

SUPPORTING OUR KIDS AND FAMILIES WITH CHILD PROTECTION

PROVIDING ADVICE TO CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION SERVICES ABOUT FAMILIES WE KNOW



In this document: Information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and services who want to become support people to give advice to Child and Youth Protection Services (CYPS) about our kids.

Did you know CYPS has a *legal obligation* when making decisions to consider information about our kids and parents provided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and individuals who know them? These decisions include putting a child in care, going to court for a care order, doing an assessment and deciding about contact.

WHO WE ARE?

We are the CYPS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Services Team. We are a team of Aboriginal people who support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, families and kids involved with CYPS. CYPS is the ACT Government agency responsible for looking into the safety and wellbeing of children in the ACT. Our team works alongside CYPS case managers and is committed to supporting families to keep our kids safe within community as we know connection to culture is important.

WHY YOU SHOULD BE A SUPPORT PERSON OR SERVICE?

Sometimes CYPS gets involved with one of our families and it's really hard for family members to tell CYPS case managers what things are like and how things are really going. This can be because of trust, history, or just being confused by what CYPS is saying and how they are saying it.

It can be a lot better for our kids and their families if people and services they already know and trust, stand beside them in these meetings with CYPS. This is known as being a support person or service for the family.

Sometimes all support people or services need to do is **be there** and **listen**. This is because it can be good to have someone else hear the same information and try and think about what to do about it **together** afterwards. Sometimes our people need an **advocate** and someone to explain to CYPS case managers, how things really are.

CYPS works under a law that says if an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person or service who knows a child or family has something to say, CYPS **must** listen and hear it. This means if you are a support person or service you can write a letter, reference or opinion down and it will become part of the official record and what CYPS will think about when making decisions about our kids.

Too many of our kids are involved with child protection matters, and we want to stop this. It's time to work together to improve cultural understanding and support our kids and families to stay safe together.

WHO CAN BE A SUPPORT PERSON?

Any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person or service provider who really knows a kid and family can be a support person. It helps if this person is good at talking to people in government, but it doesn't matter if not. Just as long as the person wants to make sure our kids' and families' voices are heard.

You can support someone just by being with them and talking – you don't have to write a reference or letter if you don't want to.

A support person can be:

- > a relative
- > a friend of the family
- > a neighbour
- > a school Aboriginal Liaison Officer, school social worker or teacher
- > staff from an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation such as Gugan Gulwan, Winnunga and Aboriginal Legal Services
- > an ACT Victim Support Officer
- > a member of our CYPs Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Services Team
- > any person that can provide support to help a child, young person and/or family to identify and express their ideas, needs and wishes.

WHEN SHOULD A SUPPORT PERSON OR SERVICE BE INVOLVED?

Support people and services can be involved any time CYPs meets with one of our families. As long as the family or kid wants you to be there, you can be there also. This includes going to court.

It's good if support people or services can be at CYPs meetings, and court if that happens, so our families can be best supported through any stage of their involvement with CYPs.

For more information, please contact us, the CYPs Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Services Team, at CST@act.gov.au or phone 6207 2228.