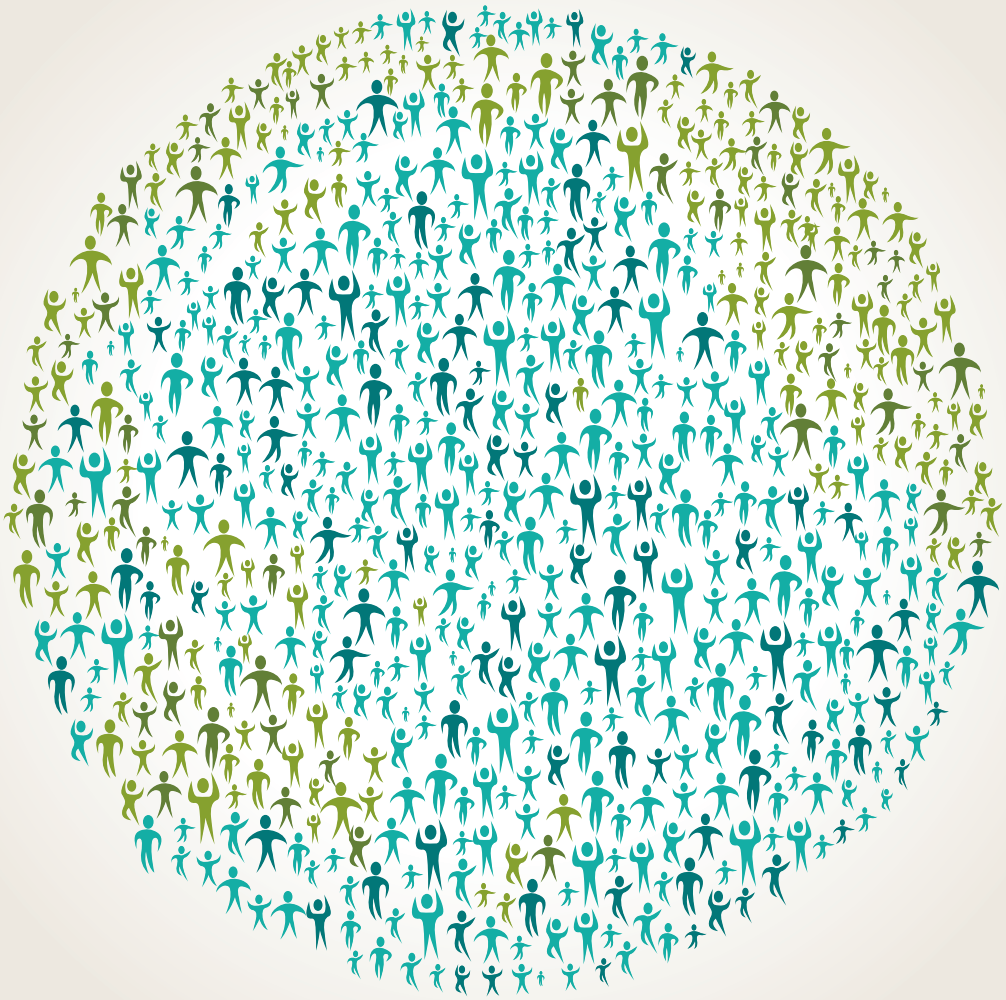
Quality Care Planning

Leading Practices in Select Canadian & International Jurisdictions

April 26, 2022



REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

InsideOut POLICY RESEARCH

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Introduction

The Office of the Representative for Children and Youth (RCY) has undertaken a multi-year qualitative review of care plans and care planning in B.C. for children and youth in care, with a particular focus on permanency, cultural and transitional planning and plans.[1] The two reports that RCY is releasing are designed to enhance understanding of the current state of care planning and care plans, and how the quality and benefits of care planning and plans could be improved. At the inception of the care planning project, fundamental questions for RCY were: What is quality? How might we assess quality when we review care plans and the care planning process? To address these questions, RCY looked to research literature and to other jurisdictions that have focused on improving the quality of care planning.

The following jurisdictional scan examining care plans and care planning is one of two reports that RCY has made available. It is based on a scan of 12 jurisdictions across North America and internationally. The initial scan was conducted in 2017, with an update completed in the summer of 2021. This scan also highlights two jurisdictions in particular as having promising practices in care planning – practices that could guide future improvements here in British Columbia.

The primary content in this jurisdictional scan was prepared by InsideOut Policy Research, working in partnership with RCY. The Representative is grateful for the knowledge and expertise of our valued partners at InsideOut.

Why is a focus on quality important?

Placing a focus on improving the quality of care plans and care planning is both compelling and urgent.

The moment a child is taken into care, it is the duty and obligation of the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) to ensure their safety, security and well-being. To support well-being, the ministry – and all those engaged by the ministry to support the child – must consider the trauma that the young person has experienced, their developmental needs, their physical and mental health needs, the connections that they have with family, culture, and community and how to sustain these, and how to provide a nurturing home environment, stability and a sense of belonging. In June 2021, RCY released an investigative report entitled *Skye's Legacy – A Focus on Belonging* to raise awareness and enhance commitment to practice that fosters stronger connections and belonging to people, place,

[1] According to MCFD's *Children in Care Service Standards* (2003), a plan of care [care plan] is *"an action-based planning tool for children in care, used to identify specific developmental objectives based on continuous assessments of the child's evolving needs and the outcomes of previous decisions and actions. Care plans are completed by the child's worker with the involvement of the child, the family, the extended family and Aboriginal community if the child is Aboriginal, the caregiver, service providers and significant people in the child's life."* See Ministry of Children and Family Development, *Children in Care Service Standards*, (Victoria, B.C.: Ministry of Children and Family Development), 2003, 7. Social workers are required by policy to complete a full plan of care within six months of a child coming into care. These care plans are meant to be living documents, to be reviewed every six months or sooner when goals for a child change or there are significant changes within a child's life. See Representative for Children and Youth, *Skye's Legacy: A Focus on Belonging* (Victoria, B.C.: Representative for Children and Youth), 2021, 70.

culture and a sense of self. Safety, stability, well-being and all dimensions of belonging must be addressed, and care planning and care plans are vitally important tools and processes to ensure that happens.

A context for the focus on quality

The Care Planning Quality Review project was envisioned following the release of a significant review of Indigenous child welfare issues in B.C. in 2016.[2] That document, *Indigenous Resilience, Connectedness and Reunification – From Root Causes to Root Solutions: A Report on Indigenous Child Welfare in British Columbia,* recommended that RCY, the provincial court, or another independent body conduct an annual review of care plans for Indigenous children in care of government. The stories shared and the recommendations made in that report provided a foundation for the RCY Care Planning Quality Review.

Over a number of years, the Representative has undertaken several in-depth studies with the objective of providing key findings for MCFD to improve the quality of its care plans and care planning and subsequent outcomes for children and youth in care.

In March 2013, then Representative Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond released a report titled *Much More than Paperwork: Proper Planning Essential to Better Lives for B.C.'s Children in Care* that demonstrated the fundamental necessity of care planning and care plan documents. *Much More than Paperwork* found that, while care planning is an essential function of MCFD, it was often not seen as a priority function by a ministry that is typically focused on managing crises.[3] At that time, the Representative found disturbingly low levels of compliance with practice standards for assessment and planning. For example, of 100 care plans audited, only five were fully compliant with ministry standards, and only half could be considered current.[4]

More recently, additional reports have continued to delve into the topic of care plans and care planning. The 2016 report referenced above examined various components of the Indigenous child welfare system and, again, raised serious concerns about the perfunctory nature of care planning taking place, especially in relation to cultural and permanency planning.[5]

In the last three years, RCY has released reports that have highlighted troubling chasms in care plans and planning. In 2018's, *Time to Listen: Youth Voices on Substance Use*, the Representative examined care plans as part of her analysis. That examination revealed ongoing concerns around the efficacy of care planning, particularly in relation to cultural planning and cultural safety – areas that Indigenous youth in the report highlighted as especially important to them.[6]

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[2] E. John (Grand Chief), *Indigenous Resilience, Connectedness and Reunification – From Root Causes to Root Solutions: a Report on Indigenous Child Welfare in British Columbia* (Vancouver, B.C.: The First Nations Summit), 2016.

[3] Representative for Children and Youth, *Much More than Paperwork: Proper Planning Essential to Better Lives for B.C.'s Children in Care* (Victoria, B.C.: Representative for Children and Youth), 2013, p. 3.

[4] *Much More than Paperwork*, p. 3.

[5] *Indigenous Resilience, Connectedness and Reunification.*

[6] Representative for Children and Youth, *Time to Listen: Youth Voices on Substance Use* (Victoria, B.C.: Representative for Children and Youth), 2018, pp. 9, 43-44.

In *A Parent's Duty: Government's Obligation to Youth Transitioning to Adulthood*, released in December 2020, the Representative identified deeply problematic gaps in transition planning for youth including, for example, the total lack of transition plans in some cases, a failure to include youth voices in their own care plans, and care plans that suggested minimal effort had been expended in their production – in contravention of legislated requirements.[7] The issues identified in this report signaled a need for the ministry to begin a comprehensive process of reviewing, refreshing and appropriately resourcing care planning, especially with respect to transitioning out of government care and into adulthood.

Also in 2020, the Representative supported the late Katherine McParland in developing and releasing a report on youth homelessness titled *From Marginalized to Magnified: Youth Homelessness Solutions from Those with Lived Expertise.* In that report, McParland characterized the child welfare system as a *"superhighway to homelessness"* due, in part, to the abrupt transition to independence at age 19 for those in government care. Supporting critical transitions continues to be a central issue in care planning. The young people in McParland's report voiced numerous problems with the process of transitioning out of care and recommended that MCFD change its policies around aging out as one part of a strategy to prevent youth homelessness.[8]

Most recently, *Skye's Legacy: A Focus on Belonging*, analyzed in detail areas where Skye's care plan and care planning fell short, becoming a contributing factor to the ultimate tragedy: Skye's death.[9] This report called again for a substantial reworking of the care planning process through one of its recommendations: *"That MCFD conduct a comprehensive review and revision of all relevant care-planning and case management standards, policies, practice guidelines and training materials with the goal of aligning those materials with the dimensions of belonging, as described in this report."*

Further, the Representative's review of Skye's care planning experiences led to important shifts in language. The Representative began the project by focusing on dimensions of permanency that were missing from Skye's life and care plan. However, during the development of the report, in consultation with First Nations and other leaders in the field, the Representative found that speaking of "belonging" rather than "permanency" was, in fact, more accurate and effective language that contained deeper meaning for Skye, her family and community.

A Note on Terminology

Note that although we use the term "belonging," the InsideOut report that follows uses the language of "permanency" because that is the language used in the jurisdictional scan. RCY's commitment is to continue to move forward with using the language of "belonging."

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[7] Representative for Children and Youth, *A Parent's Duty: Government's Obligation to Youth Transitioning to Adulthood* (Victoria, B.C.: Representative for Children and Youth), 2020, pp. 23, 47, 48, 53, 54.
For MCFD practice guidelines, see Ministry of Children and Family Development, *Children and Youth in Care Policies, Chapter 5, Child Welfare Policy* (Victoria, B.C.: Ministry of Children and Family Development), last revised Oct. 24, 2019, https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/policies/cf_5_children_youth_in_care.pdf.

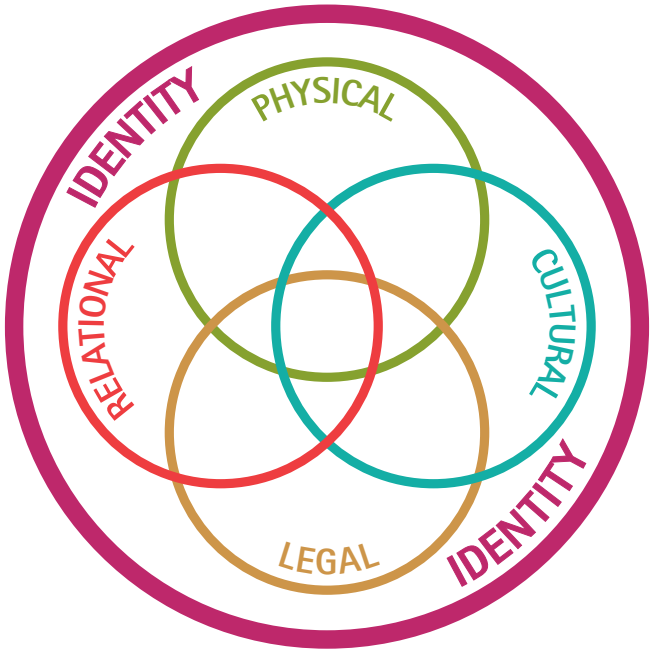
[8] Katherine McParland, *From Marginalized to Magnified: Youth Homelessness Solutions from Those with Lived Expertise* (Victoria, B.C.: Representative for Children and Youth), 2020, pp. 9, 13.

[9] Representative for Children and Youth, *Skye's Legacy: A Focus on Belonging* (Victoria, B.C.: Representative for Children and Youth), 2021.

The five dimensions of belonging include physical, cultural, legal, relational and identity in belonging, and can be understood as follows:

- Physical belonging refers to belonging to a child's physical environment: the lands they are on, community, school, home and any other physical space that is important to the young person.
- Cultural belonging refers to a child's connection to their own cultural background. This must be a sustained connection that goes beyond attendance at a single event, for example. True cultural belonging creates roots that strengthen an individual through connection to ancestry, traditional customs and support from their community.
- Legal belonging refers to the legal status of a child within a group. It often refers to adoption but is not limited to that status.
- Relational belonging refers to a child's relationship connections, which may include birth family but may also include other important relationships such as extended family, community, friends, social workers or counsellors, etc.
- Identity in belonging refers to a healthy connection to self and the development of a young person's identity.

Domains of Belonging



This shift in language from "permanency" to "belonging" is more than semantics. It calls for a different way of thinking about what the system's responsibility to a child is: to create belonging. It is also a lens through which the decisions made and actions taken in planning and caring for a child can be assessed: how will the interaction with the child, the plan being developed, the decision being made, or the service being offered contribute to the child's sense of belonging to people, place, culture, community and sense of self?

This shift in language and intention is not as clearly reflected in the following InsideOut jurisdictional scan as the review draws from language and approaches in the 12 jurisdictions studied. However, the importance of changing language as a representation of a larger change in thinking about the purpose and practice of care planning is reflected in the two promising practice examples in New Zealand and New South Wales, Australia.

All of RCY's work to date points to the urgent need for a renewed in-depth review of care plans and planning and immediate action toward a practice that demonstrates a renewed understanding of quality, that draws wisdom and insight from promising practices in other jurisdictions, and that examines vital components of effective planning for transition, for cultural connections and for belonging.

The Representative hopes that the following jurisdictional scan by InsideOut will prove useful and will inform updated ministry policies and practices. As mentioned previously, it is being co-released with a report by the RCY Care Planning Review team, with the ultimate goal of improving outcomes for children and youth in government care.

About This Report*

This report provides a summary of key findings from a review of care planning practices in select Canadian and international jurisdictions.[10] It presents a synthesis of the elements of *quality* care planning to support *permanency*, to promote *connection to culture* and *a sense of belonging*, and to ensure *safe and supported transitions* for children and youth in out-of-home care. The report also includes spotlights on two jurisdictions whose work in this area may be considered particularly strong and leading edge: New Zealand and the State of New South Wales, Australia.

The content of the report draws on jurisdictional research that was originally conducted in 2017 as well as a process to update that research undertaken in 2021. Of note, the findings of the research update indicate that the key elements of quality care planning have remained (broadly) stable and consistent. The materials that have been developed and published since 2017 consolidate and strengthen the original findings. There is an increased (and growing) recognition in most of the jurisdictions examined of the fundamental importance of sustaining family connections and other healthy relationships for children and youth in out-of-home care, and with this, a stronger focus on "belonging" and on the value of relational permanency. This emphasis complements and permeates all of the elements of quality identified and outlined here.

The focus of this jurisdictional scan is on *practice* and *process* – the '*how*' of quality care planning. Recommended practices are highlighted in the synthesis of quality care planning components, and the New South Wales and New Zealand spotlights walk the reader through the key practice guidance and tools that have been developed by those jurisdictions to support child welfare practitioners to engage effectively and meaningfully with children and youth, their families and communities in their daily practice.

It is important to acknowledge that the kind of quality care planning described in this report can only happen when the appropriate organizational and system-level support for practitioners is in place. A key finding of the 2017 scan was that constrained resources and heavy caseloads frequently present as barriers to effective care planning and positive permanency outcomes.

N.B. In the interests of readability, we have elected not to include citations in this report. The source materials that have informed the synthesis of the elements of quality care planning are listed in an Appendix. Hyperlinks to the tools, documents and websites discussed in the spotlights on New Zealand and New South Wales are embedded in the text.

* Web links in this report are current as of the date of publication.

[10] Jurisdictions examined were: the Canadian Provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and New Brunswick; the United States Federal Government and the States of California, Minnesota and Washington; England; the Australian Commonwealth Government and the States of New South Wales and Victoria; and New Zealand.

A Note on Terminology

Across the jurisdictions examined, there is a range of terminology in place to describe the process of developing a plan that sets out the goals and objectives for a child or youth in out-of-home care and how these goals and objectives will be achieved. Some jurisdictions use the term 'care planning' while others refer to it as 'case planning.' Frequently, both of these terms are in play in the same jurisdiction – sometimes they appear to refer to different processes and products, sometimes they are conflated or used interchangeably.

In the section of this report that offers a synthesis of the Key Elements of Quality Care Planning, the term 'care planning' is used throughout. In the spotlights on New South Wales and New Zealand, the terms that are in place in those jurisdictions are used.

Of note, New Zealand appears to have moved away from using the terms 'care planning' or 'case planning' entirely in favour of simply 'planning.' This is seen in the use of such terminology as the 'All About Me plan' and 'my working plan,' which indicates a mindful shift to language that encapsulates and promotes child-centred thinking and practice.

Key Elements of Quality Care Planning

Through the jurisdictional research a number of key elements of quality care planning were identified. These elements are common to all or most of the jurisdictions examined and are understood or have been shown to contribute to better outcomes for children and youth in out-of-home care.

Note that while the elements are presented separately here, in practice they intersect and overlap, and are mutually reinforcing. Together, they reflect and support the fundamental principle that the child or youth, in their particular social, cultural and emotional context, must drive and be at the centre of the care planning process.

Participation of the Child

Recognized by all jurisdictions examined as fundamental to achieving successful outcomes, actively engaging the child or youth in the creation and regular review of their care plan helps to ensure that they are at the centre of the planning process and that their needs and preferences are attended to and respected. Active involvement in decision-making about their lives also supports emotional development and self-esteem.

Children and young people living in out-of-home care have the right to clear and accurate information and advice about their situation. It is important that they are provided with opportunities to express their views freely on matters pertaining to their safety and wellbeing, and that these views are listened to carefully and given due weight in the decision-making and planning process.

The level of active involvement should be appropriate to the child or young person's age and developmental stage. Where possible, children and young people should be able to choose the level of their participation in decision-making.

Effective Practices

Practices that facilitate the child's meaningful participation, in accordance with their age and developmental capacity, include:

- Provide comprehensive information to the child – explain their rights and explain the care planning process and purpose clearly, fully and sensitively.
- Provide information in a manner the child can understand and in formats with which they can engage – accommodate their communication preferences (e.g. talk while walking or driving, use photographs or videos), accommodate their communication needs, and use language that is inclusive, engaging and meaningful for the child.
- Invite advocates or support people to help the child in the care-planning process. Consider inviting the child to select two adults to be part of their care planning team.
- Ask the child about their views and wishes and engage them in goal setting during care planning. Invite the older child / youth to visualize their life in 1, 5, 10+ years and to identify the dreams that they aspire to.

- Collaborate on genograms, timelines and placement maps and talk about the people who are important to the child.
- Pursue creative approaches to engage a reluctant child and to ensure that their voice is heard (e.g. arrange for a teleconference so the child can listen to the meeting from a distant location and say something if they want to, make a recording of the child to be played at the planning meeting, read something the child has written or share something they have drawn, communicate via a text or messaging app).

Collaboration with Parents, Family and Community

All of the jurisdictions examined emphasize the importance of including the child or youth's family and other members of their circle of support in the care planning process. Input into decision-making from parents, extended family members, community members and other significant adults in the child or youth's life is considered to be crucial to achieving positive outcomes for the child or youth. This dimension is consistent with "relational belonging" and "cultural belonging."

When practitioners engage and work collaboratively with family and natural supports, connections are made that can help ensure that the child or youth experiences a stable and nurturing home. Meaningful engagement and collaboration with Indigenous communities, families, children and youth is essential prior to and during the development of a Cultural Plan.

Effective family participation involves looking at the family's strengths, interests, needs, culture, language, and belief system as well as their capacity to be involved in supporting the child or youth, including assuming tasks and activities. It is important to respectfully engage the family as experts in their own experience with knowledge about what interventions will be most supportive to them as they in turn support their child.

Effective Practices

Practices that support meaningful engagement with families, community members and other significant adults in the planning process include:

- Involve parents as active partners early in the planning process.
- Continually search for individuals who may commit to participation in planning for and supporting the child.
- Communicate clear and accurate information to parents and involved family and community members – provide definite timeframes for decision making.
- Use active listening and honest communication.
- Ask families what they see as solutions and then respond in practical ways to their needs – work with families on generating solutions.
- Use the Family Group Decision Making or Family Group Conferencing model and hold the family conference where it is most convenient for the family.
- Engage with Indigenous families and communities in healing traditions and talking circles that support participation of family and community members.
- Share relevant information with everyone involved.

Continuity of Relationships and Healthy Connections

The critical importance of maintaining and supporting the child or youth's relationships is acknowledged and emphasized by all of the jurisdictions studied. This is also consistent with "relational belonging." Children have inherent attachments and connections with their families of origin that should be protected and preserved whenever safely possible. Even if the care plan does not pursue reunification with the birth parent(s), a child has a fundamental right to maintain contact with family and other significant adults in their life (as is consistent with their safety).

Familial and other close relationships are important to the development of a child or young person's identity, as well as to their feeling of belonging. A focus on family connections can also mitigate the effects of trauma that children and youth in foster care may have experienced, and reduce further trauma.

Increasingly, jurisdictions are recognizing that successful legal permanency cannot be achieved without relational permanency. Leading practice involves evaluating the relationships that children and youth already have and providing them with opportunities to develop and sustain their existing attachments.

Effective Practices

This component of quality care planning is reflected in practices that encourage the continuity of the child or youth's relationships, as well as the prioritization of permanency options that place the child or youth with known family members. Recommended practices include:

- When developing the care plan have the following key question in mind: *How will links to the birth family be nurtured and preserved?*
- Use eco-maps, genograms and approaches such as Family Search and Engagement and Family Finding to identify significant relationships for the child (including adults who can provide emotional support and long-term trusting relationships) and to locate potential alternative placements.
- Prioritize kinship care placements for children and youth.
- Make every effort to keep siblings together.
- Keep children and youth in their communities – including in their schools and connected to classmates and teachers (where remaining in the same school is in their best interests).
- Ensure that the care plan addresses:
  - Measures to help parents maintain their relationship and attachment with their child (e.g. visitation plans, family time) – in addition to personal meetings and visits, keep in mind other means for contact including letters, telephone calls, exchange of photographs, and use of electronic media;
  - How contact with siblings will be facilitated to support the development of healthy relationships;
  - Grandparent and other extended family involvement; and
  - Opportunities for the child to establish other life-long relationships.

Nurturing Identity and Sense of Self

Jurisdictions are demonstrating a growing awareness of and emphasis on the role that care planning must play in supporting children and young people in out-of-home care to develop their identity and sense of self. Maintaining connections to family, friends and community (as discussed above) is key to this; connections to community and culture are also crucial to strengthening and preserving the cultural identity of Indigenous children and youth. This dimension is consistent with "identity belonging" or a healthy connection to self and identity.

Recognizing that connection to culture, traditional practices and spiritual beliefs is fundamental to wellbeing, most jurisdictions require the creation of a cultural plan for every Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse child or young person in out-of-home care. This plan, which should be developed with the full and meaningful collaboration of the child or youth and their family and community, sets out how the child or youth placed in out-of-home care is to remain connected to their community and culture. New Zealand stands out for taking an approach that seamlessly integrates cultural care planning for Māori children and youth within the overall care planning process for all children and youth in out-of-home care.

In the context of nurturing a child or youth's identity and sense of self, jurisdictions are increasingly using the language of "belonging." There is also an emerging acknowledgement that an important goal of connection to culture and community is for the child or young person to feel proud and strong in their culture.

Effective Practices

Critical aspects of practice that serve to protect and preserve a child or youth's identity and sense of self and belonging include:

- When developing the care plan or cultural plan, ask: *How are we honouring this young person's culture? How are we facilitating connections to their community?*
- *Discuss with the child the traditions and culture of their family* – encourage them to talk about their family and community and to identify significant people in their life who can help them maintain links with their community.
- Involve community members in the planning process (e.g. First Nations designate, Métis resource, other cultural resource) – seek the views of Elders and other significant community members, particularly with respect to education and the maintenance of culture.
- Ensure that all individuals involved with the child are aware of and understand the child's cultural background.
- Conduct exhaustive and ongoing kin searches.
- Make placement decisions that carefully consider the child's existing connections to their community – customary care should be the preferred placement option for Indigenous children and youth.
- Craft meaningful plans for family time (with siblings and parents) at the onset of placement and throughout the child's time in out-of-home care.

- Ensure that the care plan addresses and facilitates shared experiences with family, friends and carer families, as well as school, cultural, spiritual and community experiences – in particular, craft meaningful plans for family time (with siblings and parents) at the onset of placement.
- Monitor and review identified cultural activities and goals to ensure the child remains connected to their culture.
- Record family details and personal histories, including the child's own life history (milestones and important events and experiences) as they grow up, and make these available to the child.

Dimensions of Cultural Identity

Jurisdictions that have developed frameworks for evaluating / assessing cultural connectedness typically identify the following dimensions of cultural connection and identity:

- Kinship – close links with family and extended family members;
- Language – the capacity to speak one's first language or at least to be in the company of family / community members that speak it;
- Relationships with positive community role models, including Elders;
- Spirituality – traditional or customary spiritual beliefs and practices through which the individual finds meaning, purpose and connectedness to their community, culture and the natural world;
- Participation in cultural events and ceremonies; and
- Connection to place and to the land.

An Expanded Understanding of Permanency

In the materials examined for the original research in 2017, there was a consensus that achieving timely permanency, whether through reunification with the birth family or alternative placement options, was paramount for the wellbeing of the child or youth in out-of-home care. Most jurisdictions demonstrated a shared concern about children and youth who end up "drifting" through the care system without ever achieving permanency. There was a considerable focus within the jurisdictional practice-based guidance on what to do to expedite the achievement of legal permanency, with less attention being paid to the other dimensions of permanency.

While jurisdictions still emphasize the importance of identifying a permanency goal and achieving a placement in a timely manner, more current materials (captured in the 2021 research update) indicate that this is increasingly being balanced with or moderated by the primary importance of focusing on a child or youth's attachments and connections. In particular, the Representative's 2021 report, *Skye's Legacy*, noted that the primary focus on legal permanency in Skye's case precluded a more fulsome understanding of and action in support of the other dimensions of permanency and belonging, including relational, identity, cultural and physical. In addition, the Children's Bureau (CB) in the United States issued guidance for practitioners in 2020 that stresses that timeliness is but one of many considerations in meeting the needs of children and youth. The CB advises that while it is critical not to cause undue delay in achieving legal permanency, timeliness should not be prioritized over the important work to identify and sustain children and youth's familial and social relationships, which can significantly improve their foster care experience as well as strengthen families.

Some of the factors that have been shown to contribute to an undue delay in achieving legal permanency include: impractical care plan templates; excessive paperwork; and a lack of ongoing communication between practitioners, caregivers, other service providers, children and families. In order to help mitigate delays, a number of the jurisdictions studied have turned to innovations in technology, including mobile care planning apps that enable practitioners to access and update the child's care plan *in situ* (e.g. during a home visit). The ability to adjust the care plan "on the go" in a digital format that can be uploaded or linked to the child's primary case file can significantly reduce the amount of time required to formulate and execute the care plan. New South Wales's *ChildStory* platform (discussed below) is a good example of this as is *mCase*, which is now being used in Alberta.

Effective Practices

The following practices are recommended to support timely permanency planning that prioritizes the emotional and social wellbeing of the child. The focus is primarily on legal permanency outcomes, but the practices listed below support placing an appropriate emphasis and value on the child's familial and social connectedness and sense of belonging to ensure that the other dimensions of permanency are also being nurtured.

- Conduct an early and comprehensive assessment of the child's developmental and relational needs – this can help practitioners to develop a care plan in a timely manner that identifies the permanent placement option that best suits those needs.
- Emphasize the child's attachments and connections while ensuring their safety, rather than solely focusing on compliance with timelines.
- Work with parents to identify appropriate relatives, kin or other persons who may be permanent resources for the child.
- Discuss with the current foster parent / caregiver regarding their potential interest in being a permanent resource for the child.
- Help the child to identify an adult or adults who may be a permanent source of support.
- Use twin track or parallel planning, including Concurrent Planning, to help secure permanence at an earlier stage.
- Conduct regular care plan and placement reviews to minimize drift in care and reduce delays in permanency planning – a review of the plan with the child and family should occur at least annually (some jurisdictions mandate every 3 or 6 months) and when something changes.

Planned and Supported Transitions

In the jurisdictional materials examined in 2021, greater attention is being paid to effective practice with respect to transition planning for youth in out-of-home care. There is a consensus that transition planning should be a process that takes place over years, not days / months. Some jurisdictions mandate or strongly advise that young people in out-of-home care should have a transition-from-care plan commencing at 15 years old. In addition, several jurisdictions have put legislation in place to extend support for young people over the age of 21 (e.g. the *Family First Prevention Services Act 2018 in the U.S. and the Children and Social Work Act 2017 in England*) to better prepare them for adulthood. Of note, Alberta has recently launched an app to support former and current youth in care aged 14 - 26 to navigate the adult world.

A notable theme in the materials on transition planning is the recognition that transitions are more successful when youth have healthy connections to family and community, opportunities to develop life skills, and a strong sense of identity and high self-esteem. Jurisdictions stress that in addition to dealing with the practical and logistical aspects of transition planning, the process must also attend to the emotional, psychological and developmental pieces associated with this significant life change.

All of the guidance regarding collaboration with young people and their families and communities on care planning applies to the development of the transition plan. Youth-driven transition plans, based on their specific needs, interests and realities, and with the active involvement and support from their family, support greater personal choice and self-determination.

Effective Practices

Jurisdictional guidance on effective transition planning highlights the following effective practices:

- Start planning for transition early – the process should take place over several years and include a focus on programming that enables the child / youth to develop important life skills, fosters self-determination and builds resiliency.
- View transition planning as a process that considers the youth's long-term plans and breaks them down into smaller, short-term goals – planning must be guided by the youth's wishes, hopes and dreams, but practitioners may need to work with the youth to make sure the goals are attainable.
- Help the young person to develop lifelong connections as a part of the transition-planning process – encourage them to include the important adults in their lives in their transition-planning meetings and work with these adults and community partners to develop a strong support team.
- Help the youth adjust by talking with them about "what was" and "what will be" as an important aspect of preparing them to transition out of care.
- Ensure that the transition plan addresses the essential supports and documentation that the young person leaving care will need (e.g. bank account, social insurance number, birth certificate, driver's license, etc.). There must be a plan in place to find suitable (safe and sustainable) housing before the young person leaves care.
- Attend to the emotional, psychological, and developmental aspects of transition planning, as well as the logistical – use the time to partner with the young person on assessing their strengths and needs and to address any current or future challenges associated with preparing them for adulthood.
- Review the transition plan with the youth and their family and other significant supports regularly – engage the youth in meeting the goals they have identified in their transition plan and celebrate their successes.

Spotlight: New South Wales

Terminology used by the Department of Communities and Justice

In NSW, a **case plan** is different from the **care plan**. The **case plan** is a living document developed by the 'Permanency Support Program' (PSP) service provider who has primary case responsibility for the child. The case plan gives effect to the permanency plan for the child and is reviewed regularly. The case plan does not need to be given to the Children's Court.

The **care plan** is a document prepared by the Department of Communities and Justice for the Children's Court. It must be approved by the Court before the Children's Court can make a final order for a child. The care plan informs the Children's Court about the past experience of the child, their needs and interests and how they will be met in the future, and includes information about services to be provided as well as the long-term permanency plan for the child.

From 'Foundations of Case Planning in the Permanency Support Program'

Over the past several years, New South Wales (NSW) has emerged as a leader in quality care and case planning for children and young people in out-of-home care, in large part due to the state's emphasis on the development and implementation of the Permanency Support Program (PSP). The PSP was launched in October 2017 to shift the child welfare system in NSW from a placement-based system to a more child-centric service system. It followed from an earlier 2012 reform strategy, A Safe Home for Life, which sought to effect large scale transition of foster and kinship placements to the non-government sector.

The three stated goals of the PSP are:

1. Fewer entries into care – by keeping families together;
2. Shorter time in care – by returning children home or finding other permanent homes for more children; and
3. A better care experience – by supporting children's individual needs and their recovery from trauma.

The PSP requires that legal and physical permanency planning is embedded in each child or young person's case plan (which is a living document), with a goal for achieving permanency, in most cases, within two years. The four components of the program are:

1. Permanency and early intervention principles built into casework;
2. Working intensively with birth parents and families to support change;
3. Recruitment, development and support of carers, guardians and adoptive parents; and
4. Intensive Therapeutic Care system reform.

Of some importance to note, the PSP program is currently being evaluated. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of the PSP in improving outcomes for children, young people and families. According to the Evaluation Project Website, the evaluation will be completed by the end of 2021.

The dedicated focus on permanency in NSW since 2017 has translated into a wide and robust collection of source material related to case planning, much of it available through comprehensive support web pages on the Department of Communities and Justice website. The Permanency Support Program section of the website provides thorough overviews, information, training, and resource links that offer a fairly thorough treatment of the NSW approach. Practice guidance related to Permanency Case Management Policy as well as Aboriginal Case Management Policy is covered, and is discussed in this spotlight.

The Department of Communities and Justice website also provides detailed information specific to **care planning**, including a dedicated section focusing on Care and Cultural Planning, which is also discussed later in this section. *N.B. A reminder that in NSW, the "care plan" is the document that is provided to the Children's Court*.

Annotations of sources generated by the NSW government that inform either care planning or case planning **practice** related to the key elements of quality care planning that are the focus of this report are provided below.

Practice Frameworks, Tools and Resources

Department of Communities and Justice PSP Learning Hub

The PSP Learning Hub was launched in late 2019 to support workforce development and provide information and training to case managers, practitioners and others working across NSW as part of the Permanency Support Program. Designed to "deepen knowledge, develop practice skills and support sector connections" the Hub is populated with government-developed materials as well as external resources recommended as relevant by caseworkers and others. Accessing the Hub is free, but some face-to-face training does incur a small fee.

The Learning Hub addresses 10 practice areas (*Figure 1*). As the Hub is relatively new, some topics have fewer resources. For example, at the time of writing, the 'Cultural Care, Identity & Support' practice area links to a single webinar (described below) and there are no resources yet attached to the 'Working with Aboriginal Children, Young People & Families' practice area. Several of the other ten practice areas are rich with materials that inform practice, including "fact sheets" (that focus very specifically on improving practice), webinars, podcasts, videos, training and other resources.

Figure 1. The 10 practice areas addressed by the PSP Leaning Hub

Cultural Care, Identity and Support Practice Area

Foundations of Culture and Individual Identity

This informative webinar is related to working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children and includes a focus on:

- Foundation and framework for working with children from different cultural backgrounds;
- Identity for children and what this means in permanency support planning;
- Understanding of culture and how it impacts casework in permanency support planning;
- Culture in permanency support planning, including the experiences / needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers;
- Cultural planning;
- Working with migrants and refugees;
- Culturally reflective practice; and
- Practice tips.

Casework Skills Practice Area

Examples of some of the many practice-relevant resources available as part of the 'Casework Skills' practice area are outlined below.

Relationship-Based Practice to Support Permanency

This practice fact sheet summarizes the foundations and elements of relationship-based practices and presents key messages for caseworkers to consider in building strong relationships with children and the people closest to them. It also includes reflections and practice tips for caseworkers.

Quality Documentation in Casework – Tips and Examples

It is imperative that caseworkers pay close attention to how they write about children and young people and that they do so with clarity, respect and purpose. As this practice document notes "what is written about [children] affects how we and others view them, the decisions that are made about their lives and how as adults they might understand their childhood" (p. 1). The fact sheet includes:

- Points to consider when documenting;
- Ideas for recording smarter, not harder;
- Using technology to help work smarter; and
- Understanding how the quality of the documentation affects the perception of the child and their case (with examples).

Family Connections and Networks – Practice Tips

This resource includes practice tips related to:

- Identifying family and other important people;
- Making initial contact with family and other networks;
- Developing relationships with family and other important people;
- Nurturing relationships with family and other important people;
- Reflecting on practice when working with family and community; and
- Tools to support family connections and networks.

The document also includes a link to Circle of Safety & Support: A Tool to Help Parents Identify People for Their Family's Safety & Support Network.

Supporting Reflective Conversations – Tips for Managers

This fact sheet focuses on *group reflective practice* as a strategy for managers to help guide and mentor staff to reflect on their decision-making and practice to ensure that:

- Children and young people, families and carers are being treated with dignity;
- Practice is skilled;
- Staff address bias, assumptions and power;
- Staff make fair decisions based on evidence;
- Casework is being recorded fairly;
- Practitioners recognize and understand their beliefs about other cultures; and
- Casework is being conducted in the spirit of the permanency framework.

The guidance includes lists of reflective prompts for critical self-reflection or supervision when working with children, parents, carers, Aboriginal families, and culturally and linguistically diverse families.

Language – The Words We Use Practice Tips

Recognizing that language sets tone and mood, this practice guidance stresses how important it is for caseworkers to consider the language they use to communicate with and describe the children, young people and families that they work with, both verbally and in written documentation. Recommendations to avoid jargon are provided along with a list of more person-centred and strengths-based language (*Figure 2*).

Figure 2. More effective alternatives to casework jargon

Disengaged/won't engage	Not currently having their needs met
Risk	Worry, worried about
(long-term) placement	A place (name of the child) stays
Permanency planning	Planning for the future
Home visit	Visited the home/talked to
Absconded	Left and returned to (provide explanation and contact)
Restoration	Has returned home returned to family
Supervised contact	Supported visit
Removal	Separation/taken from
Parenting capacity	Describe their skills/strengths and areas for improvement
Dirty urine	Positive drug test result
Client	Name of person
Files	Family's story

There is also a section on using specific language to uphold the dignity of a child, their family and community.

Another fact sheet simply entitled 'Language' provides more guidance and includes powerful suggestions related to 'Capturing a Child's Voice and Writing a Family's Story.'

Dignity Driven Practice – Recognising Resistance Practice Tips

This practice guidance suggests ways that practitioners can identify and reflect upon common acts of resistance by children, and then recommends specific language for how to talk to and give positive social responses to children about those acts of resistance. Dignity driven practice asks caseworkers to think about the language that they use, consider power dynamics, and empower and support families to "view themselves as being strong and adaptive in the face of suffering" (p. 6).

Difficult Conversations with Children, Families and Carers – Tips and Guidance
This fact sheet focuses on:

- Examples of difficult conversations (with children, families and carers);
- Tips on how to prepare to have a difficult conversation;
- Tips for when having the difficult conversation;
- Tips for having a difficult but meaningful conversation with a child; and
- Self-management after a difficult conversation.

Leaving Care and After Care Practice Area

Examples of the practice-related resources available as part of the 'Leaving Care & After Care' practice area include:

- Leaving Care Future Planning – Infographic;
- Talking to Young People About Leaving Care;
- Establishing Networks; and
- Leaving Care Planning – Practice Tips for Caseworkers.

The 'Leaving Care & After Care' practice area also provides links to recently developed tools and guides intended specifically for young people to use as they plan to leave care, including:

- Your Next Step: Preparing Young People for Leaving Care (2020);
- Go Your Own Way: A Guide to Transitioning to Independence (2020); and
- Independent Living Skills Checklists.

ChildStory

In late November 2017, the Government of New South Wales Department of Communities and Justice implemented ChildStory, an information technology system for case planning. The system is based on a narrative framework that places the child or young person at the centre of their own story, surrounded by a network of family, carers, caseworkers, other service providers and specialists. The child's needs, wishes and experiences are central to each stage of the case planning process, with an emphasis on relationship-building and collaborative team support.

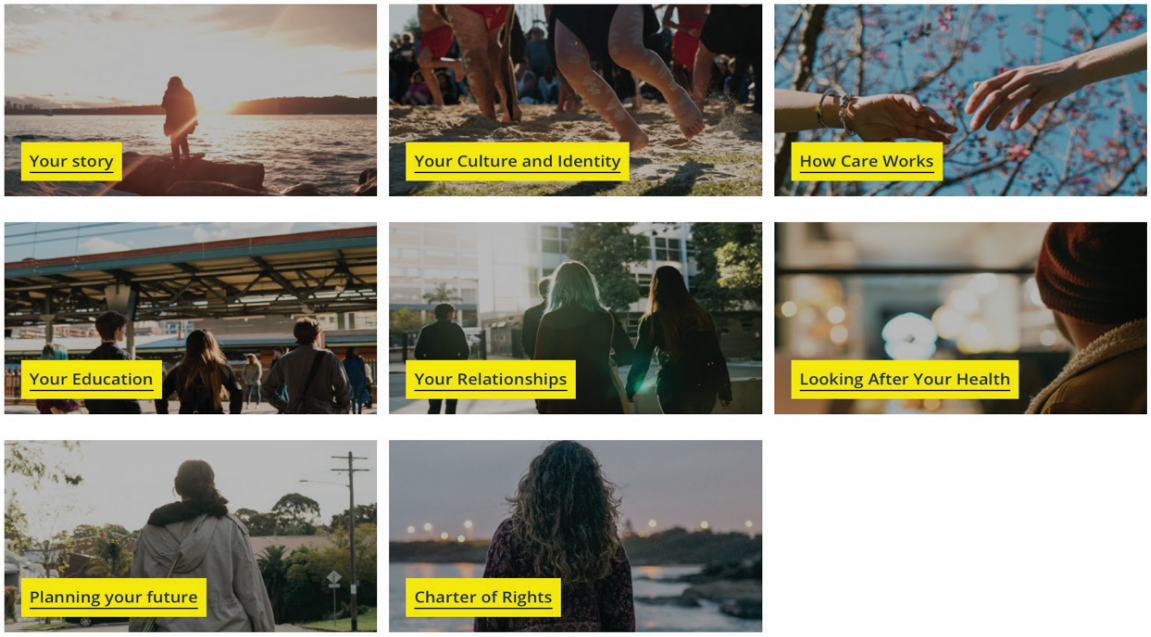
The interactive system enables a greater degree of flexibility in terms of case plan objectives, goals, and tasks. Each task in the case plan also has its own "status" represented by traffic light icons. The icons automatically adjust in colour when task dates are met (or they can be manually adjusted by the caseworker). This visual aid is designed to help caseworkers keep track of the progress of case plan tasks and objectives more easily.

There are five key components of ChildStory:

- **ChildStory Casework** – the main ChildStory system, this is the single point for a practitioner to view, create and update information about children and young people. Key tasks can be recorded and managed including: field assessments; family action plans; case management; and placement management.

- **ChildStory Partner** – makes it easier for service partners to interact with Communities and Justice, allowing them to send and receive information about the children and young people they work with securely.
- **ChildStory YOU** – gives a child or young person in care access to their own information online via a dedicated ChildStory YOU website (*Figure 3*). It enables a child or young person to: understand more about their past; contact their caseworker online; ask their caseworker questions if they are not sure about something; stay connected to their birth parents and carers; stay connected to their culture and/or religion; access links and phone numbers of services they may find helpful; and contribute to their life story work.

Figure 3. Homepage of the ChildStory YOU website



- **ChildStory Caring** – still under development, this will provide carers access to information about the child or young person in their care. It will help carers to: understand the child or young person's history; address specific needs that they may have; record important events and milestones for the child or young person; arrange family visits online; liaise with their caseworker online; and contribute to the life story work for the child or young person.
- **ChildStory Reporter** – an online tool that supports mandatory reporters (e.g. teachers, nurses, doctors) to decide how to respond to events and to access the Mandatory Reporter Guide if necessary.

According to the ChildStory website, there are currently over 46,300 people across NSW contributing to the online record using ChildStory, including: Department of Communities and Justice practitioners and key child protection practitioners in Police, Health and Education; non-government organizations and other government agencies; and mandatory reporters.

While the ChildStory Casework component is only accessible to Department of Communities and Justice staff and key child protection practitioners, the original proto-type of the case plan is still available (password: SHFL); it provides a detailed overview of each section (with clickable links).

In March 2021 a modified "app" version of the ChildStory desktop system (ChildStory Mobile) was launched that enables caseworkers to record and upload files, access client information and complete safety assessments and plans, regardless of where they are.

Practice Framework Standards for Child Protection and Out of Home Care Practitioners (2020)

These practice standards from the Office of the Senior Practitioner, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, are intended to "encourage skilful, ethical and relationship-based practice" (p. 6). Each of the eleven standards – with practice-informed evidence stated for each – provides rich, detailed practice guidance in the form of key expectations and reflective prompts. The standards address:

1. Enacting Children and Young People's Rights;
2. Culturally Safe Practice with Aboriginal Communities;
3. Culturally Safe Practice with Diverse Communities;
4. Writing and Talking with Children and Families;
5. Nurturing the Child's Lifelong Belonging;
6. Holistic Assessment;
7. Critical Reflection to Improve Outcomes;
8. Building Relationships that Support Change;
9. Learning from Critique;
10. Collaborating as a Team Around the Child; and
11. Leading Effective Practice.

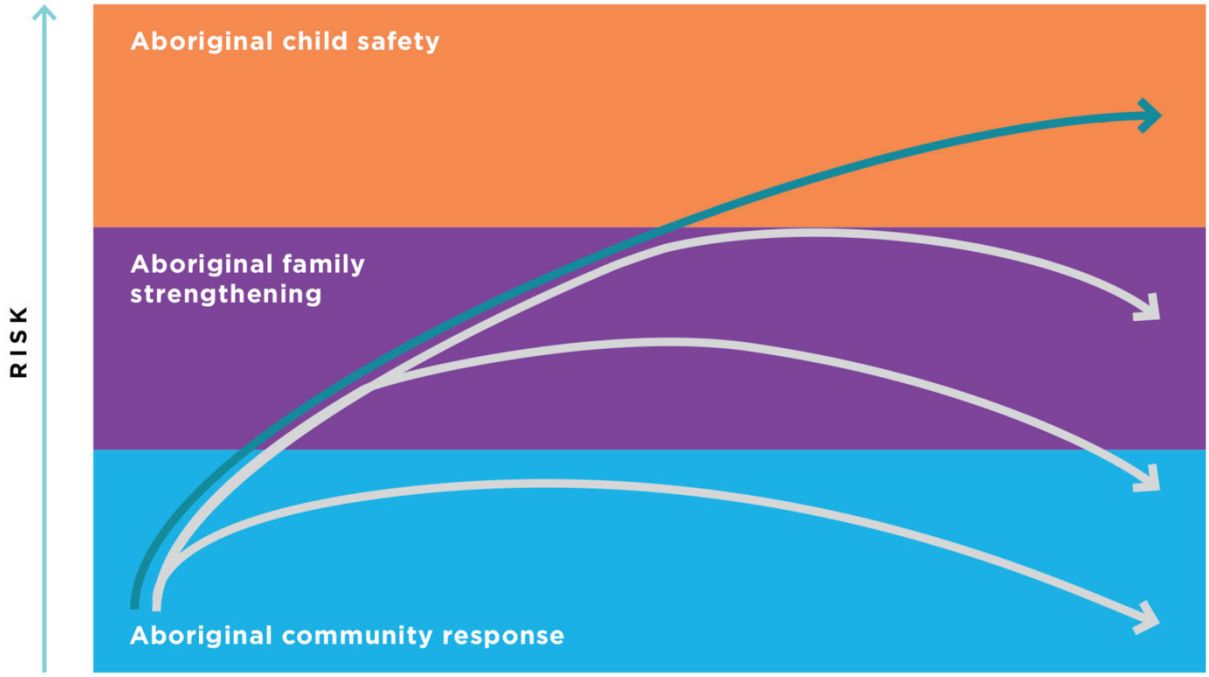
Permanency Case Management Policy: Rules and Practice Guidance (2019)

This guidance document describes the minimum expectations of the Department of Communities and Justice and funded service providers in working collaboratively to deliver the Permanency Support Program. The document is weighted more towards policy and rules, but does provide detailed guidance related to permanency case planning and includes a section on considering the importance of Aboriginal cultural connectedness in permanency planning.

Aboriginal Case Management Policy Rules and Practice Guidance: Strengthening Aboriginal Families, Delivering Outcomes for Aboriginal Children and Young People (2019)

This guidance comprises "three interconnected segments spanning the continuum of support, including universal services, family preservation, restoration, out-of-home care and after care" (p. 6). It outlines rules and practice guidelines related to expectations, roles and responsibilities that align to three key segments, as illustrated below (*Figure 4*).

Figure 4. Aboriginal Case Management Policy Rules and Practice Guidance – 'three key segments'



Care and Cultural Planning

In January 2017 a redesigned care plan for children and young people in statutory out-of-home care in NSW came into effect. The care plan includes a **Cultural Care** section, the completion of which is mandatory for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, as well as children from multi-cultural backgrounds. The aim of the cultural plan section is to ensure that a child's cultural needs are directly addressed by their care plan.

In addition to providing a comprehensive definition of care and cultural planning, the Care and Cultural Planning section of the Department of Communities and Justice website offers a number of support resources, including:

- The Care Plan template (interactive PDF);
- Policy Statement – Care and Cultural Planning;
- Care and Cultural Planning Process Map;
- Care and Cultural Planning Frequently Asked Questions; and
- Care Plan Information Icon Buttons (instructions for filling out the Cultural Care Plan).

Spotlight: New Zealand

Key Māori Vocabulary in Child Welfare Policy and Practice Tools

Māori vocabulary is integrated and woven throughout New Zealand's child welfare policy and practice materials. The Ministry for Children itself is named 'Oranga Tamariki,' which means 'child wellbeing.' Other key Māori terms used in the material (and therefore in this spotlight) are:

- **tamariki** – children
- **rangatahi** – young people
- **mokopuna** – descendants, though in the context of out-of-home care it generally refers to children and youth and captures the collective nature of caring
- **whānau** – extended family, family group
- **hapū** – kinship group, clan, tribe, subtribe
- **iwi** – extended kinship group, tribe, nation, people, race
- **whakapapa** – genealogy, lineage, descent

'Te Aka Māori-English' online dictionary

New Zealand's approach to planning for children and youth in out-of-home care stands out from other jurisdictions for the careful and comprehensive way in which children are placed at the centre of the process, for the integration (in policy and practice) of the Māori world view and traditional knowledge and ways of being, and for a commitment to evaluating outcomes for children using robust and culturally appropriate methods and tools.

In 2018, the Oranga Tamariki (Ministry for Children) introduced National Care Standards (along with supporting regulations) that set out the standard of care that every child and young person in out-of-home care in New Zealand can expect to receive. To help the Ministry and child welfare practitioners meet their obligations under the standards, a wide range of practice guidance and tools have been developed, including resources designed specifically for children and youth. These are curated by and made available through the Oranga Tamariki Practice Centre.

This spotlight on care, cultural and transition planning practice in New Zealand provides an introduction to the key tools and resources, starting with a brief overview of the National Care Standards, paying particular attention to the child-focused planning tools, and ending with the jurisdiction's evolving work to establish independent quality improvement mechanisms to ensure that child welfare agencies are doing what is needed to enable children and young people in out-of-home care to reach their potential and thrive.

National Care Standards

New Zealand's National Care Standards came into effect in July 2019. The broad goal of the standards is both to enhance the quality of care for children and young people and to provide better support to caregivers. There are six parts to the standards (*verbatim* abridged, Oranga Tamariki website):

- **Part One:** Needs assessments and plans for children – affirms that children and young people in care are entitled to a holistic needs assessment and support plan that reflects their views, wishes, aspirations and strengths. The views of their whānau, hapū and iwi must be heard and taken into account, and the plan must be maintained and reviewed regularly.
- **Part Two:** Meeting the needs of children in care – addresses support to help children and young people maintain their whānau connections and to help meet their cultural, recreational, education and health needs.
- **Part Three:** Assessments, plans and support for caregivers – entitles every caregiver to an assessment and support plan to help them meet the needs of children and young people in their care. The plan must cover: information about the child coming into their care; training, resources and financial support; keeping young people connected to their whānau and culture; and supporting children to stay healthy and do well at school.
- **Part Four:** Supporting children to express their views and contribute to their care experience – speaks to how to support children and young people in care to have a voice and actively contribute to their care experience. This includes: receiving child-friendly information about what they are entitled to under the regulations; being supported to speak up if they are not getting the care they are entitled to; having a way to capture the important things that are happening in their lives; and being given the opportunity to find out about their potential caregiver before they go and stay with them.
- **Part Five:** Supporting children during care transitions – addresses making sure that children and young people are well supported during care transitions. This includes when they are: moving between different care arrangements; returning home after being in care; leaving care; and transitioning into adulthood.
- **Part Six:** Monitoring and reporting on compliance with the standards – establishes an Independent Monitor to monitor and report to the Minister for Children on compliance with the Care Standards Regulations, and requires Oranga Tamariki and organizations that have legal custody of children and young people to self-monitor and report on compliance with the regulations.

In the published version of the standards, the voices of the young people that informed their development are highlighted at the outset and woven throughout the document. The detailed regulations and standards content is also prefaced by a 'Child-friendly statement of rights.'

National Care Standards Resources for Children

Oranga Tamariki has created a number of child-friendly resources explaining the care that children and young people can expect to receive. These include:

- My Rights My Voice poster;
- My Rights My Voice booklet; and
- Tamariki entitlements.

The last of these identifies a range of items available to children and youth in care that aim to "bring the Care Standards to life." The items, which are shown in *Figure 5* below, are given to the child or youth by their social worker. The document notes that the child or youth is welcome to customize the items, e.g. by shopping for a bag or journal that they prefer.

Figure 5. Items for children and young people in Oranga Tamariki care

The Tuituia Framework and Domains

The Tuituia (from the Māori verb *tuitui* meaning 'to bind into a book') is the single assessment tool used by practitioners working with children and young people in the care of Oranga Tamariki. It has three parts:

- **The Tuituia Framework** – guides all assessment activity. It "offers a holistic view of the mokopuna that can be shared [across] care and protection, youth justice, residential and high needs services" and it "provides a consistent framework and focus for information sharing and collaborative cross-agency work."
- **The Tuituia Recording Tool** – where practitioners record areas of need, strength and risk for the mokopuna and their parents and caregivers. This information is used to inform: intervention planning; placement decisions; and ongoing work with mokopuna, their family/whānau, caregivers and other agencies.
- **The Tuituia Report** – generated from the recording tool, this is the written record of an assessment at a single point in time. The Tuituia report is designed to be used: as the assessment summary when completing a child and family assessment or investigation; as a report to a family group conference or court; and whenever a social work assessment is required to support a social work decision.

The framework addresses three domains of assessment, within which are several subdomains:

- **Mokopuna ora** – the child or young person's holistic wellbeing:
  - Attachments, health, identity and culture, behaviour, friendships, learning and achieving, education.
- **Kaitiaki mokopuna** – their caregiver's capacity to nurture the child's wellbeing:
  - Factors impacting on safe parenting, safety and basic care, skills and knowledge, relationship with the child or young person, guidance and supervision.
- **Te ao hurihuri** – the whānau, social, cultural and environmental influences surrounding the child:
  - Networks of support, resources available, family / whānau / hapū / iwi.

A visual representation of the framework components is available here. Of note, the core outcomes in this representation are: *safe*, *belong*, *healthy*, *achieving* and *participate*.

The resources provided through the online framework are extensive and include policies, practice tools, guidance, and research. Each section of the framework is linked to relevant practice guidance, key policies and tools.

The 'All About Me' Plan

The 'All About Me' plan is described as "a living tool for developing, sharing and reviewing a support plan to meet the needs identified in the Tuituia assessment and [which] describes how each need will be met." Developing the plan involves a process of collective decision making that identifies who will be responsible for meeting the needs of the child or young person in care. The 'All About Me' plan reflects the goals and objectives agreed in the family group conference or court plan and sets out in detail how those goals and objectives will be achieved.

While the family group conference and court plan are "set moments in time," the 'All About Me' plan is used to reflect and ensure responsiveness to the changing needs of children and young people. It is also designed to support practitioners "to focus on all aspects of wellbeing, healing and maintaining connections at all times with tamariki and rangatahi, and their family / whānau and everyone important to them." The process of creating and implementing the plan explicitly requires practitioners to:

- Develop quality relationships and maintain contact with the significant people in the lives of the child or youth; and
- Consult with everyone who is important to the child or youth as each section of the plan is completed over time.

The 'All About Me' plan has three parts:

- **Part 1** – contains important introductory information for anyone who is going to care for and support the child or youth.
- **Part 2** – outlines the child or youth's day-to-day needs and aspirations. In creating this part of the plan, the practitioner is expected to collaborate with the child or youth and their family / whānau to:
  - Identify the uniqueness and potential of each tamaiti and rangatahi;

  - Promote the strengths, hopes, dreams and wishes of te tamaiti or rangatahi;
  - Describe where they belong and come from in relation to their whakapapa;
  - Record information about how te tamaiti or rangatahi feels about their identity including their gender, sexuality, disability and culture; and
  - Record the hopes, dreams and wishes for tamariki and rangatahi that are held by their family / whānau and other important people in their life.

- **Part 3** – 'My working plan' – details how the needs of the child or youth will be met in accordance with the responsibilities set out in the National Care Standards. In completing this section practitioners are encouraged to, "Build a picture for the caregiver so they can provide the best care possible" and, "Include significant events and history that impact on the wellbeing of te tamaiti or rangatahi." There is an emphasis on the need for flexibility and adjustments "to ensure we are meeting needs as they change" and on making sure that the child or youth "receives consistent messages and support to make sense of their experiences."

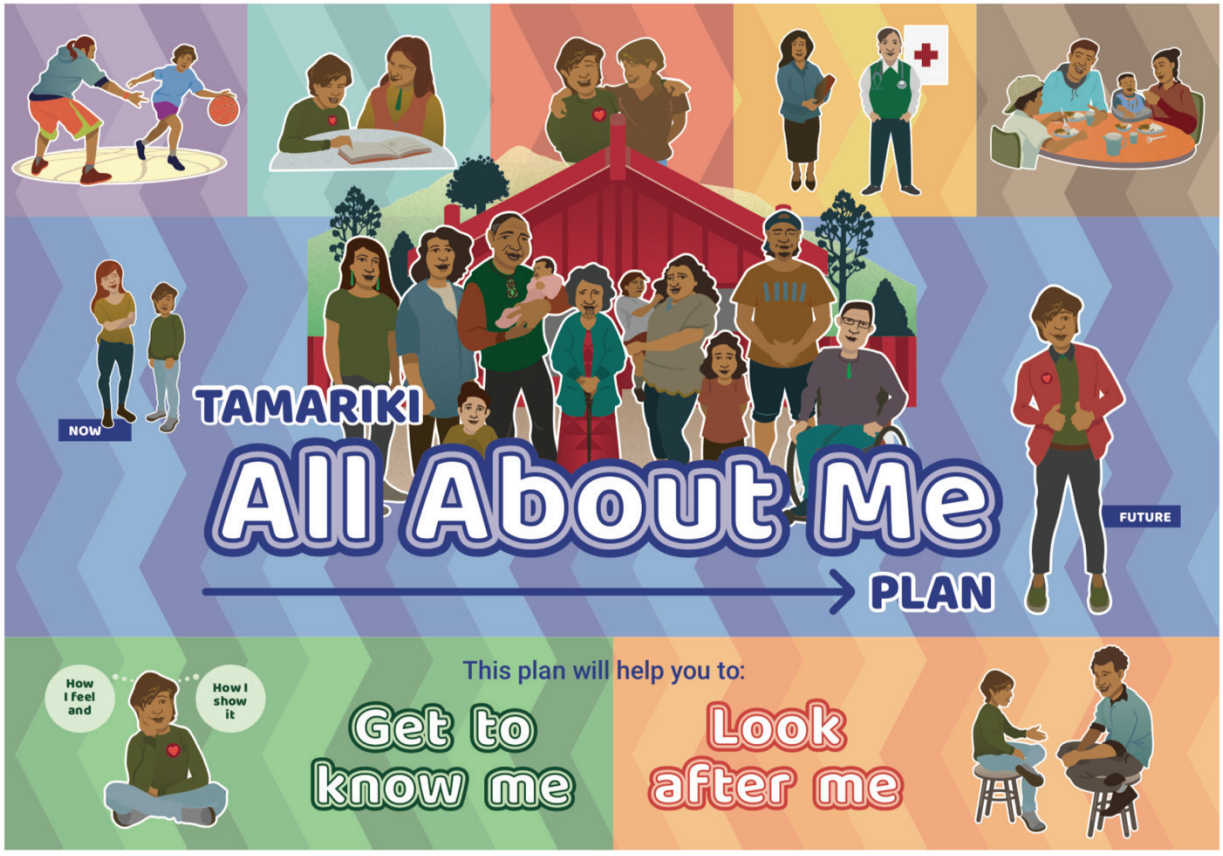
The Tamariki 'All About Me' Plan

There is a fillable PDF child-friendly version of the 'All About Me' plan, which is intended to "help [the child or young person] understand what their plan means and allow them to actively engage in the process." Each child or young person has their own copy of their plan, which they can refer back to whenever they want to.

The child-friendly version of the plan is written from the perspective of the child / youth. Sections include: *My people*; *Where I come from*; *My whānau & important people in my life*; *Learning stuff*; *My health*; *Here are the people helping me*; *Hopes, dreams and wishes for good things in my life*; *Things I am good at*; *Food & drink* (what the child likes, doesn't like, can't eat); *I can't live at home* (worries and fears about this, things that will help the child to feel better, what the child wants to know about their caregivers and what they want their caregivers to know about them); *My routines / things that help me*; *Things that are important to me*; *Learning stuff – My progress*; *My visits – Who I can see*; and *Staying connected with whānau, family, and people I care about.*

Figure 6 below shows the front page of the fillable PDF.

Figure 6. Front page of the Tamariki 'All About Me' plan



Engaging and Working Effectively with Māori

Oranga Tamariki has developed several resources to support practitioners to better engage and collaborate with Māori families and communities in the context of child welfare services. Two of the key resources are outlined here: the *Māori Cultural Framework and a curated selection of practice guidance and tools on 'how to work effectively with Māori.'*

'Our Māori Cultural Framework'

Oranga Tamariki created their Māori Cultural Framework in anticipation of the National Care Standards coming into force in 2019. It is described as "a starting point for [the Ministry] to better engage with and respond to [its] iwi and Māori partners, whānau and tamariki" and is intended to provide "understanding and context to [Ministry] decision making" and to help "deepen [the] understanding of key Māori values, practices, concepts and events that have impacted Māori."

Notable details within the framework include commitments to:

- Know and recognize the significance of Māori values, practices and concepts;
- Know about key events in the colonial history of New Zealand and be aware of the impacts and effects on Māori;

- Know how to engage with Māori and support their participation in decision making in ways that are culturally appropriate and respectful;
- Recognize the significance of identity, belonging and connection;
- Support positive cultural identity, belonging and connections for tamariki Māori; and
- Promote the value of Māori culture.

The framework is expected to "evolve and grow" as the Ministry matures as an organization.

'How to Work Effectively with Māori'

This collection of guidance materials and tools curated on the Oranga Tamariki Practice Centre website, includes the following resources for practitioners:

- ***Practice for working effectively with Māori*** – guidance on how to: support Māori participation; support, strengthen and assist whānau; prioritize whānau placement; support connections to whānau, hapū and iwi; and support transitions home and into community.
- ***Hui ā-whānau*** – information on a whānau gathering that is facilitated using Māori methods of engagement and protocols. The resource outlines what 'hui ā-whānau' is, why it is important, when to do it, and who can hold / facilitate such a gathering.
- ***Kairaranga ā-whānau*** – a description of this specialist Māori role (literally, 'a person who is a weaver of family connections'), the context for the role, and the core activities within the role. Early involvement of kairaranga ā-whānau ensures that tamariki Māori have their right to whānau, hapū and iwi Māori connection met.
- ***Whānau searching*** – information about creating a reference map for tamariki of their significant people, places, values and beliefs and how to ensure that these resources are a central part of creating a plan to improve tamariki wellbeing. The resource outlines when to do whānau searching, who does it, involving specialist support and how to do it.
- ***Whakapapa research*** – describes the process of researching and identifying people, places and events that will provide tamariki with access to important cultural connections for their sense of belonging, wellbeing and identity. The guidance addresses when to do whakapapa research, who does it and how to do it.

The Independent Children's Monitor

Formally established on July 1, 2019, the role of the Independent Children's Monitor is "to oversee the Oranga Tamariki System […] of State care […] to ensure the agencies that look after our tamariki (children) and rangatahi (young people) are doing what they need to, to enable them to reach their potential and thrive."

An overview of how the Independent Children's Monitor conducts their work is available here. A short video describing the agency and how they work is also available on the homepage of the agency's website in English and in te reo Māori. Notably, the agency's approach is centred in the Māori world view (te ao Māori).

The Outcomes Framework for the Independent Children's Monitor is currently under development; however, a draft iteration is available on the Independent Children's Monitor website here. It includes outcomes and indicators, with measures still to be developed.

Key characteristics of the framework include:

- Outcomes based on and informed by a "holistic te ao Māori lens";
- Informed by engagement with Māori communities;
- Draws on Māori and child- and youth-centred health and wellbeing models;
- Strengths-based – takes "a positive youth development approach";
- Incorporates notions of responsibility and reciprocity to help ensure tamariki, rangatahi and whānau are active participants;
- Whānau-centred and reflective of the diverse realities of Māori; and
- Encompasses the diversity of culture and ethnicity of all participants in the Oranga Tamariki system.

The outcomes articulated in the framework emphasize relationships and connections, self-determination, and feelings of safety and belonging, and they reflect a holistic understanding of wellbeing. They are *(verbatim)*:

- *Whanaungatanga* – Tamariki and rangatahi have strong, healthy and positive relationships and connections with their family, whānau, hapū, iwi and people around them;
- *Rangatiratanga* – Tamariki and rangatahi, alongside their whānau, are involved, empowered and supported to become self-determining, and leaders in their own lives;
- *Aroha* – Tamariki and rangatahi feel loved, supported, safe and cared for and are capable of receiving kindness through love and giving love to others;
- *Manaakitanga* – Tamariki and rangatahi have positive reciprocal relationships where they feel (as well as show) genuine care, generosity and respect for themselves and others;
- *Kaitiakitanga* – Tamariki and rangatahi feel protected, and are kept safe by having all aspects of their wellbeing acknowledged, nurtured and supported; and
- *Mātauranga* – Tamariki and rangatahi are learning and developing their skills and knowledge about themselves, their culture, their potential, their future, and their role/place in this world.

Conclusion

This jurisdictional scan provides a foundational understanding of quality in the context of care planning and care plans through examination of promising practices in outside jurisdictions. It is part of the culmination phase of work that RCY has done over many years to suggest improvements in care plans and care planning and is being released in conjunction with a report by RCY's Care Planning Review team that provides insights into how care planning is currently carried out in B.C. from multiple perspectives, and how it could be improved to reflect the core components of quality.

Placing a focus on improving the quality of care plans and care planning is both compelling and urgent. The process of care planning plays an essential role in supporting children and youth in care to develop their sense of belonging, connectedness and self-efficacy, and to emerge into adulthood successfully. The Representative hopes and anticipates that the contents of this jurisdictional scan together with the RCY team's report will provide the impetus to significantly improve how care planning is done in B.C.

Appendix: List of Works Consulted

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