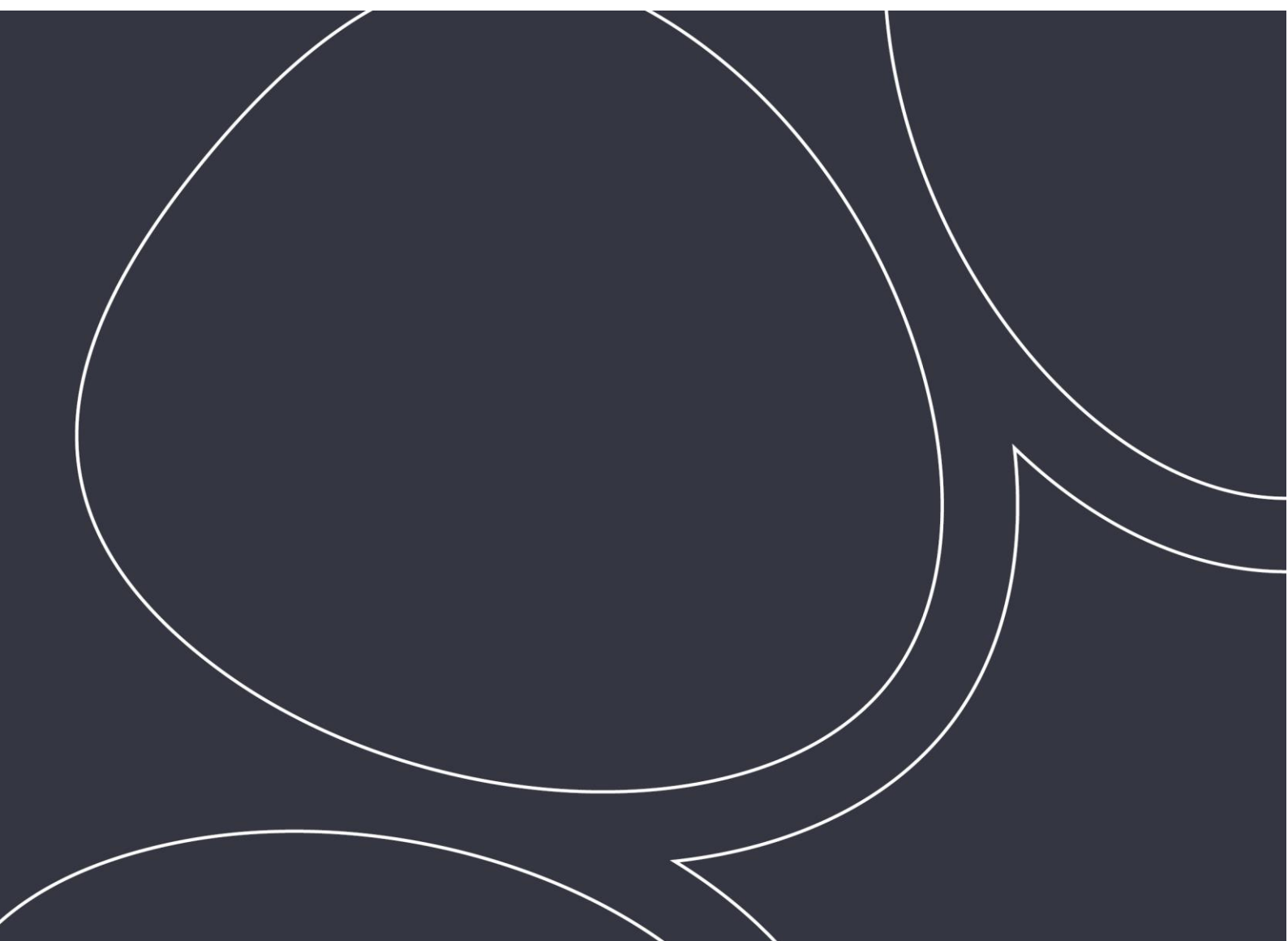


Placements

Policy



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1.0	16/03/2015	Operational Policy	First Version
1.1	02/03/2020	Operational Policy	Update core elements of SNAICC Aboriginal Child Placement Principles; updated information to align with legislative amendments.
2.0	27/06/2024	Operational Policy	Rebrand and update of the core elements of SNAICC Aboriginal Child Placement Principles, inclusion of consideration of s84A investigations. Inclusion of Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework.
2.01	15/01/2026	Operational Policy	Rebranded the document from <i>Territory Families, Housing and Communities</i> to <i>Department of Children and Families</i> . Hyperlinks updated.

Acronyms	Full form
AIS	Aboriginal Interpreter Services
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
ISA	Investigation and Safety Assessment
ITRC	Intensive Therapeutic Residential Care
OOHC	Out-of-Home Care
Placement Regulations	Care and Protection of Children (Placement Arrangement) Regulations 2010
SNAICC	Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
The Act	<i>Care and Protection of Children Act 2007</i>
The Department	Department of Children and Families

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1. Policy Purpose

To define the Department's responsibility for sourcing and approving appropriate OOHC placements for all children and young people in the care of the CEO.

2. Policy Statement

The safety, wellbeing, and best interests of the child or young person must be the paramount consideration when a decision about their OOHC placement is being made.

The child's individual needs, and support for the child's ongoing contact and connection to family, culture, and community must be central to the placement decision.

The child or young person should be matched with carers who have the capacity and skills to meet their needs and support their development. The views of the child need to be heard and form part of the placement decision making process wherever possible.

The OOHC system must promote continuity of care and make every effort to minimise placement disruption to children and young people by ensuring their placement is planned and considered. Placement stability, including stability of relationships, schooling, community involvement and/or participation in community/sporting activities leads to better outcomes for children in care.

All placements must be made in accordance with the Placement Regulations. Accordingly, no new placements can be made with carers whose approval as an authorised or emergency carer is not current.

When a child or a young person is in a placement and the carer's authorisation has expired, efforts must be made to re-authorise the carer as a priority. Child or a young person is not to be removed from their place of care solely for the reason of their carer being unauthorised. Child protection practitioners are to give consideration to placement monitoring that has occurred since the authorisation through information obtained from home visits, contact with the child, care planning meeting or any other relevant information in line with Regulation 7(a) of the Placement Regulations to promote the child's safety. Child protection practitioners are to continue to monitor the placement and regular meaningful face to face home visit with a child at the place with carers whose authorisation has expired are to continue.

Placements will only be made within the carers' approved age range, gender preference, or placement capacity.

3. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

Departmental staff must ensure that an Aboriginal child or young person's placement is able to maintain and support their connection to family, community, culture, and country.

The Department's [Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework](#) recognises that Aboriginal culture is a strength that must be genuinely acknowledged and actively celebrated. The framework states clearly that the Department needs to build genuine relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal children, their parents and families, their communities, and organisations. It is recommended that staff members read, understand, and complete the self-assessment contained within the Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework.

For Aboriginal children, all placement decisions must demonstrate the Department's commitment to the five elements of the SNAICC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.

The five elements, summarised below, are essential components of the Department's planning and decision making when sourcing and supporting successful placements for Aboriginal children. The five elements of the SNAICC Aboriginal Child Placement Principle are:

- **Placement** - Connection prevention placing children in OOHC in accordance with the established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle hierarchy.
- **Connection** - Monitoring and supporting connection to family, community, culture, and country for children in OOHC.
- **Prevention** - Protecting children's rights to grow up in family, community, and culture by redressing causes of child protection intervention.
- **Partnership** - Ensuring the participation of community representatives in service design, delivery, and individual case decisions.
- **Participation** - Ensuring the participation of children, parents, and family members in decisions regarding the safety, belonging and wellbeing of their children.

3.1. Placement

Placement decisions for an Aboriginal child must comply with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle which is defined in Section 12 of the Act.

The placement element of the Child Placement Principle sets a hierarchy of preferred placement options for carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC. The placement hierarchy is designed to ensure the highest possible level of connection to family, community, culture, and country is maintained for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child in OOHC.

The placement hierarchy is as follows:

- With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or non-Indigenous relatives or extended family members (kin).
- With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the child's community.
- With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family-based carers.

The 3 options above are preferred placement types. If these preferred options are not available, as a last resort, the child may be placed in another care arrangement, such as with a non-Indigenous carer or in a residential setting. If the child is not placed with their relatives or kin (that is, level 1 in the placement hierarchy), the placement should be within close geographic proximity to the child's family.

3.2. Connection

The connection element of the Child Placement Principle relates to support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC to maintain or re-establish connections to their family, community, culture, and country. This element is considered especially relevant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children placed with non-Indigenous carers.

Connection covers a broad range of actions and supports that can facilitate the maintenance or reestablishment of connection to culture and can be measured by reporting on children in out-of-home care living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers.

The child's or young person's Care Plan or Transition to Independence Care Plan must promote active efforts to enhance opportunities for children and young people to be supported to maintain connections to their family, community, culture, and country.

3.3. Prevention

The prevention element of the Child Placement Principle relates to supporting families and building capacity in communities to care safely for their children. This will protect future generations from the devastating effects of removal from family, community, culture, and country. To protect the rights of children to be brought up in their families, it is necessary to ensure that families have equitable access to quality service supports.

Protecting the right of Aboriginal children to be brought up by their families requires that active efforts are made to support families and build-up communities to care safely for their children. Providing culturally safe services enhances the opportunity for families to readily engage with services they require.

3.4. Partnership

The partnership element of the Child Placement Principle ensures that participation extends beyond consultation to genuine inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives in the decisions that are made about children at all stages of child and family welfare decision-making.

Consultation and collaboration must occur with the child or young person, the family, kinship group, representative organisation or community nominated by the child or young person's family. Engagement with funded Aboriginal Carer Services and their family finding services where available, may assist with identification of family and kin carers for individual children. Children and young people's best interests are met when families and communities are central to planning and decision-making processes.

3.5. Participation

The partnership element of the Child Placement Principle ensures the participation of children, parents, and family members in decisions regarding the care and protection of their children. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families have the best knowledge about the caring strengths and risks that exist in their own families and communities. Involving family members in decision-making can help to widen circles of support for parents and children, identify placement options with family and community, and promotes families take responsibility for plans to address safety concerns.

A kinship group, representative organisation, the family's support network or community of Aboriginal people nominated by an Aboriginal child or the child's family should be able to participate in making decisions involving the child. To ensure that children, their parents, family members and nominated representatives can meaningfully participate in decisions regarding the wellbeing of the child, including placement decisions.

All participants must be provided with information in a timely way and in a language and manner they understand.

All reasonable steps must be taken to arrange for the provision of services (including an interpreter) to facilitate the participation of all people involved in discussing, approving, and supporting the placement. Refer to the [using interpreters, translators and assisted communication services](#) guideline for information about how to determine if a person requires an interpreter and how to arrange one. The AIS also provides a step-by-step guide to support determination of when to use an Aboriginal interpreter. The child or young person's views need to be heard and form part of the placement decision making process wherever possible. Listening, hearing, and understanding the child or young person's views is a crucial component of client

centred practice that is focussed on meeting the child or young person's needs. The child or young person must also be provided with age-appropriate information.

4. Siblings

Siblings should be placed together when:

- It is in their best interests.
- It is in accordance with their wishes.
- There are no safety concerns.

In all decisions, the best interests of the entire sibling group must be carefully considered. Where co-location of siblings is not possible, regular contact must be facilitated, unless there is evidence that this would not be in the best interests of the children. Ongoing placement review meetings must occur to determine if/when the sibling group can be placed together in one placement.

5. Section 84A Concerns for the Safety and Wellbeing of Children in Care

When a notification is received that a carer or OOHC provider is identified as the alleged person believed responsible for the harm of a child in their care, no other children are to be placed in the placement arrangement until the outcome of the ISA is known, and steps to address the concerns have been completed.

When an ITRC staff member is identified as the alleged Person Believed Responsible for the harm, further placements of children and young people may not be impacted, as the ITRC provider may stand down the relevant staff member or move them to an alternate household (depending on the seriousness of the allegations) until the outcome of the ISA is known and the actions to address the concerns have been completed.

6. Legislative Basis and Related Documents

[Care and Protection of Children Act 2007](#)

[Care and Protection of Children \(Placement Arrangement\) Regulations 2010](#)

[Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework](#)

[Placement changes procedure](#)

[Section 84A Investigation and Safety Assessment – Practice Guidance](#)

[Sourcing a placement procedure](#)

[Understanding and Applying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle](#)