



Developing Aboriginal Cultural Support Plans

Guidance tools: Cultural support planning for Aboriginal children and young people developed by Curijo

Curijo acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and Elders of the lands of this continent now known as Australia. We acknowledge that prior to colonisation these lands were cared for by the Traditional Custodians of over 300 distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations, who still claim sovereignty over their traditional lands.

Curijo also acknowledges the past destructive practices of colonisation including the decimation of culture and language over the past 235 years. We acknowledge the impact of the policies that led to the Stolen Generations and acknowledge the survivors of those policies, and especially those members of the Stolen Generations who did not or have not yet had the opportunity to return home.

Lastly but most importantly, we wish to acknowledge our children because that is where our culture will continue to live and grow.

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Background

Curijo was contracted by the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) to develop guidance tools to assist non-Aboriginal Permanency Support Program (PSP) providers in the development of culturally safe Aboriginal Cultural Support Plans (ACSP) for Aboriginal children and young people who are placed in the PSP provider's care and placed in statutory out-of-home care (OOHC).

Curijo and the OCG acknowledge that most non-Aboriginal agencies work hard on developing their ACSPs - however reviews conducted by the OCG also revealed that some of the agencies and plans weren't fully compliant with the NSW Child Safe Standards.

Curijo also acknowledges that non-Aboriginal PSP providers often have Aboriginal staff who can assist in developing ACSPs. It is important to note that caseworker or case managers of the child in care, who have case management of the child, should always be the primary worker in developing the ACSP. This builds relationships between the worker and the child, birth family, extended kinship family, Country of belonging, Country of living, Aboriginal agencies, and carers.

This document was tested in draft form with Aboriginal PSP providers and their feedback on the cultural veracity of this document has been included in the final version. The agencies also suggested that Aboriginal services will generally be happy to assist in supporting connections and provide advice on their in-house support programs or appropriate local agencies to consult.

About Curijo

Curijo is an award-winning majority Aboriginal owned and controlled purpose driven consulting firm. For almost a decade we have provided high quality technical expertise across the policy spectrum, from design to implementation, through to evaluation, assurance and learning. We provide these services to government, industry and Community organisations. Our experience spans multiple sectors including child and family, government, health, Community development, education and finance. Our key disciplines include community development, child and family services, diversity and inclusion, organisational reform, adult education and well-being, assurance and Indigenous policy and program design and review. We contribute to business capability through leadership, sharing our story, providing opportunities of employment with Curijo, and nurturing other leaders and businesses to establish and grow.

As an independent Aboriginal consultancy, Curijo has been successful in building non-threatening relationships with many Aboriginal families who traditionally may not have had positive experiences with agencies or governments. This can be related to current and historical government policies and practices, and the ongoing impacts of the Stolen Generations and intergenerational trauma.

The Aboriginal Cultural Support Plan guidelines have been developed in line with the Secretariat of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care (SNAICC) resource '**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Cultural Needs**' <https://www.snaicc.org.au/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-Childrens-cultural-needs-2013-snaicc-resource/>.

Note:

Aboriginal children and young people have the inherent right to identify their Aboriginality. On occasions Aboriginal children in care may choose not to identify as Aboriginal or choose to predominately identify with another part of their heritage. These wishes should be respected.

There are protocols in place which must be followed in the instance where a child or young person, who has previously identified or has been identified as Aboriginal, and no longer wishes to identify as Aboriginal. In this case seek advice from your local DCJ office.

Before You Start

You should familiarise yourself with terms in this document before attempting to use the tool or develop an Aboriginal Cultural Support Plan.

Terminology

Note:

Where the term *child* is used in this document it can be taken to mean child, young people or children or any or all of the combinations of all three as appropriate.

Where the term *Aboriginal* is used in this document it should be taken to include Torres Strait Islander people who may be living on the lands of Aboriginal people of NSW.

Aboriginal kinship and family:

Family as an Aboriginal concept has a different meaning than western understandings of what constitutes family. Traditional Aboriginal family relationships are complex and differ significantly from non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family relationships.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples value an extended family structure which often includes distant relatives and goes beyond blood and marriage.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, 'kinship' and 'family' defines where a person fits in to the community and binds people together in relationships of sharing and obligation. These systems may vary across communities, but they serve similar functions in determining what rights and responsibilities each person has within that community.

Often Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as a sign of respect, will refer to Elders or leaders within their community as aunt or uncle, even where not blood related. You may hear Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples refer to each other as brother, sister or cousin even though not blood related.

Responsibility for, and to, family is particularly significant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the flow on from this may impact the workplace. Family will usually be the number one priority for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person. Be aware that caring for children and elderly family members, including financial care, health care and general care, is often shared within extended family and community.

Due to family kinship structures and relationships, be mindful of decision-making which may involve input from many family members.

Country and Countries of Belonging – Country of Living:

Australia has over 300 diverse Aboriginal nations who have different languages and distinct cultural practices.

Aboriginal people have moved between the different nations for thousands of years using songlines and protocols understood by all Aboriginal people - but have always sought to return to their Country of belonging.

Over the past 235 years Aboriginal people have, often been forcibly removed from their traditional Country onto the Country of other nations. This continues to cause issues in the present day. Think about the Stolen Generations and the moving of peoples onto other people's traditional lands,

onto missions and reserves, without the opportunity of cultural protocols being able to be observed.

Over the past 200 years Aboriginal people have also often moved voluntarily - to find work, housing, for health reasons or to escape poverty and persecution etc.

Often, through the generations, these “refugees” have gained acceptance in their Country of living and on occasion will be accepted into Elder status by the traditional custodians. This needs to be considered when a placement of a child is being made off their Country of belonging.

Note: A child may have more than one Country of belonging through the paternal and maternal sides - but may feel more connected to one side than the other.

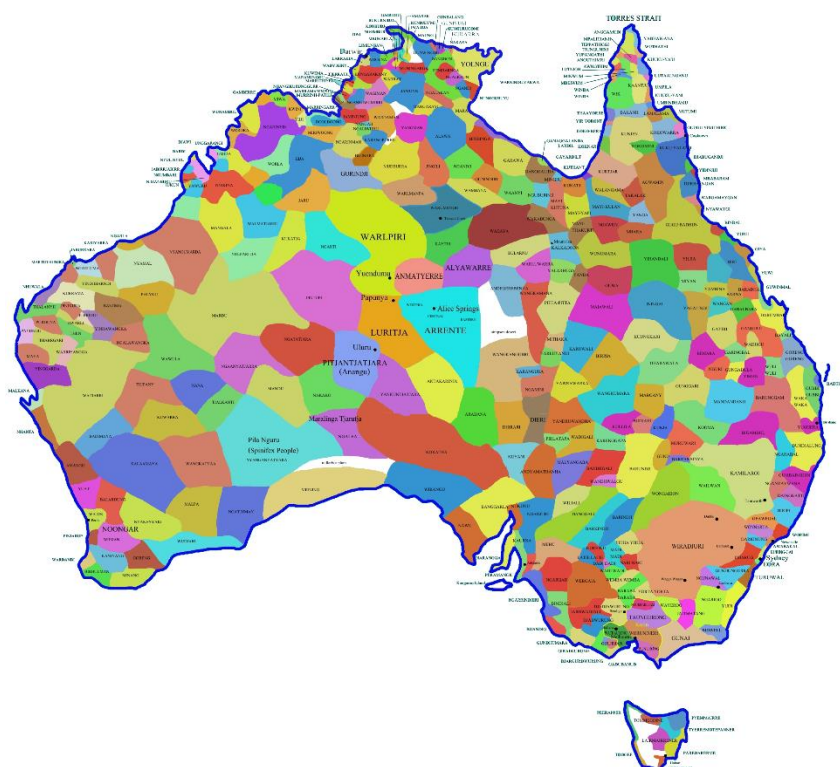


Figure 1 source: <https://connectionandwellbeing.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Australia-Aboriginal-Tribes-Map.png>

Yarning and Yarning Circle:

Yarning circles are a traditional way of resolving disputes or differences of opinion for thousands of years. Yarning circles by their nature are best able to overcome power imbalances when there are areas of disagreement.

We believe the yarning circle format is the most suitable approach when conducting meetings on topics related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, especially when the meetings include sensitive topics such as those related to child protection. The yarning circles should always be facilitated by experienced senior Aboriginal people or Elders acceptable to the family.

What are the guidance tools?

These tools have been developed to provide guidance to assist non-Aboriginal agencies to better develop ACSPs and aims to set out the parameters that agencies should achieve, to be compliant with the legislation, policies, and standards applicable at the time.

These tools can assist agencies to recognise what needs to happen to ensure the cultural safety of the Aboriginal children or young persons who are in their care.

Whilst the advice given sets out the minimum requirements - it is not compulsory to use the templates included in these tools - the outlined minimum requirements can be adapted as a guide to update any of the individual agency's current templates.

Complexities

Expectations of Aboriginal families

The history of change for Aboriginal people has led to 230 + years of disappointment for the tradition custodians of Australia. Aboriginal people have an expectation that there will be communities to be supported to ensure that their children can live safely in community.

Numerous reviews of the child protection system have led to rafts of recommendations which, had they been implemented, could have facilitated the needed change for Aboriginal children, families, and communities.

This was especially evident after the **Wood Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection in NSW**¹. If the changes recommended by Justice Wood and changes identified through Keep them Safe been completely implemented, life outcomes for Aboriginal children and families might be wholly different today.

One of the main recommendations, that was agreed to by the government of the day in March 2009, was that all Aboriginal children in care would be looked after by Aboriginal carers and families in their communities and would be placed with and supported through Aboriginal agencies with Aboriginal caseworkers overseeing the placements. This was meant to have been implemented within 10 years of the recommendation and it initially led to an increase in the number of Aboriginal services². The implementation has stalled over the past 14 years. This delay in implementation has led to the number of Aboriginal children being placed with non-Aboriginal service providers increasing rather than decreasing as was originally planned. This has caused much angst in Aboriginal communities, especially those that have had not had the chance to develop Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations children's services. (ACCOs)

It is important for non-Aboriginal agencies, who are providing OOHC to Aboriginal children, to ensure the care they provide to Aboriginal children is grounded in community, culture, and family. This is why ACSPs are so important in guiding their workers and agencies in providing for the culturally safe care of Aboriginal children.

¹ https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/320984/keep_them_safe.pdf

² Ministerial Statement in Preamble by Hon Linda Burney Minister of Community Service and page 16 Building capacity of Aboriginal organisations.
https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/320984/keep_them_safe.pdf

Men's and Women's Business

In developing an ACSP for older children and young people it is important that consideration be given to men's and women's business (agencies should be guided by communities in the consideration of these protocols).

In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, certain customs and practices are performed separately by men and women. These are often referred to as men's business and women's business.

Under Aboriginal lore, these traditional practices have very strict regulations and penalties attached, if rules are broken. Some of these practices may be still carried out in some communities.

Keep in mind in that in the workplace there may also be some issues that are more appropriate for your staff member to talk about with a family member of the same gender. This should not be seen as personal or offensive but a respect for culture which has been passed on through generations.

Why do we need ACSPs?

- **The NSW Child Safe Standards promote it** – Standards 1, 4 and 10

https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-12/g_CSS_GuidetotheStandards.pdf

- **Closing the Gap**

This emphasises self-determination and especially Target 12 – reduction of Aboriginal children in OOHC by 45% – restoration should be included in ACSPs wherever possible. This option for restoration should be reconsidered whenever circumstances change or at a minimum at the time of the annual review.

<https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/targets>

- **DCJ are implementing the Aboriginal Case Management Policy (ACMP) and related Aboriginal Community Controlled Mechanisms (ACCM)**

These policies have been developed by AbSec - and the ACCM will be an important resource when developing ACSPs. Caseworkers and carers should familiarise themselves with the ACMP and ACCMs through a short video at <https://absec.org.au/aboriginal-case-management-policy/>

Full online training - which will inform you all about the importance of the ACMP and ACCMs is available at <http://ngolearning.com.au/aboriginal-case-management/>

- **Legislative change**

There is a current Legislative review of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment (Family Is Culture Review) Bill 2021* happening in NSW - which will enshrine some further recommendations of the Family is Culture report into legislation.

https://www.familyisculture.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/726329/Family-Is-Culture-Review-Report.pdf

The most important changes are related to proactive efforts and a strengthening of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Placement Principles - so they are no longer just a tick-a-box exercise and will lead to ACSP planning from when the child first comes into care. The changes highlight the need for better outcomes for Aboriginal children in the child protection and OOHC sectors.

Culture is identity

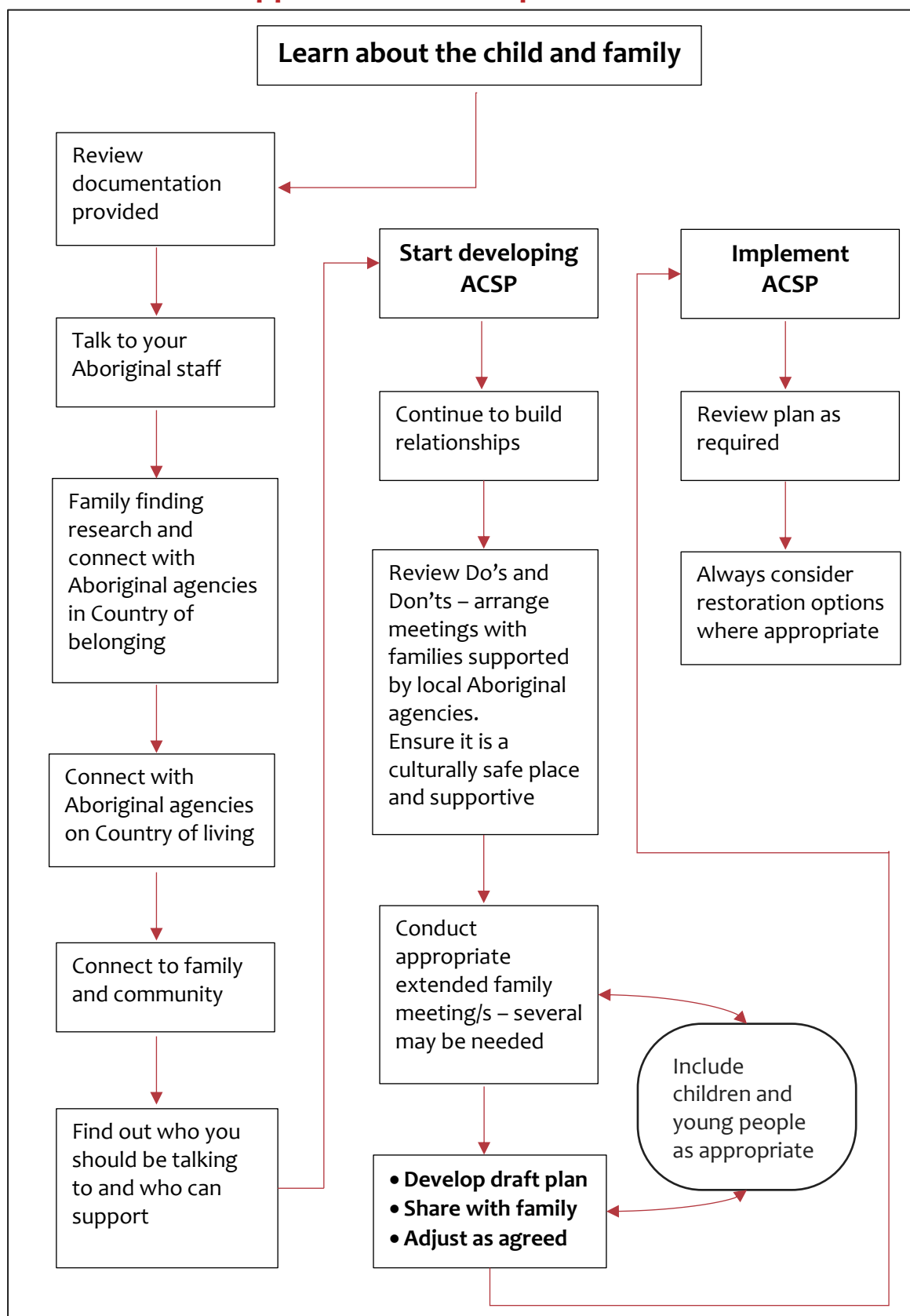
ACSP help to connect and maintain family and cultural connections for children or young people living in OOHC placements.

For an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child or young person to develop their own unique Aboriginal identity, they need to know where they have come from and where they fit within their family and community structures.

This includes knowing all their own family's cultural connections and stories. This is especially important for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children or young people who are not living with their parents or families and/or are not living on their Country of belonging.

ACSP's should be developed to be strength-based and connection and future focused. A strong ACSP will allow for the child or young person to be supported culturally, emotionally, spiritually, socially, physically and permit their general wellbeing to be nurtured - allowing them to heal from trauma and make better sense of their world. A clear, culturally safe ACSP should allow a child to grow up connected to culture and community and supported to grow strong in their Aboriginal identity.

Guidance on an Approach to Development of an ACSP



The above flow chart is a developed to be general guidance. Each case will be different and should be reflected in the ACSP.

What are culturally safe Aboriginal Cultural Support Plans?

They must:

- Meet the cultural needs of the child or young person, birth family, extended family and community
- Embody respectful engagement with family, extended family and community
- Be informed by current legislation, the NSW Child Safe Standards, policies - including the Aboriginal Case Management Policy (ACMP), Closing the Gap (CTG), Family is Culture report (FIC) and most importantly the meeting of Aboriginal Community expectations
- Always leads to better life outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people in care
- Be living documents

Cultural sensitivity

It is important that non-Aboriginal workers who are tasked with developing ACSPs with the child and their families, do so with cultural sensitivity and professionalism - as each family's story is different and unique. It is recommended to agencies that all non-Aboriginal staff, who may be asked to develop an ACSP, should have undertaken Aboriginal cultural learning training.

It is also recommended that any non-Aboriginal worker undertaking this work should do so with the advice and knowledge of Aboriginal staff within the agency (if available). This does not mean that the Aboriginal staff member does all the work - but they could act in secondary, advisory and review roles. This role could include:

- Giving advice on Country of belonging and Country of living
- Giving advice on agencies who can support the ACSP where the child is placed.
- Help make connections with family, community, and agencies on the child's Country of belonging
- Attending initial meetings with the children and family, extended kinship group and agencies

If agencies do not have Aboriginal staff, it is important that they seek advice from Aboriginal agencies or community members. See this link for [how to access agencies in all areas of NSW](#).

Consultations can happen individually or in culturally safe group forums and yarning circles and will contribute to supporting the development of a culturally safe and individualised plan. If the consultations are happening individually, parents should be offered the opportunity to have a support person of their choosing to also attend the consultation. This is especially important in the early stages of building relationships.

It needs to be acknowledged that a family's current circumstances and past experiences may impact upon their ability to participate in the development or review of the ACSP.

It is important that all information and contributions, are valued and acknowledged. The development of the ACSP can also assist the child or person's birth family to learn more about their own family history and culture and can help support their own healing as a family.

As part of ongoing case management, a child or young person's ACSP must sit above the annual case plan and filter into all casework. The child or young person's ACSP must be used to drive the case plans and ensure that culture is not just a one-off tick-a-box exercise. The plan should reflect a child's past lived experience and their everyday life experiences. Each child must be supported to become immersed in ongoing cultural experiences through engagement with Aboriginal services both within the local communities in which they reside as well as their own traditional communities and Countries of belonging.

This assists and promotes a best practice approach and more authentic connection to their culture and family. This approach also allows for connections with family and significant others to grow and for cultural information and history to be shared.

Aboriginal culture is traditionally an oral culture with storytelling and yarning used as a means of sharing cultural stories and histories. When Curijo is developing ACSP, they use a structure that ensures ACSP tells the child or young person's narrative or story and reflect who has contributed to their plan.

The development or review of an ACSP must include a child's cultural information and a family genogram. It must also include the contemporary ways in which a child or young person is currently supported to connect to both their local and traditional Aboriginal communities and Country of belonging. It must also identify significant family members or community members who can also be accessed to provide cultural information and/or support. All tasks within the ACSP should be completed within the recommended time frames and all plans fully reviewed annually.

Developing a Culturally Safe ACSP – The Do's and Don'ts

The Do's

Do source and undertake recognised Cultural Learning Journey training - realising that you can't be taught to be Aboriginal, but you can learn about Aboriginal people and cultures. The term cultural learning journey acknowledges this and recognises that the acquirement of Aboriginal knowledge is an ongoing Journey throughout one's life and you cannot become an expert by just attending "cultural awareness" training.

Be inquisitive without being intrusive

Do understand it will take time for Aboriginal people to be trustful of you. Understand this is linked, not only to their current situation but past injustices and intergenerational trauma.

Be respectful of Country and the People

Aboriginal people have been and remain spiritually connected to Country since the dreaming. Always acknowledge the Country you are meeting on and the Country of belonging of the Aboriginal people you are meeting with (respectful scripts are available and should be sourced from Aboriginal workers in your agency).

Be honest and open

Explain fully what you are trying to achieve and focus on the positive outcomes that might be achieved by developing an ACSP.

The Don'ts

Don't assume

- Don't assume that you know what is best for the child or family – be inquisitive without being intrusive.
- Don't assume that what is contained in previous ACSPs, or case notes are accurate. Explore further if what is being said does not match what you have been provided.

Don't Judge

- All people have different events in their lives which have the potential to impact on their parenting skills. Aboriginal people have generations of ongoing trauma which continues to

impact on their children, families and communities. Try to walk in Aboriginal peoples' shoes and ask yourself how your life may have been if you were in the same situation.

- All people can change - so don't go in with the mindset that this child will never remain connected or be returned to family and community.

Don't use jargon or terminology that is unique to Aboriginal society

- Aboriginal people are not impressed by the use of "big" words – exactly the opposite and will see you as a "noter" who is not interested in them but more interested in the government speak.
- Non-Aboriginal caseworkers may have heard Aboriginal people use words that aren't generally used in everyday conversations. Don't assume that you know what a certain word means and if you don't know, ask respectfully by saying that you don't understand the meaning of that word.
- Don't assume because you have heard an Aboriginal person use a specific term that it is OK for you to use it.

Don't talk down

Many Aboriginal people may not have had the same opportunities of education as the workers they are talking to - but lack of education does not equal lack of intelligence. This is especially important in community situations if you are trying to build trust.

An Aboriginal person may not answer your questions immediately or may defer to someone else to answer. This should not be taken as a sign of disrespect but may be an indication they do not wish to answer, the question was not clear or that they would like more time to answer.

Don't overdress

Smart casual at all family meetings, yarning circles, community meetings etc. Aboriginal people get a laugh out of the twin sets and pearls.

Don't be overly familiar

Aboriginal people are generally and often shy and are always suspicious of people who they do not know "who are there to help" (given the past history of the Aboriginal Welfare Board and removal of children etc).

Don't go in being all happy and smiley or intimate that you know all the family's situations. Treat every meeting like it is the first meeting until you are sure you are gaining acceptance.

Always ask the participants if they are comfortable with you taking notes and say that a copy of the notes will be provided at the end of the meeting wherever possible and that a copy of the ACSP will be provided in draft form for the family to review.

Identifying and building relationships

Genogram

It has been noted that often genograms provided to agencies contain very little or sometimes incorrect information and have often been developed from assumed knowledge. This information often could have been provided by the birth family as a way of not including their family and community because of the "shame factor."

Before starting any ACSP it is essential that any information contained in the provided genogram is verifiable.

Often the genogram may contain the information provided one part of the family - but given the intricate and interwoven nature of Aboriginal familial society and connections it is essential that the genogram is also treated as a living document. There is an assumption that all workers would have the skills, and training to be able to develop complex and complete genograms.

Identifying connections

Aboriginal people retain intricate knowledge of their families through kinship systems and are generally able to recognise complex family ties through names and kinship ties.

It generally would not be possible for a non-Aboriginal person to identify these ties without assistance of an Aboriginal worker. It is important that if you believe a child is from a certain area or family that you make efforts to identify connections at an early stage.

Identifying supports

Once connections have been identified it is necessary to identify what supports are available for the worker to ensure that the ACSP can be developed in a culturally safe way, and which will meet the needs of the child and family.

These supports can include:

- Family and kinship supports
- Local Country and Country of belonging Aboriginal agency supports
- Cultural supports in the placement (especially important when the carer/s are non-Aboriginal)
- Culturally safe educational supports
- Supports which help facilitate family contact and connection to Country
- Mentors

All supports should be identified at the early stages of engagement with the family, community, community agencies and schools - and solid relationships should be built with all of these supports.

Note: Many schools have Aboriginal support staff which should be engaged early in the process. Advice on appropriate support can be gained from the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) which has local chapters. The AECG is the Aboriginal education peak in NSW and can offer assistance and advice at a State or local level. <https://www.aecg.nsw.edu.au/>

Building relationships

The foundation of all ACSPs should be built around the tenet of relationships. Making sure the ACSP is relationship based will help ensure that the child is better connected to family, community, culture and services.

See [practice tips to building Family, cultural, Community and Aboriginal agency relationships click on this hyperlink](#).

Reviewing ACSPs

It is important to acknowledge, that as the child grows and develops, circumstances and needs will change and whilst it is mandated that the ACSP should be fully reviewed annually it necessary to recognise that the ACSP is a living document and as such there is a requirement that a review should take place to address those changes as they happen or as soon as possible after they are identified. Reviews should always consider restoration options.

Practice guidance on developing ACSPs

Practice tips for maintaining cultural connection within the child's placement:

- Ongoing life story work (with involvement by the child or young person) needs to be regularly updated. Life story work should include input from birth families, significant others and/or family members who may hold cultural or family knowledge. This should be supported by both the carer/s and caseworker
- All life story work gathered by the caseworkers should be shared with the carer/s and discussed at home visits to ensure life story books are regularly maintained and areas for further improvement are identified
- Access to authentic Aboriginal books, music, opportunities for art development, Aboriginal artefacts, and instruments (from the child's traditional Country wherever possible).
- Photos of the child or young person's birth family on display in the child's bedroom and openly spoken about with the child or young person in a positive manner
- Access and regular viewing of culturally and age-appropriate shows on NITV or other media
- Learn about Aboriginal foods and consider using in the home

Practice tips to support ongoing connection to family and extended family:

- In a safe and appropriate manner, ensure that there are regular family visits that include immediate family (siblings, parents), extended family members (grandparents, aunts/uncles), other family members and significant others who may also be able share cultural information and knowledge.
- Having regard to the fact that Aboriginal people have an oral history - it is important to note that wherever possible face to face contact is the preferred method for family and community visits.
- Have the child and their family participate in culturally appropriate activities together on the family visits. These might include participating in such activities as artwork, finding their Country of belonging on an Aboriginal map and or attending cultural events together. Wherever possible time visits to Country to coincide with Aboriginal days of importance e.g., NAIDOC Week, National Reconciliation Week, Sorry Day, the Koori Knockout etc. [Click on this hyperlink for list of appropriate events.](#)
- Regularly have other family visits through letter writing, Skype, Facetime, Messenger or emails, where safe and appropriate.
- Carer/s or caseworker should regularly share photos or other information with the family which relates to the child or young person's activities. Look at setting up a Facebook page or similar - which the family can access (and the child when age appropriate).

Practice tips for building and maintaining connection within the child's traditional culture of their Country of belonging:

- Agencies should ensure that the carers are committed to ensuring that the child remains connected to their culture and this commitment should be spelt out clearly in the ACSP
- Purchase age-appropriate Aboriginal dreamtime stories and resource books which have been developed by authors of the child's Country of belonging. This will help to further link them culturally to stories, songs and history of their Country of belonging.

- Liaise with the Local Aboriginal Lands Councils, Elder's Groups and Aboriginal Corporations or Community Controlled Organisations to be guided as to cultural events and connections in the Community. The child's sense of culture and connection can be built through participation cultural events and activities and by linking the child and carers with Elders and/or other Community members who will be able to share history, culture and or language.
- Arrange visits to the child's traditional Country of belonging and visits to places of cultural significance.
- Seek guidance from other family, Aboriginal community members and Aboriginal agencies to identify special places of interest or significance.
- Participate in any guided Aboriginal ranger tours (or similar) offered in the area through the national parks in the child's Country of belonging (if available). These are often free of charge to Aboriginal children and families.
- Encourage the child to learn some of the language of their Country of belonging – there are now numerous online resources, dictionaries and apps which can assist carers to work with the child to learn language. Numerous schools and TAFEs are also running Aboriginal language classes. A non-definitive list of language options will be included in the resources section of this document. An example is the Wiradjuri Language App which is an interactive program which assists children of all ages to engage with the Wiradjuri Language <https://wcclp.com.au/wiradjuri-dictionary/>. The AECG is also able to guide you to a full a list of language apps available <https://www.aecg.nsw.edu.au/download-aecg-languages-app/>.

Practice tips for building connections with the child's Country of living:

As stated previously – unfortunately, and all too often, Aboriginal children are being placed away from their Country of belonging and community - requiring them to reside on the Country of other Aboriginal nation's. It is important that the child is respectfully connected with the local Aboriginal community and culture. This can be achieved by:

- Engagement with local services such as Aboriginal Medical Services, Aboriginal preschools, Aboriginal sporting events and participation in local ceremonies of events of national importance to Aboriginal people such as NAIDOC week events, Sorry Day events, Reconciliation Week events etc. [A list of the events of importance are included in the resources section of this document.](#) **Note:** Not all the events listed will occur in all places.
- Sourcing engagement with local Elders and other cultural support through participation in such events as language, dance, art, weaving, traditional weapon making etc. The availability of these programs varies across the state.
- Participation in a guided ranger tour of the local area through the national parks service (if available), or other local cultural activities.
- Learning some of the language of the community of their Country of living.

Attending local community events helps them to build a connection with the local Aboriginal community, build new friendships and have pride in being Aboriginal.

Practice tips for connection within the child's school:

- Ensure the child or young person has a current Aboriginal Education Plan that has learning goals as well as cultural groups linking to Aboriginal and supports within the school.
- Link with the Principal or Aboriginal Education Officer/Worker at the school or TAFE to develop an ongoing relationship and to also help link with other Aboriginal supports within the educational facility.

- Carers and caseworkers to access the support and liaise with the local AECG to help guide additional educational supports and assistance with educational pathways for and young people.
- For young people, investigate mentoring programs such as AIME and the AECG to help develop vocational pathways to university or other tertiary studies or vocational pathways to employment opportunities.

Sorry Business

Aboriginal people have ceremonies related deaths in the community. There is a cultural expectation that clan and broader groups will gather for grieving. This is known as Sorry Business.

Dependent on the age of the child - and with the advice from the family and community - there may be an expectation that the child attend some of these ceremonies. This expectation is especially relevant when the deceased is closely blood or clan related.

If these expectations are known early in the life of the development of the ACSP allowances can be made and community and family expectations can be met.

Note:

It is not expected that this information would be included in the child's copy of the ACSP but be an annexure in the or agencies' copy of the plan. This situational information should preferably be initially discussed with the child by a relative or Elder with participation from the family and community.

Sorry Business may also impact on planned community events.

Resources

How to find local and Community of belonging Aboriginal services?

Most communities will have local Aboriginal services - and lists of services in your area or the County of belonging can be found through the websites of the Aboriginal peak bodies. Links to these member services are below:

NSW Aboriginal Land Council: Peak body for 120 Local Aboriginal Land Councils many of which are also housing providers. https://alc.org.au/land_council/

AbSec: The Aboriginal Child and Family peak. Providing support for Aboriginal OOHC, early intervention and related services. Also provides supports to Aboriginal carers. <https://absec.org.au/our-sector/>

AECG: Aboriginal Education Peak who support the local AECG branches throughout the state <https://www.aecg.nsw.edu.au/aecg-regions/>

Aboriginal Housing Office: Able to provide information of Aboriginal Community controlled housing providers. <https://www.aho.nsw.gov.au/housing-providers/approved-provider-list>

BLAQ: LGBTQIA + SB Peak Body who can offer advice on gender and sexual orientation issues for young people https://blaq.org.au/case_management/

AHMRC: Peak body for Aboriginal Medical Services and other Aboriginal health related services <https://www.ahmrc.org.au/about/members/>

Link Up NSW: – providing services to the stolen generations and have a Family Link service which can assist with identifying Aboriginality. <https://www.linkupnsw.org.au/program/family-link/>

Aboriginal Legal Service: - <https://www.alsnswact.org.au/locations>

Department of Education - School Liaison Officers: Most high schools and many primary schools have liaison officers and Community engagement staff. Phone the local school in the Country of belonging.

Other resources

SNAICC is the National Child Protection Peak and has a number of useful resources related to Aboriginal children in care <https://www.snaicc.org.au/resources/>

AIATSIS: Family History Unit - allowing for online research of Aboriginal families. <https://aiatsis.gov.au/family-history>

Community events and days of importance to Aboriginal people

13 February - **National Apology Day**: Prime Minister Kevin Rudd <https://healingfoundation.org.au/apology-2/>

21 March - **Harmony Day** <https://www.harmony.gov.au/>

5 April – **Anniversary of Bringing Them Home Report** <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/publications/bringing-them-home-anniversary-events>

26 May – **National Sorry Day – Day of Remembrance** acknowledging the Stolen Generations <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/national-sorry-day-2020/>

27 May – **National Reconciliation Week** <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/our-work/national-reconciliation-week/>

3 June – **Mabo Day** – Recognising the 1993 High Court Decision the existence of Native Title <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/commemorating-mabo-day/>

10 June – **Memorial Ceremony recognising the Myall Creek Massacre** <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/myall-creek-massacre>

1st week of July – **NAIDOC week** <https://www.naidoc.org.au/>

4 August - **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day** <https://www.aboriginalChildrensday.com.au/>

9 August – **International Day of Indigenous Peoples** <https://www.un.org/en/observances/indigenous-day>

1st Wednesday in September - **Indigenous Literacy Day** <https://www.indigenousliteracyfoundation.org.au/IndigenousLiteracyDay/Resources>

Long Weekend October - **NSW Koori Rugby League Knockout** <https://www.sydneybarani.com.au/sites/koori-knockout/>

Family and Community Research Consultation Checklist

Click this hyperlink for the [Research Consultation Checklist](#)

Example of Culturally Safe Aboriginal Cultural Support Plan

My Aboriginal Cultural Support Plan



Insert Photo here

Encourage the child or young person to answer these following q's - don't just fill them

My name is.....

I am years old and my birthday is

My mum's name is my dad's name is..... (this should be confirmed)

I was born at and lived at.....

My Aboriginal Country is (Ok to prompt if they don't know)

I now live at which is on Country

I live with (detail relationship/s)

About your Caseworker

My Caseworkers name is (you certainly should have met the child before this plan is being developed).

Explain what your role in helping the child or young person develop the plan (age appropriate)

Explain about your culture and if an Aboriginal worker is present tell them that them where you are from and your role.

Explain to the child that you will talking to them and their family about their plan to keep them connected to culture. Show them the diagram below and say that we are going to discuss all these things.

My dad is called but I call him

Dad's photo goes here with current age and other info

Explain that you will hear Aboriginal people call Aboriginal nations and clans and family and extended families “my mob”. So, we are going to talk about how you are connected to your mob.

Brothers and Sisters				
Name	D.O.B.	Relationship to you	Your family connections and visits	Contact Details

Talk about how often they see them and try to get to tell you about each of them and record.

Other family members and important people to you – <i>This includes your aunts, uncles, grandparents, sister cousins and brother cousins and other extended family members</i>				
Name	D.O.B.	Relationship to you	Your family connections and visits	Contact Details

Talk about how often they see them and try to get to tell you about each of them and record.

Family photo/s go here

My Family Tree

We have a copy of what we call a family tree – it is a drawing that shows how you are connected to everyone else in your family. Like all trees the family tree is always growing, and we can add other people such as new brothers and sisters and cousins etc. as they are born or as we find out about them.

Genogram

EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW WHAT A GENOGRAM LOOKS LIKE AND HOW TO DEVELOP

Genogram

Say that knowing our heritage provides us with an understanding of how we belong in the world and helps to strengthen connections to our family and community.

Here is what your family shared with us.

When I spoke to your <insert name e.g., Mum/Dad/Aunty Vanessa>, I was told that:

As much information as possible should have been collected before sitting down with the child to discuss this. See the [Family, Community and Agency Cultural Knowledge and Research Tracking Tool](#).

Sense of belonging

Here is what we know about the Country your parents are connected to. Country is a term used by First Nations peoples to refer to the lands, waters, and skies to which they are connected through ancestral ties and family origins.

Story of your mother's Country:	
Story of your father's Country:	
Story of the Aboriginal community where you are living:	<i>To be used if the child is living on or off their traditional country</i>
Story of your Community of belonging:	<i>Delete if the box above is completed - if the child is NOT living in their traditional community</i>

Ask the child

1. What does your culture mean to you?

Who is in your family? Names, where do they live?

Who is important to you in your family?

Who in your family do you see?

Are there other family members you would like to see?

Who in your family makes it their business to know everyone's business?

Who is the storyteller in your family?

Do you know where your mob is from?

Do you have a totem? Who told you this?

When I spoke to you about your Aboriginal Culture, you told me that... ..

2. What you would like to learn about and connect with?

What would you like to see in your Aboriginal Cultural Support Plan?

Is there anything that you would like to do regarding culture?

Is there anything you need to assist with you being connected to culture, family and community?

Have you had an Aboriginal Cultural Support Plan before?

What do you understand about Aboriginal Cultural Support Planning?

What do you think an Aboriginal Cultural Support Plan can do to help you with your Aboriginality or Torres Strait Islander heritage?

Is there anything you would like to know?

If the child is too young, please amend this statement and delete questions:

<Name>, as you are only a little baby/boy/girl, you were not able to talk to me about your cultural needs and wishes. As part of my job, I was able to talk to <names> in your family, your Caseworker, <name>, and your Carer, <name>. They were able to help me plan what is already happening for you and how they plan or would like to connect to your Aboriginal family, Aboriginal Community where you live and also your traditional Community of belonging.

Say... It is important that as you grow and develop, you are part of making and have your say in all future Aboriginal Cultural Support Plans. This is your plan, and we want to make sure that your needs and wishes are heard as you grow.

<response>

These are some photos/ that <insert name> gave us to include in your plan. <response about what is happening in photos>

Photos added here as
them become available

3. How are we keeping you connected?

<Name>, your <carer/caseworker/school> is doing? <response, summary of how they are connected right now>.

Below you will see that I have included all the contacts that we know you are already connected with, as well as adding some more that your carer or caseworker can help connect you with.

Contacts to support my cultural links

Name of person/Name of Service	Traditional Group	Support Type	Status
			Connected/Future Connection

My Cultural Goals

These are the actions and people that will support you to stay connected to your family, your culture and help develop your cultural identity. Your caseworker will make notes on what has been achieved, what things need to change and new things that you may like to do.

Some examples and narrative of goals are listed below. Please change out/up goals or add/or delete where needed, so that they are not all the same and are individualised.

Direct cultural connection

How will this happen?	Who will help me?	When will it happen?	Achieved Yes/No
Family connection visits			
Return to Country trips			
Attend Sorry Business			
Cultural resource pertaining to Country (Belonging/Traditional)			

Cultural Socialisation			
How will this happen?	Who will help me?	When will it happen?	Achieved Yes/No
<Child's name>, you will be supported and encouraged <to/continue to> spend time in your local Aboriginal community at events such as NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day, to ensure you are staying connected to your culture and local community		Ongoing	
Cultural activities			
Cultural camp			
Koori Knockout			
Engage with Aboriginal services e.g., AIME			

Health			
How will this happen?	Who will help me?	When will it happen?	Achieved Yes/No
<Child name>, to ensure you are staying connected with your local Aboriginal community and that your health, developmental and dental needs are met in a culturally supportive manner, you will continue to use the <Name of Aboriginal Medical Service>			
Aboriginal Go4Fun program			

Bushwalks			
Other health related activities – sport etc			

Education			
How will this happen?	Who will help me?	When will it happen?	Achieved Yes/No
Individualised Education Plan (IEP)			
Participate in cultural class/groups/events/ activities at school/preschool			
Acknowledgment of Country			

Plan development support			
How will this happen?	Who will help me?	When will it happen?	Achieved Yes/No
Update Genogram Copy provided to the child or young person	Your caseworker <Name>		
Your life story work <will continue to be/will be> collected for you, with information from your family, photos, awards, really anything that allows you to maintain your identity and connections and for you to have those memories and mementos saved for you to have always			
Application for Confirmation of Aboriginality			
Carer training			
<Child's name> a copy of your ACSP and Cultural Links Report, will be provided to <Parent's/Carer name>, and any other people that had a say, in how they will continue to support you as a young Aboriginal <boy/girl/young person> to stay connected to your culture, family and Community	Your caseworker <Name> will provide your <Parent's/Carer name> with a copy of your plan and Cultural Links Report (adhering to the agency privacy policies where appropriate)		

Your caseworker will arrange a home visit with you, and your carers/kinship carers to discuss the recommendations that will support you to stay connected to your family, your culture and help develop your cultural identity. Along with your family they will plan together how these will be achieved over the next twelve months			
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People who have helped you with your ACSP

List the key people who have had input to this plan.

Name	Relationship	Date we spoke	Signature
		Dates spoken to, if several dates, separate by commas	
	Aboriginal Consultant		

Agency staff sign-off sheet

Caseworker	Manager Casework
Name:	Name:
Signature:	Signature:
Date:	Date:

<Name>, your caseworker <Name> will review this plan in a year's time to see what worked well and what needed to be changed. It will be important that you participate in activities.

Family, community and agency cultural knowledge and research tracking tool

As previously outlined in the guidelines - relationship building is integral to developing a culturally safe ACSP. There are expectations that agencies will develop, establish, and maintain relationships with community, Aboriginal organisations and families from the child's Country of belonging and living and these relationships should be fully documented.

This ongoing process will assist the agencies in the acceptance by the ACCO and the Aboriginal communities, that the agency is truly invested in the child's wellbeing, which will facilitate better relationships and ongoing trust between all parties in developing and monitoring of the ACSPs. It is the responsibility of the non-Aboriginal PSP provider to establish and maintain those relationships.

This document is provided as a research guide and tracking tool to assist you in developing a culturally safe ACSP through engagement. Curiyo acknowledges the difficulties that can be had in trying to engage with families and communities to elicit information about children that have been removed and placed in care. This is especially difficult when the children have been placed off country.

Below are some questions that – in a basic way – tell you what you should be asking when you are attempting to make connections. A research checklist is at the end of this document.

The Agencies should develop their own template to track the work undertaken - including all the above domains.

Questions that Caseworkers should ask themselves:

Who have you talked to in the Family? What did they tell you?

This needs to be updated after each time the family has contact with the family and any new information added. Include:

Date:

Who:

Relationship:

What did they say?

Who have you talked to in the community of the child's Country of belonging? What did they tell you?

List here

What did they say?

Who have you talked to in the community in child's Country of living? What did they tell you?

List here
What did they say?

Which Aboriginal agencies/services have you talked to in the community of the child's Country of belonging? What did they tell you?

List here
What did they say?

Which Aboriginal agencies/services have you talked to in the child's Country of living? What did they tell you?

List here
What did they say?

What family finding activities have you undertaken? What have you found?

List here
What resources did you use?
Who did you speak to?

What research have you undertaken?

Below is a checklist of resources and links to assist you to further flesh out the information you have gathered. Often due to past government practices Aboriginal people have lost their oral histories through translocation, removal from family, community and country. These links should assist in filling in the blanks to help build connections.

Family and community research consultation checklist

Research Checklist	Date	Initial	Information obtained Yes/No
Births, Deaths and Marriages			
Mura (AIATSIS catalogue) http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/collections/muraread.html			
ABI http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/fhu/searchform.html			
AIATSIS fact sheets			
Dawn/New Dawn; Koori Mail; Australian Indigenous Index			
National Library of Australia http://www.trove.nla.gov.au			
State library			
Local archives			
Archives in other states			
National archives – indexes http://www.naa.gov.au			
State archives – records			
University archives			
Local archives			
Other resources			
Cemetery records			
Death notices https://www.ryersonindex.org			
Centre for Indigenous Family History Studies http://www.cifhs.com			
Places http://www.ga.gov.au			
Land records (e.g., archives, Noel Butlin, local historical societies)			
Aboriginal Affairs Family Records http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au			
Find and connect			
Church and Mission records			
Electoral rolls			
Tindale Genealogies http://www.samuseum.sa.gov.au/collections/information-resources/archives/tindale-dr-norman-barnett-aa-338			
Military records			
Extra web resources			
www.ancestry.com			
www.familysearch.org/eng			