

# PRACTICE GUIDE

## Culturally capable behaviours

### Purpose

The purpose of this resource is to assist staff to consider culture in all practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. The practice prompts are questions staff may use to prompt cultural considerations in line with the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle. The second column are behaviours that may indicate that our practice is culturally sound.

### In all our practice

Practice Prompts	What would we be seeing and hearing in our practice?
Have I engaged in self-reflection and ongoing discussions with my supervisor and Cultural Practice Advisor (CPA) regarding my cultural knowledge and understanding, information I don't know, and how to develop my own cultural capability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are engaging in conversations with family and community members to clarify and expand on preliminary family and cultural information.</li> <li>• If family members are unsure of cultural details, we ask about potential extended family or community members who have supported the family culturally who may have broad or specific cultural information.</li> <li>• We acknowledge that relationships are the cornerstone of working well with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, children/young people and communities, as such we invest in building those relationships.</li> <li>• We are not using jargon or acronyms with families, children and young people.</li> <li>• We allow for the use of silence when engaging with families.</li> <li>• We stop talking when the family starts talking.</li> <li>• We conduct our business in such a way that families have time and space to exercise self-determination.</li> <li>• We are engaged in community cultural events and have made connections in the community.</li> <li>• We know who the local elders are and involve them where appropriate</li> <li>• We facilitate opportunities for the Independent Person for the child to</li> </ul>
Have I spoken to my Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander colleagues and where relevant community members and /or elders for advice and guidance?	
Have I consulted relevant elders, community members and staff of other government or non-government agencies for information or advice?	
Am I making my own connections with the community and participating in community events?	
Do I know the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations in my area and what services are available for children and families?	
Do I know and follow protocols for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities?	
Have I ensured Family Led Decision Making (FLDM) processes have occurred at relevant decision-making points?	
Am I aware that any information before me may be preliminary or limited?	

<p>Am I ensuring that I have taken responsibility to understand, clarify and expand on cultural, community and family information?</p>	<p>support the child and family to participate in significant decisions (such as when safety planning, case planning and / or making placement decisions).</p>
<p>Have I considered 'people before business'?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We demonstrate an understanding of, and use respectful language when engaging with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander families and colleagues.</li> </ul>
<p>Have I ensured the child / young person and family have had the opportunity for an Independent Person to help them participate when significant decisions are being made?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We always have an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person to provide a cultural perspective involved in Child Safety decision- making forums such as practice panels. Where possible more than one cultural perspective is included. (E.g. Cultural Practice Advisor (CPA), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Practice Leader, critical friend from partner agency).</li> </ul>
<p>Has my engagement and documentation reflected the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: Prevention, Partnership, Placement, Participation and Connection?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We reflect and seek guidance on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cases from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.</li> </ul>
<p>Am I promoting the family's right to self-determination?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Led Decision Making (FLDM) processes are being offered to families during the I&amp;A about the child in need of protection decision and to develop or review a case plan.</li> </ul>
<p>Have I read The Respectful Language Guide to ensure the language I am using with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families and colleagues is appropriate? <a href="https://csywintranet.root.internal/our-department/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-cultural-capability/resources-staff">https://csywintranet.root.internal/our-department/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-cultural-capability/resources-staff</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written documentation including case plans, I&amp;A outcomes, placement decisions and case notes reflect the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and how these elements have been considered.</li> </ul>
<p>Have I partnered with stakeholders and agencies to discuss and work towards applying the elements of the Child Placement Principle in our work together across all functions under the Act?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We respectfully share with family and stakeholders our understanding of and our requirement to meet the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and hear the perspectives of family and other stakeholders.</li> </ul>

**Intake (RIS, CSAHSC, CSSC)**

Practice Prompts	What would we be seeing and hearing from Child Safety Staff?
<p>Have I sought information about the family’s cultural identity?</p> <p>Have I explored and developed an understanding of the child’s immediate and extended family members, and documented this accordingly?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We respectfully ask for information about the family’s cultural identity, for example “I acknowledge some people may not know this information, but if you do, are you able to share this with me?”</li> </ul>
<p>Have I gathered cultural information about the child and family in a sensitive and respectful manner? Have I clarified the child and both parents’ clan, mob, community group and language?</p> <p><i>Note: As a result of past policies, not everyone knows their clan, mob, community group and / or language. Ensure this information is asked for in a sensitive manner.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ICMS is updated and cross checked during each interaction to ensure Indigenous identity (using the Indigenous status tab in ICMS) and cultural information is detailed for each family member.</li> <li>• Immediate and extended family members have been identified and explored, including the strengths and supports extended family members and the family’s culture brings to the family unit.</li> </ul>
<p>Have I asked questions to elicit information regarding the importance / significance of the child’s culture to the child and family? About how culture features in their family functioning?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are connecting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, agencies and community elders (where appropriate) for cultural guidance, and are confident in the way we do this.</li> </ul>
<p>Have I sought information regarding the strengths and protective factors that the family’s culture and cultural identity provides them?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We build cultural knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in our region to inform our understanding of family circumstances.</li> </ul>
<p>Have I been curious about the notifier’s cultural lens, knowledge and understanding of family and community?</p> <p>Am I aware of the potential for institutional and internalised racism and how this could affect the information provided by the notifier?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are conscious of internalised racism in ourselves and notifiers and sensitively explore motivation for reporting. We consider this factor in our intake assessments.</li> </ul>
<p>Have I talked with the notifier about available community resources and supports?</p>	
<p>Have I referred to the child’s cultural support plan as required?</p>	
<p>Has my engagement and documentation reflected the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: Prevention, Partnership, Placement, Participation and Connection?</p>	

## Investigation and Assessment

Practice Prompts	What would we be seeing and hearing from Child Safety Staff?
<p>Prior to the Investigation and Assessment (I&amp;A), have I engaged in self-reflection regarding my existing knowledge and understanding of the family's culture, elements of power and privilege, and considered what I <i>don't</i> know? (<i>Remember, it is OK not to know</i>).</p> <p>Have I taken steps to fill these gaps in knowledge?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When planning the I&amp;A, we include cultural considerations and respectfully elicit cultural information from families. I&amp;A plans reflect cultural information and considerations the worker may not know, and plans on how to seek this information. I&amp;A plans have been discussed with CPAs.</li> </ul>
<p>Have I acknowledged my own cultural lens? Have I sought to understand the family through their own cultural lens throughout the I&amp;A process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultural information is sought from families, acknowledging that they are best placed to provide information about culture, traditions and customs.</li> </ul>
<p>Even if this information has been sought by previous workers, have I asked / clarified with the family about their culture, the differences between each parent's culture and how I can best work with the family considering this information?</p> <p><i>Note: As a result of past policies, not everyone knows their clan, mob, community group and / or language. Ensure this information is asked for in a sensitive manner.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We respectfully ask for information about the family's cultural identity, for example "I acknowledge some people may not know this information, but if you do, are you able to share this with me?"</li> <li>During interviews and decision making processes, families have relevant supports, cultural or otherwise (namely the Independent Person, or another person identified by the family).</li> </ul>
<p>Have I partnered with the family, elders and community agencies throughout the I&amp;A?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews occur at a location and time chosen by the family unless the child's immediate safety precludes this.</li> </ul>
<p>Have I considered whether the location of interviews and interactions with the family are appropriate to Aboriginal tradition or Island custom and whether the location allows sufficient time and arrangements to be made for the right people to participate</p> <p><i>Note: The child's safety remains paramount.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We talk with families about the intentions of our work and the purpose for the questions we are asking.</li> <li>We are clear about safety concerns and our worries.</li> </ul>
<p>Have I arranged, with the agreement of the child and the child's family, for an independent person to help their participation in decision-making?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When the child is likely to be in need of protection, we have referred to the Family Participation Program (FPP) (with the family's approval) and they have undertaken a Family Led Decision Making (FLDM) process with the family.</li> </ul>
<p>Have I considered a referral for a family led decision making process to the Family Participation Program (FPP), with the agreement of the family?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where required, multiple meetings are held to ensure the input of important and relevant family and community members.</li> </ul>
<p>Have I asked purposeful questions, and explained the intent of my questioning?</p>	
<p>Have I liaised with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies who are already engaged with the family?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families are allowed time and space (without departmental officers) to discuss and decide on what solutions they can provide within their own family and community to address the concerns.</li> </ul>
<p>Has my engagement and documentation reflected the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: Prevention,</p>	

Partnership, Placement, Participation and Connection?

- Written assessments reflect details of the child's culture, including maternal and paternal cultures.
- Written assessments reflect information regarding the way the family's culture has been considered to contribute to the assessment and outcome.
- The assessment shows evidence of how the five elements of the Child Placement Principle have been considered.

**Ongoing Intervention (IPA, CPOs)**

Practice Prompts	What would we be seeing and hearing?
<p>Even if cultural information has been sought by previous workers, have I asked / clarified with the family about their culture, the differences between each parent's culture, the communities the family feels connected with and how I can best work with the family considering this information?</p> <p><i>Note: As a result of past policies, not everyone knows their clan, mob, community group and / or language. Ensure this information is asked for in a sensitive manner.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We respectfully ask for information about the family's cultural identity, for example "I acknowledge some people may not know this information, but if you do, are you able to share this with me?"</li> <li>• Primary and respite placements are in accordance with the placement element of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle</li> </ul>
<p>Have I engaged with the family to establish a safe and robust network of people who could care for the child if required?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the child is subject to an IPA, family and community members have been identified and established as part of safety and support networks to support the family and care for the child if required.</li> </ul>
<p>Have I arranged, with the agreement of the child and family, for an independent person to help their participation in decision-making?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concurrent planning is documented clearly in case plans and case notes.</li> </ul>
<p>Have I referred the family for Family Led Decision Making (FLDM) and have they engaged in FLDM processes to develop or review the child's case plan, including developing the child's connection and cultural needs?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural support plans are developed collaboratively with the child and family and contain clear, specific and achievable actions that family members, carers and relevant community members agree to and can achieve to nourish, strengthen and sustain the child's cultural identity.</li> </ul>
<p>Has the child, family, child's carers and relevant cultural supports been key in developing and implementing the child's case plan and cultural support plan?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culturally appropriate services to address the worries and promote connections are linked in for children and families in a timely manner. Where possible, the family should consent to and be included in referral processes to services.</li> </ul>
<p>Have I considered the long term impact of the decision on the child's wellbeing now and into the future?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture is embedded in all plans and other documents such as a child's therapeutic support plan, positive behaviour support plan, life story work, Transition to Adulthood plan, and Kicbox</li> </ul>
<p>Have I prioritised the child's right to grow up within their family, community and culture?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The child and their family are given the opportunity and support to engage in cultural healing on their terms.</li> </ul>
<p>Has the child's case plan detailed information regarding how the Child Placement Principle element of connection will be met, specifically: That the child has a right to be supported and to develop and maintain a connection with the child's family, community, culture, traditions and language, particularly when the child is in the care of a person who is not an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.</p> <p><i>Note: It is a legislative requirement for this to be detailed in a case plan.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The child's views and wishes on culture are explored in a meaningful manner during home visits and interactions with the child.</li> </ul>
<p>If a new placement is required for the child, have I reviewed the file to identify family or kin who Child Safety previously identified or had contact with, but</p>	

<p>are not currently in contact with the child or with Child Safety?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the child is displaced, the child returns to country and community as often as possible, supported by family and community. This is documented in the child's case plan, in the cultural support plan.</li> <li>• The child returns to their community for cultural, family events and ceremonies.</li> <li>• Placement agreements reflect the specific actions carers will take to nourish the child's cultural identity, including timeframes and frequency of actions. The five elements of the Child Placement Principle are discussed and documented in the placement agreement.</li> <li>• Ongoing conversations occur with carers and partners regarding the importance of the five elements of the Child Placement Principle and how these can and should continue to be embedded into the child's life.</li> <li>• The child has regular, meaningful family time at a time and location that considers the child and family's cultural needs.</li> <li>• Carers, child/young person and family (where appropriate) are provided with copies of the child's cultural support plan.</li> <li>• With the support of their agency, robust discussions occur with carers regarding their understanding of, and what further supports they may need to ensure they are meeting, the five elements of the Child Placement Principle.</li> <li>• If a child is placed in foster care, carers are supported to have meaningful relationships with the child's biological family and to support family contact, where possible.</li> <li>• The child's carer has information about the child's culture and community of origin.</li> <li>• The child has photos, videos and stories regarding their family, community and culture documented on the child's Kicbox.</li> <li>• Regardless of the length of the child protection order, the child, family and</li> </ul>
<p>Have I engaged in conversations with the family regarding the timing and location of family time between children, their parents and other family members to ensure the child and family's cultural needs are met?</p>	
<p>Have I considered how immediate and extended family members can facilitate and engage in meaningful family time with the child without the need for Child Safety presence or supervision?</p>	
<p>Have I considered the child's connection to maternal and paternal family members and cultures?</p>	
<p>How have I <b>actively</b> promoted the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, rather than reacting once a disconnection from culture has been noted?</p>	
<p>Have I considered what supports carers and care services need to truly understand and implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle?</p> <p><i>Note: As a result of past policies, not all kinship carers will know their clan, mob, community group and / or language, or the child's. Ensure this information is asked for and support is implemented in a sensitive manner.</i></p>	

	community have involvement and input into decision-making for the child.
--	--

**Placement (Placement Services Unit, CSSC)**

Practice Prompts	What would we be seeing and hearing?
<p>Prior to making a placement decision for a child subject to a child protection care agreement or an order granting custody or guardianship to the chief executive - have I actively considered placement options in accordance with the placement element of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are exploring and continually updating genograms with family members, or using other tools such as the Circles of Safety and Support, to consider appropriate placement options.</li> <li>• Prior to placement decisions being made, FLDM processes have occurred to identify appropriate placement options (for example, during the I&amp;A stage and / or during initial case plan development).</li> <li>• Carer assessments have a strong cultural lens and document the way in which carers can promote and adhere to the Child Placement Principle. Assessments go beyond superficial questioning regarding these elements, and in depth discussion and consideration is given to the carer's cultural lens, capacity and willingness to integrate the five elements into their caring role.</li> <li>• Potential placement options from within the child's family and / or community are provided with all possible supports to enable them to overcome any barriers to safely and practically care for the child, or to care for siblings together.</li> <li>• Placement agreements reflect the specific actions carers will take to nourish the child's cultural identity, including timeframes and frequency of actions. The five elements of the Child Placement Principle are discussed and documented in the placement agreement.</li> <li>• Ongoing conversations occur with carers and partners regarding the importance of the five elements of the Child Placement Principle and how these can and should continue to be embedded into the child's life.</li> <li>• Carers, child and parents (where appropriate) are provided with copies of the child's cultural support plan.</li> <li>• With the support of their support agency, robust discussions occur with</li> </ul>
<p>Has the child's and family's views on placement been sought and discussed with them? Have the child and family (where appropriate) had the opportunity to have an Independent Person help them participate in placement decision-making?</p>	
<p>Has the child and family engaged in a Family Led Decision Making (FLDM) process to discuss placement, map kin and identify potential placement options?  Can a placement decision wait until this process has occurred?</p>	
<p>Are siblings placed together, where possible?  If this is not possible, have I explored and discussed strategies to make this a reality?  Have I explored and discussed strategies to keep them connected? I.e. Siblings are placed near each other, siblings are attending the same school / sporting teams, siblings attend respite and participate in family time together.</p>	
<p>If multiple placement options are available, have I explored and discussed these with the child and family, to allow them to participate in the decision, including indicating their preferred option?</p>	
<p>If a child is not in a placement that meets the requirements of the placement element of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, as outlined in the Child Protection Act, s. 83, am I continually exploring or re-visiting placement options that align with the Child Placement Principle?</p>	
<p>Have I considered what supports carers need to truly understand and implement the Child Placement Principle?</p>	

<p><i>Note: As a result of past policies, not all kinship carers will know their clan, mob, community group and / or language, or the child's. Ensure this information is asked for and support is implemented in a sensitive manner.</i></p>	<p>carers regarding their understanding of, and what further supports they may need to ensure they are meeting the Child Placement Principle.</p>
<p>Am I engaging in discussions with partner foster and kinship care agencies and residential care services to discuss and work towards applying the elements of the Child Placement Principle in our work together?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a child is placed in foster care, carers are supported to have meaningful relationships with the child's biological family and to support family contact, where possible.</li> <li>• The child's carer has information about the child's culture and community of origin.</li> </ul>

---

## Version history

**Last reviewed: September 2019**