



VACCA

Connected by culture

VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE AGENCY

A large orange graphic featuring a stylized figure in the center, surrounded by various Aboriginal patterns including concentric circles, dots, and wavy lines. The figure is rendered in a lighter shade of orange, and the background is a solid orange color.

Aboriginal Stronger Families Program and Procedure Manual



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Artist: Emma Bamblett



Welcome

Welcome to the Aboriginal Stronger Families Program. This program is one of many programs the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) provides to the Aboriginal Community that reflects our cultural values and principles in achieving the safety, wellbeing and empowerment of Aboriginal people.

Fundamental to our work is the commitment to provide programs and deliver services in an Aboriginal way, reflecting the priorities and needs of the Community. Our vision is for Aboriginal children, young people, families and Community to thrive – by being culturally strong, empowered and safe. We strive to achieve this vision by providing programs that:

- keep children safe
- empower and strengthen families and Community
- draw on culture to promote healing and build resilience
- utilise and embed kinship systems of care and Aboriginal childrearing practices
- provide an Aboriginal trauma-informed approach.

As a member of the Aboriginal Stronger Families team, you play a vital role in achieving this vision and in helping children remain with their families and Community. This manual, together with mentoring, supervision, training and professional development, will guide and support you in this important work.



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1. Preface



1.1 How to use this manual

The Aboriginal Stronger Families Program and procedure manual (manual) will inform and guide you in culturally appropriate case practice and the delivery of effective services to Aboriginal children, parents and families.

It provides information about the tools and casework frameworks you will use in your day-to-day work.

This manual is not a stand-alone resource. You will also need to read the [client services manual](#) and the [introduction to family violence manual](#) for information about the policies and practices relevant to all client service staff and the broader child and family sector.

This manual is designed to be read online. Hyperlinks have been created within the text to access information, forms and resources while reading. You can also click on the table of contents page numbers to take you directly to sections in the manual.

1.2 Language used in this manual

It is important staff are aware of how language is used within VACCA and this document. We understand that language is powerful and have sought to be respectful in the way we use language. Key terms we use within this manual are:

Child – this refers to children and young people up to 18 years, unless otherwise specified.

Aboriginal people – this refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Community – this refers to and acknowledges all Aboriginal people living in Victoria.

We use the 'phrases Aboriginal and Communities' (plural) to 'acknowledge the diversity of Aboriginal people and communities their different histories, political dynamics, social situations and cultural characteristics. Some Aboriginal people will prefer to use other terms to convey their tribe or clan group: for example, some Aboriginal people from Victoria may prefer 'Koorie'¹.

When we refer to Elders and Traditional Owners we have written these words with a capital letter to show the deep respect we have for these positions and their significance in the Community. We have also written Country in capital to show the importance and sacredness of land and Country.

More information about language can be found in the [client services manual](#).

¹Building Respectful Partnerships: The Commitment to Aboriginal Cultural Competence in Child and Family Services, VACCA, 2010, pg10

1.3 Introduction

Aboriginal children and young people continue to be overrepresented in the out-of-home care system. They are nearly 13 times more likely to be placed in out-of-home care than non-Aboriginal children and young people. As at 30 June 2015 there were 1,511 Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care placements in Victoria².

The Stronger Families Program was developed in response to the growing number of children entering care and staying in care. It was designed to respond earlier with families whose children were at risk of entering care, to enable their children to safely remain at home or return home sooner.

The program was first piloted by the Victorian Government in 2009 in four areas across Victoria. The areas of North Eastern Melbourne and Southern Melbourne included an Aboriginal specific model delivered by VACCA. In 2012-13, VACCA received ongoing funding to continue delivery of these programs. In 2015 VACCA received funding to implement the program in the East and in 2016 VACCA received funding to expand the service in the North.

²AIHW Child Protection Australia report 2014-15, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

2. Overview of the Aboriginal Stronger Families Program

2.1 Program summary

The Aboriginal Stronger Families Program (program) provides an intensive, culturally informed in-home support service, through an integrated and therapeutic model of assessment and professional support to vulnerable Aboriginal children and families.

Caseworkers support parents to address the issues that place their children at imminent risk of being removed, or that have resulted in their children being placed in care, and to build their capacity to safely care for their children at home.

The program model includes a comprehensive child and family assessment, coordination of child and family care plans, therapeutic support and practical support.

Key elements of the program include:

- a focus on the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people
- utilising a care team approach that involves the family and other services
- developing child and family goals with the family and other professionals in a [child and family care plan](#)
- working with other professionals to coordinate services the family needs
- connecting the family with services based on their needs
- providing outreach visits to the family home up to three times per week, depending on the family's needs
- providing a 24-hour on-call service (where available).

In addition, the program has access to flexible support funds to purchase additional services to meet the child and family's needs. This allows the program to secure priority of access to intensive specialist support services or purchase these services, where needed. There is also some capacity to purchase goods and services to enhance the social, physical and cognitive development of the children.

2.2 Program aims

The program aims to:

- prevent children from entering out-of-home care, with a priority on first time entrants
- support children to return home as soon as possible after entering care
- build parenting capacity
- help families to make sustainable changes
- provide coordinated services to address the complex needs of families
- provide a flexible approach to meet the needs of individual families
- use brokerage to provide timely services and support to families
- promote the safety of all family members.

2.3 Program principles

The program is underpinned by the following principles and values:

- the best interests of children is paramount
- a recognition that impact of colonisation and the consequent trauma across generations of Aboriginal families continues today
- a commitment to culturally appropriate and holistic practice
- respect for Aboriginal self-determination and person-centred services
- recognition of the important role of the Community in supporting families.

Case practice is informed by:

- the best interests of the child – protecting and promoting the safety, wellbeing and cultural identity of our children
- Aboriginal cultural observance - compliance with Aboriginal protocols, cultural practice and ceremony to achieve successful outcomes
- respect - comply with the individual and collective cultural rights, obligations and responsibilities of Aboriginal people, respect to each other, our partners and our community
- healing and empowerment – provide empowering and healing services using a strengths-based approach
- excellence – our Community is entitled to high quality and professional services that are culturally embedded.³

2.4 Program eligibility

To be eligible for the program, the family must live in the area where the program is offered and have at least one child who is:

- considered to be at imminent risk of being placed in out-of-home care if appropriate supports are not available to the child and family or
- currently residing in out-of-home care, with a priority of placements less than six months at the time of referral.

There are some targets specific to first time entrants into out-of-home care.

For a family to be eligible for the program, Child Protection must determine that they will benefit from an intensive support program and will require support for up to 12 months to be able to make the necessary changes to safely parent their children.

³VACCA Strategic Plan 2015-18, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

2.5 Program targets

The program is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services (the department). VACCA has a funding and service agreement with the department, which sets out the services to be provided, the target group, program standards and performance measures.

The department has established [program requirements for family and early parenting services](#) which staff need to comply with in delivering this program.

Northern program

- Supports up to 24 families at any one time (assessed daily)
- For up to twelve months
- For families living in the North Eastern Melbourne area which includes the local government areas of Banyule, Darebin, Nillumbik, Whittlesea and Yarra. If there is capacity and no referrals from this area, the program may accept referrals from the Hume and Moreland area.

Southern program

- Supports up to eight families at any one time (assessed daily)
- For up to twelve months
- For families living in the Southern Melbourne area which includes the local government areas of Casey, Cardinia and Greater Dandenong.

Eastern program

- Supports up to six families at any one time (assessed daily)
- For up to twelve months
- For families living in the Inner and Outer East which includes the local government areas of Manningham, Whitehorse, Monash, Boroondara, Yarra Ranges, Knox and Maroondah.

2.6 Data collection and reporting

The program records and reports its performance data via the Integrated Reports and Information System (IRIS). Caseworkers can access a [userguide](#) to support them in entering data into IRIS.

Reporting requirements to the department include:

- monthly data requests through Funded Agency Channel
- quarterly business reports
- a six-monthly financial acquittal report for the flexible support funds
- a six-monthly concordance table.



2.7 Program location and contact information

Northern program

VACCA Headoffice

340 Bell Street
Preston VIC 3072

PO Box 494, Northcote Plaza
Northcote VIC 3070

Ph: (03) 9287 8800
Fax: (03) 9287 8881

Southern program

VACCA Dandenong office

Level 2, Plaza Business Centre
26 McCrae Street
Dandenong VIC 3175

PO Box 7052
Dandenong VIC 3175

Ph: (03) 9701 4200
Fax: (03) 9706 6808

Eastern program

VACCA Ringwood office

10 Maroondah Hwy
Ringwood VIC 3134

PO Box 635
Ringwood VIC 3134

Ph: (03) 9871 9000
Fax: (03) 9879 4224

2.8 Program hours

Operating hours

The program operates from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday. There is flexibility for caseworkers to work outside of normal business hours if this is negotiated with their team leader or program/operations manager.

On-call service

All families involved with the program are provided with an on-call contact number. The on-call service provides after-hours telephone support and guidance to families in an emergency or crisis situation.

The on-call service is available to families outside of business hours and on weekends for the Northern and Southern programs. There is not an after hours on call service for the Eastern program.

Northern program

The on-call service is managed by program managers across the Aboriginal Stronger Families Program and Aboriginal Restoration Program, covering both programs on a rostered basis.

Caseworkers can obtain the on-call contact information from their team leader.

Southern program

The on-call service is shared by team leaders across all Southern VACCA programs, on a rostered basis.

The on-call number is 0447 599 632.

The on-call team leader can contact the operational or executive manager for case direction and advice when support is required.

2.9 Program structure

Program structures are updated regularly, caseworkers can access their office [program structure](#) to get a better understanding of how the program fits within the broader office and staff in positions.

2.10 Program positions

All staff

All staff in this program are required to:

- prioritise the wellbeing and safety of the child
- see the child's best interests through a cultural lens
- empower and strengthen families
- use a trauma-informed approach to practice
- respect and promote the kinship systems of care and decision making
- see families within the context of their past and present experiences
- create a culturally safe environment where children and families feel safe and supported.

Caseworker

The caseworker works with families to create an environment of caring, nurturing and cultural connectedness that facilitates the development of good parenting and healthy family relationships.

The caseworker is responsible for ensuring that Aboriginal culture is embedded throughout all aspects of the program's functioning and that all program activities are culturally safe.

The caseworker is required to provide a quality, timely and effective family support service to children and families with complex needs, which involves:

- undertaking home visits to children and families
- conducting child and family assessments and developing child and family care plans to address and meet the needs of children and families
- monitoring and reviewing the child and family care plan, including assessing the effectiveness of services provided and developing recommendations on intervention strategies
- identifying families' cultural support needs
- providing parenting advice and support
- making referrals and being an advocate in relation to housing, income security, access to education and protective matters
- making referrals to other appropriate services
- providing intensive support, education and counselling to families about child development, behaviour management, routines, parenting as well as financial and household management
- coordinating cases, providing case management and ensuring regular care team meetings occur to review and modify goals
- developing and maintaining effective relationships with other VACCA programs, appropriate Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, government agencies and community service organisations
- maintaining high-quality and up to date written records (case notes) and statistics on casework activities
- preparing case reports containing informed comment and assessments with well-reasoned recommendations
- participating in training sessions, team meetings, case plan meetings and other meetings as directed
- participating in regular supervision and being well prepared for case discussions
- other duties as directed.

Team leader

The team leader are responsible for the day-to-day management of the program.

It is their role to:

- ensure Aboriginal culture is embedded throughout all aspects of the program's functioning and that all program activities are culturally safe
- be familiar with all relevant legislation, sector and VACCA policies, including governance and foundational documents relevant to managing the program. It is the role of the program manager to guide staff to embed these frameworks in their practice
- ensure the program is focused on the best interests of the child
- manage new referrals to the program, including eligibility, intake and assessments
- convene regular intake and allocations meetings
- ensure all families have documented assessments and a child and family care plan
- ensure regular care team meetings are convened
- review client files to ensure they are up to date and good quality standard
- provide regular and formal supervision to caseworkers in the program
- ensure that data collection and monitoring systems are adequate and operating effectively
- ensure that performance targets and compliance requirements are met
- participate in on call roster as required
- develop, implement and evaluate quality control standards for the program
- meet agency registration requirements
- provide written reports to the department in relation to performance against targets and the expenditure of brokerage funds
- develop, implement and maintain quality services to ensure the program engages, supports and strengthens Aboriginal childrearing practices
- provide culturally sensitive promotional material and professional education to Aboriginal and mainstream services and the Aboriginal Community
- develop and maintain effective partnerships within the Child and Family Services Alliances.

Operations or program manager

The operations or program manager is responsible for overseeing the management of the program.

It is their role to:

- ensure Aboriginal culture is embedded throughout all aspects of the program's functioning and that all program activities are culturally safe
- be familiar with all relevant legislation, sector and VACCA policies, including governance and foundational documents relevant to managing the program. It is the role of the operations or program manager to guide staff to embed these frameworks in their practice
- ensure the program is focused on the best interests of the child
- provide support and supervision to the team leader
- participate in on call roster as required
- ensure adequate staffing levels by leading the recruitment, induction and retention of staff
- ensure that data collection and monitoring systems are adequate and operating effectively
- ensure the program operations are compliant with legislation, standards, program requirements and continuous quality improvement processes
- ensure that performance targets are met
- manage program finances and ensure program remains within budget
- ensure VACCA policies and procedures are implemented, monitored and reported as required.

Executive manager

The executive manager is responsible for the overall management of the program.

It is their role to:

- ensure Aboriginal culture is embedded throughout all aspects of the program's functioning and that all program activities are culturally safe
- provide support and supervision to the operations manager
- participate in VACCA strategic, business and operational planning activities
- engage in department and sector service development and strategic planning
- ensure the program operations are compliant with legislation, standards, program requirements and continuous quality improvement processes
- manage program finances and ensure programs remain within budget
- ensure VACCA policies, procedures and systems are in place and working effectively.



2.11 Key networks and partnerships

Internal networks and partnerships

All caseworkers are expected to work with other VACCA programs as required to achieve the best outcomes for children, young people and families using our services.

Information about other VACCA programs and the services they deliver can be found in the client services programs section of the [client services manual](#).

Caseworker will need to be familiar and work closely with the following internal programs.

Lakidjeka ACSASS

The Lakidjeka Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support Service (ACSASS) is a state-wide service that provides expert advice to Child Protection on culturally appropriate interventions and case consultation regarding significant decisions made about Aboriginal children. If Child Protection is involved the caseworker will need to advise Lakidjeka ACSASS of program involvement and keep Lakidjeka informed of work with the child and family to assist them in making decisions and providing advice to Child Protection.

Aboriginal Family Led Decision-Making

Aboriginal Family Led Decision-Making (AFLDM) program provides a decision-making process that:

- empowers families to make good decisions and plans in relation to the safety and care of their children
- is guided by and respectful of the family's culture
- actively involves the child's family and Aboriginal Community.

For children and families involved with Child Protection the caseworker needs to check if their has been or is a planned AFLDM and if not recommend that a referral is made to the AFLDM program. Where concerns are substantiated Child Protection must make a referral to the AFLDM program, caseworkers will need to ensure that a referral is made and advocate for meetings to occur.

Aboriginal Kinship Care Program

The Aboriginal Kinship Care Program is able to provide an information and advice service to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal kinship carers who are caring for Aboriginal children. They can also provide group support and activities and short-term family support and cultural connections work. The caseworker may recommend a referral to the Kinship Care Program for children currently in the care of kinship carers if additional support for the current placement is required.

Aboriginal Foster Care Program

The foster care program provides safe, stable and culturally safe foster care placements for Aboriginal children. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal carers are supported to provide safe, stable and culturally appropriate care for children in their own home. The program ensures children in care continue to learn about their culture and participate in Aboriginal Community events and activities, ensures children in care have regular and safe contact with their family and provides children with a healing environment to recover from trauma. For children in care who access this program, they may be in a foster care placement managed by VACCA and the caseworker will need to work closely with foster care workers.

Integrated Family Services

The Integrated Family Services program provides support to individuals and families caring for children to address issues and improve their quality of life. The program focuses on the strengths of the individual and family, supporting them to identify goals and work towards achieving these. Individuals and families working with the service will generally have between 1 to 6 hours of contact with their caseworker per week.

The caseworker may make a referral to Integrated Family Services where families require further less intensive support service after the program has closed.

Mental Health Worker

The mental health worker supports Aboriginal children aged 5-13 years who have mental health issues or who are at risk of a mental health illness, where the parents have consented to this support. There is some flexibility for the worker to support young people over 13 years on a case-by-case basis. The mental health worker also delivers community education and facilitates group work for mental health. The caseworker can refer the young person to this worker if relevant and appropriate in the Northern metropolitan area.

Integrated Family Violence Program

The VACCA Integrated Family Violence Program is an intensive case management service for Aboriginal women with or without children experiencing family violence that provides:

- an integrated and holistic approach to address family violence
- risk assessment and immediate safety planning through assertive outreach
- a duty system for L17 referrals for women experiencing violence
- intensive, short and long term, case management for women and children most at risk presenting with multiple complex needs and experienced multiple episodes of violence
- secondary consultation and casework
- holistic Aboriginal healing approaches and counselling to women and children traumatised by family violence.

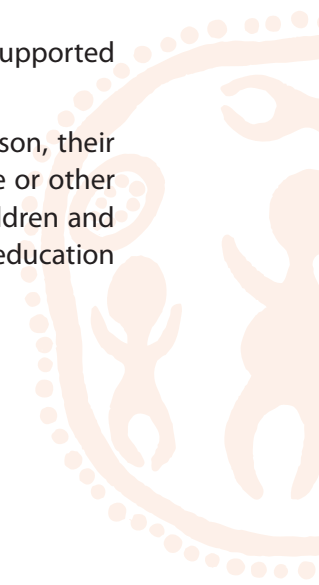
If a family is experiencing or has been affected by family violence the caseworker can make a referral to this program. The family violence team will be able to support them through these issues including homelessness for families residing in the Northern metropolitan area.

Koorie Kids Stay @ School

The Koorie Kids Stay @ School program provides intensive and trauma informed education support to Aboriginal young people aged 10-16 years of age who are at risk of disengaging or recently disengaged from school.

The program is delivered by an education support worker who is a qualified teacher, and supported by a therapeutic practitioner from VACCA's Aboriginal Children's Healing Team.

The education support worker provides intensive education support to the young person, their family, and the school as required. Outreach support is provided in the school, at home or other setting depending on the young person's learning needs. The caseworker can refer children and young people who live in the Northern metropolitan area to this program for specific education support.



Koorie Connect

The Koorie Connect program provides information, advice, assessment, casework and facilitated referral service. There are two provides support to Aboriginal people and families including information and advice, advocacy, supported referrals and casework support to assist people to address issues, resolve conflict and change behaviour. The program is available to people residing in the North metropolitan area and caseworkers can provide families with details of this service for future short term support.

Koorie Emergency Relief

The Koorie Emergency Relief program provides a culturally respectful service to help Aboriginal people to address immediate basic needs in times of financial crisis. Access to emergency relief is considered universal and is a safety net for people experiencing financial distress or hardship and who have limited means or resources to help them alleviate their financial crisis. Emergency relief is seen as an entry point into the continuum of financial services and other support services. Aboriginal people will be supported to address immediate basic needs in times of financial crisis through the provision of provision of food vouchers, support to pay bills and material aid. The caseworker can support parents and carers to access financial support where this is needed.

The Wilam Support Service

The Wilam Support Serve is a transitional support service that aims to support Aboriginal Community members who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness. The service provides case management support to help Community members achieve long term housing, employment, education, health and wellbeing outcomes so that they are unlikely to return to being homeless in future. For some families involved with the service they may require further support to address housing issues and the caseworker can refer to this program for people residing in the Northern metropolitan area.

Playgroups (Bringing Up our Boorais and Bubups)

Playgroups provide culturally safe opportunities for Aboriginal parents and carers to meet other Aboriginal families and establish support networks while strengthening their parenting skills and knowledge. The caseworker may support families to attend and participate in playgroups.

Cultural Programs

All client services programs are involved in delivering and facilitating cultural programs for children in care and the broader Community in their service areas. In addition VACCA has a cultural program team based at Head Office. All staff should keep themselves informed of relevant cultural activities and programs to support families and children to attend, keeping them connected to Community and culture. See also client services programs section of the [client services manual](#).

External networks and partnerships

The operations, program manager or team leader meets with the Local Engagement Officer regularly and provides aquittal reports.

The three programs have the following external networks and partnerships in delivering the service.

Northern program

Berry Street Take Two

The program has access to a part-time (0.7 full-time equivalent) mental health clinician through Berry Street Take Two to provide therapeutic services to infants, children, young people and parents.

The Queen Elizabeth Centre

The program has access to a part-time (0.4 full-time equivalent) worker from the Queen Elizabeth to deliver Parenting Assessment and Skill Development Service (PASDS) Plus program.

Southern program

Berry Street Take Two

Berry Street Take Two provides therapeutic services to infants, children, young people and parents.

Aboriginal Children's Healing Team

VACCA's Aboriginal Children's Healing Team (Healing Team) assists families to access healing services and support.

Connections – Child, Youth and Family Services

The program has access to the Finding Solutions Plus program for young people aged 10-15 years through its partnership with Connections.

The Queen Elizabeth Centre

The Queen Elizabeth Centre prioritise referrals from the program to its Parenting Assessment and Skill Development Service (PASDS) Plus program and Early Parenting Centre (EPC) services.

Operations group

The operations group meets every four weeks. The purpose of this group is to:

- foster services working together
- monitor and implement the day-to-day running of the program
- undertake case discussions and practice considerations
- review and analyse program data, including targets.

Membership of this group comprises:

- VACCA program managers or team leaders
- Berry Street Take Two manager
- Queen Elizabeth Centre PASDS Plus coordinator
- Connections program manager
- a representative from Child Protection.

The program participates in monthly professional development sessions with other members of the partnership.





Eastern program

The Queen Elizabeth Centre

The program has access to a part-time (0.2 full-time equivalent) worker from the Queen Elizabeth to deliver parenting assessment and skill development support to families.

Aboriginal Children's Healing Team

VACCA's Aboriginal Children's Healing Team (Healing Team) assists families to access healing services and support.

Boondawan Wilam

Boondawan Wilam is a local Aboriginal service that provides a range of services including counselling, family violence support and intensive case management.

Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place

Mullum Mullum provide a range of services and cultural activities.

3. Working with children and families



3.1 Referral and intake

Referral sources

Only Child Protection can make referrals to the Aboriginal Stronger Families Program. They are responsible for screening families to determine if they are eligible and suitable for the program, and for obtaining the family's consent for the referral. In some instances Community may initiate referrals and the program will contact Child Protection to discuss possible referral.

Child Protection is required to consult with the Lakidjeka Aboriginal Child Specialist and Support Service (ACSASS) prior to making a referral to the program. Lakidjeka ACSASS provides specialist cultural advice to Child Protection on all significant decisions and actions concerning Aboriginal children and young people.

Intake processes

The Child Protection manager will determine whether the referral is appropriate, and if so, will contact the program manager/ operations manager or team leader to discuss the referral and complete a [*Placement Prevention and Reunification referral consult request form*](#).

If there is capacity within the program and the family meets the program's eligibility criteria, VACCA and Child Protection will jointly undertake a pre-referral meeting (this may occur over the phone). In this meeting, VACCA will advise Child Protection if the referral is appropriate.

If the referral is appropriate, the Child Protection practitioner will complete the [*Placement prevention and reunification referral form*](#) and send it to VACCA. Upon receiving this information, VACCA will formally advise Child Protection if the referral is accepted within two working days.

If there is a disagreement in relation to the referral this matter needs to be discussed between the senior program manager and the appropriate Child Protection manager.

Intake meeting

The program is responsible for organising an intake meeting with Child Protection within five days of accepting the referral. The program manager or team leader will invite partner agencies to attend the meeting, this may include the therapeutic clinician from Berry Street Take Two or VACCA's Aboriginal Children's Healing Team or Queen Elizabeth Centre worker as required to plan for support to be provided.

The purpose of the intake meeting is to:

- provide the caseworker with background information about the family
- identify and discuss risks (both historical and current) associated with the family and develop strategies to manage these risks
- allow the caseworker and the Child Protection practitioner to establish a strong and positive relationship and build a shared understanding of the support required by the family.

The intake meeting also enables the therapeutic clinician to incorporate a therapeutic element into the assessment and decide whether clinical intervention is required.

At the intake meeting, the caseworker is required to:

- clarify information about the family and ask for an update on the family
- clarify roles, responsibilities and expectations
- find out what other services are involved with the family
- set a date and time for the first joint home visit
- discuss care team meetings and the involvement of care team members in these meetings.

Waiting lists

The program does not hold a waiting list because of the urgent nature of referrals. Child Protection is responsible for prioritising referrals, in consultation with the program, during periods where there is high demand.

Case allocation

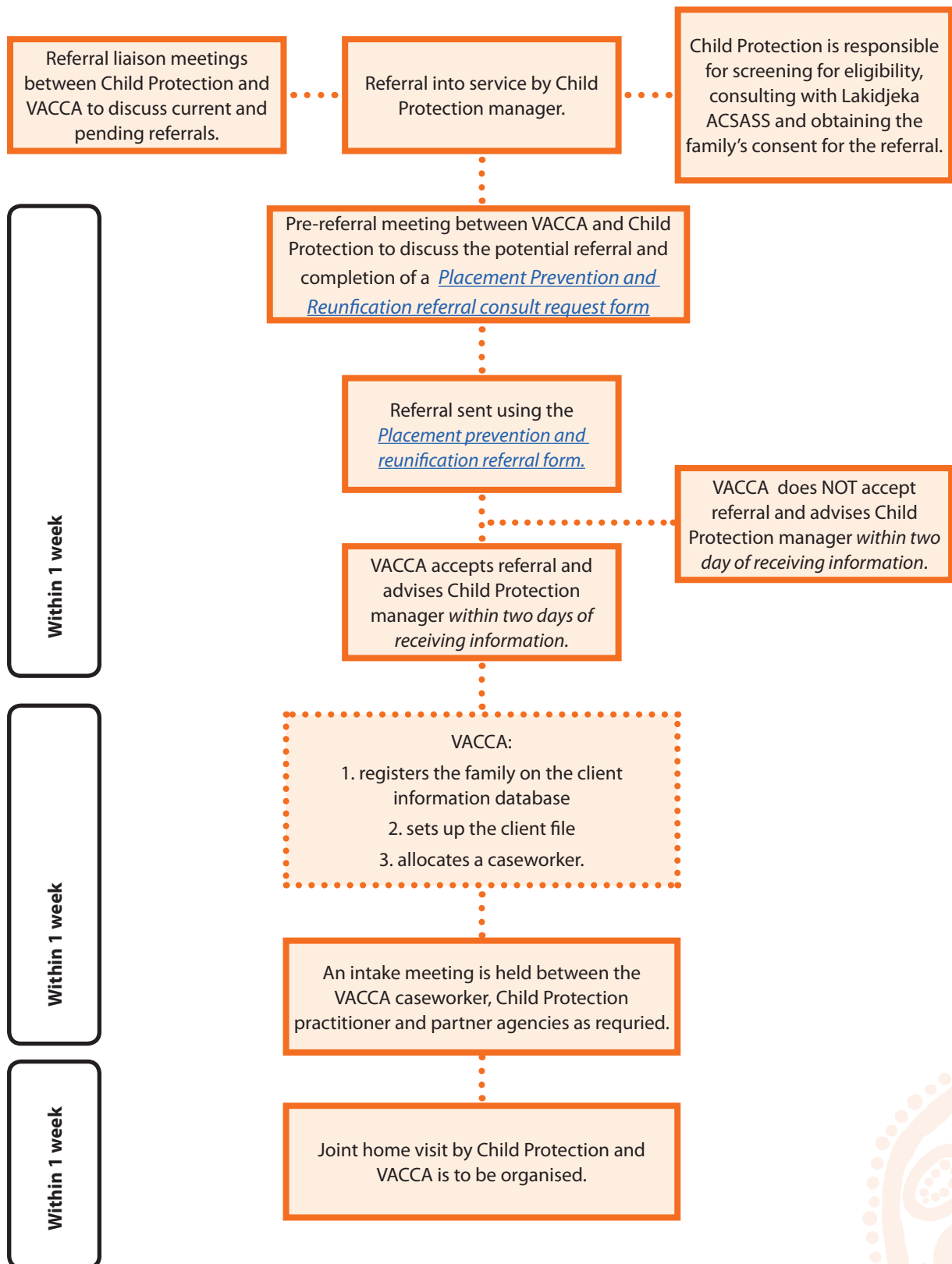
Once the referral has been accepted the program manager/ operations manager or team leader will allocate the family to a caseworker.

Registration and setting up a client file

In order to register the family as a client of the program and create a client file the program manager or team leader will complete or request the caseworker or administration worker to:

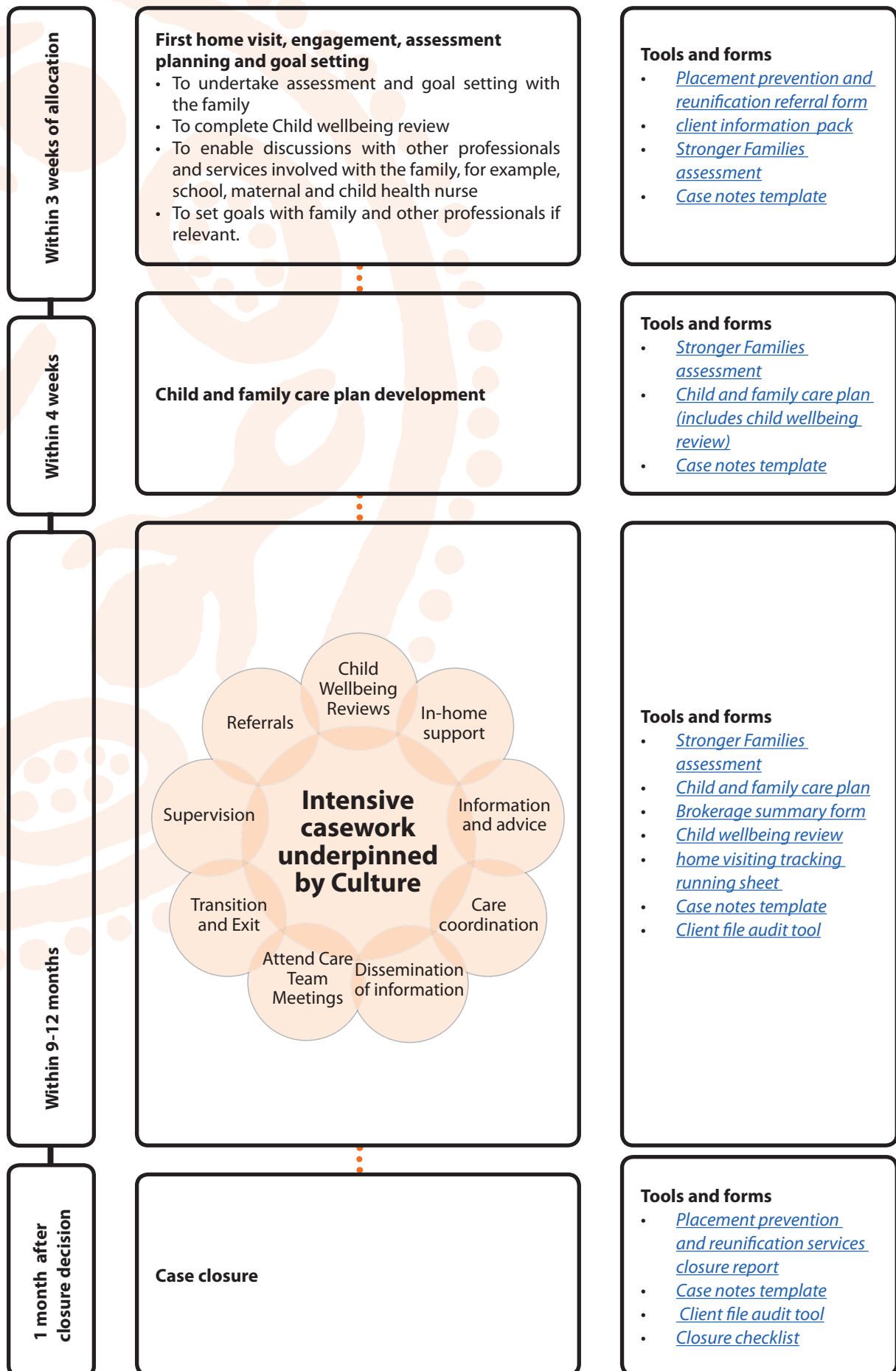
- conduct a search of the client information database to check if there is existing or previous VACCA involvement (check children's details)
- retrieve all closed files relating to the family, in line with the VACCA [client records and file management policy](#)
- register program involvement with the family on the client information database using the existing client information database number or generate a new client number (refer to the VACCA [client information database userguide](#) for more information)
- open a support period for the young person on SHIP
- set up the paper client file in accordance with the VACCA client file folder requirements using the [Client file structure](#)
- complete and attach the [client information summary](#) to the paper file.

Referral and intake flowchart



3.2 Assessment and engagement of families

Working with the family flow chart





Cultural tips for building relationships

- Be aware of using language and behaviour that may cause shame.
- Be genuine in your interest in the child and their family and make this evident.
- Create time for a yarn.
- Acknowledge that sharing information is a two way process and share something about yourself.
- Show warmth and where appropriate use humour to lighten conversations.
- Use straight talk – be honest, open and transparent.
- Respect cultural norms and values and model this through your conduct, particularly in relation to the roles and responsibilities of family and Elders and men and women's business.

First home visit

The caseworker (and team leader, if appropriate) and the Child Protection practitioner conduct the first home visit together. Engagement with the family should be the key focus of the first home visit.

In preparing for the first home visit caseworkers will need to read VACCA policies and procedures on [staff safety](#) in regards to home visiting.

For the caseworker the purpose of the first home visit is to:

- welcome the family (including children) to the program and explain the role of the program
- begin to engage and build a relationship with the family, including the children
- discuss the programs expectations including transition, exit and staff safety
- provide a copy of the [client information pack](#), which includes a welcome letter, feedback and complaints form, exchange and release information form, [VACCA and Aboriginal Stronger Families brochure](#), transport authority form, VACCA client services charter, Dardee Boorai – Victorian Charter of Safety & Wellbeing for Aboriginal & Young People and a privacy brochure
- go through the key documents as per the [client information pack checklist](#) to ensure the family understands forms and obtain their signature that forms have been received, were explained, understood and they agree to abide by these documents
- request family sign relevant forms or leave forms with family to review and request signed forms at next home visit
- where age appropriate children and young people should be provided with key documents from the client information pack and the caseworker needs to ensure that they understand the forms and documents provided, their right to provide feedback and processes.

It is important that the caseworker provides written and verbal information in a way that is understood by people accessing our services including children.

The caseworker should not conclude the first visit without organising a date and time with the family for their next visit.

Practice tips for engaging families in the program

Given the high-risk nature of referrals to the program, the caseworker is expected to make every effort to engage families with the service. The caseworker will need to use multiple strategies to contact the family and support them to work on their issues, including joint visits, phone calls, phone texts and letters.

Ultimately, the program is a voluntary service and it is the parents' choice to participate or not in the program.

Assessment

Stronger Families assessment

The aim of assessment is to understand the individual or family member as a total person in the context of their life history and environment. It provides a holistic view that incorporates emotional, physical, spiritual, cultural, behavioural and social dimensions.

The assessment is more accurate when multiple observations and conversations are held with the family. It is recommended that an assessment be completed over two to three weeks, with multiple visits to the family per week, to gather all the information required. It will also be necessary to observe and interact with all the children, and to observe the children interacting with their parents. The caseworker needs to be clear with the family about the purpose of the assessment and the time that it will take.

The [Stronger Families assessment template](#) covers information about family details, family genogram, cultural identity and heritage, child wellbeing, a summary of assessment goals and staff safety issues.

The caseworker should not rely on the assessment template as a checklist to be gone through with the family or spend the entire time writing. This may give the impression they are there for their own purposes rather than to listen. Before taking notes, the caseworker needs to explain to the family that note taking is necessary to record their information accurately. After the family visit, the caseworker will complete the assessment template and place this in the family's client file.

Further information about completing a comprehensive psychosocial assessment is set out in VACCA's [conducting an assessment guidelines](#).

The child's wellbeing

This section encourages the caseworker to focus on the broader needs of each child and supports the development of a child-focused plan. These include health, education, identity, emotional and behavioural development, family and social relationships, and self-care skills. This section of the template helps you think about each child separately.

An assessment of these aspects should always be through the lens of culture.

Child wellbeing review

The child wellbeing review is completed during the assessment phase and at agreed intervals throughout the duration of the family's involvement with the service. The child wellbeing review should be documented within the assessment and throughout involvement on the [child wellbeing review template](#).

Practice tip for child safety

The safety and wellbeing of the child is always the priority in any assessment. Make sure you are always aware of what is happening for the child or children.

3.3 Planning and goal setting

Once the assessment phase is complete and the family's goals are identified, the caseworker will work with the family to map out the 'journey' and the 'way forward' for the family.

Cultural tips for planning and goal setting

- In all planning, consider the cultural rights and needs of the child.
- Ensure that key members of the child's family – and where appropriate, Community members – are invited to planning meetings, and that they know how important it is that they attend.
- Empower parents and families to actively participate in case planning and decision making by:
 - using an Aboriginal family decision making approach
 - creating an environment where they feel supported and comfortable in attending by organising the meeting at a culturally safe venue
 - making sure they are fully informed about the case planning process, who will be in attendance, whether there are non-negotiable aspects prior to the meeting
 - using language that they understand and ensuring they are consulted in the meeting and supported to contribute to discussions.

Child and family care plan

Once the assessment phase is complete and the family's goals are identified, the caseworker will work with the family to map out the 'journey' and the 'way forward' for the family.

The way forward for the family is mapped out using the [child and family care plan](#). The caseworker and family will need to:

- document the family's goals (goals of the department case plan will also need to be included)
- work out how each goal will be achieved (the actions required)
- determine how long each action will take (timelines)
- identify the care team
- identify who is responsible for each action – the parents, the caseworker or other care team member
- set review dates for when the goals set out in the [child and family care plan](#) will be reviewed against the best interest principles.

The [child and family care plan](#) should be prepared with a strengths-based focus, working towards parents providing safe care for their children. In addition to specific goals identified for each family, the caseworker is to encourage families to promote the wellbeing of their children in the following key areas:

- education
- health, hygiene and nutrition
- connection to culture and Community
- parenting capacity.

The caseworker needs to encourage families to have goals relating to each of these key areas, and will need to document these in the [child and family care plan](#).

Why are these four areas important?

Education

Research tells us that Aboriginal children face significant challenges in comparison to non-Aboriginal children in terms of school readiness in reading, writing and numeracy. VACCA's Home Reading Program aims to close this gap in school readiness and educational outcomes for Aboriginal children. This program is a therapeutic model of intervention founded on the practical exercise of reading that families readily participate in.

In addition to the educational benefits, reading can be used to develop positive relationships between parents and children by providing closeness and one-on-one time between parents and children and time for children to wind down before going to bed. VACCA advocates building reading time into the routine of all families and starting reading with children at a young age.

Health, hygiene and nutrition

The program will ensure that all children have at least one health check during their participation with the program and that medical needs are addressed. The caseworker can also support families to access other VACCA programs and local resources such as playgroups and parenting programs.

Connection to culture and Community

A loss of culture is considered to be a risk factor for Aboriginal children, as culture is central to the development of healthy attachments, emotional stability, education and health. This program connects children and their parents to their culture by involving them in cultural activities using culturally specific materials, and making connections with Community and family where possible.

Parenting capacity

The program works with families to address safety issues and strengthen parenting skills, with a strong focus on Aboriginal parenting practices. This area covers a number of requirements for the healthy and safe development of children including:

- the physical aspects of the home
- factors impacting the parents' functioning, such as drug and alcohol dependence or family violence
- basic parenting skills
- integration of household routines.

Once goals have been set, the caseworker needs to identify what resources are required and available to support the family to achieve their goals. The caseworker may need to discuss the family's proposed goals and resource requirements with their team leader.

All home visits will be recorded on the [home visiting tracking running sheet](#). This provides a quick reference to visits with the family.

3.4 Court work

For many families referred to the program, it is likely that they will be subject to a Children's Court protection order that may include:

- Family preservation order
- Family reunification order.

It is possible that the family's participation in the program is a condition of the protection order.

On occasion, caseworkers may receive a subpoena to give evidence, provide a copy of the client file or a report to the court. The caseworker must advise their team leader or program manager as soon as possible if they receive a subpoena, and who will support the caseworker in attending court or providing documents as legally requested in the subpoena.

The [client services manual](#) has more information about the Children’s Court of Victoria and court related tasks and casework and VACCA provides regular training. The caseworker will also need to refer to the [client records and file management policy](#) for information about procedures to undertake if the client file is subpoenaed.

3.5 Making referrals

A key role of the caseworker is making referrals and supporting families to access relevant services to help them achieve the goals outlined in the [child and family care plan](#).

Cultural tips for making referrals

- Refer children and families to Aboriginal services first, as these are best placed to meet their needs.
- When referring children and families to non-Aboriginal services, assess their cultural safety before making the referral.
- Introduce families to new services to help them feel comfortable attending.
- Recognise the vulnerability of children and families in attending new services. If they miss an appointment or meeting, make another time for them to attend and, where appropriate, offer to attend with them until they feel comfortable attending on their own.
- Always check whether families have reliable transport to services or meetings and, where necessary, help arrange this.
- Always follow up with families after contact with new services to ask how it went, talk through any issues and provide support.

The caseworker may directly make or assist families to make referrals to a number of services including:

- playgroups, kindergarten, child care
- health services
- housing
- alcohol and drug, mental health and family violence services
- counselling and family therapy
- financial counselling
- specialist services and assessments, including PASDS Plus and Take Two
- internal VACCA programs, such as the Koorie Faces Program.



3.6 Client records and file management

Case notes and client files

An important part of working with individuals and families is keeping accurate records and up to date case notes and client files. The caseworker is required to keep paper and electronic client files.

All caseworkers are required to follow [VACCA's client records and file management policy](#) that sets out the responsibilities and expectations of staff in recording client records and managing client files (this includes carers files) to:

- ensure there is standardised and consistent record keeping practices across programs and offices
- create clear, accurate, up-to-date, respectful and professional client records including case notes, using VACCA templates
- record assessments, plans, actions, consultations, key decisions and outcomes to meet accountability requirements
- create and register client files so that they can be quickly and easily accessed when required
- maintain client files in a manner that protects documents from misuse, loss, damage and unauthorised access
- only allow access to client files in accordance with privacy laws and access procedures.

It is the responsibility of all VACCA staff to ensure that client files are created and managed in accordance with relevant legislation and in line with this policy.

3.7 Casework tasks

In-home support

The caseworker is required to provide in-home support to:

- assess the safety of the child
- build parenting skills and confidence
- improve household management and develop routines including appropriate child rearing routines
- connect families to culture and Community
- improve knowledge and skills for behaviour management of toddlers, children and young people
- manage finances and budgeting
- support families to engage with schools, child care and other services
- therapeutic service when required
- parenting and skill development service when required.

Information and advice

The caseworker is to provide families with information about:

- safety issues including family violence, drug and alcohol misuse
- child development
- housing
- child and adolescent wellbeing including education, health, hygiene and nutrition
- child care options and financial supports
- the best ways to address school issues
- the best way to communicate with Child Protection and to understand the service system and referral processes.

Practice tip for identifying protective issues

If a protective issue is identified for the child, raise your concerns with the family and speak to your team leader or program manager as soon as possible. Refer to the child safety and wellbeing section of this manual for more information.

Case management

The caseworker is to work with the family, Child Protection and other services to ensure the family can access the right services, in the right place, at the right time. At times the caseworker may take the lead role in co-ordinating care and services.

However, where Child Protection is involved, case management roles and responsibilities will need to be negotiated and agreed upon.

Client expenses (brokerage)

The program has client expense brokerage funding to support the needs of children and families. The use of brokerage funding needs to be in line with the child and family care plan developed and directly related to outcomes for the child and family. This funding enables the program to provide flexible and responsive services based on the needs of individual children and families, examples include the purchase of services, physical or mental health assessments and material aid. The caseworker and team leader will discuss the needs of each child and family involved with the program and identify their financial support needs. The caseworker will record all client expenses on the [brokerage summary form](#).

Promote community engagement and connection

VACCA's [community calendar](#) is a tool for keeping caseworkers and families up to date with events and activities in the Community. The caseworker is expected to review the calendar and to let families know about upcoming events and activities on a regular basis.

Care team meetings

Care team meetings are an important way for the professionals involved with a family to communicate with each other and the family, and coordinate services. The caseworker will convene regular care team meetings and encourage and support family participation in these meetings.

Depending on the circumstances, Child Protection may convene these meetings, as agreed.

3.8 Case review

Case review requirements and documentation

All [child and family care plans](#) are subject to a quarterly case review. The [best interests case practice model](#) notes that 'review is the continual process of being curious about our effectiveness'. The caseworker needs to routinely reflect upon the circumstances of the child and family based on new information and action outcomes. Interventions may need to be revised so that they remain relevant to the current circumstances.

Case reviews take place for all families every quarter, every year, occurring in the third week of December, March, June and September. The caseworker will review their cases during these weeks and bring the reviews to supervision with their team leader or program manager for discussion.

In addition to the [child and family care plan](#), the caseworker will need to complete the following documentation as part of the review:

- a [child wellbeing review](#) for each child
- a [family feedback form](#), so that the family's feedback can be incorporated into the review.

Team leaders will also complete regular audits of client files using the [client file audit tool](#) throughout involvement with the family to review that all documents and casenotes have been completed and on the file as per the client file structure.

Questions to guide the quarterly case review

Is the child safe?

What has changed in the family since work began? Are there plans in place to manage a future crisis? Has the family been effectively engaged and how do you know? Is there a pattern of concerns, either positive or negative?

Is the child meeting their developmental milestones?

What do we need to do to address each child's developmental needs as per the [child wellbeing review](#)?

Does the child have a connection to culture and Community?

Are there plans in place to support this ongoing connection? Have all attempts been made to involve extended family? Do the child and family have a sense of belonging?

Has the program been helpful?

What is the family saying about where they are now in relation to where they want to be? Have agreed goals been reached? What could the program do differently? What have been any service system constraints?

What could we do differently?

What could we do differently in the light of what we now know, and what does this child need right now? Has the family received the necessary assessments, supports and services or is something else required?

3.9 Exit planning

Exit planning requirements

It is expected that families will remain in the program for up to twelve months. The time of support can be extended in consultation with the team leader based on the needs of the family. As the family's capacity increases and they begin achieving their goals, the caseworker should begin discussing a transition and exit plan with the family.

This may involve referring the family to a less intensive internal program such as Family Services or to external programs to ensure relevant support is in place to maintain their achievements.

Cultural tips for exit planning

- Help parents to identify Community supports and establish a support network before leaving the program.
- Work through any concerns parents and children may have about the program ending, or their concerns about being referred to non-Aboriginal services.
- Give families information on relevant Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal services and check whether the Aboriginal services require proof of Aboriginality as part of their eligibility.
- Make sure families know about upcoming cultural and Community activities to remain connected to culture and Community.
- Ensure children and families know they can contact VACCA at any time should they need further support.

What if a family wants to withdraw from the program?

A family has the right to withdraw from the program at any time. The caseworker needs to encourage families to stay in the program if they feel it will benefit the family.

Where a family expresses they wish to withdraw from the program, an urgent meeting with Child Protection should take place to discuss the implications of the family's exit from the program. If Child Protection is no longer involved, consideration should be given to consulting with the community-based Child Protection practitioner.

3.10 Case closure

Case closure is an important event, providing the opportunity for all involved to reflect and review progress on goals, acknowledge the experiences gained during the program, celebrate successes and achievements and plan for the future. This should occur in a meeting with the family 2-3 weeks prior to closure. The caseworker also needs to discuss how support was delivered and seek feedback about:

- what worked well?
- What were the challenges?
- How could we improve services provided?

The caseworker will also need to inform the family that VACCA has a Continuous Quality Improvement team that will send out a feedback form to seek independent feedback to improve services we provide at VACCA.

Closing the case is a responsibility shared by the caseworker and the program manager/ operations manager or team leader. When a case is closed, the caseworker is responsible for:

- completing the [Placement prevention and reunification services closure report](#) and discussing this with the family
- sending a copy of the closure report to the family and Child Protection, if they are still involved
- sending closure letters to Child Protection and other relevant professionals
- sending a closure letter to the family using the [case closure letter template](#)
- placing copies of the closure letters and the closure report in the client file
- remove the [on-call client contact sheet](#) from the on-call file and from the back-up on-call file (Southern program only)
- complete a [closure checklist](#)
- providing the entire client file (multiple files) to their line manager for sign-off.

The caseworker's line manager is responsible for reviewing the file to ensure that the closure report and letters are completed to the required standard, and that the file has been appropriately maintained. The team leader will check IRIS for consistency of information.

The team leader or operations manager is also responsible for:

- completing a [client file audit tool](#)
- closing the case on IRIS
- advising relevant senior managers that the case has been closed
- ensuring that the client information database is updated with closure information
- closing the client file and sending for archiving, as per VACCA's policy and procedures.

The team leader is responsible for advising the Continuous Quality Improvement team of all closed cases for processes to be completed to seek independent feedback and input from community to improve the services we provide at VACCA.

3.11 Re-entry into the program

To re-enter the program, all families must go through the same referral and intake process as a new referral (as described above). Due to the nature of the program, families will generally not be eligible for re-entry once they have exited. The caseworker will need to advise families when exiting the service of other internal programs available should they require future support.

4. Child safety and wellbeing



4.1 Child safety and wellbeing

VACCA is committed to the safety and wellbeing of at risk and vulnerable children and young people and place the safety of children and young people above all else. This commitment is clearly stated in VACCA's [child safe policy](#) and is reflected throughout a range of other VACCA policy, procedures guidelines and practice. VACCA's programs and services are consistent with the [Victorian Child Safe standards](#) ensuring that a proactive approach is taken to protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect.

Staff need to be familiar with the [child safe policy](#) understand their responsibilities to keep children safe and protected from abuse and comply with procedures outlined in this policy.

More information about child safety can be found in the [client services manual](#).

4.2 Responding to concerns for a child

All children have a right to feel and be safe and to live in an environment that is free from abuse, neglect and violence. VACCA expects that staff who know or believe a child is being hurt by someone in their family or is living in a home that is unsafe will act on behalf of that child to protect them, regardless of whether this happens in course of their work or in Community.

Staff are expected to be familiar with VACCA's [child safe policy](#) that sets out roles, responsibilities and procedures to respond to and report suspected child abuse or neglect.



5. Staff safety and wellbeing



5.1 Staff safety and wellbeing

It is important for staff to keep themselves safe and well while working in the Aboriginal Stronger Families program. Working with children and families with complex needs can be challenging emotionally and physically and at times place staff in unsafe situations. Safety issues can arise in and out of the office, outside of work hours, and for Aboriginal staff in the Community.

VACCA requires you to be familiar with the [staff safety](#) and [staff wellbeing](#) policies. These policies aim to protect and maintain your safety and wellbeing.

In preparing for contact with children, young people and families, it is important staff assess and plan for potential risks (example during bushfire fire season), including how to respond to identified risks. The [staff safety](#) policy sets out the safety procedures to be followed in planning and working with children and families:

- in the office
- while attending home visits, at court or in other places
- when transporting children and families in VACCA vehicles or other forms of transport.

However critical incidents in the workplace involving or affecting staff may occur and these are defined as staff incidents.

A staff incident may include for example:

- a staff member is physically injured at work through a workplace accident
- a staff member becomes emotionally unwell through workplace bullying or vicarious trauma
- a staff member is physically or verbally threatened or assaulted by a client.

A [staff incident report](#) form must be completed where a critical staff incident has occurred.

For Aboriginal staff living and working in Community, this policy also sets out the safety procedures to follow when attending Community and cultural events.

We understand the impact our work can have on your health, in particular the impact of vicarious and intergenerational trauma for Aboriginal staff. The [staff wellbeing](#) policy outlines the things that we will do to maintain your wellbeing and the programs and services in place to support you.

We are committed to providing you with:

- access to appropriate counselling
- regular support and guidance (including debriefing) from team leaders and managers
- workplace action to reduce stress when the need arises
- training and other professional development opportunities to increase your capabilities and knowledge
- information and options for managing stress and support where required
- culturally appropriate and respectful supervision.

There are a number of other related policies and procedures that staff are required to understand and enact to reduce the risk of harm to themselves and their colleague. These procedures are generally covered under occupational health and safety and human resources policies.

Practice tips for staff safety

- Look after yourself and be aware of your wellbeing and safety, and that of your colleagues.
- Actively manage your work and personal boundaries.
- If you are part of the Aboriginal Community, be aware of your safety in Community and of triggers that may contribute to your own trauma.
- If you are concerned that your wellbeing or safety is at risk, discuss the issue with your team leader or program manager and refer to VACCA's staff wellbeing and staff safety policies.

5.2 Supervision

All VACCA caseworkers are supervised and managed according to [Our work our ways VACCA's supervision program](#). There are a range of [supervision forms](#) that are used to document supervision arrangements and record supervision.

The program conducts regular supervision that is documented in a supervision agreement for all caseworkers, team leaders and managers. Supervision is to be documented on the supervision record or unscheduled supervision record, Where the team leader or manager provides direction on a particular case, the action plan for casework section is to be completed for each client and placed on the client file.

Supervision creates opportunities for caseworkers to talk about their work, identify and address issues, develop high quality assessment and plans and reviews these plans regularly.

Please refer to the [Our work our ways VACCA's supervision program](#) for more information about supervision.

6. Quality



6.1 Quality services

VACCA is committed to providing quality services and continuously improving our services. Staff are expected to deliver efficient, effective, consistent quality services that meet legislative obligations and standards. VACCA has policies, client services program and procedure manuals, forms and templates in place to direct and manage work across programs to ensure we meet our organisational obligations and provide quality services to the Community.

The Continuous Quality Improvement team undertake internal auditing, facilitate external audits, analyse data including incident reports, feedback and complaints to support VACCA in developing, reviewing and updating policies, procedures, forms and templates.

Staff are expected to be familiar with VACCA policies, client services program and procedure manuals and use correct forms and templates. If unsure of procedures or forms to use caseworkers need to speak with their line manager, or contact the Continuous Quality Improvement team for information about where the correct information or form is located.

6.2 Responding to critical incidents

Caseworkers are expected to be familiar with VACCA's [critical client incident policy](#) and respond to critical incidents according to these procedures. It has been developed in line with the [department's critical incident management instructions](#).

This policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of staff in reporting and responding to critical incidents that involve or impacts on clients during VACCA's work with them. Caseworkers need to speak to their line manager to discuss and plan appropriate responses that need to occur and ensure that timeframes of reporting critical incidents are met.

6.3 Feedback processes

The program is to gather and receive feedback according to [VACCA's feedback guidelines](#). When families first begin in the program they are given information about how to provide positive feedback and make a complaint. When families leave the program the caseworker will need to revisit this conversation and encourage feedback. This involves talking to them about:

- how they can give feedback
- who they can give feedback to
- giving feedback anonymously
- the importance of their feedback – that it is valued and treated with respect and in the strictest confidence.

VACCA's Continuous Quality Improvement team will be advised of all closed cases and send independent feedback forms to people who access VACCA's services to seek input from community that is used to improve the services we provide at VACCA.

Information about handling complaints is contained in the client complaints section of the [client services manual](#).

Cultural tips for obtaining feedback

Aboriginal people may feel uneasy about providing feedback for a number of reasons. When asking for feedback it is important to:

- explain why feedback is important to VACCA and how it will be used
- provide them with a variety of options for feedback so they can choose the one they feel most comfortable with
- assure them that good and bad feedback is appreciated and if they prefer they can provide feedback anonymously.

6.4 Privacy and confidentiality

All staff in the program must handle personal information related to staff, service users, volunteers and third parties according to relevant legislation and VACCA's [privacy](#) and [confidentiality policy](#). It is important that all staff understand their responsibilities in protecting and managing client information, including sharing their information.

If a caseworker is concerned about the privacy and confidentiality obligations expected of them, or has trouble understanding the policy, they are asked to speak to their team leader or program manager/ operations manager.



Cultural tips for talking to families about privacy and confidentiality

Aboriginal people may have fears about the security of their information in an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation. It is important to:

- always advise children and families of their privacy rights and their right to change caseworkers if there is a conflict of interest because of family and community connections
- describe to them how you will keep their information safe and the systems in place to restrict access to their information
- encourage them to talk to you if they are worried that their information is unsafe
- address privacy concerns immediately.

Please take the time to read the privacy and information sharing section in the [client services manual](#).



7. Resources

7.1 Key legislation

The Aboriginal Stronger Families Program works within the requirements of the following legislation:

- [Children, Youth and Families Act 2005](#) (Vic.)
- [Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005](#) (Vic.)
- [Information Privacy Act 2000](#) (Vic.)
- [Health Records Act 2001](#) (Vic.)
- [Family Law Act 1975](#) (Commonwealth)
- [Family Violence Protection Act 2008](#) (Vic.)
- [Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004](#) (Vic.)
- [Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006](#) (Vic.).

A summary of each of these Acts is provided in the legislation section of the [client services manual](#).

7.2 Key sector policies and frameworks

The program is underpinned by a range of sector policies and practice frameworks. It is important that you learn about these and understand how they relate to your day-to-day practice. The most relevant sector policies and frameworks are provided below.

- [Best Interests Case Practice Model](#)
- [Program requirements for family and early parenting services in Victoria 2012](#)
- [Department of Health and Human Services standards](#)
- [Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Department of Health and Human Services policy and funding plan](#)
- [Dardee Boorai: Victorian charter of safety and wellbeing for Aboriginal children and young people \(2008\)](#)
- [Victoria's vulnerable children: our shared responsibility](#)
- [Protocol between the Department of Human Services Child Protection Service and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency \(2002\)](#)
- [Aboriginal cultural competence framework \(2008\)](#)
- [Marrung Education Plan 2016-2026](#)
- [Victorian Indigenous family violence strategy: Regional Action Group operating guidelines reference manual 2012](#)

More information about these key policies and frameworks can be found in the [client services manual](#).

7.3 Key VACCA policies and frameworks

All staff need to be familiar with and know how to locate [VACCA policies](#) as they relate to their area of work. These VACCA policies and frameworks have been developed to guide the way in which staff undertake their roles and responsibilities within the organisation.

It is your responsibility to be aware of these policies and frameworks and ensure you work within these guidelines.

All VACCA policies fall under the following key headings within the VACCA organisational folder. Please click on the hyperlinks to familiarise yourself with the policies within each of these headings:

- [Governance](#)
- [Foundation documents](#)
- [Corporate services](#)
- [Finance](#)
- [Occupational health and safety](#)
- [Human resources](#)
- [Information management](#)
- [Client services](#)
- [Quality](#)

Critical to working within the organisation is having an awareness and understanding of the [VACCA strategic plan 2015-18](#). All staff are expected to read this plan and refer to it regularly. More information about the VACCA strategic plan can be found in the [client services manual](#).

VACCA has developed a number of frameworks to support the organisation and more specifically support staff in delivering services to children and families. These include:

- [Our work, our ways: VACCA's supervision program](#)
- [Building respectful partnerships: the commitment to Aboriginal cultural competence in child and family services](#).

In addition to VACCA's policies and frameworks and strategic plan, each program area will also have an operational business and risk plan. This plan contains important information about the programs objectives, reporting requirements, targets and strategic directions. The Stronger Families Program operational plan can be obtained from your team leader or manager.

7.4 Practice tools

- [Client services manual](#)
- [Client information pack](#)
- [Aboriginal Stronger Families Program brochure](#)
- [Conducting an assessment guidelines](#)
- [Community calendar](#)

7.5 Forms

- [Client summary information](#)
- [Client file structure](#)
- [Placement Prevention and Reunification referral consult request form](#)
- [Placement prevention and reunification referral form](#)
- [On-call client contact sheet](#)
- [Stronger Families assessment](#)
- [Child and family care plan](#)
- [Home visiting tracking running sheet](#)
- [Case note template](#)
- [Brokerage summary form](#)
- [Supervision forms](#)
- [Child wellbeing review template](#)
- [Family feedback form](#)
- [Client file audit tool](#)
- [Closure checklist](#)
- [Placement prevention and reunification case closure report](#)
- [Case closure letter template](#)



