



VACCA

Connected by culture

VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE AGENCY

A large, stylized Aboriginal artwork in shades of blue and white. It features a central figure with outstretched arms, surrounded by circular patterns and other abstract shapes. The artwork is set against a dark blue background that is part of a larger decorative border on the cover.

Client Services Manual



Message from the Chief Executive Officer

Welcome to the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency otherwise known as VACCA. If I haven't had the opportunity to meet you, I look forward to this and hope you are feeling welcome and excited about working in this organisation. Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Land we are on, the Wurundjeri people and pay my respects to our ancestors, Elders past and present and the Aboriginal people we work with every day.

VACCA was established as an Aboriginal child placement agency in 1977. At the time (as today) there were high numbers of Aboriginal children being removed from their families. Children were adopted out or placed in foster homes of non-Aboriginal families and some were placed in religious and government homes. These types of placements were consistent with past government assimilation policies and resulted in many children being lost to their families and Community and in placement break down, leaving children homeless and destitute. The importance of an Aboriginal child placement agency in Victoria was critical. With the support of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and the Victorian Aboriginal Community, the Victorian Aboriginal Community led by the late Elder, Aunty Mollie Dyer established VACCA.

Since 1977, VACCA has grown from a small-unfunded organisation, to a large organisation employing up to 250 people. We remain focused on the struggles first fought by the freedom fighters and our Elders. We are committed to the healing of our Communities, the safety and wellbeing of our children, the self-determination and empowerment of our people and the celebration of cultural practices and protocols. One of the biggest struggles remains the healing of families and reducing the numbers of children in the Child Protection and the out-of-home care system.

Your commitment to this work is valued and appreciated. I expect all staff including the leadership team, managers and your peers to provide a working environment that enables you to feel and be supported and safe. Please take the time to read our internal staff safety and wellbeing policies.

This manual will help you gain a better understanding of our work and the tools you require to fulfil your role. Your line manager will support you to navigate through this manual and understand the overarching legislation and policies that guide work in this sector.

In my culture we learn through the teachings, and handing down of information and knowledge and we learn through experiences. I encourage you to share your knowledge and experiences, to ask questions of others and learn from the wisdom of others and our Elders. This is the learning culture of VACCA and one that I welcome you into.

Kind regards
Muriel Bamblett

Artist: Emma Bamblett

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1. Preface



1.1 Acknowledgements

The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) would like to thank all staff who have contributed to the development of this manual and generously shared their expert knowledge and time.

1.2 Purpose of the manual

This manual is an introductory guide for client services staff to learn about:

- the organisation, the history and continuing challenges and vision
- the programs we deliver across the organisation and how we work together
- the casework frameworks and approaches used in client service programs
- the child and family sector in Victoria.

Staff will also need to refer to their program and procedure manuals as these provide information relevant to their programs and day to day work. There is also an [introduction to out-of-home care manual](#) that provides additional information relevant to caseworkers working in out-of-home care programs.

1.3 How to use the manual

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 headings to take you directly to sections in the manual.

1.4 Language used

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'.

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.

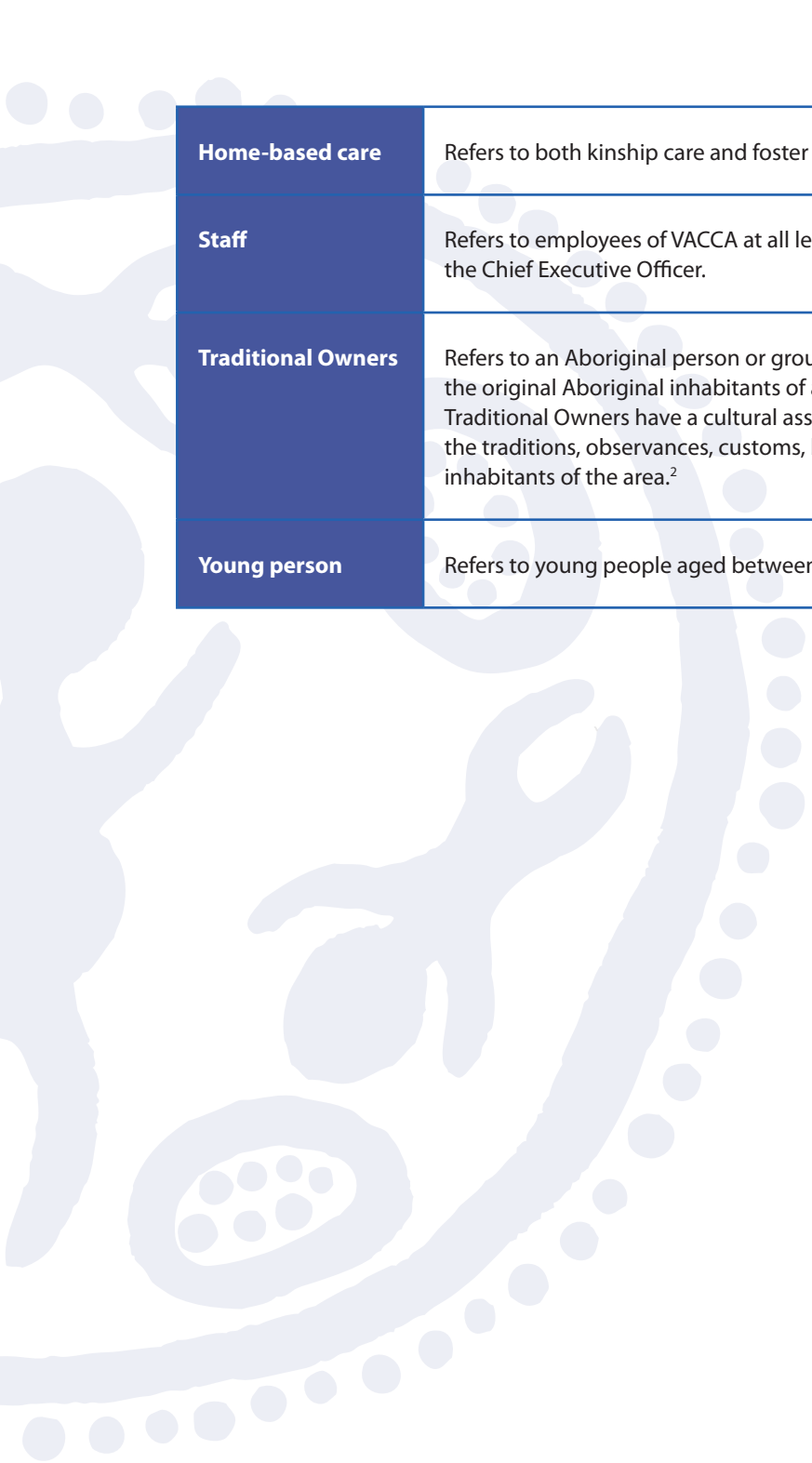
More information about language used in this manual can be found in the key terms and definitions section.

1.5 Key terms and definitions

Aboriginal	The term Aboriginal is used within this document to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
Aboriginal Community	<p>Also referred to as the Community is used in two ways in this document.</p> <p>We use <i>the</i> or <i>our</i> Community to refer to the Aboriginal Community of Victoria that is made up of different clan groups from across Australia.</p> <p>We use <i>their</i> Community to refer to the Aboriginal Community to which the child belongs. A child will belong to their Traditional Country and Community and may also belong to another Community. For example, where a child grows up and lives outside of their Community they may identify both with their Country and the Community in which they live.</p>
Care team	<p>The term care team is used in two ways depending on the context and program being delivered.</p> <p>In out-of-home care a care team refers to the group of people and family who share the responsibilities for doing the things that parents generally do, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the placement agency caseworker (VACCA caseworkers) • the carers (home-based carers or residential carers) • the Child Protection practitioner • the child's parents • other professionals involved in the care and support of the child. <p>In other programs a care team refers to a group of people that work together to support and coordinate services for a parent or other person requiring help.</p>
Care and placement plan	Refers to the plan for the care of the child while they are in out-of-home care which is the responsibility of the caseworker to develop and implement

Case plan	Refers to the statutory case plan as defined in s.166 of the <i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005</i> . This plan is sometimes also referred to as the DHS or Best Interests case plan.
Caseworker	Refers to the worker who undertakes casework and works directly with the child, family or carer. The caseworker may also have case management responsibilities.
Case manager	The person who holds the primary responsibility for coordinating support or care. Where Child Protection is involved the case manager is responsible for making sure that the case plan is implemented. Depending on the circumstances, the case manager may be the Child Protection practitioner, or the VACCA caseworker. Where a case is contracted to VACCA or VACCA is the lead agency involved with a child or family, the caseworker will be the case manager.
Child or children	A child in this document refers to children and young people aged up to 18 years.
Community	<p>Community refers to the Aboriginal Community and is used in two ways in this document.</p> <p>We use <i>the</i> or <i>our</i> Community to refer to the Aboriginal Community of Victoria that is made up of different clan groups from across Australia.</p> <p>We use <i>their</i> Community to refer to the Aboriginal Community to which the child belongs. A child will belong to their Traditional Country and Community and may also belong to another Community. For example, where a child grows up and lives outside of their Community they may identify both with their Country and the Community in which they live.</p>
CRISSP	Refers to the Client Relationship Information System for Service Providers. This is the electronic record keeping and case management system that VACCA uses for casework, for cases not case contracted. Child Protection practitioners cannot access CRISSP.
CRIS	Refers to the Client Relationship Information System. This is the department electronic record keeping and case management reporting system VACCA uses for cases that are case contracted.
Department or DHS	Refers to the Department of Human Services.
Extended care	Refers to home-based care provided by a registered carer in their own home. This is also referred to as foster care.
Elders	An Aboriginal Elder is someone who has gained recognition within their Community as a custodian of knowledge and Lore, and who has permission to disclose cultural knowledge and beliefs. Recognised Elders are highly respected people within Aboriginal Communities. ¹
Foster care	Refers to home-based care provided by a registered carer in their own home. At VACCA foster care is provided by the Extended Care program.

¹Department of Lands (1987). Aboriginal New South Wales A Pictorial Study Guide. Department of Lands Bathurst.



Home-based care	Refers to both kinship care and foster care, where carers provide care in their homes.
Staff	Refers to employees of VACCA at all levels of the organisation from caseworkers to the Chief Executive Officer.
Traditional Owners	Refers to an Aboriginal person or group of Aboriginal people directly descended from the original Aboriginal inhabitants of a culturally defined area of land or Country. Traditional Owners have a cultural association with this Country that derives from the traditions, observances, customs, beliefs or history of the original Aboriginal inhabitants of the area. ²
Young person	Refers to young people aged between 12 and 17 years of age.

²NSW Department of Health (2004). Communicating positively. A guide to appropriate Aboriginal terminology.

2. Overview of Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

2.1 History

VACCA originally began as an Aboriginal out-of-home care child placement agency in 1977. At this time the numbers of children being removed from their homes by Child Protection services was increasing. There was little if any consultation by these services with the Aboriginal Community in making placement decisions such as where the child should live and in ensuring children maintained ongoing positive contact with their families. Children removed were mostly placed with non-Aboriginal foster carers or in institutions. For many children these interventions were devastating as placements broke down and they were left homeless, alone and vulnerable.

With the support of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service the Aboriginal Community, led by the late Elder Aunty Mollie Dyer established the first Aboriginal child placement agency in Australia. Since this time VACCA has grown, while we continue to provide child placement services to the Community we also provide services and programs that support and heal children and families and celebrate culture. We provide more than a 100 child and family programs to the Community.



Photo of VACCA Staff and First Chairperson Elizabeth Hoffman (middle) Mollie Dyer (third from left) with Glenda Nicholls, Adriana Palarmara, Michael Jackomos, Graham Atkinson. 1978

A more detailed description of the historical events can be located at [timeline of VACCA development](#).

2.2 Our organisation today

Today, VACCA is the largest Aboriginal child and family organisation in Victoria. We employ over 200 people in the roles of family workers, cultural workers, counsellors, community development workers, therapists, researchers, policy advisors, trainers, artists and musicians. VACCA remains committed to the visions of the freedom fighters and Elders in protecting children, strengthening and healing families and promoting culture.



Our vision

Every three years, the VACCA leadership team in consultation with its Board and Community, develops a [strategic plan](#) that outlines our vision, and identifies the key things to be achieved in the next three years.

From 2012 to 2015 our vision is for our children, young people and families and Community to be thriving culturally strong empowered and safe.

To achieve the vision and purpose VACCA will:

- 1) Provide programs that:
 - promote and protect the physical and cultural safety of children
 - heal and empower families
 - promote Aboriginal cultural practice and comply with Aboriginal protocols and ceremony in effecting positive change
 - support kinship systems of care and Aboriginal child rearing practices
 - provide an Aboriginal trauma informed approach.
- 2) Promote Aboriginal self-determination and governance by advocating to government at the highest levels to:
 - respect and promote our culture
 - promote Aboriginal self-determination by ensuring Aboriginal services are managed and delivered by Aboriginal people
 - ensure consultation occurs with the Community in developing new Aboriginal programs to ensure their appropriateness
 - allocate appropriate funding for Aboriginal service delivery
 - create funding models that enable services to provide culturally appropriate services to our children and families¹.

¹Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Response to the Inquiry by the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA). May 2011.

- 3) Prioritise the commitment to quality improvement to provide services of the highest quality. In this role we will develop an Aboriginal outcomes framework and embed continuous quality improvement processes throughout our organisation.

Our partnerships

VACCA has a number of key partnerships with a variety of organisations. Partnerships are created through formal arrangements such as memorandum of understandings, participation in cross-agency committees, reference groups and time limited projects. Our partnerships relate to the following four areas:

- 1) Service delivery – we work in partnership with community service organisations and government to deliver services to the Community. For example, VACCA has a family violence partnership with Berry Street where we deliver a joint family violence service. VACCA also has a formal protocol with the Department of Human Services (department) which describes how we work together to protect children who are reported to Child Protection and strengthen families.
- 2) Trauma research and treatment – for example we have a formal partnership with Take Two and La Trobe University and Mindful.
- 3) Education – we are partners with La Trobe and Melbourne Universities, Take Two, the Bouverie Centre and the department in the design and delivery of the Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma in Child and Family Welfare Practice Leadership.
- 4) Research projects – we develop partnerships with other services as opportunities arise.

Our work environment

Working at VACCA provides a different experience from working in other private, government or community service organisations.

At VACCA we are in some ways like a big family, we look after our staff, as staff help us to look after the Community.

“VACCA provides a sense of Community”. Comments made by VACCA staff member at 2012 Staff Forum

Our aim is to create a culturally strong, vibrant and professional working environment that promotes and protects the wellbeing of Aboriginal children, young people and families in the Community.

Some of the key factors that make our organisation unique are that:

- we are an Aboriginal Community controlled organisation
- we have an Aboriginal Chief Executive Officer
- we advocate for the cultural rights and safety of Aboriginal children and families in all our dealings
- we model our work and practice on an Aboriginal way of doing business
- we strive to strengthen culture by delivering culturally strong programs
- we prioritise the wellbeing and cultural safety of staff and Community
- we understand the damage to our Communities under past government policies and practices and the healing that needs to occur.

There are a number of key [foundational documents](#) and [policies](#) staff will need to be familiar with and understand. These include (but are not limited to) Child Safe, Code of conduct and Aboriginal Professionalism policies.

Managers will need to provide staff with all relevant human resource and occupational health and safety policies. It is the responsibility of team leaders and managers to ensure all staff are aware of these documents and are clear in how they relate to staff on a day to day basis.

What makes VACCA different from others

The primary difference between our organisation and other non-Aboriginal child and family organisations is that we understand and prioritise culture and the rights of the Community.

- Our workplace prioritises culture and ensures culture is embedded in the way we do business.
- We employ Aboriginal staff and non-Aboriginal staff that share our vision and commitment to culture and self-determination.
- We organise cultural events, revive cultural practices and encourage staff to attend.
- We help families learn about their ancestry and maintain contact with their extended families.
- We are respectful of Aboriginal Lore and social and cultural protocols.
- We celebrate and promote all forms of cultural expression in our workplace and the events we attend.
- We use traditional and Aboriginal English in everyday business.
- We preserve and hand down stories of Aboriginal history and legacies of past and present Elders.
- We prioritise the cultural planning of children in out-of-home care so they remain connected and strong.



Our challenges in the child and family sector

The over-representation of children in the welfare system

One of the biggest challenges in our work continues to be the over-representation of children in the Child Protection and out-of-home care systems and the healing of families. The reasons for this are complex and are primarily a result of past government policies and practices resulting in:

- the disempowerment of Aboriginal people through the forcible removal of children from their families and Community (Stolen Generations)
- the forcible removal and ongoing dispossession of people from their Traditional Lands
- the loss of language, ceremony and cultural practices
- the past and present marginalisation, racism and disempowerment experienced by the Community.

These actions resulted in the destruction of Communities and high levels of trauma, loss and grief. This has been inherited from one generation to the next resulting in families struggling to care for themselves and parent and the continued removal of children from their families².

As the rate of Child Protection reports and out-of-home care placements increase our role in ensuring children's physical and cultural safety remains the highest priority.

Child Protection data for Victoria

- In 2011-12, Aboriginal children were almost 10 times more likely to be the subject of substantiated child abuse and neglect than non-Aboriginal children. While substantiation rates increased for all Victorian children, substantiations were higher for Aboriginal children (25.4 per cent compared to 18.6 per cent).
- At 30 June 2012, the rate of Aboriginal children on orders was nearly 15 times that of non-Aboriginal children.
- At 30 June 2012, there were 1,028 Aboriginal children in out-of-home care. Aboriginal children were almost 16 times more likely than non-Aboriginal children to be in care (the highest rate in Australia).
- The increase of Aboriginal children being placed in out-of-home care in Victoria is significantly higher than non-Aboriginal children. From 2011 to 2012, this was significantly higher for Aboriginal children (17.2 per cent) and Non-Aboriginal children (8.6 per cent)³.

While we acknowledge the ongoing challenges faced by the Community, we also acknowledge the resilience and strengths in families and the Community. We will draw on these strengths and use culture to protect and heal children and families.

²<http://www.aifs.gov.au/cfca/pubs/factsheets/a142117#a6>

³AIHW 2011-12 Child Protection Australia report, The full report is at <http://aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129542755>



3. Our Community

To work respectfully with the Aboriginal Community it is necessary for staff to learn about who we are, our diversity, our strengths and the ongoing challenges we face on a day to day basis.

3.1 Population

Victoria's Aboriginal population is made up of Aboriginal people from Victoria as well as Aboriginal people from interstate that have made Victoria their home⁴. Information is provided below on the demographics of the Community.

- Victoria is the second most populated State or Territory in Australia yet Aboriginal people only make up 0.7% of Victoria's population.
- There are approximately 33,317 thousand Aboriginal people living in Victoria.
- Nearly half of the Aboriginal population in Victoria are under 19 years of age
 - children (aged between 0-17 years) make up nearly half (43.5 per cent) of the total Aboriginal population of Victoria
 - there are 14,578 Aboriginal children and young people living in Victoria.
- The proportion of Aboriginal children living in rural Victoria is higher than metropolitan Victoria across all age groups⁵.
- The male to female distribution of Aboriginal children is exactly divided. Of the 14,578 children in Victoria, 50 per cent are male and 50 per cent are female.
- The population of Aboriginal children is almost double the proportion of non-Aboriginal children (43.5 per cent compared to 23.6 per cent).
- It is projected that the number of Aboriginal children in Victoria will increase by 22.9 per cent by 2021⁶.
- There are a very high proportion of single parent families in Victoria, with 1.2 per cent of these families being Aboriginal. Considering the Community only makes up 0.7 per cent of the population this is extremely high.

VACCA would like staff to reflect on what these statistics mean for our Community and the work we do. For more information about Aboriginal children in Victoria staff can read [The State of Victoria children 2009: Aboriginal children and young people in Victoria](#).

⁴The State of Victoria children 2009: Aboriginal children and young people in Victoria

⁵DHS Information Sheet – Local Aboriginal Population 15/2/2013. Full list is available on the Z:manuals/client services/key documents/DHS Aboriginal population data

⁶"Experiential estimates and projects, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians"; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1991-2021, Cat. No. 3238.0, ABS, 2009; "Population by age and sex, Australian states and territories, Cat No. 3201.0, ABS, 2007, Preliminary ERP.

3.2 Language

Prior to colonisation there were 40 languages spoken in Victoria, while colonisation decimated many Aboriginal languages there is a strong movement in the Community to revive language. Language is an important part of identity and continues to be a defining feature of Aboriginal identity.

The Aboriginal language of Victoria map provides an overview of the local Aboriginal languages and the connections between language and Country. VACCA would like you to go to the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation of Languages website and inform yourself so that you have a better cultural understanding of the families we work for and with.

As our Aboriginal population also includes families from interstate and families who have family living interstate, staff will need to know how to access information about the Aboriginal language groups from other parts of the Country. Internet links to both the map of Aboriginal Languages of Victoria and the Aboriginal languages of Australia are provided below.

Staff can access more information from the [Aboriginal languages of Victoria](#) and [ABConline Indigenous - interactive map](#).



Aboriginal English

Aboriginal people in Victoria will often use Aboriginal English also known as Koorie English and Koorie Lingo to communicate with one another. Staff will hear Aboriginal staff using this language at work to speak to one another and with children and families in contact with our service. While there are common Aboriginal English words used by all Aboriginal people, words and expressions in this language will vary across Communities to reflect cultural and tribal differences of clan groups.

Some of the features of Aboriginal language, which makes it distinctly different from English, is the accent, the mixture of Aboriginal dialect words and English words and the rhythm of speech and body language. People unaware of Aboriginal English will often assume people speaking this language have a poor grasp of English. However, this is not the case, Aboriginal English speakers observe rules different to those used in standard English. For example, language is highly contextualised, direct requests are often avoided and body language is used to support words.

For many Aboriginal people Aboriginal English is often the first form of English they learn and is the preferred language when communicating with their family and Community.

VACCA has put together some common [Aboriginal English words](#) used by the Community to help staff understand children and families. Non-Aboriginal staff should not use Aboriginal English without first asking permission from the Aboriginal people they are communicating with. If non-Aboriginal staff do not understand words used by Aboriginal people we encourage you to ask the person speaking what they mean. You may also want to speak the Aboriginal staff at work and they will explain this to you. More information and resources are available about [Aboriginal English](#).



3.3 Tribes

Today many clan groups (or tribes) live outside or away from their traditional Country. This does not mean their connection or responsibilities towards land is unimportant, but rather a consequence of past government policies (the forcible removal of Aboriginal people from land) and modern society. Families move away from Country for work, marriage and other reasons.

All staff will need to know the names of the Victorian clans and where they are from. Learning about the local Communities and the families you are working with will help you to:

- build respectful relationships with local Aboriginal people including Elders
- understand how Victorian Aboriginal families are related to each other and their networks
- undertake casework tasks to support culture.

At VACCA it is our practice to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country and Aboriginal people in the room before starting a meeting. This shows respect and the significance of being on Aboriginal land.



4. Working with Aboriginal children and families

4.1 Introduction

VACCA employs both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff to provide services and programs to the Community. Regardless of cultural background, staff are expected to learn about Aboriginal culture and continuously reflect on their practice to ensure they are culturally appropriate at all times.

VACCA provides a number of opportunities and resources to assist staff in this role. These include:

- the support and teachings of Aboriginal staff
- VACCA publications including [Building Respectful Partnerships](#) and the [Working with Aboriginal children and families: A guide for Child Protection and Child and Family Welfare workers](#) cross cultural training
- reflective practice
- on the job guidance
- opportunities to attend cultural activities, Community events and other programs.

4.2 Engagement and empowerment of families

Dealing with Child Protection services and with agencies such as VACCA can be confronting for vulnerable families. VACCA acknowledges there are many barriers that impact on children and families being comfortable and confident in attending our services. The factors staff will need to consider and be mindful of in their engagement with the Community are many.

To help you in this role we have identified some of the key issues impacting on families so that you have the knowledge to appropriately support families in a respectful way.

Families in contact with VACCA may:

- be dealing with significant grief and loss and trauma directly experienced and via intergenerational trauma
- have identity issues – they may not be comfortable identifying as Aboriginal as a result of past government policies and practices
- be disconnected from their family and Community
- be fearful of services affiliated with Child Protection services due to past experiences
- be mistrustful of services because they have been let down in the past
- be in contact with Child Protection which has contributed to feelings of anger, powerlessness and hopelessness
- may be concerned they will be known by other Aboriginal staff in the workplace

Staff will need to create a culturally safe and supportive environment where family are and feel respected and comfortable attending meetings and appointments and activities. Children are always to be supported to maintain positive relationships with their family where possible.

VACCA has developed some engagement tips to help with building relationships and putting families at ease. Staff will need to further inform themselves by learning from Aboriginal staff and Elders and undertake further reading.

Engagement tips

Use plain English.	Avoid using sophisticated language or ACRONYMs in conversations.
Build trust.	Spend time getting to know a child, family or carer before asking them to share personal information with you. Share information (as appropriate) about yourself to build trust and relationships. This can be done through an informal way of 'yarning'.
Ask permission.	Always ask the permission of the person before raising a personal or traumatic subject or talking about the child or families business with them.
Be respectful of men and women's business.	<p>Staff need to ensure they are sensitive to men and women's business. There are rules, customs, norms and practices performed separately by men and women. Traditionally these practices were strictly monitored and there were severe penalties for breaking these. Some examples of this in modern day practice are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if you are working with a husband and wife ask whether they are comfortable with you meeting with either of them alone • when meeting with couples ensure focus is directed at both equally as appropriate • ensure topics for conversations are appropriate to be held in the company of / and with both men and women. <p>If you are unsure about how men and women's business relates to your work speak with Aboriginal staff or Elders for guidance and advice.</p>
Be aware of how Aboriginal people make decisions.	Aboriginal people will usually take time to consider a question, form an opinion and reach a decision. Aboriginal people make decisions by talking to their family and their Elders. Be respectful and allow children and families the appropriate time to think things through. Do not force them into making decisions they are not comfortable with or will not agree to later because they felt pressured.
Be sensitive.	Be aware of power differences and language and literacy issues. Be aware that not one size fits all. Aboriginal people are not the same, they will not have the same cultural knowledge, interests and experiences.

Be aware of shaming.	Aboriginal people can be shamed or feel shame very easily. Inappropriate behaviour by staff such as forcing children and families into positions they haven't consented to or asking direct questions that make them feel uncomfortable in front of people of the opposite sex can cause shame and is culturally inappropriate for the person or family.
Read body language.	Aboriginal people will often use non-verbal communication. An understanding of this communication style is important.
Involve family and kin as appropriate.	When working with families, remember that some family members will have more responsibility than others in caring for the child and their wellbeing. Ensure all family members are given a voice (as appropriate).
Elders.	Elders are to be treated with great respect and have an important role in providing leadership, education and cultural learning. They are key decision makers within the Community.
Be respectful and understanding of Sorry Business.	<p>Sorry Business refers to the death of a family or Community member and the mourning process. Sorry Business includes attending funerals and taking part in mourning activities with the family and Community.</p> <p>It is extremely important for Aboriginal people to participate in Sorry Business as they have a spiritual and cultural obligation to say goodbye to the person who has died and show their respect to the family.</p>
Be aware of your communication style.	<p>Be aware of how you may present to Aboriginal people you work with. How does the family see you?</p> <p>Your relationship with the child and family will be influenced by their perceptions of how genuine you appear, how open you are to new ways and ideas, how understanding you are of their history, how respectful you are to Elders, how insightful you are. Make it a priority to reflect on your engagement approach and buddy up with another Aboriginal person.</p>
Be upfront about your role and reporting responsibilities if there are any.	In your first meeting with the family explain the differences in roles and responsibilities between VACCA and other services and Child Protection. Be clear about the aims of the program, your role and of wanting to incorporate cultural approaches into your work. Give them opportunities to ask questions and answer them respectfully.
Be aware that the families contact may not be voluntary.	While VACCA programs are voluntary, families can be directed by Child Protection or court ordered to participate in programs. In these cases families may view VACCA as being 'on the side of' Child Protection services and not to be trusted.
Explain how their information is kept safe at VACCA.	Talk to children and families about how their information will be kept private and safe at VACCA. Explain the privacy and confidentiality policy . Discuss any privacy issues they may have and their rights to complain if they believe their privacy has been compromised.

4.3 Valuing culture in all interactions with families

The importance of kinship systems

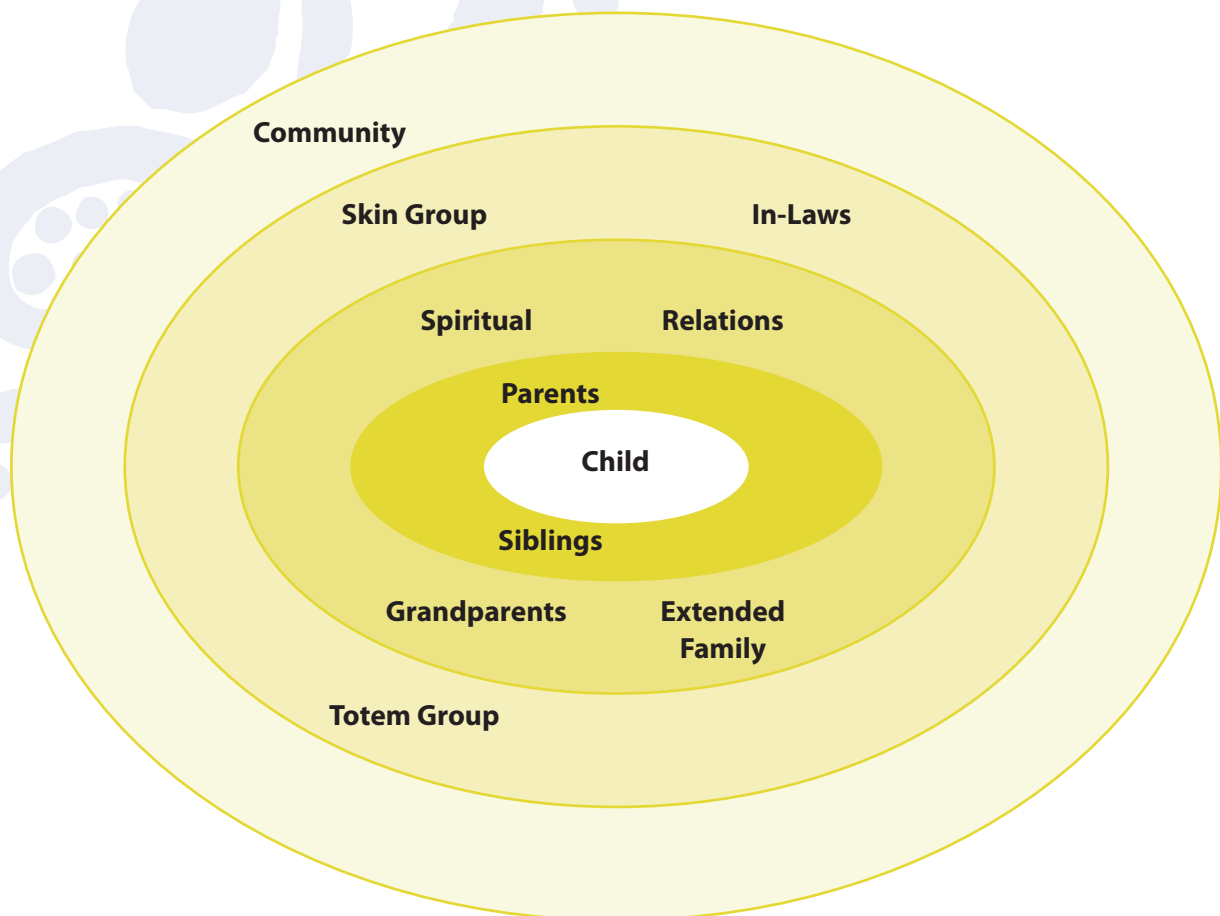
Aboriginal kinship systems continue to be a cultural strength of Aboriginal families and Communities⁸. In the kinship system the responsibilities for raising children and providing for their day to day needs is shared by members of the child's family, extended family and Community. From a very young age children are told about their relationships and links to others, and are taught to show respect to Elders. They are taught that these people are important in their life; they will support them and they can rely on them, they are family.

This practice is described by Aboriginal Elder, Pat Kopusar he says,

*"So, we must ask the question: What is normal for Aboriginal children and what is an Aboriginal family? One picture would look like this: A child is born into a group; they would immediately be part of a tribe; there would be many carers with differing roles and many responsibilities. There would also be one, two or three mothers and fathers; there would always be someone to look after and care for the child in a special way, and others who would have responsibility to provide different necessities"*⁹

Kinship relationships explained

This circle details the key relationships and links that are part of the child's kinship network. The definitions applied to each of these relationships must be seen from an Aboriginal perspective to understand the true value and role of the relationships. This is described below.



⁸Respectful Partnerships p 25

⁹Cultural Foundation of Aboriginal Kinship Care, VACCA.

Parents

For Aboriginal people this can include the birth mother, birth father, spiritual mother and father and their brothers and sisters. Aunties and Uncles (in particular the parents siblings) can also be called mum and dad.

Siblings

For Aboriginal people half brothers and sisters hold the same importance as full brothers and sisters. Cousins can be seen as brothers and sisters, they may be called cousin brother or cousin sister.

Extended family

For Aboriginal people the extended family is very large. It includes their birth parents first and second cousins, their grandparents' brothers and sisters. It also includes people from the clan group, even when the blood relationship is very far away.

Grandparents

For Aboriginal people this includes their paternal and maternal grandparents, their grandparents' brothers and sisters and cousins. It also includes spiritual grandparents.

Spiritual relations

For Aboriginal people this can include people not necessarily related by blood, but given to a child to act as a parent, grandparent, or an Elder of one's tribe and Community.

Skin group/totem and in-laws

For Aboriginal people sharing the same skin name or totem indicates a relationship, (men and women do not share skin names, a totem could be an animal or plant and must be respected), partners of relations, ie; a cousin's wife or husband.

Respect for kinship systems

Family structures are critical in developing the sense of identity for all children. Aboriginal kinships systems are primarily embracing and inclusive in nature. These kinship systems set out how all members are related and their position or status within the clan group, all of which have a foundation based on a relationship to Country.

It is important that staff understand and respect kinships systems as:

- they recognise the cultural wealth that comes from many people living together
- they understand that an Aboriginal child belongs to a complex family system and that these cannot be reduced and simplified to western understandings of family and responsibilities
- they listen to the child's family and the Community
- they develop a genogram with the family to identify all of the family, their relationships to one another and their responsibilities towards the child
- they listen and learn from Elders and recognise their strengths and knowledge and role in raising children to have and build strong cultural and Community connections
- they support families to re-establish contact and reconnect as appropriate.



Cultural tip

Working with family and Community can be emotionally confronting and difficult for everyone involved. Always remember the families you work with are not the same- their culture, what they value and hold dear, how they live and make decisions and relationships will be different¹⁰. Ensure you learn about the families prior to contact to ensure you are sensitive, respectful and protective of the child and family. It is good practice to check with other Aboriginal staff to ensure your contact is culturally respectful and is in the best interests of the child and family.

[Working with Aboriginal children and families: A guide for Child Protection and Child and Family Welfare workers](#) and [Cultural foundations of Aboriginal kinship care](#) and [Building Respectful Partnerships](#) provide more information about working with our families.

The importance of Aboriginal child rearing

Past government assimilation policies and practice involved forcibly removing children from their families. Family's fortunate enough to keep their children were prohibited from speaking their language and teaching their children culture. To ensure compliance with this practice government authorities regularly checked and reported on parents and families. Families who were considered non-compliant had their children removed. Despite these practices Aboriginal culture and child rearing practices have survived.

As many Aboriginal stories have been lost to families, they are often unaware that some of their values and childrearing knowledge stems from their culture.

Caseworkers will need to learn about Aboriginal child rearing practices to support vulnerable families and carers to raise children with a strong culture and identity. To help with this learning we provide a few of the common Aboriginal child rearing practices. Please undertake further reading and guidance from Aboriginal staff and Elders.



Reaffirming the role of the family in raising children

In Aboriginal culture the care and responsibility for raising children including educating, discipline, and teaching is shared within the family. It is normal for children to be grown up by members of their extended family and for them to make decisions for the child and take responsibility.

Creating opportunities to learn about culture

In Aboriginal culture children growing up are introduced to all members of their family and taught the relationships. They are taught culture by being taken to places of significance, learning the stories of the past, spending time with family and in Community, attending cultural and Community events and learning the significance of important Aboriginal events.

¹⁰Building Respectful Partnerships pg 24

The importance of looking after family and what this means

In Aboriginal culture family responsibility requires that children and family members share their possessions. It is common for children to share the same bed and to sleep with other family members of the same gender. Children are taught to take responsibility for younger children and other family members

Case workers wanting to undertake further reading should read [Growing up our way: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child rearing practice matrix](#).

Children's rights to culture

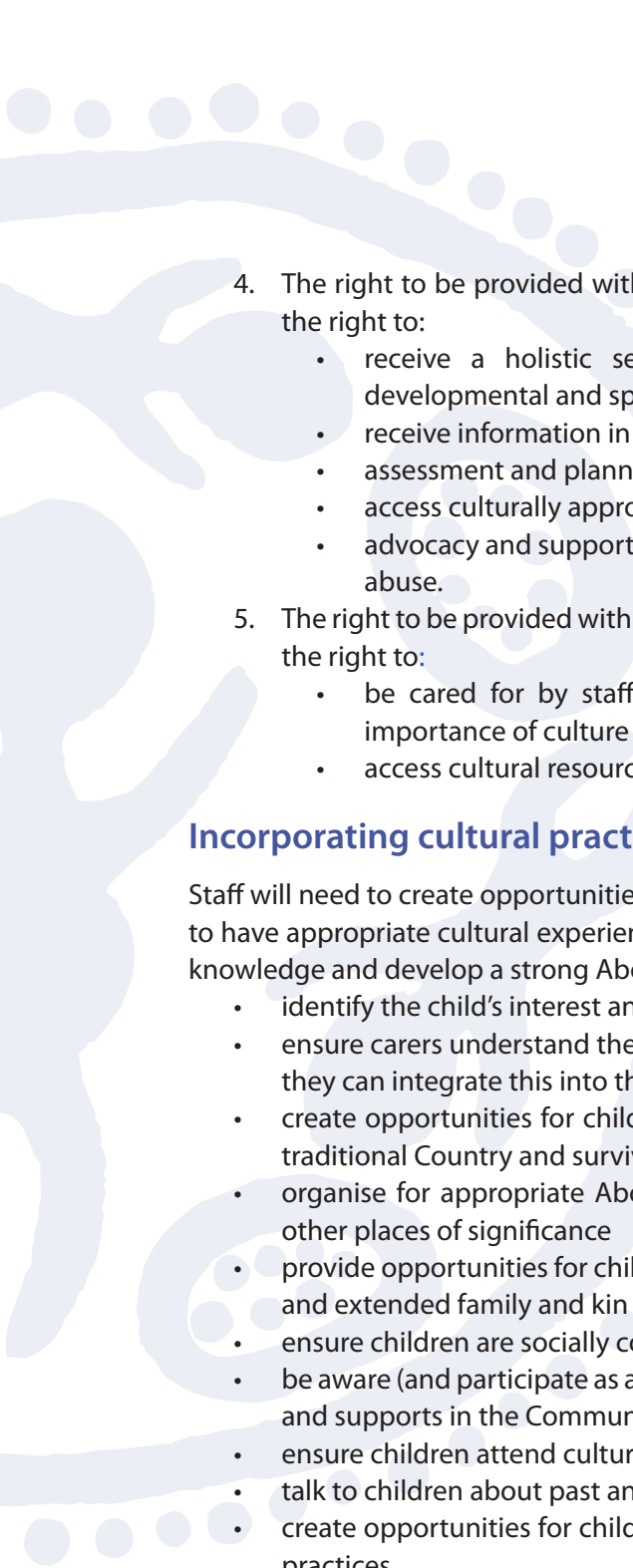
All staff need to ensure they understand and promote the rights of the child including their cultural rights in their planning, decision-making and actions. This involves an understanding of what their cultural rights are and the practical things you can do to ensure their cultural rights are met. This responsibility is usually the role of the family and the child's Community, however when children are in care this responsibility falls on us.

It is also our responsibility to help families who have been disconnected from culture to bring this back into their lives and support them to heal and raise children to be strong in identity and culture.

Supporting families to raise their children according to Aboriginal customs and culture is a priority for VACCA, particularly for children who have been removed from their family and Community.

These are five key cultural rights children are entitled to:

1. The right to maintain connections with Aboriginal people including the right to:
 - develop and maintain strong connections with their kinship group
 - be connected to their Aboriginal Community
 - maintain or have fostered peer relationships with other Aboriginal children
 - have strong cultural mentors
 - socialise and participate in recreational activities with other Aboriginal children.
2. The right to maintain and be involved in Aboriginal forms of expression including the right to:
 - learn about and speak their language
 - access and participate in artistic cultural expressions such as music, drama, arts and crafts and dance
 - access and participate in cultural sports events
 - attend and participate in ceremonies such as corroborees and to learn their rites of passage as determined by their ancestors.
3. The right to be involved and develop their cultural understanding and knowledge including the right to:
 - live in an environment that actively promotes positive cultural values and associated experiences such as adherence to men's and women's business
 - maintain their social and cultural obligations
 - be taught their cultural heritage by Community Elders and respected others within Community
 - the right to visit and be connected to their Traditional Lands.

- 
4. The right to be provided with and have access to information and service access including the right to:
 - receive a holistic service response that caters for their physical, emotional, developmental and spiritual needs within a cultural framework
 - receive information in a culturally sensitive, relevant and accessible manner
 - assessment and planning processes that take into account their cultural needs
 - access culturally appropriate supports and services
 - advocacy and support from all services for experiences of racism and broader cultural abuse.
 5. The right to be provided with the day to day experiences that reflect cultural values including the right to:
 - be cared for by staff and managers and an organisation that are aware of the importance of culture and seek to actively promote their cultural wellbeing
 - access cultural resources as part of their daily living experience¹¹.

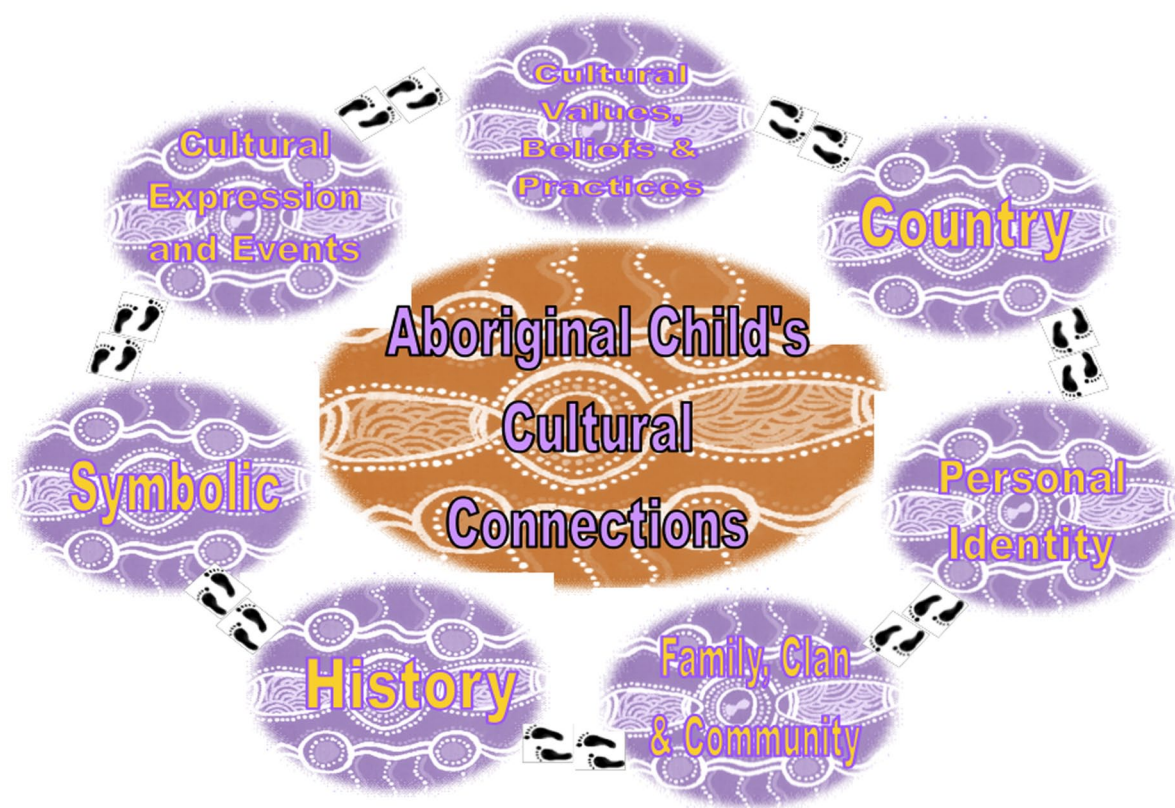
Incorporating cultural practices in casework

Staff will need to create opportunities and provide support to families and carers to enable children to have appropriate cultural experiences and activities that foster their learning, grow their cultural knowledge and develop a strong Aboriginal identity. Staff will:

- identify the child's interest and incorporate culture into activities
- ensure carers understand the importance of Aboriginal child rearing and learn about this so they can integrate this into their own practice
- create opportunities for children to learn about their Aboriginal history, people, language, traditional Country and survival stories
- organise for appropriate Aboriginal people to take them to their traditional Country and other places of significance
- provide opportunities for children to have regular and positive contact with their immediate and extended family and kin as appropriate
- ensure children are socially connected with other Aboriginal people
- be aware (and participate as appropriate) in the cultural events and programs VACCA delivers and supports in the Community
- ensure children attend cultural and Community activities and events
- talk to children about past and present history, Aboriginal leaders and Elders
- create opportunities for children to meet Elders and learn about cultural beliefs, values and practices.

¹¹Cultural foundations of Aboriginal Kinship Care

VACCA has developed a conceptual map to describe the key cultural connections for Aboriginal children and help staff understand what the cultural elements are and how they may approach conversations with the child about their exposure to culture, knowledge and interest.



The prompts below can be used to explore questions of identity and culture with the child and develop a plan.

- Who you are (personal identity) – knowing you are an Aboriginal person, knowing your family name.
- Who you belong to (family, Community) – knowing your family and family connections, your clan and language group.
- Where you belong (Country) – knowing your Traditional Land and the stories and totems of that Land.
- Where you come from (family history, Aboriginal history) – knowing your personal history, the history of your family and the history of Aboriginal peoples.
- What you do (cultural expression and events) – participating in cultural events – creative, sporting and Community events, learning Aboriginal English and traditional Aboriginal words.
- What you believe (cultural values, beliefs and practices) – values like prioritising family relationships and responsibilities, respecting Elders, sharing.
- What symbolises your Aboriginal culture – things like the Aboriginal flag, Aboriginal art or music, Aboriginal role models¹².

¹²Kinship Care, Discussion Paper



Right to confirmation of Aboriginality

Being able to provide proof of Aboriginality is often required when applying for Aboriginal programs and services in Victoria. All children in VACCA out-of-home care programs must have a confirmation of Aboriginality letter before they leave care. Caseworkers will need to be aware of and understand the [Confirmation of Aboriginality policy](#) and their role and responsibility in ensuring children obtain their confirmation letter. Team leaders and managers in out-of-home care will need to ensure staff this work is undertaken.

5. Overview of client services

Our client services branch delivers a broad range of programs to the Community. Because of the varied range of programs, children and families can be supported by more than one program at a time. Our capacity to provide multiple programs means that we have the potential to provide high quality and culturally appropriate programs. This flow chart sets out the client services programs and management structures in the organisation.

Due to the pace at which the client services branch is growing the *client [services organisational chart](#)* is hyperlinked here.

5.1 Working together

It is VACCAs expectation that all programs work together to provide high quality services to children and families. Staff will need to learn about the other programs in this organisation.

In working together we can:

- deepen our understanding of the child and family's needs
- pool resources
- provide a wraparound service at many levels
- address multiple needs and meet case goals
- intensively support children and families.

We acknowledge that working together also brings challenges such as:

- staff having different views about case approaches and levels of risk
- carriage of responsibility for cases
- case tasks overlapping
- complexities of supporting different family members within one family.

Staff will work together to deliver high quality services to the Community.

These challenges create opportunities for staff to discuss problems and share their knowledge in the best interests of the child. Staff will have different views based on their own experiences and this is a healthy part of discussion. Where issues arise that are difficult to resolve these will be referred to team leaders and managers to resolve.

A key reference for staff is the [VACCA programs internal referrals](#) document. This provides a summary of all client services programs including their targets, eligibility and service location. Using this resource caseworkers can make appropriate referrals to other internal programs increasing our capacity to provide culturally appropriate and high quality supports.

5.2 Client services programs

A brief snapshot of the client services programs is provided here. More information about these programs can be obtained by clicking on the hyperlinks for each program and procedure manual.

Lakidjeka Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support (ACSASS) Program

Lakidjeka ACSASS provides expert advice and case consultation to Child Protection about culturally appropriate interventions in respect of all Aboriginal child protection reports. Lakidjeka also provides advice to Child Protection on all significant decisions affecting Aboriginal children.

- [Lakidjeka Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support Service \(ACSASS\)](#)

Early intervention and family services

Early intervention and family services programs provide support to vulnerable children and families. The support families receive from programs will depend on their level of need and vulnerability. These programs aim to strengthen families and keep families together. Further information can be found in the following manuals.

- [Integrated Family Services Program](#)
- [Southern Aboriginal Liaison worker](#)
- [Aboriginal Stronger Families Program](#)
- [Aboriginal Family Restorations Program](#)
- [Wilka Kwe Program](#)
- [Cradle to Kinder Program](#)
- [Aboriginal Family-Led Decision-Making](#)
- [Koorie Connect](#)
- [Playgroups](#)

Out-of-home care programs

VACCA out-of-home care programs play an important role in growing Aboriginal children up in a culturally strong and safe way when they are unable to live at home. They provide high quality and culturally appropriate services to children, families and their carers to promote culture, safety, stability, healthy development within a cultural framework and understanding. Further information can be found in the following manuals.

- [Introduction to Out-of-home Care](#)
- [Aboriginal Kinship Care Program](#)
- [Aboriginal Residential Care Program](#)
- [Extended Care Program](#)
- [Aboriginal Permanent Care Program](#)
- [Koorie Cultural Placement and Support Program](#)
- [Aboriginal Adolescent Community Placement House](#)
- [Aboriginal Leaving Care Program](#)
- [Cultural Support Plan Program](#)
- [Aboriginal Childrens Healing Team](#)

Family violence programs

Family violence programs provide support to women and children experiencing family violence and at risk of violence. The Orana Gunyah facility in Morwell provides a safe place for Aboriginal women and their children from across Victoria to go. Further information can be found in the following manuals.

- [Orana Gunyah](#)
- [Aboriginal Family Violence Programs](#)

Homelessness programs

The youth homelessness service provides Aboriginal young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with case management, assessment, support and referral to address accommodation needs. Further information can be found in the following manual.

- [Kurnai Youth Homelessness Program](#)

Cultural and Community engagement programs

By strengthening Aboriginal children's cultural awareness, identity and connection to Community we build their resilience.

All client service programs deliver and facilitate cultural and Community engagement programs in their regions. In addition to this VACCA has a cultural programs team based at the East Brunswick office to facilitate organisational wide Community activities in this area.

Our cultural programs provide opportunities for Aboriginal children to connect with Elders, musicians and artists from the Community so they can learn about and actively contribute to their own culture in ways that are relevant and meaningful to them.

Our cultural programs:

- strengthen children's experience, understanding and knowledge of Aboriginal culture
- build respectful relationships with local Aboriginal Elders and artists who become positive role models and mentors to the young participants
- support young Aboriginal people to participate in and contribute to the maintenance and revival of Victorian Aboriginal cultural practices and arts.

VACCA provides the Koorie Connect program, this is a Community support and referral service. The East Brunswick program also provides an internet cafe for the Community to drop in, have a coffee, use the internet and be assisted. Other programs that are provided include My Moola and Koorie Faces.



Link-Up Victoria

Link-Up Victoria supports Aboriginal people over the age of 18 who were adopted, placed in foster care, institutionalised, or forcibly removed, to trace and be reunited with their families.

5.3 Contact details for VACCA offices

North West VACCA

Preston office

273 High Street
Preston VIC 3072

Ph: (03) 9480 7300

Fax: (03) 9484 5403

East Brunswick VACCA

East Brunswick office

139 Nicholson Street
East Brunswick VIC 3057

PO Box 494 Northcote Plaza

Northcote VIC 3070

Ph: (03) 8388 1855

Fax: (03) 8388 1898

Eastern VACCA

Ringwood office

10 Maroondah Hwy
Ringwood VIC 3134

PO BOX 635

Ringwood VIC 3134

Ph: (03) 9871 9000

Fax: (03) 9879 4224

Southern 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

Gippsland VACCA

Morwell office

25-27 Rintoull Street

Morwell VIC 3840

PO Box 39

Morwell VIC 3840

Ph: (03) 5135 6055

Fax: (03) 5135 6772

6. Overview of the child and family sector

6.1 Introduction to the child and family sector in Victoria

When people talk about the child and family sector they generally mean the services and programs delivered and funded by Government to vulnerable children and families. Introductory information is provided on the key services providers here.

Key service providers in the sector

Aboriginal Community controlled organisations

Elected members of the Aboriginal Community govern these organisations. VACCA is the largest Community controlled organisation in the child and family sector in Victoria. There are a number of other Aboriginal Community-controlled organisations providing child and family services in Victoria. Some of the larger organisations are provided in the table below.

Aboriginal community controlled organisation	Location and contacts
Aborigines Advancement League	Thornbury
Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative	Ballarat
Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative	Bendigo
Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative (GEGAC)	Bairnsdale
Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Co-operative	Horsham
Gunditjmara Aboriginal Co-operative	Warrnambool
Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS)	Mildura
Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place	Ringwood
Mungabareena	Wodonga
Njernda Aboriginal Cooperative	Echuca
Ramahyuck & District Aboriginal Corporation	Sale
Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative	Shepparton
Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative	Geelong
Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation	Haywood

Community service organisations

Elected members of the wider Australian community govern these organisations. The Aboriginal Community may also access these services. VACCA plays a key role in supporting these organisations to deliver culturally appropriate services to the Community. We do this by:

- delivering cultural competence training and other training as required
- sharing cultural resources
- providing advice and information
- working in partnership.

Some of the larger organisations in the sector include Anglicare Victoria, Uniting Care Connections, MacKillop and Berry Street. Speak to your team leader or manager for more information about the community service organisations in your local service delivery area.

Child Protection Services

Child Protection provides services to protect children from significant harm caused by abuse or neglect within the family.

The key functions of Child Protection include:

- to receive child protection reports
- provide advice to people who report suspected cases of abuse or neglect
- investigate child protection reports
- to refer and connect children and families to services for ongoing support and harm prevention
- to apply to the Children's Court for court orders where it is believed the child is unable to live at home
- to supervise children on legal orders granted by the Children's Court.

VACCA works closely with Child Protection in most programs.

Child FIRST

Child FIRST stands for child and family information, referral and support teams (Child FIRST). Child FIRST is a key referral point for services and children and families requiring information and contacts for the support programs in their local area.

VACCA is a part of the local Child and Family Services Alliances (governing committees) that decide how Child FIRST operates in each department catchment area. VACCA provides support to Child FIRST through its Aboriginal liaison worker positions. The Aboriginal liaison workers role is to provide consultation, advice and information to Child FIRST staff in responding to Aboriginal people in contact with their service. These positions are currently located in the East Brunswick, Ringwood and Dandenong Offices.

Department of Human Services

The Department of Human Services (department) is a Victorian government department responsible for the planning, managing, funding and delivering of child and family services for Victorians. The department funds both Community controlled and community service organisations.

There are four [department divisions](#) of North, West, East and South. Each division has primary responsibility for the funded services in their division. Within each division there are department areas. VACCA provides services within specific department area across Victoria and some programs provide services within a Child FIRST catchment. When referring to other programs within VACCA staff will need to know the [department areas](#) and local government areas that are covered. This map visually shows the 17 department areas and 24 [Child FIRST catchments](#).

Funding providers

The department is one of the key funding sources for VACCA. Funding is generally negotiated through three-year service agreements that outline the activities, achievements, targets and reporting obligations VACCA is to fulfil. Funding requirements and good practice requires staff to meet [program requirements](#) targets, keep good records and regularly report on performance. The [Department of Human Services policy and funding plan](#) is an integral part of the service agreement.





7. Case practice



7.1 Introduction

This section outlines:

- case practice, case work and case management
- contracted case management
- key phases common to all cases in client services programs
- case practice approaches
- common tasks in case practice
- key partners in case practice
- case practice tools.

Case practice is generally used to refer to all the tasks associated with providing direct services to children and families. At VACCA a cultural framework supports case practice. For caseworkers this means their casework approach must:

- help children and families understand the impact of past policies and practices
- build respectful relationships
- promote the child's connection to personal and cultural safety
- promote self-determination and empowerment of families
- strengthen Aboriginal child rearing practices
- adhere to the Best Interest principles through a cultural lens
- adhere to the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle
- involve and prioritise cultural support planning
- be responsive to racism that many Aboriginal children and families experience.

7.2 Case management and casework

Case management and casework are the umbrella terms covering all of the management and coordination tasks, actions and responsibilities caseworkers carry in order to meet the child's best interests and family needs.

Case management is primarily a co-ordination role and includes activities which link the client into the service system and coordinate the different services involved and brokering in services for clients.

Casework refers to the direct services that caseworkers provide and includes the day to day responsibilities and tasks for the care and support of the child.

Where Child Protection is involved with the same family, Child Protection will usually take the role of case management and VACCA caseworkers will undertake the casework.

Both tasks require caseworkers to work with children, their families, carers and other caseworkers in a coordinated way to achieve agreed outcomes for the child. At all times, case management and casework aims to keep the child safe, free from harm, strengthen the child's cultural identity and relationships with the Aboriginal Community and provide children with age appropriate life and problem solving skills.

Contracted case management

Contracted case management is a formal written agreement between Child Protection and VACCA about the case management of a child on a children's protection order. Under this agreement, contracted case managers may perform all of the case management tasks (except case plan decision-making) or some of the case management tasks outlined in the department's case plan. The responsibilities and tasks of the case manager will depend on the stage, level of Child Protection involvement, the case plan and the placement type.

Contracted case managers may be responsible for:

- implementing the case plan
- coordinating services and professionals involved
- making sure all those involved are clear about their roles and responsibilities
- being the coordination point for new or critical information that may affect the current case planning and case work approach
- ensuring Child Protection is aware of all key developments and any new information
- informing Child Protection about the level of risk to the child
- reporting regularly to Child Protection including recording all key information in the Client Relationship Information System (CRIS) and keeping the client file up to date
- referring any matters outside the scope of the child's current case plan to the department for decision-making
- making recommendations for changes to the case plan, including preparing the draft revised case plan as part of the annual review process.

For children in out-of-home care, contracted case management also involves:

- leading the child's care team (the core group of people involved in caring for the child including the carers, key family and community members)
- developing a care and placement plan as part of the overall case plan
- managing the care arrangements using the Looking After Children (LAC) framework. In Victoria, LAC provides the practice framework for considering how each child's needs will be met, while that child is in out-of-home care. It is used for managing out-of-home care in accordance with the Best Interests Case Practice Model cycle of information gathering, assessment, planning, implementation and review.
- undertaking regular assessments of the child's progress in care
- completing quarterly reports.

Caseworkers who have case contracted cases will need to be familiar with the [VACCA contracted case management guide](#) and [Department of Human Services case contracting processes](#).

7.3 Key phases of case practice

Referrals

Referrals into VACCA programs come from a variety of sources that will be different for each program.

Referrals to VACCA may come from:

- Child Protection services
- the Community
- parent or other
- child or young person
- community service organisation
- government departments.

Referrals may be received face to face, by telephone or via written correspondence.

Referral and intake processes

Referral and intake processes are important because they allow VACCA to:

- respond to referrals from a variety of sources
- follow procedures to ensure there is an appropriate response to the referral
- gather relevant information necessary to determine eligibility and the most appropriate response
- re-direct the referrer to another program or agency if we are unable to respond to the referral.

Each program has its own referral and intake procedures outlined in their program manuals.

Client information data base

The client information data base is a data collection tool that collects information about the number of children and families who are receiving a service from VACCA and which program is providing the service.

The data base is reliant on programs as part of their referral and intake processes to update the client information data base with information about the child and family and allocated caseworker. Each program will have their own processes that will be outlined in their program and procedure manual to ensure that the data base is always up to date.

This data base enables VACCA to know how many children and families are receiving a service from VACCA at any given time.

Assessment and engagement

The purpose of the assessment is to gather and assess the relevant information, past and present, from the child (where age appropriate), the family, carers and other professionals involved with the family. Assessment and engagement is a necessary part of case planning as through these processes caseworkers can identify the individual needs of the child and their family and plan the most appropriate response.

If this process is undertaken in a respectful, sensitive and culturally safe way caseworkers will begin to develop a positive relationship with the child and family.

All assessments are guided by the Best Interests principles.

Information about how to engage the children and families can be found in the Working with Aboriginal children and families section of this manual.

Engagement of families from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds

Aboriginal children will sometimes have family members from a culturally linguistic and diverse background. Caseworkers will need to engage and support these families in a culturally safe and appropriate way.

Caseworkers will need to:

- learn about the parent's cultural background to increase cultural knowledge through information sessions, resources and cultural awareness training
- be mindful that an individual cannot be reduced to a set of cultural norms
- understand the migration process, resettlement and post-migration stressors impacting on the parent and their family. These may include the stresses of separation from homeland, racial discrimination, language barriers and the ongoing trauma of pre-migration experiences
- be aware of personal cultural influences and judging others
- be aware of making assumptions about cultural influences and applying generalisations to individuals
- understand that behaviours and values of people within cultures can vary considerably
- understand that over time cultural groups can change through generations and experiences.

Home visits

Home visits are a regular part of casework. Caseworkers will visit children, families and carers in their homes for a number of reasons. Caseworkers are advised to read the [staff safety policy](#) prior to undertaking home visits to ensure

Program and procedure manuals will talk more about the procedures for home visits.

Importance of seeing the child

Caseworkers must regularly sight and meet with the child on their own (without the carer or parents present) to ensure:

- the child's needs are being met
- the child feels safe and is treated well in the home they are living, this could be their family home, the carers home or other placement type
- the child has opportunities to speak in private and raise issues
- the child's cultural rights are promoted and protected.

Caseworkers will need to be observant to changes in the child's behaviour and to the observations of other professionals involved.

Planning and goal setting

The process of planning and goal setting involves supporting the child (where age and developmentally appropriate) and the family to identify risks and goals, identify their strengths and capacities, prioritise and plan the steps to be taken to address needs and risks and their wellbeing.

Client services programs will use different tools and processes for case planning. The Best Interests Case Practice Model supports all planning and goal setting.

Case plans and best interests plan are used interchangeably in the child and family sector. Although there are specific requirements of a best interests plan these two plans are the same plans in practice.

Case review

Caseworkers will regularly undertake case reviews through; regular supervision, care team meetings, and reflective practice. This helps caseworkers to reflect on the progress of the case, whether identified outcomes have been met and where appropriate identify new outcomes. Client services programs will use different tools and processes for case review. Caseworkers need to refer to program and procedure manuals for more details.

Case closure

There are number of steps caseworkers will undertake in closing a case. Client services programs will have the case closure procedures set out in their program and procedure manuals. Generally case closure will require the caseworker to:

- talk with the child and family about the specific accomplishments met in their time in the program emphasizing positive changes in behaviors and conditions
- review tasks completed and discuss any obstacles encountered and focus on the successes and knowledge obtained
- review general steps in problem solving. Remind families of the gains made as well as the methods they can use when future problems arise
- consider any remaining needs or concerns. Help family members plan how to maintain the changes. Discuss any potential obstacles they may encounter as well as strategies for overcoming them
- make appropriate referrals for ongoing supports if this is required. Planning for case closure should ensure families and young people have supports in place and are prepared for leaving VACCA programs
- ensure all information is recorded in the client file
- update the client information database with closure information.

7.4 Case practice approaches

Culturally informed case practice

Culturally informed case practice involves a number of key elements of which include:

- seeing families within the context of their past and present history and experiences
- understanding the compounding effects of disadvantage and trauma inherited and experienced by the Community
- an ongoing commitment to the maintenance, development and promotion of culture as a protective factor and in healing
- Aboriginal child rearing practices are celebrated and embraced in all contact with children
- creating a culturally safe work place where Aboriginal staff and the wider Community is comfortable attending, shown respect, and know their opinion is valued and important
- the self-determination and empowerment of families and Elders in decision-making
- a commitment to facilitating and organising cultural and ceremonial activities for our children, families and Community.

Aboriginal family-led decision-making approach

Aboriginal family-led decision-making is a formal decision-making approach brings family members together and:

- empowers them to make good decisions and plans in relation to the safety and care of their children
- is inclusive and respectful of the culture
- leads to better outcomes for children and their families.

Best practice is to conduct all family meetings using the Aboriginal family-led decision-making approach.

This approach is based on the decision-making approaches within the kinship system where decisions are made collectively and guide by the wisdom and experiences of Elders and the responsibility for raising children is shared. The principles of the family-led decision-making are that:

- family is recognised as having a pivotal role in the care and protection of the child and is supported and empowered to lead decision-making in partnership with Child Protection
- a child's connection to family is critical and wherever possible should be maintained
- family-led decision-making is a collective decision-making process
- culture is respected and integrated into the program and provides a safe environment to engage in discussions of culture and supports family traditions
- children have the widest possible family group around them
- the family group are entitled to information about what has happened to the child and family because of their decision-making role. This is a transparent process with all information necessary for planning for the child's safety, stability and development being shared with the family group.

These meetings can be used to:

- explore whether there are family members who could care for the child while the parent's work towards reunification
- identify an ongoing role for family members in the child's life and in supporting the parents, while the child is in care and following reunification
- identify positive and negative family dynamics
- bring family members together to resolve what is best for the child.

By using this approach in planning and decision-making families are engaged, encouraged and empowered to have an ongoing role in the care of the child. It gives families the message that VACCA values culture and understands the role and importance of family in all planning for the child's present and future needs.

Aboriginal trauma informed approach

Aboriginal children and families accessing our services are likely to have experienced trauma through multiple sources, both from direct experience, such as through exposure to family violence in their own family, extended family or Community, as well as secondary exposure, through intergenerational trauma.

To be able to support and heal children and families, staff will need to understand what trauma is, how it affects the individual and the family. Staff will also need to be aware of how our trauma can affect us as workers.

What is trauma?

Trauma refers to an event that is psychologically overwhelming for an individual. This event involves a threat (real or perceived) to the individual's physical or emotional wellbeing. The person's response to the event involves intense fear, helplessness or horror, or for children, the response might involve disorganised or agitated behaviour¹³.

A person does not have to directly experience a distressing event to be affected by trauma. This means that trauma can be transferred from one person who has directly experienced an event to another person who has not.

Many Aboriginal people are affected by the transfer of trauma, the grief and loss passed down in families as a result of the past government policies, and vicarious trauma, where they are working with or in contact with people experiencing trauma. To be able to effectively support children and families and protect staff VACCA has developed an Aboriginal trauma informed approach, this is based on Aboriginal experiences and understanding of trauma and culturally informed therapeutic practice.

"I want to write about my children because people think the suffering stops with me. But I have passed these feelings, teachings on to my children not realising what I was doing¹⁴".

Our approach to addressing the effects of trauma is based on the following cultural pillars of:

- cultural safety
- cultural rights
- Aboriginal understandings of family and kinship
- Aboriginal understandings of trauma
- Aboriginal understandings of culture as resilience
- adherence to the Best Interests principles
- adherence to the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle¹⁵.

In our practice and engagement with children and families we will:

- see the family within the context of their past and present experiences to understand their behaviours and challenges
- promote healing through connection to culture and safe relationship building
- listen to the voice of the child
- foster a culture of non-blame
- be honest about serious concerns that may exist in relation to the care of the child
- create a culturally and emotionally safe environment in which children and families are respected and valued
- employ culturally competent staff and adopt practices that acknowledge and demonstrate cultural respect
- provide support for children and families to regain a sense of control over their daily lives and actively involve them in the journey
- share decision-making and planning processes with children and families, including community engagement in the design and evaluation of programs
- provide this through therapeutic practice and care.

¹³Trauma-informed services and trauma-specific care for Indigenous Australian children

¹⁴It doesn't stop here: Transgenerational Effects of the Forced Removal of Children, Australasian Psychiatry, Peters, L., 1953, page 3

¹⁵Cultural Elements of Therapeutic Residential Care Discussion Paper, VACCA, 2009, page 11

What is culturally informed therapeutic practice?

This is practice that:

- helps the child understand what has happened is not their fault
- undertakes a comprehensive assessment of the child's needs through the lens of culture
- creates an individualised therapeutic response, which details how the care team will promote healing, safety, stability and wellbeing
- provides consistency and predictability in the child's daily routine and keep the child informed about all aspects of their case plan
- rebuilds and strengthen the child's relationship with their family, Community and culture
- involves the child in cultural healing practices, including art, story-telling, dance and song¹⁶.

Further information about therapeutic practice can be obtained by contacting the Aboriginal Childrens Healing Team. VACCA has also developed a resource folder of [trauma related research and practice guidance](#) to assist your understanding.

Best Interests framework

[The Best Interests framework](#) is the overarching framework that guides all child and family practice across Victoria. When workers talk about best interests they are usually referring to the best interests of the child.

The *Child Youth and Family Act 2005* states that the best interests of the child must always be paramount. This means that everyone working in early intervention and family services, youth services, family violence, Child Protection, and out-of-home care programs and services must take action to:

- protect children from harm
- protect children's rights
- promote children's development in age appropriate ways.

To achieve the best interests of Aboriginal children, caseworkers must promote the Best Interest principles through the lens of culture. This means promoting:

- safety – including 'cultural safety'
- stability – to focus not only on the continuity of placement arrangements but on a cultural relationship with other Aboriginal people, the Land, cultural values, practices and cultural understanding of Aboriginal people, their history and aspirations for the future.
- development – in terms of the domains of health and growth, emotional and behavioural development, education and learning, family and social care relationships, identity and social presentation and self care skills. For Aboriginal children healthy development also involves an understanding of identity and culture which recognises the key transition periods of a child's life are ideally guided by an older Aboriginal person of the same gender.

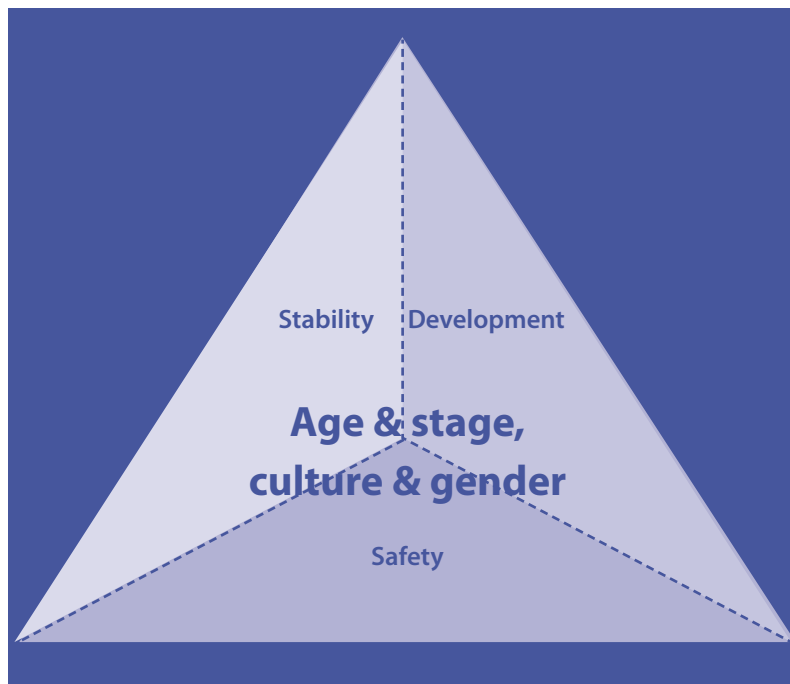
The Best Interest principles and Best Interest framework guides workers in implementing the principles in their day to day work.

¹⁶Aboriginal Children's Healing Team Program Manual 2013

The Best Interests Case Practice Model is set out in the Best Interests framework. The model sets out the stages of case practice. These are:

- information gathering
- analysis and planning
- action
- reviewing outcomes.
- dimensions of a child's experience.

The Best Interests framework identifies the child's age and stage of life, culture and gender as all having an input into their safety, stability and development. See diagram below.



Cultural lens on Best Interests

“Cultural identity is not just an add-on to the best interests of the child. We would all agree that the safety of the child is paramount. No child should live in fear. No child should starve. No child should live in situations of neglect. No child should be abused. But if a child's identity is denied or denigrated, they are not being looked after. Denying cultural identity is detrimental to their attachment needs, their emotional development, their education and their health. Every area of human development which defines the child's best interests has a cultural component. Your culture helps define how you attach, how you express emotion, how you learn and how you stay healthy¹⁷.”

¹⁷Bamblett and Lewis, A Vision for Koorie Children and Families: Embedding Rights, Embedding Culture, 2007

Stages of case practice



In the client services program and procedure manuals these stages of case practice are captured under the headings of referral and intake (information gathering), assessment and engagement (information gathering and analysis), planning and goal setting (analysis and planning), casework (action) and case review (reviewing outcomes).

The Best Interest Case Practice Model also describes the work that supports and enables good practice. As seen in the diagram. Caseworkers must also invest time in:

- relationship building
- engagement
- partnership
- empowerment of children and families.

Staff are required to read the [Best Interests series](#) documents.

The department has a range of [specialist assessment guides](#) to provide additional guidance to staff.

8. Case practice tools

There is a range of case practice tools available for caseworkers to achieve the best outcomes for children. A brief overview of these tools is provided below.

8.1 Client welcome pack

All children and families who receive services from VACCA are provided with a [client welcome pack](#).

This includes the following forms and documents:

- Welcome letter
- VACCA client services charter
- Dardee Boorai charter
- Consent to exchange and release information form
- Consent for sharing information form
- Feedback and complaints form.

Client services programs may also have additional documents and forms they wish to be included in this pack. Caseworkers must go through the contents of the pack and explain the forms and information to children, families and carers and where appropriate obtain their written consent.

All paperwork signed by clients will be given to them and a copy is to be placed on their client file.

8.2 Genograms

Genograms are a critical tool in casework practice. All caseworkers undertaking case tasks are required to complete a genogram of the child and their family. Through the genogram the child and family can tell their story comfortably and create a visual picture of their kinship network and relationships. Completing a genogram with the child and family is a culturally appropriate practice.

Genograms generally look like a family tree, but provide a more detailed and complete picture of the 'whole' family. Genograms can be used as a reference point to:

- provide a visual picture of the child and their family, identifying key family members and supports
- talk about the relationships between individuals

- identify issues in the larger context of their relationships including, parents, siblings, grandparents, extended family and significant others in the person's life
- identify and discuss intergenerational patterns and trauma within families.

Caseworkers can refer back to genograms to talk about family issues and other important factors.

8.3 Safety and therapeutic intervention plans

These plans assist caseworkers, families or carers to manage and defuse risk and respond to risk situations if they arise. They provide all professionals with a clear action plan and identify the responsibilities of people in certain situations.

A key part of developing a safety plan (risk management plan) is assessing the safety risks to the child, parent or carer's history. A client safety checklist (included in most VACCA program manuals) assists caseworkers to assess the safety of a child and informs the development of safety plans.

Where the child's behaviour is considered the major risk factor, caseworkers are required to develop a [therapeutic intervention plan](#). This plan needs will be developed in consultation with the care team and the Aboriginal Children's Healing Team. It will provide a framework for supporting caseworkers and carers in caring for traumatised children in preventing risk and managing the risk appropriately when it occurs.

The safety and therapeutic intervention plans need to be made accessible to the child's workers and copies provided to all relevant people (as appropriate) involved with the family.

There are a number of other casework practice tools that VACCA is in the process of exploring including:

8.4 Family history timelines

This is an engagement tool used with the child and family to help with gathering family of origin information. Usually the timeline begins with birth and works through the client's lifespan.

8.5 Eco-maps

This tool shows diagrammatically the network of people around a child and family including extended family, friends, carers and professionals. The child is placed in the centre of the diagram and each person or organisation that forms part of the child's network is named and placed within the circle. A line drawn between the child and the individual or organisation illustrates the nature of the relationship.

Eco-maps are useful in deepening understandings of the complexity of the child's network of family, friends, carers and professionals or organisations that surround the child and family. They can identify patterns and actual or potential areas of strength and support as well as conflict in relationships or lack of relationships.

8.6 Social network mapping

This tool is used to assess current levels of social and family support and resources. A social network map collects information about the size of networks, the nature of relationships and the extent to which members provide support and the nature of the relationships perceived by the person completing the map. This tool can be used to assist families develop supports and access to services.

9. Key partners in case practice



9.1 Child Protection

Child Protection works closely with Lakidjeka ACSASS and other child and family programs including family services and out-of-home care.

Child Protection makes a high number of referrals to VACCA programs. In many cases Child Protection will remain involved in a case following a referral to VACCA, especially where there are significant safety concerns for children. Where Child Protection remains involved they are usually responsible for case planning and the case management unless the case is contracted to VACCA.

In all cases Child Protection remains responsible for case planning decisions.

9.2 Care teams

The term 'care team' has different meanings depending on the context and program being delivered.

For example, when a child is placed in out-of-home care, they have a care team that share the responsibilities for doing the things that parents generally do. The care team will usually include:

- 1) the placement agency caseworker (the VACCA caseworker)
- 2) the carer (the home-based carer or residential carer)
- 3) the Child Protection practitioner
- 4) the child's parents and other adult family members.

Another example of a care team (not an out-of-home care team) is a team of people that work together to support and coordinate services for a parent or other person requiring help. This could be for a person escaping violence or struggling with mental health issues.

The care team will usually include:

- 1) the client
- 2) other adult family members or significant others
- 3) professionals supporting the client.

9.3 Lakidjeka ACSASS

Lakidjeka ACSASS provides expert advice and case consultation to Child Protection about culturally appropriate intervention in respect of all reports regarding the abuse or neglect of Aboriginal children and regarding significant decisions in all phases of Child Protection intervention. Lakidjeka ACSASS provides consultation to Child Protection on reports regarding unborn children, quality of care concerns and therapeutic treatment reports.

The Lakidjeka ACSASS service is delivered across Victoria, with the exception of the Mildura Local Government Area, where the Mallee District Aboriginal Service manages the program.

In this role Lakidjeka ACSASS key responsibilities are to:

- provide consultation to Child Protection on all significant decisions and actions concerning Aboriginal children, ensuring a culturally informed and effective response to the protection of Aboriginal children from harm
- provide an Aboriginal perspective on risk assessment and safety assessments for Aboriginal children
- participate in the planning of an investigation including the first visit with Child Protection
- attend joint visits with Child Protection to investigate protective concerns, where there are no family objections
- assist children and families to better understand the reasons for Child Protection's involvement and the investigation processes
- provide information and advice to Child Protection on the child's family and Community, suitable local support services and Community networks for the purpose of referral
- assist Child Protection to identify and involve the child's extended family and Community members in decision-making and best interests planning
- where appropriate and agreed to by the child and family, participate in best interests planning meetings, including those held as Aboriginal Family-Led Decision-Making meetings
- provide advice to Child Protection in making a decision to place an Aboriginal child in out-of-home care and, where a decision has been made to place the child in out-of-home care
- provide advice to Child Protection on placement options with regard to the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle
- provide advice and, where appropriate, direct involvement in the assessment and investigation of quality of care concerns relating to Aboriginal children
- assist Child Protection in cultural support planning for Aboriginal children in out-of-home care
- provide advice to Child Protection on reports concerning unborn children (where the mother is Aboriginal or the family is known to be Aboriginal)
- provide advice to Child Protection on irreconcilable differences applications concerning Aboriginal children
- provide advice to Child Protection and, where appropriate, direct involvement in the investigation of therapeutic treatment reports concerning Aboriginal children
- provide advice to Child Protection on the interstate movement of Aboriginal children subject to protection orders under the transfer of child protection orders and proceedings (*Children, Youth and Families Act* Schedule 1).

More information about the requirements of Lakidjeka ACSASS can be found at [the Program Requirements, Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support Service](#).

9.4 The Aboriginal Childrens Healing Team

The Aboriginal Children's Healing Team (Healing Team) has four primary roles in client services. These are:

- 1) To undertake trauma informed assessments of children and develop therapeutic intervention plans for carers and other professionals to follow
- 2) To promote trauma informed approaches to understanding the needs of Aboriginal children in our care
- 3) To undertake theoretical development work to integrate Aboriginal healing and theory to address complex trauma and promote healing
- 4) To provide training to staff regarding trauma and attachment and informed approaches and theoretical understandings.

This team consists of six therapeutic specialists and a senior clinical practitioner. Each specialist position is attached to one of our out-of-home care programs. Other internal programs can access the Healing Team especially for consultation. The role of the therapeutic specialist is to provide insight and advice regarding:

- the presentations of children in the respective programs
- assessments grounded in the frameworks of trauma and attachment
- training
- therapeutic intervention plans with specific strategies to sequentially address the presentations of children
- coaching and mentoring caseworkers and carers
- creating reflective practice opportunities.





10. Court

10.1 Children's Court

In Victoria the [Children's Court](#) is a specialist court dealing with matters relating to children. The Children's Court hears matters concerning children under the age of 18 years.

The court is divided into four divisions:

Family division – hears applications that relate to a child (aged 0-17 years) in need of protection or subject to a protection order. Child Protection matters are heard within the Family Division. The Children's Court can grant a variety of [court orders](#) for children in need of protection.

Criminal division – hears matters of alleged criminal offending by children aged between 10 and 17 years except culpable driving causing death and arson causing death, manslaughter, attempted murder and murder.

Koori court (criminal division) – hears matters where young Aboriginal offenders have pled guilty or been found guilty of a crime. While magistrates make the final sentencing decisions, a Koorie Elder or respected person may advise on cultural considerations and issues.

Neighbourhood justice division – hears matters relating to family violence and personal safety intervention orders.



10.2 The family court

The *Family Court of Australia* is a federal (Commonwealth) court established under the *Family Law Act 1975*. It deals with a range of matters arising out of relationship breakdowns, including divorce, property settlement and the care of children.

The court's jurisdiction in relation to children includes the power to make decisions about:

- **residence orders** – the person with whom a child is to live
- **contact orders** – the contact between a child and another person
- **specific issues orders** – parental responsibility for making daily and long-term decisions about a child's care, welfare and development
- **child maintenance orders** – child support.

The court also has a broad welfare jurisdiction to deal with special matters such as consent to medical treatment and certain powers under international conventions.

Role of the Family Court

The role of the Family Court is to determine disputes between separated parents and other persons concerned with the child's welfare or care.

In making its decisions, the Family Court's paramount consideration is the best interests of the child.

This means that matters relating to a child's protection and care needs must be considered by the Family Court when making decisions.

Research indicates that a significant proportion of children's matters before the Family Court involve child protection issues¹⁸.

10.3 Court related casework

Staff supporting children and families with court matters may be required to:

- provide evidence in the Children's Court or the Family Court
- write a court report or provide information to the department to be included in their court report
- prepare and support children and families attend court
- translate the content of court reports and court orders to children and families.

Attending court can be a scary process for everyone involved. Aboriginal families may fear the court system because of past injustices and discrimination resulting in a distrust of legal authority. Caseworkers can support children and families to prepare for court in the following ways:

- prior to the child or family attending court explain the court procedures, i.e. what will happen at court and possible outcomes
- help the child or family to manage stress related to court proceedings
- attend court to support the child and family
- be sensitive, respectful and honest in answering questions related to the court proceedings.

Staff required by the court to attend will receive a subpoena or witness summons. If staff have not attended court before speak with the relevant manager to discuss your support needs. In preparing for court staff will:

- ensure they have up to date case notes
- prepare a chronology of events to refer to
- review the case with the appropriate manager
- where appropriate practice being on the witness stand.

¹⁸<http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety/protecting-children/ongoing-intervention/court-processes/familycourt>

Staff may be required to prepare court reports or provide reports to Child Protection for their court report. The following suggestions are provided to assist in this role:

- prepare early
- seek guidance from you manager about what to include
- find examples of reports written by team members for guidance and learning
- allow enough time to review the report with your manger and make appropriate changes
- present factual information in a chronological order
- where appropriate include the case plan and identify supports VACCA can provide to the child and family
- prepare the report on a VACCA letterhead and place the final version on the client's file.

All VACCA reports are required to be approved by the team leader before being submitted.





11. Case recording and case notes

Caseworkers are required to maintain accurate and up to date case notes and an electronic and a hardcopy client file.

Case notes are important because they:

- provide a record of all contacts and events related to the family that can be accessed by the family and new workers
- ensure historical information is part of the current assessment and goal setting with the family
- outline the assessment and rationale behind key decisions
- clarify complex information
- promote interpretation and analysis of the information
- ensure all information on the family can be found and understood
- fulfil the requirements for professional and legal accountability
- help in the identification of patterns in behaviours and cumulative harm
- record the success or failure of past interventions for future decision makers
- explain and verify case records and assessments to others
- assist in writing reports
- assist in court related casework
- provide evidence that caseworkers have followed through on planning processes.

Client services programs will have their own file checklist to be included in their client and carer files and the filing order. However, in general all client files are to contain:

Client file details sheet

A VACCA client file details sheet contains the child's essential information such as their name, date of birth, parents name and contact details, siblings details, previous placements, school etc. As the child's information changes this form is to be updated. The client file details sheet is to be attached in the inside cover of the clients or carers file.

Client file checklist

A client file checklist contains the required reports and information to be kept in the client or carers file. The checklist is to be attached to the front of each client file.



All VACCA client files will be:

- **consistent** – all client files within a program will use the same format
- **transparent** – all client files will file the information in accordance with the client file checklist
- **accessible** – client files must be accessible to the worker and should they need to be retrieved if required for evidence or new referrals
- **private** – information in client files is to be kept safe and in accordance with the VACCA [privacy and confidentiality policy](#).
- **up to date** – client files and case notes must be kept up to date and recorded clearly so that other people can read and understand the information should this be required.

VACCA regularly audits client files to ensure they are in good order.

Caseworkers are required to read the [file note policy](#) to ensure they comply. Caseworkers requiring support in case notes recording and maintaining files must speak with their team leader or manager to organise support.

More information about case recording and maintaining client files can be found in your program and procedure manual.

12. Quality



12.1 VACCA is commitment to quality improvement

VACCA is committed to providing quality services and continuously improving our services. VACCA believes the Community expects and are entitled to a high quality and professional service.

VACCA also has obligations under legislation and funding agreements to comply with quality and service standards. VACCA must comply with [department standards](#) that apply to service provision and the [Quality Improvement Council \(QIC\) standards](#) that apply to the organisational governance and management.

For more information about our quality services please contact the Quality Manager.

12.2 Privacy and information sharing

VACCA has a [privacy confidentiality and policy](#) that outlines the legal and ethical responsibilities if staff in terms of privacy and confidentiality and ensure compliance with the requirements of the *Information Privacy Act 2000* and the *Health Records Act 2001*. It also includes guidance regarding storage and transportation of client files.

The [Department of Human Services information sharing guidelines](#) outlines the circumstances under which staff can share information with Child Protection and Child FIRST. Staff can share information without the consent of the child or the consent of the person (if not the child) to whom the information relates or the consent of that child's parents, carer or guardian.

It is best practice for caseworkers to ask for consent from a child or their parents, carers or guardians before sharing their information, provided that they do not place the child or another person at risk.

Other than in very urgent situations caseworkers are required to consult with their team leader or manager before disclosing information about a child or their family without their consent.

VACCA takes breaches of privacy and confidentiality very seriously.

Children, families and carers have the right to make a complaint if they feel the confidentiality of their private information has been breached. A 'privacy breach' is an act or practice that interferes with the privacy of an individual by being contrary to or inconsistent with one or more of the Information Privacy Principles or any relevant code of practice.

Complaints regarding a breach of privacy can be lodged directly with caseworkers, team leaders, the Continuous Quality Improvement Manager or via the [client feedback form](#) or feedback email address (Feedback@VACCA.ORG). For further details regarding feedback and complaints, refer to the VACCA [client feedback policy & complaints policy](#). VACCA has a client complaints procedure as part of the client feedback policy. Most client complaints will be managed and resolved within VACCA.

In the case that clients feel their privacy concerns are not resolved through VACCA, they have the right to further their complaint with the Privacy Commissioner or the Aboriginal Childrens Commissioner.

12.3 Informing children and families of their rights

Caseworker's need to inform children (where age appropriate) and families of their rights to privacy and obtain their consent to collect records and use their information. Children (where age appropriate) and families also need to be informed of their rights under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)* including their right to request access to their files.

[Consent to share information form](#) is included in the [client welcome pack](#) and needs to be explained to families when they first enter the service. As with all documents in the client welcome pack, parents are to sign the checklist in the pack to confirm they have received the documents and they were explained to them.

12.4 Gaining consent of children and families to collect and use their information

Caseworkers are required to gain the consent of families to collect and share their information with other services. Caseworkers will ask families to sign the [consent to exchange and release information form](#) after it has been explained to them. This form is included in the client welcome pack.

VACCA requests consent for personal information to be:

- provided by VACCA to other agencies to assist in decisions about their eligibility for the program
- provided by one agency to another agency for the purpose of referring the family for services
- sought from another agency to assist with the assessment of the family's needs and which services would be the most appropriate.

Families are able to withdraw or limit their consent at any time; however this may make it difficult for appropriate services to be provided to children and families.

12.5 Transferring information

Caseworkers may need to transfer client files, carer files and other documents between VACCA offices. They may also need to transfer client information to partner agency sites to share information, make a referral or transfer the case.

When transferring client and carer files internally staff are required to deliver these in person and document the transfer on the client file (electronic and hardcopy).

Caseworkers are not permitted to take client or carer files and documentation containing children, families or carers information home.

Electronic transfers of client information need to be minimised, however where this is required caseworkers need to ensure that:

- they have the correct email address of the intended recipient of the information
- any email containing child, family or carer information needs to contain a footer with the following message:

This message contains confidential information and is intended only for the individual names. If you are not the named addressee you should not disseminate, distribute or copy this email. Please notify the sender immediately by email if you have received this email by mistake and delete this email from your system.
- record of emails sent or received are printed and stored on the paper file and saved to electronic client files and deleted from Microsoft outlook
- documents are password protected and the password is not provided in the content of the email (refer to the [how to – set passwords on documents](#) for more information about how to do this).

Child or family related emails are subject to privacy and information sharing provisions as outlined in this manual.

12.6 VACCA feedback guidelines

VACCA considers feedback an essential part of our work enabling us to continue to improve the organisation. The [VACCA feedback guidelines](#) outline how VACCA obtains feedback from children, families, carers, Community members, staff and stakeholders.

Caseworkers need to ensure children, parents and carers are given information about how to provide feedback when they first contact our service. This information will also include what we do with their feedback. We have provided cultural feedback tips in your program manuals to assist you to gather feedback from children and families that have contact with VACCA.

All feedback (complaints and compliments) are treated with respect and in the strictest confidence.

Feedback can be lodged with their caseworker, the team leader, the Continuous Quality Improvement Unit, or either via the Client Feedback Form or Feedback Email address (Feedback@VACCA.ORG).

12.7 Client complaints

Fundamental to all VACCA's work is the feedback we receive from our Community about their experiences and contact with our service and feedback from our key stakeholders. Caseworkers will gather and receive feedback according to VACCA's [feedback guidelines](#).

12.8 Critical incidents

VACCA is committed to protecting the safety and wellbeing of staff and clients. There will be times where situations or events occur that detrimentally impact on clients and staff. There are two types of critical incidents that can occur at or through work. These are client critical incidents and staff incidents. Both types of incidents will require staff to report and respond in a certain way and in accordance with the relevant critical incident policy.

It is important staff are aware of and understand these policies to ensure they comply with legislation. These are referred to as client critical incidents and staff incidents.

Critical client incidents

Critical incidents involving or impacting on clients are referred to as critical client incidents.

A critical client incident is an incident involves or significantly impacts on a child and/or family during VACCA's work with them.

A critical client incident may include for example:

- a child's whereabouts is unknown and there are serious concerns for their safety
- a child is allegedly physically assaulted by a staff member or carer
- a child is hospitalised due to self-harm behaviours

Staff are required to respond to and report on critical client incidents according to VACCA [critical client incident](#) policy. This policy has been developed in line with the department's [critical client incident management instructions](#).

A [critical client incident report form](#) must be completed, where indicated under this policy.

Staff incidents

Critical incidents in the workplace involving or affecting staff 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 incident has occurred. Further guidance is available in VACCA's [staff safety](#) and [staff wellbeing](#) policies.

Both types of critical incidents have focus on risk management and the desire to learn from and prevent repeat occurrences of adverse events. Some critical incidents will involve both clients and staff, for example a fire in a residential care service. This will require both reporting procedures to be followed for different purposes.

13. Key legislation, charters and government documents

13.1 Introduction

All client services staff must comply (work within) the overarching legislation and frameworks created to protect children and uphold the rights of individuals and groups in this sector.

13.2 Legislation

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)

This Act establishes the systems to protect and support vulnerable children and families in Victoria. This Act has a strong focus on child's best interests and the need to preserve cultural identity through the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle and Decision-Making Principles for Aboriginal children.

Key sections of this Act specifically relating to Aboriginal children are:

- Section 10: Best Interests principles
- Section 11: Decision-making principles
- Section 12: Decision-making principles for Aboriginal children
- Section 13: Aboriginal Child Placement Principle
- Section 14: Further principles for placement of an Aboriginal child
- Section 18: Secretary may authorise principal officer of Aboriginal agency to act
- Section 176: mandates preparation of cultural support plans for Aboriginal children subject to guardianship or long-term guardianship orders.

The intents of these sections are to:

- recognise and uphold the principle of self-determination and self-management for Aboriginal families and the Community
- ensure that all decision-making and actions involving Child Protection intervention and child placement and care involves consultation with Aboriginal families, Communities and organisations
- ensure that children who are unable to live at home are placed in compliance with a hierarchy of placement options that protects and maintains their connections to their Aboriginal family, Community and culture at every level
- ensure Aboriginal children in out-of-home care are supported to maintain connection to their family, Community and culture, especially children placed with non-Aboriginal carers.

Registration requirements

Section 45 of the *Child Youth and Families Act 2005* ensures that government funded organisations delivering services to children and families are registered and meet performance standards. This is achieved through an audit process conducted by an independent audit body every three years.

Where standards are not met, the department may assist the organisation to rectify issues, they may also choose to withdraw funding and revoke registration. Our Continuous Quality Improvement Program and audit by the Quality Improvement Council every three years ensures that VACCA fulfils its requirements for registration and provides high quality services.

[The Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#)

This Act provides key principles to all service providers when working with children to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children and that children are given the opportunity to reach their full potential and participate in society, regardless of their family circumstances and background.

[Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012 \(Vic\)](#)

This Act provides for the role of the Commission, which is independent of government and able to undertake its 'own motion' inquiries.

[Working with Children Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#)

This Act outlines the process for assessing a person's suitability to work or volunteer with children. It states the type of work the Act applies to, referring to this work as child-related work. It lists the type of offences that are relevant to the assessment of a person's suitability to work and volunteer with children and the exemptions from the Working with children check.

[Working with Children Regulations 2006 \(Vic\)](#)

This prescribes the contents of a working with children check application form, the required documents for proof of identity and the application fees. The Regulations list the professional bodies and the nature of their findings that are relevant to the assessment of a person's suitability to work with children under the Act.

[Information Privacy Act 2000 \(Vic\)](#)

This Act sets the standards for the collection and handling of a client's personal information. It is important that staff understand their responsibility in sharing, recording and protecting client and carer information to ensure that privacy of client's information is not breached.

[Health Records Act 2001 \(Vic\)](#)

This Act protects the privacy of individuals' health information. It is important that staff understand their responsibility in collecting, holding or using client and carer's private health information.

[Family Law Act 1975 \(Commonwealth\)](#)

Among other things, this Act regulates divorce, where children will reside and child support. Like the *Children Youth and Families Act 2005*, this Act enshrines the best interests of children in any orders made regarding a family. VACCA caseworkers need to be aware of any order made under this Act that applies to their clients and support families where required to obtain Family Law court orders.

[Family Violence Protection Act 2008 \(Vic\)](#)

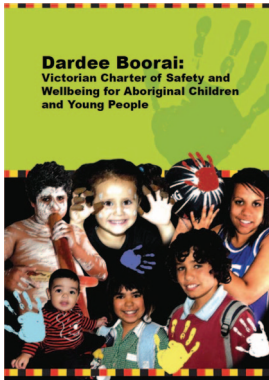
This Act establishes a system of family violence intervention orders and family violence safety notices; and creating offences for contraventions of family violence intervention orders and family violence safety notices. Caseworkers need to be aware of any orders made under this Act and support children, families and carers where required to obtain intervention orders to ensure the safety of children and families.

[Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 \(Vic\)](#)

This Act aims to secure the health, safety and welfare of staff at work. Staff are required to read and follow the [VACCA's Occupational Health and Safety Policy](#) to ensure their own safety and the safety of others.

13.3 Charters

[Dardee Boorai: Victorian charter of safety and wellbeing for Aboriginal children and young people](#)



This is an important charter for the Victorian Aboriginal Community because it:

- is grounded in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* which commits the government to develop and promote a charter of wellbeing for Aboriginal children in consultation with the Community.
- recognises the impact of past removal policies, particularly the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were forcibly removed from their families and Communities by the State and Territory governments of Australia
- was developed in partnership with government.

The charter acknowledges the following:

- culture as central to building resilience and improving outcomes for Aboriginal children
- collective responsibility for children
- opportunity to reach potential
- outcomes focus
- the central importance of parents, family and Community.

[Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006](#)

This Act recognises that Aboriginal people hold distinct cultural rights including the right to:

- enjoy their identity and culture
- maintain and use their language
- maintain their kinship ties
- maintain their distinctive spiritual, material and economic relationship with the Land and waters and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs.

Accordingly, all VACCA staff are to work in a way that respects and promotes these cultural rights. Staff need to comply with this Act to ensure our children and families human rights are protected and upheld.

13.4 Key Government Documents

There are a number of key government documents written by government that are relevant to our work at VACCA. A summary of these documents is provided below and hyperlinks added to enable easy access to these documents.

[Protocol between the Department of Human Services Child Protection Services and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency \(2002\)](#)

This protocol is between the Department of Human Services Child Protection Service, VACCA and Mallee and District Aboriginal Service (formally Mildura Aboriginal Co-operative). It establishes the consultation process, and roles in responding to the protection of Aboriginal children, and provides for the establishment of a specialist consultation service, ACSASS.

[Best Interests case practice model \(2012\)](#)

This model describes the approach all child and family workers must take to meet the needs of vulnerable children and their families.

Under the model, each of the dimensions of the child's life is considered and reviewed against their age, their culture and their gender. The child's best interests need to be considered holistically and in a culturally competent way at every point of contact with the service system.

[The Wannik: Learning together – journey to our future. Education strategy for Koorie students Victoria \(2008\)](#)

This strategy aims to improve outcomes for Aboriginal students across the whole of Victoria's government school system. Staff need to be familiar with this document as it sets out the responsibilities of schools in making sure that Aboriginal children get the educational support they need.

[Balert Booron: The Victorian plan for Aboriginal children and young people \(2010- 2020\)](#)

This document identifies the challenges faced by parents of young children. It sets out a plan about how the government and the Community can work together. This plan provides opportunities for Aboriginal children to become creative, capable adults, confident in their Aboriginality and able to participate on equal terms in an increasingly globalised world.

[Department of Human Services standards](#)

The Department of Human Services Standards (the standards) represent a single set of service quality standards for service providers. This document outlines the standards and review processes for registration and accreditation.

The standards are summarised as:

- **empowerment:** people's rights are promoted and upheld
- **access and engagement:** people's right to access transparent, equitable and integrated services is promoted and upheld
- **wellbeing:** people's right to wellbeing and safety is promoted and upheld
- **participation:** people's right to choice, decision-making and to actively participate as a valued member of their chosen community is promoted and upheld.

A service provider's governance and management systems will also be reviewed using the standards of an independent review body, at VACCA this is the Quality Improvement Council.

14. Key VACCA policies and documents

14.1 Policies

While VACCA is guided by overarching government legislation and sector policies and frameworks we also develop internal policies to guide staff and 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 policy folder. Please click on the hyperlinks created here to familiarise yourself with the policies within each of these headings.

- [Governance](#)
- [Corporate services](#) (includes finance)
- [Occupational health and safety](#)
- [Human resources](#)
- [Information management](#)
- [Client services](#)
- [Quality](#)

14.2 Documents

[VACCA client services charter](#)

This charter describes what a child, family and carers can expect from us when they receive services from VACCA. They can expect to:

- be treated with respect
- involved in decision-making
- have their complaints heard
- have their complaints treated seriously.

Caseworkers need to ensure that children, families and carers:

- are aware of their rights under this charter
- are given a copy of the charter as part of the client welcome pack
- have had the charter explained to them.

[Caring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Children in out of home care](#)

This paper was written by VACCA for non-Aboriginal carers providing out-of-home care. The document provides information about the importance of culture and practical tips on how carers can best meet the cultural needs of Aboriginal children. Caseworkers need to ensure that all non-Aboriginal carers are given a copy of this document and understand their role in caring for our children.

[Building respectful partnerships](#)

This guide was written by VACCA to describe how mainstream child and family service organisations can build Aboriginal cultural competence to deliver effective services for Aboriginal children and families. The guide discusses key concepts and understandings (cornerstones) of Aboriginal cultural competence. This document is also a good resource for non-Aboriginal staff to ensure they are working in a culturally competent way and for VACCA staff to refer their colleagues at mainstream organisations to read.

[Aboriginal cultural competence framework \(2008\)](#)

The framework was written by VACCA for mainstream child and family services to help them to build their cultural understandings and capacity. This document is also a good resource for VACCA staff to ensure they are working in a culturally competent way.

[Working with Aboriginal children and families: A guide for Child Protection and Child and Family Welfare workers \(2006\)](#)

This guide was written by VACCA to provide assistance to child and family workers in their work with Aboriginal children and families. It aims to provide workers with a better understanding of Victorian Aboriginal history and how it continues to impact on Aboriginal Communities today. It invites workers to reflect on their current practices and attitudes and provides guidance on to improve their cross-cultural practice.

15. Staff safety and wellbeing

VACCA is committed to providing a culturally, physically and emotionally safe environment to staff, children, families and carers. This is supported by our internal policies such as the *staff safety* and [staff wellbeing policy](#). This policy outlines the supports in place to promote and maintain staff wellbeing. It includes information about critical incident and stress de-briefing services including counselling, support for study leave, professional development and learning opportunities.



15.1 Employee assistance program

[Employee assistance program](#) (EAP) provides counselling and wellbeing support for all staff and their immediate family members. This service is free for all staff and eligible family members for up to 10 hours of support per issue. Staff can call 1300 361 008 to make an appointment or for more information (you will need to speak to the Human Resources for the username and password to access information online if you have not been provided with this on commencing work at VACCA).

15.2 Our work, our ways: VACCA's supervision program

At VACCA our understanding of supervision is based on Aboriginal values and culture. [Our work, our ways: VACCA's supervision program](#) describes this supervision model by:

- unpacking the definition of supervision and what this means for Aboriginal staff
- examining and appreciating the complexity and uniqueness of work with Aboriginal children and families
- describing the supervision framework – understandings of supervision, its functions and purpose, looking at different kinds of supervision and the supervision cycle
- including standards for supervision and reflective questions for supervisors.

15.3 Performance review and professional development

VACCA has developed a [performance review and professional development policy](#). This policy outlines the requirement that all staff have a professional development plan developed with their supervisor and reviewed every 12 months. The benefits to staff include job clarity, identification of professional development needs and opportunities and recognition of performance.

VACCA has a [professional development and training policy](#) that outlines the procedures for staff to access adequate and appropriate training to support staff's professional development (as identified in their professional development plan). The policy also outlines requirements of new staff to attend induction programs and regular training.

Contact a training officer to gain a copy of the current training calendar and to book training.

15.4 Occupational health and safety

VACCA is committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of its staff and any other people who may be affected by VACCA operations. VACCA has an [occupational health and safety policy](#) that outlines how VACCA will adhere to the following legislation:

- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985*
- *Dangerous Goods Act 1985*
- *Accident Compensation Act 1985.*

16. Key Readings

This list provides some of the important documents to shape our work. We have listed these here because we believe its important staff know about these.

Staff can click onto the report provided and read each of these documents:

- Australian Human Rights and equal Opportunity Commission. (1997). [*Bringing them home, National inquiry into separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, Canberra*](#)
- Bamblett, M., and Lewis, P. (2006). '[*A vision for Koorie children and families: Embedding rights, embedding culture*](#)', Just policy: A journal of Australian social policy, edition 41, September 2006. VCOSS. p 45.
- Council of Australian Governments (COAG). (2011). [*Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage: Key indicators report*](#), Melbourne
- Victorian Government. (2011). [*Victorian government Indigenous affairs report*](#), Melbourne
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. (2010), [*The State of Victoria children 2009: Aboriginal children and young people in Victoria*](#), Melbourne
- Victorian Government. (2012). [*Report of the protecting Victoria's vulnerable children inquiry Volume 2, Victoria, Chapter 12: Meeting the needs of Aboriginal children and young people*](#), Melbourne
- Aboriginal Affairs Victoria Department of Planning and Community Development. (2008). [*Strong culture, strong peoples, strong families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities: 10 year plan*](#), Melbourne
- Department of Human Services. (2004). [*Towards collaboration: A resource guide for Child Protection and family violence*](#), Melbourne
- Department of Planning and Community Development. (2009). [*A right to respect: Victoria's plan to prevent violence against women 2010–2020*](#), Melbourne
- Department of Human Services. (2008). [*Aboriginal cultural competence framework*](#), Melbourne
- Department of Human Services, (2006). [*Building better partnerships*](#), Melbourne
- Department of Human Services, (2012). [*Children, youth and families good practice publication*](#), Melbourne
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2012). [*Child Protection Australia report 2011-12*](#), Canberra
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2012). [*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander: Health performance framework 2012 Victoria*](#), Canberra

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- Frankland, R., Bamblett, M., Lewis, P., Trotter, R. (2010) This is *'Forever business': A framework for maintaining and restoring cultural safety in Aboriginal Victoria*, Melbourne
 - Bamblett, M., Harrison, J., Lewis, P. *Proving culture and voice works: Towards creating the evidence base for resilient Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia.*
 - Bamblett, M., Harrison, J., Lewis, P. (2007) *Detoxifying the child and family welfare system for Australian Indigenous peoples: Self-determination, rights and culture as the critical tools.* First Peoples Child & Family Review A Journal on Innovation and Best Practices in Aboriginal Child Welfare Administration, Research, Policy & Practice 43 Volume 3, Number 3, 2007, pp. 43-56

17. Resources

17.1 Legislation

- [*The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 \(Vic\)*](#)
- [*Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005\(Vic\)*](#)
- [*Working with Children Act 2005 \(Vic\)*](#)
- [*Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012 \(Vic\)*](#)
- [*Information and 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 \(Vic\)*](#)

17.2 Charters

- [*Dardee Boorai: Victorian charter of safety and wellbeing for Aboriginal children and young people \(2008\)*](#)
- [*Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*](#)

17.3 Key sector policies and frameworks

- [*Department of Human Service standards*](#)
- [*Quality Improvement Council \(QIC\) standards*](#)
- [*Department of Human Services policy and funding plan*](#)
- [*Program requirements for home-based care*](#)
- [*Program requirements for residential care*](#)
- [*Program requirements for the delivery of therapeutic residential care in Victoria*](#)
- [*Program requirements for family and early parenting services in Victoria*](#)
- [*Program requirements for the Aboriginal child specialist advice and support service*](#)
- [*Program requirements for cultural support plan*](#)
- [*Department of Human Services case contracting processes*](#)
- [*Department of Human Services information sharing guidelines*](#)
- [*Victoria's vulnerable children: Our shared responsibility directions paper \(2012\)*](#)
- [*Victoria vulnerable children: Our shared responsibility strategy 2013-2022*](#)

- [Protocol between the Department of Human Services Child Protection Service and the Victorian Child Care Agency Protocol \(2002\)](#)
- [Working with Aboriginal children and families: A guide for Child Protection and Child and Family Welfare workers](#)
- [Wannik: Learning together – journey to our future. Education strategy for Koorie Students Victoria \(2008\)](#)
- [Best Interests case practice model](#)
- [Victorian Indigenous family violence strategy: Regional Action Group operating guidelines reference manual \(2012\)](#)
- [Family violence risk assessment and framework](#)
- [Balert Booron: The Victoria plan for Aboriginal children and young people \(2010-2020\)](#)
- [Child Protection practice manual](#)

17.4 Key VACCA policies and frameworks

All [VACCA policies](#) fall under the following key headings within the VACCA organisational – electronic folder.

- [Governance](#)
- [Corporate services \(includes finance\)](#)
- [Occupational health and safety](#)
- [Human resources](#)
- [Information management](#)
- [Client services](#)
- [Quality](#)

There are a number of key VACCA documents to provide a framework for our work that are mentioned throughout this manual. These include:

- [VACCA strategic plan](#)
- [Moondani Aboriginal family centre](#)
- [VACCA contracted case management guide](#)
- [VACCA feedback guidelines](#)

17.5 Program and procedure manuals

- [Lakidjeka Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support Service \(ACSASS\)](#)
- Early Intervention and Family Services (EIFS)
 - [Intergrated Family Services Program](#)
 - [Southern Aboriginal Liaison worker](#)
 - [Aboriginal Stronger Families Program](#)
 - [Aboriginal Family Restorations Program](#)
 - [Wilka Kwe Program](#)
 - [Cradle to Kinder Program](#)
 - [Aboriginal Family-Led Decision-Making](#)
 - [Koorie Connect](#)

- Out-of-home care programs
 - [Introduction to Out-of-home Care](#)
 - [Aboriginal Kinship Care Program](#)
 - [Aboriginal Residential Care Program](#)
 - [Extended Care Program](#)
 - [Aboriginal Permanent Care Program](#)
 - [Koorie Cultural Placement and Support Program](#)
 - [Aboriginal Adolescent Community Placement House](#)
 - [Aboriginal Leaving Care Program](#)
 - [Aboriginal Childrens Healing Team](#)
 - [Cultural Support Plan Program](#)
- Family violence programs
 - [Aboriginal Family Violence Programs](#)
- Homelessness programs
 - [Kurnai Youth Homelessness Program](#)

17.6 Practice tools

- [Timeline of VACCA development](#)
- [Aboriginal languages of Victoria](#)
- [ABC online Indigenous - interactive map](#)
- [Aboriginal English words](#)
- [Working with Aboriginal children and families: A guide for Child Protection and Child and Family Welfare workers](#)
- [Cultural foundations of Aboriginal kinship care](#)
- [Growing up our way: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child rearing practice matrix](#)
- [Aboriginal child rearing practices summary](#)
- [VACCA programs internal referrals](#)
- [VACCA office contact information](#)
- [Department of Human Services divisions](#)
- [Department of Human Services areas and child FIRST catchments](#)
- [Children's Court](#)
- [Court orders](#)
- [Client welcome pack](#)
- [Department of Human Services specialist assessment guides](#)
- [Employee assistance program](#)
- [Our work, our ways: VACCA's supervision program](#)

17.7 Forms

Each program manual will have a list of forms relevant to the program. Listed below are the forms listed in this manual.

- [Client feedback form](#)
- [Consent to exchange and release information form](#)
- [Consent to share Information form](#)
- [VACCA's My culture, my future my cultural support journey](#)
- [Therapeutic intervention plan](#)

