

Policy: Reunification

Policy Purpose

To describe how reunification can be successfully planned and executed.

Policy Statement

A guiding principle of the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* is that a child who has been placed into care should eventually be returned to their family, provided that it is in the child's best interests and safety issues have been addressed.

Reunification is the planned and timely process of safely returning a child home to their parents, or to other family or kin who had previously been exercising parental responsibilities for the child.

Reunification is more likely to succeed if it occurs as early as possible. The reunification process begins as soon as child is placed in out of home care.

The process ends when all of the following milestones have been achieved:

- A child safely returns to their parent/s;
- Parental responsibility and daily care and control has been returned to the parent/s;
- The protection order expires or is revoked; and
- Territory Families no longer has any involvement and the case is closed.

The reunification process also ends if reunification is determined to be no longer viable and the care plan goal changes to permanency planning for long term care.

Reunification outcomes are influenced by extent of the parenting problems that resulted in the child entering care, and the parent's readiness for reunification. The quality of the relationship between the child, parents and other family members needs to be assessed to determine if reunification is likely to succeed.

Family members should be provided with accurate information about reunification processes, timeframes and expectations, communicated in appropriate language and style, and be engaged in case planning in order to develop a realistic understanding of the possibility for reunification.

Parents and extended family should have access to appropriate and timely services necessary to facilitate their child's sustainable reunification. Consideration will be given to the *Aboriginal Child Placement Principle* and other specific language and cultural needs of a child and their family.

Legislative Basis

[*Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 8\(4\)\(b\)*](#)

Standards

[*Standards of Professional Practice 1, 5, 6*](#)

Authorised by:

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