



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING

Mr Johnathan Davis MLA (Chair), Mr James Milligan MLA (Deputy Chair), Mr Michael Pettersson MLA

**Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2020-2021**  
**QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**ELIZABETH KICKERT MLA:** To ask the Minister for Families and Community Services:

Ref: Child Protection, CSD Annual Report 2020–21, p. 144

In relation to: Universal Access to Family Group Conferencing for Aboriginal Families

1. In the hearing, the 'significant effort' to convert referrals into Family Group Conferences (FGC) was discussed. During the reporting period (2020–21), how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families were referred by CYPs for a FGC, and of these, how many resulted in a FGC being convened?
2. During the reporting period, how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families *should* have been referred to a FGC (i.e., how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families engaged with or entered the child protection system)?
3. Which specific factors have been identified as contributing to hesitancy on the part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to accept/pursue a referral to a FGC?
4. Are all family plans that result from a FGC successfully honoured/implemented?
5. In the hearing, it was stated that it can take months for a referral to a FGC to result in a conference being held? What is the average length of time between a referral and the convening of a conference?
6. What obstacles contribute to the months-long delay between referral and the convening of a conference?
7. As discussed in the hearing, not all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families who engage with the child protection system are being referred (or referred when they should be) to a FGC. Which specific factors have been identified as reasons why referrals are not universally occurring?
8. In the hearing, it was mentioned that one option to improve this situation is to use IT to automatically trigger a referral. How would this option work?
9. \$1.443 million in funding over four years was provided in the 2018–19 Budget for the ongoing delivery of FGC. How much of that funding has been spent across the past three financial years?
10. What is the estimated cost savings of the 71 children who had been diverted from care by 30 June 2021?

11. Can the minister please provide copies of the FGC Strategic Plan and the FGC Evaluation Plan, both referenced in the hearing?
12. Who will be conducting the independent review of FGC?

**RACHEL STEPHEN-SMITH MLA:** The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

1. During the reporting period (July 2020 – June 2021) there were 28 families referred to FGC. Twelve (12) families agreed to participate in an FGC at a time that was negotiated with each individual family. For some these occurred outside of the reporting period.
2. All appraisals on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are considered in scope of an FGC. However, it is important to note that an appraisal may not result in a family needing a FGC for a variety of reasons such as:
  - a) Appraisal closed with no further engagement from CYPS
  - b) Family declined FGC/consent was not obtained and
  - c) Other services may be involved.
3. Barriers to the FGC process will be explored in the FGC evaluation. The aim of the FGC evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of the program and ways that it can be improved. The reach of the program and engagement of families will be an area of focus.
4. There is a built-in review process for all Family Plans. This review takes place usually three months after FGC (at times up to 12 months), however, this can be brought forward at the request of the family or Case Manager, depending on the circumstance. This process brings the family back together to review the plan, discuss aspects which have or haven't worked well, and make any adjustments as required.
5. During the reporting period, the average length of time between a referral and the convening of a conference was approximately 11 weeks.
6. The main obstacles contributing to delays between referral and the convening of a conference include identifying and locating key family members; family members availability for conferencing; mediating between family members to be able to bring them together; interstate residence of family; and working with the family members about the type of FGC that will best work for them.
7. Refer to question 2 and 3
8. CYPS expects there will be an opportunity to make improvements to the CYRIS IT system following the FGC evaluation. Work will occur to make changes to streamline and improve the process for referral.
9. All funding was expended. There was no reprofiling or rollover of funding from this initiative from 2018-19 to 2020-21.

10. A cost benefit analysis of the FGC program has not been undertaken. As reported in the Budget Statements 2021-22, the average investment per out of home care day in the ACT in 2020-21 was \$183. However, this may not represent the actual costs that would have been incurred in relation to individual children and young people if they had entered care. In addition, other investments may be made to ensure children and young people can remain safely with their families following a FGC.

11. The draft FGC Strategic Plan is available at attachment A. It should be noted the plan was developed for internal purposes to understand the barriers and challenges with delivery of the FGC program in the context of COVID-19 and the significant disruption in how families and staff have been able to engage with the program. The draft Strategic Plan also identifies the new opportunities to strengthen pathways into the FGC program and to ensure alignment with workforce, processes and technology enablers.

The draft Strategic Plan is used as a working document to guide practice. It is not intended to be static, rather responsive to changing circumstances in the delivery of this program, with the aim of increasing engagement by Aboriginal families who come to the attention of the child protection system. The draft Strategic Plan will continue to be subject to consultation with key stakeholders and review and updating as required.

12. The Family Group Conference evaluation is currently in negotiation and does not yet have a confirmed project lead.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

Signature:



Date:

14/4/22

By the Minister for Families and Community Services, Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA