

Practice Guide

Culturally capable behaviours

This practice guide assists staff to consider culture in all practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and 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, cultural practice advisor (CPA), the regional cultural safety and engagement senior advisor and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Practice Leader regarding my cultural knowledge and understanding, the information I don't know, and how to develop my own cultural capability?	• We are engaging in conversations with family and community members to clarify and expand on initial family and cultural information. • If family members are unsure of cultural details, we ask about potential extended family or community members who may have broad or specific cultural information. • We acknowledge that relationships are the cornerstone of working well with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, children/young people and communities, and investing in building those relationships. • We use clear, simple language and avoid the use of jargon and acronyms when communicating with families and children. • We check in with the family to ensure they understand what is being said. • We allow the use of silence when engaging with families • We respect and understand the limited eye contact when engaging with families, children and young people. • We stop talking when the family starts talking. • We listen carefully and respectfully, recognising that communication styles may differ. • We conduct our business in a way that allows families time and space to exercise self-determination while feeling culturally safe.
Do I know and follow protocols for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities?	
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 local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations (ATSICCO) in my area and what services are available for children and families?	
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.	

Practice Prompts	What would we be seeing and hearing in our practice?
Have I ensured that I have taken responsibility to understand, clarify and expand on cultural, community and family information? Have I ensured that the family has access to an interpreter if needed?	• We acknowledge and respect dates and events of cultural significance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. • We actively celebrate and participate in significant cultural events and had made connections in the community. • We demonstrate an understanding of and use respectful language when engaging with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander families and colleagues. • We organise an interpreter to help with communication if the family consents. • We respond with empathy and patience when speaking with the family. • We foster relationships with our local communities to develop and enhance our cultural knowledge. • We engage in consistent expressions of cultural respect, such as Acknowledgment of Country, Welcome to Country, and recognition of cultural protocols, during meetings and events. • We know who the local elders are and involve them where appropriate • We facilitate opportunities for the Independent Person for the child to be arranged to support the child and family to participate in significant decisions (e.g. safety planning, case planning, cultural support planning and making placement decisions). • We ensure that an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person provides a cultural perspective involved in Child Safety decision-making forums (e.g. practice panels). Where possible including more than one cultural perspective is included. (e.g. CPA, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Practice Leader, or critical friend from partner agency). • We reflect and seek guidance on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cases from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. • We offer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Led Decision Making (FLDM) processes to families during the assessment about the child in need of protection decision and to develop or review a case plan. • We ensure written documentation including case plans, assessment outcomes, placement
Have I considered 'people before business'?	
Have I ensured the child and their family have had the opportunity for an Independent Person/s to be arranged to facilitate the child and family's participation when significant decisions are being made? Have I ensured that the family has access to an interpreter if needed?	
Has my engagement and documentation reflected active efforts in applying the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: Prevention, Partnership, Placement, Participation and Connection?	
Am I promoting the family's right to self-determination?	
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? Respectful language guide	
Have I partnered with stakeholders and agencies to discuss and work towards making active efforts in applying the elements of the Child Placement Principle in our work together across all functions under the Act?	

Practice Prompts	What would we be seeing and hearing in our practice?
	decisions and case notes reflects the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and how these elements have been considered and applied. • We respectfully share with family and stakeholders an understanding of and the 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.
Have I completed the relevant training modules on iLearn including Starting the Journey and Our Journey, My story to enhance my understanding of cultural capability and cultural safety? Have I incorporated cultural capability strategies learnt during training into my practice?	• We recognise and value the diverse cultural backgrounds of those we work with • We identify and address any unconscious biases or assumption that may impact our practice. • We engage in conversations that respectfully acknowledge and reflect the culture, history, and lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland • We engage in culturally safe and respectful interactions, such as the use of appropriate cultural protocols, the celebration of cultural events, and the creation of welcoming spaces that reflect and honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. • We have open and inclusive conversations where all voices are welcomed and respected. • We have discussions that prioritise self-determination and collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, ensuring their voices and perspectives are central to outcomes. • We utilise workplace tools, such as cultural consultation resources and inclusive decision-making frameworks, to guide culturally responsive practices.

Intake (RIS, CSAHSC, CSSC)

Practice Prompts	What would we be seeing and hearing from Child Safety Staff?
Have I sought information about the family's cultural identity? Have I explored and developed an understanding of the child's immediate and extended family members, and documented this accordingly?	• 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?" • Unify is updated and cross checked during each interaction to ensure cultural identity is accurately recorded using the Cultural status tab in Unify), and cultural information is detailed for each family member. • Immediate and extended family members have been identified and explored, including the cultural strengths and supports both immediate and extended family members bring to the family unit. • 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. • We build cultural knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in our region to inform our understanding of family circumstances. • We are conscious of internalised racism in ourselves and notifiers and sensitively explore motivation for reporting. We consider this factor in our intake assessments.
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? <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>	
Have I asked questions to gather information about the importance and significance of the child's culture to both the child and their family? Have I explored how culture influences their family functioning?	
Have I sought information regarding the strengths and protective factors that the family's culture and cultural identity provides to them?	
Have I been curious about the notifier's cultural lens, knowledge and understanding of family and community? Am I aware of the potential for institutional and internalised racism and how this could affect the information provided by the notifier?	
Have I talked with the notifier about available community resources and supports?	
Have I referred to the child's cultural support plan as required?	
Has my engagement and documentation reflected active efforts in applying the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle?	

Assessment (Standard Response and Priority response)

Practice Prompts	What would we be seeing and hearing from Child Safety Staff?
Prior to commencing the assessment 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>). Have I taken steps to fill these gaps in knowledge?	- When planning the assessment, we include cultural considerations and respectfully gather cultural information from families. Assessment plans reflect cultural information and considerations the worker may not know, and plans on how to seek this information. Assessment plans have been discussed with CPAs. - Cultural information is sought from families, acknowledging that they are best placed to provide information about culture, traditions and customs. - We respectfully ask for information about the family's cultural identity, for example "I understand that not everyone may have this information, but if you are comfortable and able to share, could you tell me about your cultural identity?" - During interviews and decision making processes, families have relevant supports, cultural or otherwise (namely the Independent Person, or another person identified by the family). - Interviews occur at a location and time chosen by the family unless the child's immediate safety precludes this. - We talk with families about the intentions of our work and the purpose for the questions we are asking. - We are clear about safety concerns and our worries. - We consider relevant cultural protocols, such as men's business or women's business, child-rearing practices, and the cultural context regarding issues related to adolescence, sexual identity, or gender identity when conducting the assessment - We will provide culturally safe spaces for interviews to occur at a time chosen by the family, unless the child's immediate safety precludes this.
Have I ensured that I have sought advice about engagement with the family from the cultural practice advisor prior to commencing the assessment? Have I engaged the Family Participation Program to jointly plan whether they will attend the initial home visit to the family during the assessment.	
Have I acknowledged my own cultural lens? Have I sought to understand the family through their own cultural lens throughout the assessment process?	
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? <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>	
Have I partnered with the family, elders and community agencies throughout the assessment?	
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? <i>Note: The child's safety remains paramount.</i>	
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?	
Have I considered a referral for a family led decision making process to the Family Participation Program (FPP), with the agreement of the family?	

Practice Prompts	What would we be seeing and hearing from Child Safety Staff?
Have I ensured that the family understand the process of the assessment? Have I ensured that an interpreter is available to the family, if needed, throughout the assessment process? Have I asked purposeful questions, and explained the intent of my questioning?	• When the child is likely to be assessed as 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. • Where required, multiple meetings are held to ensure the input of important and relevant family and community members are heard. • We organise an interpreter to help with communication if the family consents. • 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. • We remain mindful of traditional cultural family structures when engaging with the family and the child in decision making. • We actively implement culturally safe and appropriate services for children and their families. • 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 and applied. • When the child is likely to be assessed as in need of protection we reach out to the kin finding team to identify family members who may be able to be assessed to care for the child if the parents have limited information about their family.
Have I liaised with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies who are already engaged with the family?	
Has my engagement and documentation reflected active efforts in applying the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle?	

Ongoing Intervention (IPA, CPOs)

Practice Prompts	What would we be seeing and hearing?
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? <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>	• We respectfully ask for information about the family's cultural identity, for example "I understand that not everyone may have this information, but if you are comfortable and able to share, could you tell me about your cultural identity?" • Primary and respite placements are in accordance with the placement element of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle • We refer the child's and their family to the internal Indigenous Collective stakeholders meeting (region specific) and kin finding team to identify potential family members who may be able to care for the child, particularly when the child's parents have not been able to identify any. • We work closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisation (ATSICCO) to identify children who may be suitable for, and benefit from, a delegated authority arrangement. • We engage actively with Torres Strait islander children and families in ways that respect and honour their cultural child rearing practices. • 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. • Concurrent planning is documented clearly in case plans and case notes. • 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. • We actively implement culturally safe and appropriate services for children and
Have I engaged with the family to establish a safe and robust network of people who could care for the child if required?	
Have I informed each parent/s and children about their right to have independent person involved? Have I with the agreement of the child and family, arranged for an Independent person to support their participation in decision-making? Have I spoken with the independent person to explain their role and provide them with the necessary information?	
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?	
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?	
Have I considered the long term impact of the decision on the child's wellbeing now and into the future?	
Have I prioritised the child's right to grow up within their family, community and culture?	
Does the child's case plan include detailed information about how active efforts will be made to apply the connection element of the Child Placement Principle. Specifically, does it outline how the child will be supported to develop and maintain connection with their family, community, culture, traditions and language, particularly when	

Practice Prompts	What would we be seeing and hearing?
the child is in the care of a person who is not an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person. <i>Note: It is a legislative requirement for this to be detailed in a case plan.</i>	their families to address concerns and promote connections. These services are provided to children and families in a timely manner. Wherever possible, families should provide consent and be included in the referral processes to these services.
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 are not currently in contact with the child or with Child Safety?	• Culture is embedded in all plans and other documents such as the child's therapeutic support plan, positive behaviour support plan, life story work, Transition to adulthood plan, and Kicbox
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?	• The child and their family are given the opportunity and support to engage in cultural healing on their terms.
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?	• We remain mindful of traditional cultural family structures when engaging with the family and the child in decision making.
Have I considered the child's connection to maternal and paternal family members and cultures?	• The child's views and wishes on culture are explored in a meaningful manner during home visits and interactions with the child.
How have I made active efforts to apply the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, rather than reacting once a disconnection from culture has been noted?	• If the child is relocated, efforts are made to ensure 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.
Have I considered what supports carers and care services need to truly understand and implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle? <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>	• The child returns to their community for cultural, family events and ceremonies. • Placement agreements reflect the specific actions carers will take to maintain and strengthen the child's cultural identity, including timeframes and frequency of these actions. The five elements of the Child Placement Principle are discussed and documented in the placement agreement. • 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. • The child has regular, meaningful family time at a time and location that considers the child and family's cultural needs.

Practice Prompts	What would we be seeing and hearing?
	• Carers, the child and family (where appropriate) are provided with copies of the child's cultural support plan. • With the support of their family based care provider, 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. • 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. • The child's carer has information about the child's culture and community of origin. • The child has photos, videos and stories regarding their family, community and culture documented on the child's Kicbox. • Regardless of the length of the child protection order, the child, family and 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?
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 made active efforts to consider placement options in accordance with the placement element of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle? 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 and Independent Person help them participate in placement decision-making?	• 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. • We refer the child's and their family to the internal Indigenous Collective stakeholders meeting (region specific) and kin finding team to explore potential family members who may be able to care for the child, especially if the child's parents have not identified any. • Prior to placement decisions being made, FLDM processes have occurred to identify appropriate placement options (for example, during the assessment stage and / or during initial case plan development).

Practice Prompts	What would we be seeing and hearing?
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?	• Carer assessments are conducted with a strong cultural lens, thoroughly documenting how carers can promote and adhere to the Child Placement Principle. These assessments go beyond superficial questioning, engaging in in-depth discussions and careful consideration of the carer's cultural perspective, capacity, and willingness to integrate the five elements of the Child Placement Principle into their role as carers.
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.	• 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.
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?	• Placement agreements reflect the specific actions carers will take to maintain the child's cultural identity, including timeframes and frequency of actions. The five elements of the Child Placement Principle are discussed, applied and documented in the placement agreement.
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 <i>Child Protection Act</i>, section 83, am I continually making active efforts, exploring or re-visiting placement options that align with the Child Placement Principle?	• Ongoing conversations occur with carers and their 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. • Carers, the child and parents (where appropriate) are provided with copies of the child's cultural support plan.
Have I considered what supports carers need to truly understand and implement the Child Placement Principle? <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>	• With the support of their family based care support worker, robust discussions occur with carers regarding their understanding of, and what further supports they may need to ensure they are meeting the Child Placement Principle. • 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.
Am I engaging in discussions and partnering with family based care providers and non-family based care providers to collaboratively make active efforts and apply the elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle in our work together?	• The child's carer has information about the child's culture and community of origin.

Version history

First published:	September 2017
Most recent update published:	June 2026
Owner:	Office of the Chief Practitioner