# 1404 Cultural plans - procedure

Follow this procedure when an Aboriginal child is in out-of-home care.

## Introduction

This procedure sets out the steps to follow to prepare or review a cultural plan.

Each Aboriginal child in out-of-home care is to be provided with a cultural plan that aligns with their case plan.

For additional information see Cultural plans – advice.

## Procedure

When an Aboriginal child enters out-of-home care, under section 176 of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (the Act), a cultural plan is required to be given to them. It is the responsibility of the department to ensure a cultural plan is prepared and given to the child.

The care team prepares, implements, and reviews the cultural plan. While the case practitioner (child protection or contracted agency) has the responsibility for the cultural plan being given to the child, the care team is expected to lead and ensure completion of the plan.

Aboriginal community controlled organisations funded by the department for the provision of cultural planning are responsible for supporting care teams to develop cultural plans, check the plan for accuracy and appropriateness from a cultural perspective and sign the plan. This support is provided through the Senior Advisor – Aboriginal Cultural Planning role, which will actively trouble-shoot barriers to completing the cultural plan and provide the plan to their chief executive officer for endorsement. The chief executive officer may set the review date for the cultural plan earlier than the usual 12 months where important information is missing and based on the circumstances of the child.

The case planner endorses the cultural plan, ensuring it is aligned to the case plan, and is able to be implemented within the timeframes set and within budget.

Refer to the Cultural plan timeliness flowchart for details of the timescales of the drafting and endorsement of cultural plans.

### Case practitioner tasks

* Consult with the Senior Advisor – Aboriginal Cultural Planning to inform them that an Aboriginal child has entered out-of-home care, and the need to prepare a cultural plan. As part of this consultation, discuss:
  + - the composition of the care team, including identifying Aboriginal people who are or could be part of the care team
    - information about the child’s and their family’s understanding of and connection to their Aboriginal community.

The Senior Advisor – Aboriginal Cultural Planning will determine if they need to be part of the care team developing the cultural plan, or if they will provide consultation as required. The Senior Advisor – Aboriginal Cultural Planning should be part of the care team if there is no other Aboriginal input into the care team.

* Consult with ACSASS – ACSASS may have an existing relationship with the child and their family, and/or additional information about the child and their family’s Aboriginal heritage, culture and community. ACSASS may choose to be part of the care team, which may enable better engagement and outcomes.
* Where the placement is not provided by an ACCO or CSO   
  (typically kinship care)

Convene a care team meeting, including the Senior Advisor – Aboriginal Cultural Planning (unless they have indicated they will not participate in this part of the process), and ACSASS if they have indicated they wish to be part of the process. Aim for the strongest possible participation of Aboriginal people.

* Where an ACCO or CSO is providing the placement   
  (typically foster or residential care)

Ensure that the care manager, who leads the care team, convenes a care team meeting, including the Senior Advisor – Aboriginal Cultural Planning (unless they have indicated they will not participate in this part of the process), and ACSASS if they have indicated they wish to be part of the process.

The child’s primary carer is a core member of the care team and essential to the cultural plan being implemented once developed. Include the child’s parents, other family members, and where appropriate community member and elders, unless there is a good reason not to include them, as this is likely to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of the cultural plan. As the child’s case manager, you are also a member of the care team.

* Prior to the care team meeting, check and update cultural information for the child recorded in CRIS. Prepare a genogram for the child to at least three generations. Where this is not possible, document on CRIS the genogram to the extent known and why a genogram has not been created to at least three generations. Print the ‘Child and Family Cultural Details’ document from CRIS and distribute as appropriate to the care team.
* Provide the care team with the case plan prior to or when the care team first meets about the cultural plan.
* Organise for the senior advisor - cultural planning to arrange for their CEO to sign the cultural plan
* Arrange endorsement by the team manager/ case planner.
* Within one week of endorsement, upload the signed document into CRIS.
* During implementation, maintain record in CRIS regarding:
  + - cultural collection
    - cultural activities – socialisation and direct cultural connection
* When the child changes placement or leaves out-of-home care, ensure any items or records significant to the child’s cultural journey, as well as a copy of the child’s most recent cultural plan, go with the child.

For older children, these items can be given directly to the child. For younger children, these items should be given to the new carer or parent, with an explanation of their significance.

#### Care team tasks

An Aboriginal person must have meaningful input into the cultural plan.

Ideally, the child’s Aboriginal family will participate in the care team developing the cultural plan. Consideration must be given to how to enable this in a culturally safe and empowering way. An AFLDM meeting might enable this to occur.

Where the child’s Aboriginal family is not part of the care team, a member of the child’s Aboriginal community may be part of the care team. Efforts must be made to include Aboriginal people, in addition to the Senior Advisor – Aboriginal Cultural Planning, as part of the care team for the child.

* Meet as soon as practical, and within two weeks after the child enters out-of-home care, to commence developing a cultural plan.

The care and placement plan needs to be prepared within 14 days of placement in foster care or residential care. Where the care team meets to do this, the cultural plan can be considered at the same meeting.

* In an age appropriate manner, engage with the child to ascertain the child’s views and wishes in relation to their connection to their Aboriginal community and culture.
* Consider what the child wants and what they need to encourage their connection to their Aboriginal community and culture.
* Engage with the child’s family, especially their Aboriginal family, to ascertain the family’s views and wishes on how to strengthen and maintain the child’s connection to their Aboriginal community and culture.
* Work in a collaborative way to ensure a cultural plan is developed that best reflects the needs and wishes of the child, and is aligned to the case plan for the child.

The case planner will ultimately endorse the cultural plan; however the cultural plan must be developed to align with the case plan. Goals and tasks from the cultural plan must not contradict the case plan.

* Within sixteen weeks of the child entering out-of-home care, provide the prepared cultural plan to the Senior Advisor – Aboriginal Cultural Planning, who following review will present it to their chief executive officer for endorsement. The plan does not need to include all information where this cannot be obtained within the timeframes. In these circumstances earlier review may be required as new pieces of information are found.
* Implement the goals and tasks as set out in the cultural plan.
* Identify who has responsibility for any cultural collection and make arrangements for its care and storage, and access for the child to the collection as appropriate.
* Keep records of cultural activities using the cultural activities log.
* Alert case planner if cultural plan requires review earlier than planned review date.

#### Senior Advisor – Aboriginal Cultural Planning tasks

* Consult with the case manager as soon as practicable and no later than three business days after being notified that an Aboriginal child has entered out-of-home care, regarding the composition of the care team. This consultation must consider membership of the care team, especially relating to identifying an Aboriginal person confident of being able to provide meaningful input into the care team.
* Be part of each care team preparing a cultural plan where there is no other Aboriginal person in the care team.
* Where workload permits, be part of care team preparing the first cultural plan for an Aboriginal child, giving priority to cases where potential barriers to cultural planning or particular vulnerabilities have been identified.
* Be part of all care teams reviewing a cultural plan where:
  + - * there is no Aboriginal person in the care team, or
      * there has been minimal or no progress on the goals and tasks of the cultural plan, or
      * at the request of the chief executive officer of the ACCO, or the child’s case planner.
* Actively participate in drafting and reviewing of cultural plans to ensure that:
  + - * cultural plans are culturally appropriate, taking into consideration the unique aspects of the child’s specific Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community(s) and culture(s)
      * cultural plans contain achievable opportunities for socialisation activities and direct cultural contact (where possible)
      * where cultural information is incomplete, reasonable steps are taken and responsibility is shared to complete the information
      * any barriers to completing the plan are managed which may include meeting personally with the child’s family and community
      * goals and tasks are realistic and achievable, and appropriate people are responsible for their implementation.
* Where a cultural plan has been returned to the care team by the chief executive officer, ensure the care team understand any changes or additional elements required, and work with the care team to complete make these changes as quickly as possible.

#### Chief executive officer, ACCO tasks

**Note:** In circumstances where the chief executive officer of the ACCO is not an Aboriginal person, they may choose to delegate this responsibility to a senior Aboriginal member of staff to undertake the tasks associated with this role.

* Review the cultural plan ensuring that:
  + - * the information is accurate, to the best of the ACCOs knowledge
      * where there are any gaps in the child’s genogram or cultural information, appropriate tasks have been planned to provide the child with the best possible information about the family and cultural connections
      * activities proposed provide a real opportunity for cultural connectedness.
* If the cultural plan is not ready for signing, return the cultural plan to the care team with specific information explaining what changes or additional elements are required.
* Set a date for the next review of the cultural plan. Generally, cultural plans should be reviewed annually (in-line with the case plan if possible). However, there may be individual circumstances where a shorter time frame may be more appropriate, such as where:
  + - * specific parts of the plan are incomplete despite best efforts and a shorter time frame for review may promote its completion , such as a genealogy search
      * therapeutic interventions are planned that may assist with addressing barriers to cultural connectedness for the child.
* Once you are satisfied that the cultural plan is appropriate at this point in time, sign the plan, and forward the signed plan to the team manager within the department (using local arrangements).

#### Team manager / case planner tasks

* Review the cultural plan signed by the chief executive officer to ensure that:
  + - * the cultural plan is aligned to the case plan; and
      * the goals and tasks contained in the cultural plan are financially viable.
* Where the above conditions are met, the case planner endorses the cultural plan.

## Related procedures

* Care teams – procedure

## Additional information

* Cultural plan template
* Cultural planning – advice
* Care teams – advice
* Child and family cultural details – CRIS document (view in forms)
* CRIS child protection guides – ‘[Case practice: Planning – record cultural plan details](http://intranet.dhs.vic.gov.au/resources-and-tools/guides-and-manuals/cris-case-practice-user-guides2/case-practice-planning-sub-component)’
* Cultural plan timeliness flowchart