



# Upcoming changes to Out of Home Care services

## FAQs for carers transitioning to an ACCO

The following information is to support carers who are transitioning to an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO).

The Department of Communities (the Department) is changing the way it delivers Out of Home Care (OOHC) services in Western Australia (WA) to achieve the best outcomes for all children and young people.

## Frequently asked questions

### What is the goal of the OOHC Reform?

Communities is seeking an OOHC system for children and young people that is focused on the best interests of the child or young person; is coordinated, flexible and innovative; delivers quality services accountable to high standards; and is sustainable.

For all children, especially Aboriginal children, changes to the OOHC system will result in children being in care arrangements that meet their physical, emotional, cultural, and spiritual needs in keeping with the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle](#).

The key priorities include creating greater stability for children entering care; siblings remaining together; improved opportunity for early reunification to family; young people leaving care well prepared to enter adulthood; and a system that is culturally safe and meets the needs of Aboriginal children and young people.

### What are the benefits in transitioning to an ACCO?

According to the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: a guide to support implementation](#), Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children have a right to grow up with a communal sense of belonging, a stable sense of identity, to know where they are from, and their place in relation to family, mob, community, land and culture.

ACCOs are well connected to their local community. The services are delivered to Aboriginal people, are locally informed, place-based, and culturally appropriate. They are best placed to find and assess family to care for children who are not able to return to their parents.

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For Aboriginal families and carers caring for Aboriginal children, this means working with a provider that can provide cultural security and safety that is embedded in their policies and practices. Carers will be supported to achieve the best outcomes for all children and young people.

The positive outcome for carers is that:

- Carers of Aboriginal children and young people will have the opportunity to increase their knowledge of the Aboriginal history that supports connection, identity and stability for the child and carer.
- Where possible Aboriginal children in care will remain on country with Aboriginal carers, stay connected to family, community, and culture.
- Opportunities for family reunification, where appropriate will be a focus for children to be reunified.

### **How will Aboriginal Children and Young People transition to an ACCO?**

Aboriginal children and their carers, including any other children in the care arrangement, will be provided the opportunity to transition to an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO).

This will be done in a coordinated and planned approach when working with families, carers, ACCOs, CSOs and the Department to ensure that the transition is managed with the best interests of children.

### **Why is this better for Aboriginal children?**

Aboriginal children experience better outcomes when connected to community, culture and Country. Evidence shows that Aboriginal children who are cared for by an ACCO have a greater connection to culture and identity which can lead to better health and wellbeing outcomes.

### **What will happen if I am caring for an Aboriginal child?**

If you are caring for an Aboriginal child, you will be given an opportunity to be matched with an ACCO that best meets the needs of the child. Moving to an ACCO is not compulsory. The needs of the child are the paramount consideration.

### **What will happen if I have Aboriginal children and non-Aboriginal children in my care?**

Aboriginal children and their carers, including any other children in the care arrangement will be provided the opportunity to transition to an ACCO. Ultimately, the best interest of children is paramount in all decision making and decisions will be made in consultation with the child's care team.

### **Will I be included in decision making?**

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The Department values and recognises the important role carers play in OOHC. You will be provided with the relevant information to make an informed choice about the future caring options for you and the child. The best interest of each child or young person is paramount in all decision making which will be done in consultation with their Care Team.

### How can I find out more?

To find out more about OOHC changes and more useful information for carers, please visit our website or send an email to the OOHC team at the Department (OOHCtransition@communities.wa.gov.au).

### Where can I get support?

The Foster Care Association of WA is available to provide support to carers during the transition period. Please contact 9242 4222 or 1800 497 101 or email enquiries@fcawa.com.au if you would like assistance.

### What if I need urgent help?

If you need urgent help and you can't get hold of your District Office or the Advocate for Children in Care, there are other options:

- Crisis Care (24 hours/7 days) Telephone (08) 9223 1111 Free call 1800 199 008
- Kids Helpline (24 hours/7 days) Free call 1800 55 1800
- Police 131 444 or 000 (emergency only).

### How do I contact the Advocate for Children in Care?

- Office hours (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)
- 0429 086 508 (you can call, text or leave a message)
- Free call 1800 460 696 (charges may apply for some mobile plans)
- Email: advocate@communities.wa.gov.au

### Know your rights

Children and young people have human rights. Know your rights by downloading the [Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care](#) and the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child 1990](#).