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<b>Service Stream</b>	Families and Young People Services	<b>Category</b>	Residential Care and Transition Services
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### Purpose

- The welfare and best interests of the young people residing in our programs are paramount.
- Actions taken, whilst in the best interest of the young people, will seek to maintain family relationships and be supportive of individual rights, and ethnic, religious, and cultural identity.
- Each young person is a unique individual and is therefore deserving of support that is specifically tailored to meet their individual needs. Mercy Community (MC) strive to seek the best interests of the people we support by recognising and considering their heritage, role, and responsibilities within Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Cultural Support Plans have been developed in response to the identified need to support Aboriginal, Torres Strait, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations or Indigenous) children and young people, acknowledging the historical over-representation in the child protection system.

### Scope

This procedure applies to all employees, volunteers and contractors engaged within. Residential Care and Transition Services (RCaTS) programs across MC – Families and Young People Services (FYPS).

### Procedure

#### 1. Cultural support for First Nations people we support in residential care

- 1.1 MC is committed to helping the people we support to develop their cultural identity while placed in residential care services. This includes:
  - Having protocols with local cultural support agencies, elders, and community reference groups;
  - For houses with First Nations people we support, offering subscriptions to First Nations media;
  - Promoting participation in local First Nations cultural events;
  - Connecting with local First Nations communities and elders, or other local cultural support groups; and
  - Acknowledging and celebrating significant events and dates, including NAIDOC week, Mabo Day, Coming of the Light, Aboriginal Children's Day, Reconciliation Day, and Sorry Day. Refer to the MC First Nations MercyNet Portal page to identify these dates.
- 1.2 MC workers will receive training and advice on how to support First Nations people we support and will be sensitive to any cultural differences they may have in relation to grieving, socialising, and community participation.
- 1.3 The Department of Child Safety, Seniors, and Disability Services (the Department) hold overarching case management responsibility for ongoing cultural support and development, and MC work to operationalise these plans with the people we support and their community.
- 1.4 MC will ensure consultation with the Child Safety Service Centre's (CSSC) Cultural Practice Advisor for support in cultural support planning.

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### 2. Cultural support planning – all cultures

- 2.1 Cultural support is offered to all people we support who identify with any cultural background. Care Team Leaders (CTL) are responsible for exploring the person we support's cultural identity, ensuring that they are supported to develop a sense of identity that is honest and meaningful for any person we support, and ensuring that the person we support is provided information to develop skills for identity development later in life.
- 2.2 CTLs will engage with relevant cultural advisors in cultural support planning and ensure that opportunities are provided to all people we support to connect with their culture as they would like.

### 3. Placement of First Nations people we support

- 3.1 MC recognises the Department's responsibility to place First Nations people we support in culturally suitable placements, as per the principles outlined in the *Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)*. With particular importance to Section 5C Additional principles for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Children.
- 3.2 Where referrals are received for First Nations younger people, CTL's will liaise with the referring Departmental Officer to determine whether the Cultural Practice Advisor or Independent Person has been consulted and obtain their opinion regarding the suitability of the placement. The CTL will also seek advice from the Department regarding recommendations for placement support and record this in the CTARS Referral Record.
- 3.3 Where a Cultural Practice Advisor is not available, the CTL will liaise and consult with the Departmental Officer, or another suitable cultural influence (which may include an Indigenous Child Safety Support Officer or community elders), regarding support and intervention planning.

### 4. Cultural Support Plans for First Nations people we support

- 4.1 All people we support who identify will have the opportunity to participate in the development of their *Cultural Support Plan*, its review, and inclusion of all new information as it becomes known.
- 4.2 CTL should first liaise with the Department about the development of a *Cultural Support Plan*. It is, however, identified that, at times, these plans can be difficult to receive. In these instances, internal escalation should occur to support gaining *Cultural Support Plans* from the Department.
- 4.3 All First Nations people we support must have a *CTARS Cultural Support Plan* within three (3) months of a placement commencing. It is important to note that a *Cultural Support Plan* is a flexible and interactive document. Due to the nature of exploring cultural and family connections, information is added and updated throughout the person we support's placement with MC.
- 4.4 The two (2) main objectives of the *Cultural Support Plan* are:
  - To record critical cultural, family, language, totems, and historical information relating to the person we support, including their views on their cultural connection, family and kin connection, and current interactions to connecting with the person we support and their cultural identity; and
  - To operationalise the Department's goals and *Cultural Support Plans* to support cultural development with the person we support within the scope of MC's role and ongoing responsibility.
- 4.5 The CTL is responsible for updating the *CTARS Cultural Support Plan* with new/updated information and outlining the case management actions MC will

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- explore in partnership with the person we support and their community, as directed by the Department. The content of the *Cultural Support Plan* and related Client Profile information must inform the person we support's Connected Goals.
- 4.6 The *CTARS Cultural Support Plan* will be reviewed in line with the person we support's Therapeutic Assessment Report (TAR) every six (6) months; however, it is expected that if new family and/or community connections and/or history is found, this should be updated prior to the periodic six (6) month review.
  - 4.7 The goals and actions outlined in the *Cultural Support Plan* should be reflected in the person we support's TAR Therapeutic Recommendations and Interventions, and then stepped out as case management goals within the 'My Goals' plan.
  - 4.8 It is important to acknowledge that providing family and cultural information is challenging for some people and families, regardless of cultural background. This process is aimed at supporting the person we support to connect and develop their cultural identity in a positive and non-harmful way. This may mean, at times, some family information is not available to be recorded in written format. In these cases, the CTL, in consultation with cultural supports, will attempt to record information in an appropriate and sensitive way, such as visual history/family mapping, cultural story telling imagery/writings/recordings, and any other format that is considered appropriate and informative for the person we support.
  - 4.9 It is best practice for the *Cultural Support Plan* to be written from the perspective of the person we support, rather than the Practitioner.

### 5. Reporting outcomes and engaging in evaluation and review

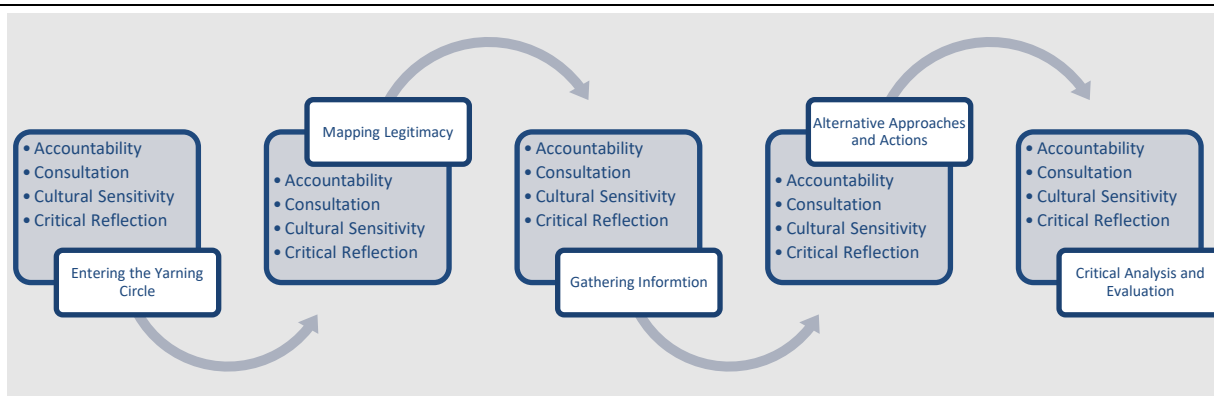
- 5.1 Engaging in evaluation and review of the actions and progress of *Cultural Support Plans* plays a key role in cultural connection for the person we support. To support practice review and evaluation, the CTL will engage with the Department's Cultural Practice Advisor, CSSC Cultural Liaison Officer, or independent person for support. MC may also make attempts to engage a partnering agency for support.
- 5.2 These six (6) monthly reviews are initiated by the CTL, with cultural advisors/group members invited to participate.

### 6. Reflective Ethical Decision-Making Model

- 6.1 It is important to acknowledge that within the process of cultural support planning for people we support in out-of-home care, a situation may arise in which the person responsible for making and/or actioning the plans is neither a First Nations or Indigenous person. This is a systemic reality reflective of the challenges and limitations of operating within the child protection system. It is critical to acknowledge this issue and build supports to reduce any possible negative impacts.
- 6.2 MC acknowledges this potential challenge within service provision, and therefore provides a Reflective Ethical Decision-Making Model for MC workers to use to reflect on their plans and actions and reduce negative impacts relating to decision-making as much as possible. All workers, regardless of their cultural identity, are supported to use Reflective Ethical Decision-Making Models within their work (adapted from Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2015, pp. 80-87).

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## 6.3 Step 1 – Entering the Yarning Circle

Reflective questions:

- *Accountability:* Is it my role to draft a *Cultural Support Plan*, or should it be referred to someone else (e.g., a Line Manager)?
- *Consultation:* Which recognised First Nations person/community am I consulting with at the start of this journey? Have they endorsed my capacity to complete a *Cultural Support Plan* in a culturally meaningful way?
- *Cultural Sensitivity:* What cultural issues do I need to consider prior to drafting a *Cultural Support Plan* (e.g., what about gender)?
- *Critical Reflection:* What have I learnt previously about this type of situation? Have I completed cultural training?

## 6.4 Step 2 – Mapping Legitimacy

Who are the legitimate people/agencies in this situation?

Reflective questions:

- *Accountability:* Who has legitimate interests in this that should be respected?
- *Consultation:* Who should I be talking to at this stage? Which recognised Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person/community am I consulting with to identify legitimacy? Have they endorsed my map of legitimacy?
- *Cultural Sensitivity:* What are the cultural factors to consider?
- *Critical Reflection:* What basis am I using for deciding who is legitimate in this?

## 6.5 Step 3 – Gathering Information

What information might help you work out what to do?

Reflective questions:

- *Accountability:* What guidance is provided by laws, policies, practice standards, codes of ethics, and/or guidelines?
- *Consultation:* What other information might assist? Are there other resources that could shed light on this? Who else should I ask for guidance? Which recognised First Nations person/community am I consulting with to help gather relevant information? Have they endorsed my approach and the information gathered?
- *Cultural Sensitivity:* What specific cultural knowledge is needed and where do I obtain this from?
- *Critical Reflection:* Are there conflicts between personal, professional, organisational, cultural, and legal expectations and values? What are they?

## 6.6 Step 4 – Alternative Approaches and Actions

What are the options for approaches and actions?

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Reflective questions:

- *Accountability:* What are the options? On what basis will I make this decision?
- *Consultation:* What recognised First Nations person/community have I consulted with to check my reasoning?
- *Cultural Sensitivity:* What options are culturally insensitive or culturally safe?
- *Critical Reflection:* Can I live with this decision? Can I justify it if needed?

### 6.7 Step 5 – Critical Analysis and Evaluation

What happened? What does this mean? What are the implications?

Reflective questions:

- *Accountability:* Are there issues or implications for the future/for policy that I need to raise elsewhere because of developing this cultural plan? With my line manager? My organisation? With a recognised Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person, elder, entity, or community?
- *Consultation:* Did I consult well? Were there others I should have talked to? What strengths and gaps feedback have I received from a recognised First Nations person, elder, entity, or community?
- *Cultural Sensitivity:* Do I feel I acted in a culturally sensitive way, or were there gaps?
- *Critical Reflection:* What have I learnt from this situation? About the content? About how I make decisions? How does this inform the further development of this and other plans?

## 7. Records management

- 7.1 Cultural support considerations for all younger people (whether identifying as First Nations or another culture) are recorded in the CTARS Client Profile under the 'Culture, Language, Religion' tab.
- 7.2 Cultural support planning for all cultures is to be included in the TAR, reviewed six (6) monthly, and monthly goals reports. If additional information is received within these timeframes, the *Cultural Support Plan* should be updated with this prior to the scheduled review date.
- 7.3 All *Cultural Support Plans* will be recorded within CTARS along with all other correspondence relating to cultural support for the person we support.
- 7.4 All cultural support planning documentation and *Cultural Support Plans* will be shared with The Department.

## Definitions

### Care Team Leader (CTL)

Employee tasked with care planning and management oversight for people we support placed in an RCaTS program.

### Cultural Practice Advisor

Cultural Practice Advisor is a person employed by the Department who provides individualised and culturally appropriate case work support to First Nations children and families.

### Independent Person

A person or entity that is fulfilling the role of the Independent Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Entity for a child (Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld) Section 6).

The entity is an individual, he or she must:

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- Be Aboriginal; and/or
- Be Torres Strait Islander; and
- Be a representative of the child's community or language group; and
- Not be an officer or employee of the Department.

The involvement of the independent person supports the right to self-determination and choice for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child and their family. The child and their family choose someone who:

- they are comfortable with;
- is significant to their child; and
- knows their community or language group.

The child and their family also have the right to decide not to have an independent person to facilitate their participation in decision-making processes. Importantly, Child Safety cannot impose an independent person on a family.

An independent person is someone the child and their family choose to support them in their communication with the department and to meaningfully participate in decisions that may have an impact on a child.

## Worker

Employee tasked with providing daily care for people we support.

## References

*Child Protection Act 1999* (Qld)  
 Department's Child Safety Practice Manual  
 (<http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety/child-safety-practice-manual>)  
 FS DOC RCaTS Program Overview  
 FS PROC RCaTS Support and Intervention Planning

## Related Documents

CTARS Cultural Support Plan

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