



Northern  
Territory  
Government

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

# PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

*Practice with Purpose*

## Our role

To deliver key child protection, out-of-home care and family support services across the Northern Territory, for children and families living in challenging and complex circumstances.

The *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* provides the Department with the mandate to intervene in the lives of vulnerable children and families.

In intervening in the lives of children and families we strive to:

- Protect children from harm and increase their safety and wellbeing
- Support and improve the wellbeing of children in our care
- Provide parenting and family support to assist families to minimise harm and strengthen capacity

## Our practice standards

- We meet the best interests of the child, engage family and are culturally responsive
- We demonstrate accountability and enable continuous improvement
- Concerns about children are identified, accurately assessed and prioritised for response
- Every child at risk of harm receives an appropriate response to keep them safe
- Children who are in the care of the Chief Executive Officer receive high quality case management to meet their individual needs
- Children in care are placed in safe, nurturing environments and are cared for by individuals who are able to meet their needs and improve their life outcomes

## Our practice foundations

Our practice is framed by:

- [Legislation, policy and procedures, practice standards and Structured Decision Making](#) – The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009 - 2020 and departmental policy documents translate the Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 into practice, promote accountable service delivery and mitigate risk, we comply with the Care and Protection Policy and Procedures Manual and Practice Standards, Practice Directions and Structured Decision Making tools (Screening Criteria, Response Priority Assessment, Safety Assessment, Risk Assessment, Family Strengths and Needs Assessment, Risk Re-Assessment)

- **Knowledge** – informed by children and young people and the families, communities, partners and peers who we work with. We draw on our experience. We learn from research findings and theory and findings and recommendations arising from Children’s Commissioner investigations, Coronial inquiries and internal practice integrity assessments
- **Professional supervision and continuous learning** – professional supervision is an active process in which we work together to review work practices to boost professional and personal resilience. We are committed to our own professional development and take advantage of the department’s accredited and non-accredited training programs and learning opportunities. We critically analyse our casework activity and processes to ensure we are providing the best possible service

## Our practice approach

### Child centred

- **Children’s best interests are paramount** – we ensure each child is safe and their needs are met. We will only take a child into care if there is no other reasonable way to safeguard his or her wellbeing. We honour each child’s identity and connection to family, community, culture and land. We aim to protect each child’s long term interests and achieve stability
- **Children are involved in making decisions about themselves** – we share information, encourage each child to talk about their hopes, fears and wishes and we listen closely
- **Children’s rights are upheld** – we respect and protect the rights of each child in care and promote their understanding of their rights

### Family led

- **Families are the primary providers for a child’s needs** – we work with families to secure the safety and wellbeing of each child. We establish respectful partnership-based relationships with families, focus on family strengths in safety planning and offer practical support

- **Families are involved in decision making about a child's safety and wellbeing** – we recognise that families remain integral to decision making about the child. We ensure families have the information and support they require to participate in the process to achieve safety for their children including information about legal processes and access to representation
- **Reunification where possible is the ultimate goal** – we work to maintain child and family contact and cultural and community connections. We support families where children have been removed and work towards reunification wherever possible

### **Strengths and solutions focused**

- **Establish a working relationship** – we build a meaningful relationship with parents and the child's family. We involve extended family members and communities to build safety networks
- **Identify strengths** – we work with families to identify strengths. We focus on building on and growing strength in families
- **Set goals** – we talk to parents and families about what child safety means and we work together to set goals to achieve it. We are straightforward in articulating what is required of parents and families to ensure their child is safe

### **Culturally responsive and competent**

- **Children and their families experience our service as culturally responsive and safe** – we are respectful and understanding of other beliefs, practices and culture
- **Culture is recognised as a source of strength and resilience** – we recognise the importance of extended family/kinship networks and cultural strengths in child rearing practices
- **Working to understand each other** – we listen and make sure that the children and families who do not speak English as their first language fully understand what is being communicated

### **Team based and collaborative**

- **Working as a member of a child protection practitioner team** – we work together as a team where our case managers, team leaders, practice advisers and practice leaders all play a critical role in ensuring good practice

- **Working with other Departmental staff** – we work closely with Community Child Safety and Wellbeing Team practitioners and Remote Aboriginal Community Family Workers when we are dealing with remote families, with out of home care and other office staff who are integral to ensuring seamless service delivery and continually improving outcomes
- **Working with our Aboriginal staff** – we value the contribution of our Aboriginal staff and work collaboratively to ensure the cultural safety of children and families
- **Working with other agencies and service providers** – we maintain strong partnerships with all agencies responsible for housing, health, early childhood, education, and youth justice, along with non-government organisations providing social services, as critical partners in protecting and promoting child safety and wellbeing. We share information to ensure the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person
- **Working with carers** – we work respectfully with carers to ensure that the holistic needs of vulnerable child are met and foster positive life outcomes

### **Inclusive and transparent**

- **Open communication and decision making** – we are consultative and collaborative with children and their families and with partner organisations and other government agencies
- **Working together** – we work to make our safety concerns known, we make sure children and families are involved and kept informed, we are consistent in our approach to working with children and families
- **Clarity about rights, roles, responsibilities** – we are upfront and honest with families about our reasons for intervening and about processes underway
- **Transparent** – we are responsive to complaints, processes of review, and learn from mistakes



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