

## Aboriginal Case Management Policy

# Best Practice Principles for Aboriginal Case Management

### ACMP Overview

The Aboriginal Case Management Policy (ACMP) is designed for practitioners working with Aboriginal children and families. The ACMP was developed by AbSec in collaboration with the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), through an extensive engagement process involving Aboriginal communities and key stakeholders. The ACMP is designed to achieve safety and wellbeing for vulnerable Aboriginal children by keeping them with or returning them to family and connected to community, culture and Country. The ACMP is holistic, culturally responsive and embeds the values and perspectives of Aboriginal people.

The ACMP applies across the entire support continuum, from Aboriginal Community Response (Early Intervention) and Aboriginal Family Strengthening (Family Preservation) to Aboriginal Child Safety (Out-of-Home Care). It applies to the delivery of programs and services by a range of stakeholders including DCJ caseworkers, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and non-Aboriginal service providers.

### ACMP and Interconnected Best Practice Principles

There are three interconnected components required to deliver best practice Aboriginal case management across the continuum of support, these are structural, system

and practice. To ensure the effective implementation and consistent application of the ACMP, all ACCO and non-Aboriginal service providers delivering case management services to Aboriginal children and young people should adopt these components across their organisation.

### Guiding principles that underpin the ACMP and ensure best practice principles for Aboriginal case management

#### Structural Principles

- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service providers have a genuine commitment to supporting the development of all aspects of the ACMP including the four key elements of the ACMP which are ACCM, Aboriginal Family-led Assessments (AFLA), Aboriginal Family-led Decision Making (AFLDM) and Active Efforts.
- The four key elements play a significant role in Aboriginal case management.
- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service providers undertake to effectively engage with these across the continuum of support to ensure better outcomes for Aboriginal children and families.

#### Systems Principles

- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service providers collaborate with Aboriginal communities, ACCOs, ACCMs and DCJ to facilitate the implementation of the ACMP.

### Interconnected Components – Definitions

**Structural** – the addition, removal or adaption of key bodies and structures in a district. A key example is the Aboriginal Community Controlled Mechanisms (ACCM). Some communities may have existing structures whereas others may need to develop these. (Must be community driven even if they have mechanisms in place).

**System** – how all stakeholders engage, operate and communicate with each other. Similar to the introduction of the Permanency Case Management Policy in 2018, which led to an overhaul of how services interact with each other. The introduction of the ACMP will represent a shift in how many services engage with each other.

**Practice** – represents the practice changes caseworkers, practitioners, managers and other support staff need to make to ensure the ACMP and all elements are integrated into their day to day practice with Aboriginal children and families.

- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service providers and DCJ will ensure the integrity and fidelity of the ACMP is maintained.
- Practice support and training is essential for practitioners to understand the changes the ACMP brings about.
- Service providers will support the provision of initial and ongoing training and supervision. This will require resourcing and support to ensure best practice is followed.

**Practice Principles**

- The ACMP reflects key principles for engaging and working with Aboriginal children and young people, families and communities, strengthening families and addressing risks that may contribute to the incidence of harm or providing for the optimal development of Aboriginal children and young people.

**ACMP – Best Practice Principles for Aboriginal Case Management**

**Aboriginal case management is child focused to promote child safety and wellbeing**

- Understanding and meeting the developmental needs, in a trauma-informed context, of Aboriginal children and young people, including physical, emotional, cognitive, cultural and spiritual elements - elements that are interdependent.
- every opportunity for a child to be raised within their own family, community, culture and on Country where they are cared for in safe and nurturing homes, by relatives and kin who support and strengthen their identity and connections to family, and have every possible opportunity for their views to be sought and heard.

**Aboriginal case management facilitates Aboriginal family-led decision making**

- Understanding that Aboriginal families and communities are critical to achieving the best outcomes for Aboriginal children, and empowering them to engage with risks or concerns to develop practical solutions for their children.
- Building an inclusive network of care around the child, understanding what each person is able to bring to promote a positive outcome, and drawing on the collective wisdom and capacity of these networks to support the child’s safety and wellbeing.

**Aboriginal case management values community involvement, including self-determination and advocacy**

- Empowers Aboriginal communities, through their own processes, to safeguard the rights of Aboriginal children and young people and their families, including participation in decision making and advocating on behalf of their children and families, acknowledging and valuing the important strengths and assets of Aboriginal communities that strengthen Aboriginal people and families.
- Aboriginal self-determination for the community, the collective right of Aboriginal communities to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural aspirations, and to develop and implement their own processes, services, supports and frameworks that sit around Aboriginal children and families. Upholds the right of an individual to self-determination to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural aspirations, and to participate and lead in the development of processes, services, supports and frameworks that sit around Aboriginal children and families.

**Aboriginal case management is culturally embedded**

- Respects and values the perspectives, beliefs, lived experiences, practices, customs and values of Aboriginal people, families, children, young people and communities.
- Recognises the importance of culture in the lifelong wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people, strengthening identity, belonging and sense of purpose, and that all systems, processes and practices are underpinned by this, including through meaningful care and cultural support planning.



## ACMP – Quality Aboriginal Case Management

- Maintains stable and enduring relationships with an Aboriginal child, or young person's family, and community and meaningful connections to culture and Country, for lifelong wellbeing.
- Engages early with Aboriginal families and empowers families to shape case planning, identifying tailored priorities and solutions to keep children safe and with their family and community. Engagement is a family-centred and strengths-based approach to making decisions and maximising positive outcomes for children and families.
- Provides holistic and flexible supports to Aboriginal children and families, building trust and promoting access to appropriate services.
- Ensures services delivered to Aboriginal children and families are culturally embedded and delivered by competent practitioners with a genuine understanding of the families and communities they serve.
- Reduces the need for more intensive and intrusive services through effective engagement and by putting supports in place to address risks early.
- Builds the trust of Aboriginal children, families and communities in the child and family service system by empowering Aboriginal communities to design, deliver and oversee local services, supports and processes.
- Accepts and understands that Aboriginal people are experts in their own lives and communities.
- Acknowledges, accepts and provides a clear understanding of cultural and personal identity.
- Understands the Aboriginal experience of colonisation practices, including removal, separation, assimilation and the impact of intergenerational trauma.
- Recognises and embraces cultural diversity and effective practice around navigating cultural norms and nuances.
- Encourages collaboration and consultation with the aim of supporting self-determination and empowering Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities involved in OOHC.
- Seeks a personal commitment to ongoing learning, development and supervision to ensure good practice.

## ACMP – Best Practice Aboriginal Case Management Outcomes

### Quality Aboriginal case management is demonstrated when Aboriginal children are:

- safe at home with family, relatives or kin - they are supported to live with their own family and community to grow up strong and in culturally rich environments
- connected to their family, community, Country and culture – connection and safety in culture is respected, valued and actively preserved and strengthened
- strong in identity and supported to practice their culture openly and freely and to fulfil their cultural roles and responsibilities
- supported to experience the interconnectedness of the elements of their culture that underpins Aboriginal life including Aboriginal spiritual beliefs
- supported to use their voice and encouraged to participate in decisions and actions that may affect them, and their views are taken seriously.

### Quality Aboriginal case management is also demonstrated when Aboriginal families and communities are:

- supported to strengthen their cultural systems of care and responsibility for Aboriginal children
- engaged in all decision-making processes concerning their children
- treated with respect, dignity and free of cultural bias against them
- have access to information to inform their rights and ensure accountability.

## ACMP – Rules and Practice Guidance Overview

The ACMP is complemented by the document [Aboriginal Case Management Policy - Rules and Practice Guidance](#), providing practical guidance to practitioners about expectations, roles and responsibilities, and elements and operating functions across the continuum of support.

The ACMP Rules and Practice Guidance is aligned to the following enabling foundations:

- the experience and expertise of Aboriginal practitioners and communities providing key supports to Aboriginal children and families on an ongoing basis
- existing evidence regarding child development, capacity and capability building and best practice with Aboriginal communities
- the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- the [United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)
- the [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#), in particular the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Principles (sections 11–14)
- [Achieving a holistic Aboriginal Child and Family Service System for NSW](#)
- the [NSW Permanency Support Program](#), in particular Aboriginal care
- [Targeted Earlier Intervention program](#)
- [Aboriginal Intensive Family Based Services Plus: An expanded model of Aboriginal intensive Family support and advocacy December 2017](#)
- [AbSec/FACS co-design: Plan on a Page for Aboriginal Children and Young People 2015-2021](#)
- [Aboriginal family Preservation and Restoration Model Guidelines](#)
- related child protection programs

For further information on the ACMP Rules and Practice Guidance:

<https://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/service-providers/oohc-and-permanency-support-services/aboriginal-case-management-policy/acmp-rules-and-guidance.html>



This factsheet was developed by AbSec, and commissioned by DCJ, to support the implementation of the ACMP. It is intended as a living document and will continue to be updated as necessary to effectively support the implementation of the ACMP and improve outcomes for Aboriginal children, families and communities.

NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation (ICN 8926)  
21 Carrington Road Marrickville NSW 2204 • Phone: 1800 363 969 • Email: [admin@absec.org.au](mailto:admin@absec.org.au) • [www.absec.org.au](http://www.absec.org.au)