

ACWA NGO Sector Permanency Support Program (PSP) Needs Analysis

Report 4: ACWA OOHC Reforms Forum, 6 September 2017

This report identifies the critical needs and solutions NGOs conveyed to ACWA relating to the PSP Reform at the ACWA OOHC Reforms Forum. Participants were also asked to rank the priority of need relating to each of the needs. This information was gathered on Wednesday 6 September at the ACWA OOHC Reforms Forum meeting from 16 people representing 14 different agencies from across NSW. The participants comprised predominantly senior agency or program managers. No Aboriginal controlled agencies or staff members were present. The feedback gathered from participants will inform a statewide survey aimed at refining information already gathered on the needs of the NGO sector relating to the Permanency Support Program reform.

<p>1. The needs in caseworker practice, skills and capabilities</p>	<p>Skills, Practice and Capabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building competence in conducting different levels of risk assessment and mitigation across the spectrum including child protection and safety when working unaccompanied; • Need to improve knowledge and skills in Child Protection, SARA, or Mandatory Reporting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What you are looking for and asking to check things and the confidence to do this; ➤ Where and how to raise concerns and what level of presentation/reporting is required? • Need to learn SDM tools for a variety of tasks such as restoration analysis; • Need clarity and consistency in providing information to the Children’s Court especially as restoration matters progress; • Need to understand and use consistent common language between NGOs and FACS; • Need to upskill caseworkers to handle social work responsibilities; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Will be working across the spectrum of issues and risks such as substance abuse/drug and alcohol issues – e.g. will caseworkers need to conduct substance testing or provide referrals for this? ➤ Also working with mental health, domestic and family violence, disability issues etc – OOHC caseworkers have not traditionally worked in direct support roles around these issues and will need relevant skills to respond and provide
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	<p>support around these issues;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation/Restoration practice knowledge and skills including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Working intensively with families prior to removal; ➤ Identifying where preservation ends and day one of restoration work begins (for children and young people at risk); ➤ What level of preservation is expected? ➤ Who will 'hold' the parents on removal? ➤ Working with difficult to engage or evasive parents; • Develop and embed best practice in working with Aboriginal children, families and communities; • Incorporating Family Group Conferencing and Family Finding into practice; • Case Plan goal – NGOs will come to FACS - new entry pathway; • Need clarity and consistency regarding role and expectations (such as report writing) in relation to the Children's Court especially as restoration matters progress; • Need process for immediate placements that enable both timeliness and appropriate consideration; • Need to build trusting relationships and transparency between FACS and NGOs regarding emergency placements especially in terms of risk mitigation and contract management and negotiating and building the system at the same time; • A collaborative approach is required prior to removal of children and young people – communication and pre-planning essential • Clear parameters of care • Multi-tracking • Need to empower caseworkers to take a lead role earlier in tasks such as case planning processes such as determining goals and actions; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ New child allocated to CSC - if preservation is case plan goal there needs to be a way to escalate as you should (eg Family Group Conferencing); ➤ If removal goes ahead need to have permanency goal to provide to court (need a chance to collaborate) ➤ Need regular touch points; ➤ Need to be able to engage in local systems to resolve dissenting views or changes to Plan; ➤ Using good standardised documentation for placement matching • Need to develop skills as confident and capable advocates and
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	<p>negotiators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding and skills in core processes including court reporting • Learning to embed new therapeutic framework and principles into practice and achieve cultural change to support this – how does it link with training and what it looks like for staff across the system (including residential care and carers)
<p>2. How you rank them in priority to be addressed</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Court reporting – clarity and consistency 2. Negotiation and advocacy skills 3. Embedding new therapeutic framework and principles into practice and achieving cultural change in the sector
<p>3. What you think the possible support solutions are</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing Communities of 'Best' Practice; • Develop joint training across FACS and NGOs • Clear timeframes for clarity of process re permanency and wellbeing (and needs analysis?) priorities • Standardised documentation • Agreed commitment to placement matching • Showcase examples of best practice models of agency structures to meet children and young people's needs through PSP lens including scope for different specialisations • Rebuild collaborative relationships between FACS and NGOs to enable open communication and respect for NGO advocacy for children's best interests • Cultural competence and skills working with Aboriginal children, families and communities • Family Group Conferencing and Family Finding training