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| Changes to the care and case management of Aboriginal children involved with Child Protection  |
| FAQ to support conversations with Aboriginal Families |

This document has been created for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), non-Aboriginal Community Service Organisations (CSOs) and the Department of Health and Human Services (the department) to support conversations with Aboriginal families, children and young people about the process of transitioning the care and case management of Aboriginal children subject to Protection Order in out-of-home care from CSOs and the department to ACCOs. It is recognised that ACCOs, CSOs and divisions will develop their own communication material that will encapsulate consistency of state-wide key messaging.

# Transferring responsibility for Aboriginal children to ACCOs

It is important that Aboriginal children and young people, who are unable to be cared for in their family home, continue to maintain and strengthen their connection to culture, community and country.

The department is undertaking work to transition the care and case management of Aboriginal children and young people from government and CSOs to ACCOs.

This will be done in a planned and collaborative manner working with families, carers, ACCOs, CSOs and the department to ensure that transition is managed sensitively and appropriately and with the best interests of children at the centre of the reform.

It is designed to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children and so that they can grow strong in their culture.

# Who will care for my child?

Existing care arrangements for your child are not expected to change as a result of this initiative. However, should a more culturally appropriate placement for your child be identified, you will be consulted about this.

Carers who provide kinship and foster care for Aboriginal children and young people, will over time be supported and managed by an ACCO wherever possible.

This will assist your child and their carer to receive the strongest possible cultural support and ensure your child’s ongoing cultural safety, health and wellbeing.

# Why is this better for my child?

Evidence[[1]](#footnote-1) shows Aboriginal children who are cared for by an ACCO have a greater connection to culture, which can lead to better health and wellbeing outcomes.

Aboriginal children and young people case managed by ACCOs will have the opportunity to thrive in a culturally safe and connected environment.

ACCOs will continue to work with you in culturally suitable ways to implement your child’s case plan and support re-unification where it is assessed as safe and appropriate to do so. They will also support your child’s continued relationship with family and community where reunification is not possible.

Carers of Aboriginal children and young people will have the opportunity to be supported to increase their knowledge of Aboriginal history and culture, therefore providing a culturally safe environment for your child whilst in their care.

This work is part of the Victorian Government’s commitment to self-determination for Aboriginal people and aims to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care.

# What is involved?

Any changes to your child’s case manager, carer or CSO will be discussed with you and your child, their carer and relevant parties to ensure the transition to an ACCO is managed in a way that supports your child’s stability and avoids any unnecessary disruption to critical relationships.

CSOs and ACCOs will work closely with you to ensure that you remain informed of any changes and how these might affect your child. The financial support and assistance available from the department to support the care of your child will remain the same.

These changes are designed to meet the best interests of your child so that they can be strong in their culture and are connected to services that best meet their needs.

# When is this happening?

The timing for the transfer to an ACCO will depend on agreements reached between the department, CSOs and ACCOs. It is anticipated however, that the first of these transitions is likely to occur in the second half of 2017 commencing in the metropolitan area of Melbourne. The pace of the transition will vary across areas due to the needs and aspirations of the ACCO and the transfer of funding between services.

It is a long-term objective that all carers of Aboriginal children will be supported by an ACCO. This includes both foster and kinship carers.

# More information

For more information, please contact your child’s case manager.

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1. “Always was, always will be Koori children”, *Systemic Inquiry into services provided to Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home-care in Victoria*, pg. 55-57, October 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)