACMP). The best practice principles are based on a review of the existing principles of both the ACMP and TEI, and applies to services regardless of whether they provide case work services or not.

Aboriginal Case Management Policy - Background

The ACMP is designed for caseworkers and other practitioners working with Aboriginal children, young people and families. Its aim is to achieve safety and wellbeing for vulnerable Aboriginal children by supporting them to remain with their family or returning them to family while maintaining their connection to community and culture. It is holistic, culturally responsive and embeds the values and perspectives of Aboriginal people.

The ACMP is an operational framework for working with Aboriginal children, young people and families across the continuum of support, providing guidance to practitioners regarding core case management practices. It provides a framework for Aboriginal-led and culturally embedded case management practices to safeguard the best interests of Aboriginal children and young people.

It promotes an integrated case management approach that is tailored to the needs of Aboriginal children and families that commences early in the continuum of support. Proactive efforts are designed to empower and support families and communities in order to reduce the incidence of harm, addressing identified risks, and thereby supporting Aboriginal children to thrive.

The ACMP applies to all DCJ funded early intervention services, such as Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) and Family Connect and Support (FCS) services. It aims to empower Aboriginal families and communities to take a significantly greater role in the decisions affecting Aboriginal children and families and the services provided to them. This includes case management approaches for all Aboriginal families that seek targeted supports to strengthen their family, addressing causes of risk; and the case management of all Aboriginal children and young people who are assessed as being at risk of significant harm by the statutory child protection system.

Aboriginal Case Management Policy – Key Principles

The ACMP reflects key principles for engaging and working with Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities, strengthening families and addressing risks that may contribute to the incidence of harm or providing for the optimal development of Aboriginal children and young people. These principles provide a framework for cultural competency and practice in working with Aboriginal children, young people and families that spans the continuum of support, from targeted earlier intervention supports through to out-of-home care.

The ACMP and EI service system share many of the same approaches to service delivery including trauma informed, family/person centred and strength-based practice as demonstrated by the Table below.

ACMP Practice Principles

TEI Practice Principles



- is child focused to promote child safety and well-being?
- facilitates Aboriginal family-led decision making
- values community involvement, including self-determination and advocacy
- is culturally embedded
- delivers holistic services tailored to the needs of Aboriginal children and families
- is oriented to prevent harm and preserve families
- is accountable to Aboriginal communities for the outcomes achieved for Aboriginal children and their families

- Culturally safe
- Person centred
- Strengths based approach
- Evidence informed
- Holistic and collaborative
- Capacity building
- Trauma informed
- Flexible and responsive

Aboriginal Case Management Policy - The Four Core Enablers

1. Aboriginal Family-led Decision Making (AFLDM)

- A series of processes that are engaged early in the continuum of support, ensuring participation of families and communities in decisions and action affecting them.
- The core elements of Aboriginal Family-led decision making include an Aboriginal community facilitator, family as key decision-making partners, family made 'family plans' and follow up efforts.

2. Proactive Efforts Standard

- Practitioners take meaningful and all possible steps to pro-actively support families to address risks that are threatening the separation of a child from their family.
- Practitioners demonstrate and document the use of pro-active standards.

3. Aboriginal Family-led Assessments (AFLA)

- Practitioners prioritise culturally valid assessment tools to identify and clarify the concerns related to the risk assessment.
- They work through a cultural lens and are supported by Aboriginal practitioners where possible.

4. Aboriginal Community Controlled Mechanisms (ACCM)

- These unique approaches consist of a formal structure or process established by a local community through their own processes to represent the interests of the community in implementation of the ACMP.
- They oversee implementation of decision-making processes affecting Aboriginal children and their families.

For further information on the four core enablers see *ACMP Rules and Practice Guidance* [here](#).



Operationalising the Aboriginal Case Management Policy

The ACMP spans the continuum of support, from earlier intervention supports like TEI and FCS, through to out-of-home care, restoration and leaving care.

The type of services that individual agencies are funded to provide in the TEI and FCS space will guide the level of supports being offered to families by those agencies under the ACMP.

Early intervention services that deliver case management are considered Tier 2 services (purple section in table below) and will need to undertake the online ACMP eLearning training module, which explains how the ACMP applies to them and how they should implement it. For more information on Tier 2 services see *ACMP Rules and Practice Guidance* [here](#).

Service providers who don't deliver case management are considered Tier One services and align with the ACMP Aboriginal Community Response Tier (blue section in table below). Tier One includes services that are voluntary and are aimed at providing support to low-risk families to prevent an escalation of intervention. These services are expected to implement the policy by working proactively towards a set of best practice principles, which are shared by both early intervention and the ACMP.

Tier 3 is considered to be the statutory response - as it relates to ACMP and is not a part of the TEI or FCS services expected response (orange section in table below).

Across the continuum of support, practitioners should be focused on delivering services aligned to family need thereby applying 'downward pressure' with respect to identified risks (see table below), diverting families from more intensive or intrusive interventions and strengthening supports to reduce the risk of harm and promote healthy development.

Case management is intended to alter an otherwise linear trajectory (orange), through proactive efforts that divert families from statutory intervention or promote restoration (grey arrows), thereby reducing the risk and incidence of harm experienced by Aboriginal children and young people. As risk increases, a more intensive service response is required.



EI Service Providers and engagement in the ACMP

A key priority for the NSW Government is to improve long-term outcomes for Aboriginal children, young people and their families. Aboriginal children and young people represent almost 40 per cent of all children in out-of-home care, signalling an urgent need for greater investment in culturally responsive prevention and early intervention services.

Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities in NSW are recognised as a key TEI and FCS priority group in the context of early intervention service delivery. Districts in their planning processes have been working on the best way to implement and achieve meaningful local Aboriginal investment targets that support self-determination and are representative of local demographics and need.

Early intervention funded services are expected, wherever possible, to adopt and operationalise appropriate components of the ACMP and accompanying *Rules and Practice Guidance* document. This will look different for each of the *Program Activities*, and the *Service Types*, under the TEI and FCS programs. It is anticipated that the ACMP policy document and operational framework will be incorporated into TEI and FCS Program Guidelines and recommissioning in the near future.

ACMP and Early Intervention Service Providers

All DCJ funded early intervention service providers are expected to use best endeavours to implement the ACMP. The way in which it is implemented depends on whether the service delivers case management or not.

Early intervention services that deliver case management are considered Tier 2 services and will need to undertake the online ACMP eLearning training module, which explains how the ACMP applies to them and how they should implement it. For more information on Tier 2 services see *ACMP Rules and Practice Guidance* [here](#).

Service providers who don't deliver case management are considered Tier One services and align with the ACMP Aboriginal Community Response Tier. Tier One includes services that are voluntary and are aimed at providing support to low-risk families to prevent an escalation of intervention. These services are expected to implement the policy by working proactively towards a set of best practice principles, which are shared by both early intervention and the ACMP.

ACMP and Targeted Earlier Intervention - Best Practice Principles

Early intervention service providers that don't deliver case management can use the matrix template (**Annexure 1**) to help implement the ACMP. The matrix is designed to guide how service providers might use the ACMP best practice principles across their service.

The matrix template (to be used as a self-assessment tool) has been developed to allow services to track how well they are implementing the various components of the ACMP as they relate to the early interventions services they provide.

It is intended to be a reference tool that can be accessed by key stakeholders, which demonstrates how practice reflects the principles. It can also be a starting point for any internal evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of current practice.



ACMP and Early Intervention Shared Principles

Trauma Informed Practice

Aboriginal families and communities are disproportionately affected by a range of traumas (i.e. individual, family, community and intergenerational). This is especially relevant for children and families who have previously been engaged with the child protection system.

People working with Aboriginal families and children must be open to learning about the unique history and associated trauma with each family; and be able to identify undiscovered traumas and respond in an appropriate manner. Workers may require specialised trauma-informed training to properly understand the full extent of what the concept means in practice. From a non-case management perspective this could include:

- Allowing a family or child to reveal and discuss trauma on their terms.
- Address causes of trauma rather than symptoms in an appropriate way.
- Understanding and incorporating the importance of Aboriginal culture and practice into service planning.
- Offering staff training to help staff recognise the impact of trauma; and develop and implement trauma informed policies and practices.
- Note: People working with Aboriginal children and families who do not have trauma informed counselling skills should make appropriate referrals.

Family/Person Centred Practice

Aboriginal families are distinct and consist of extended family, significant people connected through marriage, kinship systems, community ties and cultural obligations. Services and programs that work with Aboriginal children, young people and their families must understand this and apply practice and approaches to encompass whole family systems. Services must collaborate to build the capacity of Aboriginal communities to respond early to reduce sources of stress and strengthen core life skills. Using Aboriginal cultural and community knowledge and expertise, allowing families to participate meaningfully throughout the process; and setting goals that are focused on the child and family's wishes, are key features of family centre practice.

From a non-case management perspective this could include:

- The activities of a service or program value Aboriginal cultural practices in family life
- Recognise the protective role culture plays in maintaining the safety and well-being of Aboriginal children and young people
- Services being inclusive of extended family members in activities.

Strengths Based Practice

The *Children and Young Person's (Care and Protection) Act 1988* requires the participation of Aboriginal people 'with as much self-determination as possible' in the care and protection of Aboriginal children. Focussing on the strengths of an Aboriginal child or young person, their family and their community means that more resources and knowledge can be gained. By using existing identified family strengths and emphasising a positive, solution focused approach, Aboriginal families are much more likely to respond to proposed case work responses. A strengths-based approach supports self-determination and within the Community Strengthening stream could be seen as:



- Clients and communities actively participate in the design and delivery of services to achieve their determined goals.
- Services and programs support Aboriginal people to identify their own needs, solutions and goals.
- Interactions with clients and communities are strengths based, recognising and building on protective factors to grow their capability.
- Understands the importance of informal supports and proactively seek to build on identified family supports, to better assist the clients to achieve their goals.

The following table shows the three key areas of the ACMP; Aboriginal child safety, Aboriginal family strengthening, and Aboriginal community response, and the relationship between DCJ funded program areas.

ACMP Rules and Practice Guidance (risk continuum)	NSW DCJ Program responses
<p>Aboriginal Child Safety seeks to strengthen the capacity and skills of the community to support its vulnerable families by building on the cultural safety net of supports and services for a child who has experienced maltreatment, enabling children to be supported in safe, strong and thriving families and communities.</p> <p>Aboriginal Child Safety approaches focus on restoration and reunification, maintaining important relationships and promoting cultural continuity, as well as ensuring children stay in their communities when it is not possible for them to remain with their parents.</p> <p>Aboriginal Child Safety encompasses tertiary level supports and interventions focused on child safety, wellbeing and welfare.</p>	<p>Early Intervention agencies should also assist and support families to feel safe to engage with a range of services and programs provided by DCJ and other funded services.</p> <p>Types of supports and services for Aboriginal children and young people who are away from their parents. These services include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting restoration and contact with birth families for children and young people in care through the Permanency Support Program • Supporting young people to reconnect to their family as part of leaving care planning <p>Other services DCJ provides include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Housing • Rent Choices • Victim Support, information and referral support for victims of violent crime (including counselling and financial support).
<p>Aboriginal Family Strengthening provides targeted and intensive child, youth and family supports that are oriented towards addressing identified risks and preserving families, preventing the need for more intrusive responses.</p>	<p>Aboriginal Family Strengthening encompasses a broad range of supports and interventions focused on strengthening families and ensuring child safety and wellbeing, including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Preservation



<p>Aboriginal Family Strengthening spans low intensity family supports through to intensive family-based services, with flexibility to respond to family needs. The focus on addressing identified risks, building the capacity of parents and families, and strengthening family functioning, means that Aboriginal Family Strengthening supports are also critical for the safe and timely restoration or preservation of Aboriginal children with families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Brighter Futures and Youth Hope ○ Multi-Systemic Therapy - Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN©) ○ Functional Family Therapy - Child Welfare (FFT-CW©) ○ Aboriginal Intensive Family Based Services ○ Intensive Family Services and Intensive Family Program ● Targeted Earlier Intervention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Intensive or specialist support ○ Targeted support
<p>Aboriginal Community Response refers to a universal support system that seeks to strengthen networks of care and optimise community supports so that children can thrive. This includes providing support to reduce sources of stress, support responsive relationships and strengthen core life skills delivered through a culturally embedded service system that is designed and delivered by Aboriginal people. They are the primary supports offered within an inclusive, child safe community.</p> <p>Aboriginal Community Response services are embedded within communities, are accessible to families and are responsive to the needs of Aboriginal families. Services are expected to build and maintain strong partnerships as part of a local integrated service system providing holistic, culturally embedded supports. This includes strong relationships with Aboriginal communities and local Aboriginal governance processes.</p> <p>Services within Aboriginal Community Response are offered on a voluntary basis with the free, prior and informed consent of the family or young person following a request for assistance. They also provide a safety net for step-down support from more intensive supports.</p>	<p>Aboriginal Community Response provides a ‘no wrong door’ intake approach that encompasses a broad range of supports including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community education and awareness activities directed to Aboriginal families and communities ● Family supports and youth related services, or other similar community-based programs ● programs supporting expectant or new parents and their babies ● transition to early learning supports and services ● universal health care and immunisation ● child and family services provided to Aboriginal children and families who are experiencing challenges and/or may be at risk ● community engagement and development (including capacity development) in the specific area of child safety and child/adolescent development and growth



Application of the ACMP Principles across TEI Program Activities

The below table provides examples of how service providers and workers could engage in and operationalise the ACMP and guidance across the five (5) Program Activities in TEI to demonstrate how they are adopting the ACMP Principles.

Community strengthening; examples of how service providers and workers could engage in and operationalise the ACMP

Stream	Program activity	Description	Flexible activities	Implementation examples: Policy, Procedure, Practice
Community Strengthening	Develop community connections	Build social capital and local networks to promote tolerance, understanding and stronger communities	Flexible activities may include events, festivals, recreational, art, language and cultural activities including Aboriginal events and Reconciliation Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with local land Council and Elders groups to support program planning and development Establish links with other Aboriginal controlled service providers to promote service inclusion and integration Establish soft entry points in informal, familiar and culturally safe environments Develop processes to engage directly with Aboriginal communities about the nature and design of services Use outreach and promotional measures that are place-based in communities Provide practical supports such as transport and childcare to reduce access barriers Utilise existing relationships and networks within the community to strengthen service access
	Provide a community centre	A place for people to meet, interact and volunteer and a soft entry point for supported referrals	Flexible activities may include providing a space for people to meet, access to internet and equipment,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with local Land Council and Elders groups to support program planning and development Establish links with other Aboriginal controlled service providers to promote service inclusion and integration



			groups including Aboriginal Elders, Men's and Women's Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish soft entry points in informal, familiar and culturally safe environments • Develop processes to engage directly with Aboriginal communities about the nature and design of services • Adopt a Child Safe or Child Rights Policy • Provide practical supports such as transport and childcare to reduce access barriers • Make proactive efforts to ensure that consultation has occurred through Aboriginal Community Controlled Mechanisms
	Provide community support	Increase knowledge, skills, experience, confidence and wellbeing of community members	Flexible activities may include opportunities for volunteers, learning, training and employment skills, supporting Aboriginal Sorry business and Aboriginal healing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with local land Council and Elders groups to support program planning and development • Establish links with other Aboriginal controlled service providers to promote service inclusion and integration • Establish soft entry points in informal, familiar and culturally safe environments • Develop processes to engage directly with Aboriginal communities about the nature and design of services • Adopt a Child Safe or Child Rights Policy • Make proactive efforts to ensure that consultation has occurred through Aboriginal Community Controlled Mechanisms • Develop streamlined referral processes with Aboriginal controlled organisations





Safety and wellbeing; examples of how service providers and workers could engage in and operationalise the ACMP

Stream	Program activity	Description	Flexible activities	Implementation examples: Policy, Procedure, Practice
Safety and Wellbeing	Provide targeted support	Ensure the needs of people with known vulnerabilities are met and their outcomes improved	Flexible activities may include parenting support and programs including supported playgroups, family support, case management as well as Aboriginal preventative and restoration activities, playgroups and camps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt ACMP Principles in your current policies and procedures • Make proactive efforts to ensure that consultation has occurred through Aboriginal Community Controlled Mechanism • Develop streamlined referral processes with Aboriginal controlled organisations • Have processes in place to ensure informed consent is sought from families to enable more effective case coordination, participation, and family-led, strengths-based practices • Have processes in place to do safety planning • Ensure for each family processes are initiated to identify significant relationships and broader family networks that may be able to support the child and their family • Demonstrate that case plans are developed through Aboriginal family-led decision-making processes jointly with the child, their parent/s, family/kin and the service provider with case management • Promote and support a child’s continuing connection to family (including siblings), culture and community



	Provide intensive or specialist support	Ensure the needs of people with high and/or complex needs are met and their outcomes improved	Flexible activities may include trauma informed support activities for drug and alcohol, sexual assault, problem gambling and disability support as well as family mediation and activities for Aboriginal families and adolescents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt ACMP Principles in your current policies and procedures • Make proactive efforts to ensure that consultation has occurred through Aboriginal Community Controlled Mechanisms • Develop streamlined referral processes with Aboriginal controlled organisations • Have processes in place to ensure informed consent is sought from families to enable more effective case coordination, participation, and family-led, strengths-based practices • Have processes in place to do safety planning • Ensure for each family processes are initiated to identify significant relationships and broader family networks that may be able to support the child and their family • Demonstrate that case plans are developed through Aboriginal family-led decision-making processes jointly with the child, their parent/s, family/kin and the service provider with case management • Promote and support a child's continuing connection to family (including siblings), culture and community • Provide tailored, culturally embedded services and supports to strengthen families and address risks • Embed in process the identification of cultural needs
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				and strengths including need for healing supports
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Support, training and resourcing

AbSec has developed an ACMP online interactive eLearning program, which explains the ACMP across the continuum of support, from targeted earlier intervention supports through to out-of-home care, that can be accessed through the AbSec website [here](#) or the [NGO Learning Centre](#).

Also available on an expression of interest basis is AbSec’s Cultural Connections Workshops for Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) Providers and Trauma Informed Care Workshops.

For further information contact AbSec acmp@absec.org.au or 02 9559 5299.

For detailed information on the ACMP see the Aboriginal Case Management Policy - Rules and Practice Guidance [here](#).

Documents supporting workforce development include:

- Aboriginal Workforce Development Statewide Strategy (Statewide Strategy) 2020 (see [here](#)) - developed as part of the initiatives of the NSW government’s Aboriginal Child and Family Investment Strategy (ACFIS). It identifies ways to strengthen the Aboriginal workforce as part of the government’s commitment to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal children and families.
- Aboriginal Child and Family Investment Strategy (see [here](#)): Workforce Development Project Consolidated Report, November 2019 - developed to enhance the capacity and capability of the Aboriginal Child and Family Sector workforce. The report is a reflection of the sector’s voice about their workforce development needs, including current opportunities and barriers.



ANNEXURE 1

Matrix explaining how service providers can demonstrate and assess their use of ACMP best practice principles across their services to monitor and improve their practice as it relates to ACMP.

The vertical bar lists three combined principles, and the horizontal bar shows three levels of service activity (practice, intra-organisational, and inter-organisational).

Practice relates to interactions between staff (paid and volunteer) and service users.

Internal relates to how staff are supported by their organisation (the service provider) to provide and practice each of the principles.

External relates to efforts by the service provider to promote or introduce best practice when dealing with stakeholders such as other service providers and DCJ.

It should be emphasised that these are *practice* principles. Internal and External organisational activity still relate to how a service provider encourages, monitors and improves practice. For example, these boxes could be filled in with information or advocacy work undertaken by the service.

MATRIX

	Practice	Internal	External
	<p><i>How does your organisation encourage/support the use of/ /implement/ apply this practice?</i></p> <p>For example</p> <p>what training is given to staff? how is training refreshed? how is it evidenced, measured and documented? how is it improved?</p>	<p><i>How does your organisation promote this practice within its own organisation, across all levels of staff?</i></p> <p>For example</p> <p>monitoring and training staff, emphasising and sharing examples of best practice, implementing continuous improvement mechanisms, use of client satisfaction surveys, empowering staff to demonstrate and learn from each other.</p>	<p><i>How does your organisation communicate and work with other stakeholders to ensure this practice is being delivered at the highest level by your service?</i></p> <p>For example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mentoring - secondments - resource and idea sharing - inter-agency forums - partnerships - relationships



<p>Trauma Informed Practice</p> <p>People working with Aboriginal families and children must be open to learning about the unique history and associated trauma with each family, identify potentially undiscovered traumas and be able to respond in an appropriate manner.</p>	-	-	-
<p>Family/Person Centred Practice</p> <p>Services and programs and the Aboriginal children, young people, families they work with must proactively collaborate to build the capacity of Aboriginal communities. Building capacity of communities and families to respond early to reduce sources of stress and strengthen core life skills. Local community involvement is actively sought and valued in service design.</p>	-	-	
<p>Strengths Based Practice</p> <p>By using existing identified strengths and emphasising a positive, solution-oriented approach, Aboriginal families are much more likely to respond to proposed case work responses.</p> <p>Aboriginal community strengths and assets are identified to</p>	-	-	



strengthen Aboriginal people and families.			
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