

What you told us: Key Themes

Survey Responses

Development of an Aboriginal Case Management Policy and Guidelines

This paper highlights the key themes raised through completion of AbSec’s Aboriginal Case Management Policy survey. This survey was intended to provide an additional avenue for participation, in addition to the series of direct consultations conducted in various areas. The feedback gathered from respondents will be added to those that emerged from the face-to-face consultations to contribute to the foundational work being undertaken by AbSec in developing an Aboriginal Case Management Policy and Guidelines. It is noted that many of these themes are interdependent when considering best practice.

Forty nine responses were received during the period that the survey was open from a range of respondents, including carers (30%), practitioners with ACCOs (16%), NGOs (16%) and FACS (16%), as well as community members (12%). The vast majority of respondents agreed that the survey provided a useful opportunity for their participation in the development of the Aboriginal Case Management Policy and have their views heard.

It should be noted that not all respondents completed all items, however all responses were included in thematic analysis.

<p>1. How important are these core principles to an effective Aboriginal Case Management Policy</p>	<p>The Core Principles identified in the initial 2-day intensive workshop were presented in the survey for validation. Each of the Core Principles were strongly endorsed, with between 75% and 91% of all respondents agreeing that each Core Principle was either “very important” or “absolutely essential”. Consistent with other themes emerging throughout the survey, the involvement of extended family and significant others in decision making, and the involvement of community in decision making was particularly strongly endorsed, with 63% and 59% of all participants indicating it was “Absolutely essential”.</p>
<p>2. Commencement and referral pathways</p>	<p>The majority of respondents (55%) endorsed case management for Aboriginal children and families commencing early, at the point of first contact (pre-ROSH). This was followed by “at point of referral” (18%). Participants were also presented with three possible referral pathways (FACS referral, Family Self-referral, Other Aboriginal community referral pathways) and asked to select all that were important to an effective Aboriginal Case Management Policy. All were strongly endorsed (all >81%), emphasising the need for a broad range of referral options across the continuum of care to enable access to services and supports.</p>
<p>3. What’s being done well?</p>	<p>Across the continuum of care, there was a general sense of pessimism about the effectiveness of the current service system for Aboriginal children and families. While some respondents noting</p>

	<p>silver linings in changes such as greater involvement of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (particularly the commitment to placing Aboriginal children with accredited Aboriginal community-controlled agencies or Aboriginal intensive family services where they exist), community engagement, cultural understanding and cultural care planning, the dominant theme emerging was that much more needs to be done to create an effective Aboriginal child and family service system. Some of the themes important to this system also emerged (discussed below), and included the importance of implementation and a long term commitment to an Aboriginal community approach. A number of participants emphasized the need to follow through on the implementation (generally consistent with the themes of the Core Principles, such as the ACPD).</p>
<p>4. Key theme: Family and community involvement</p>	<p>Across all identified segments (Pre-ROSH, ROSH, Crisis intervention) survey respondents emphasized the importance of family and community involvement, and the need for “shared power” in decision making. That is, the case management policy must reinforce the need for participatory/inclusive practice with family (including extended family) and Aboriginal community, commencing at the earliest point and continuing throughout. Aboriginal children’s families, kin and community must be genuine partners driving decision making about Aboriginal children and young people. This includes regular review, where all stakeholders are able to come together around the child/young person. There was an identified need for greater community engagement, both in local service system design as well as decision making processes, and guidance for practitioners on community engagement and how to make decisions together. This might include Aboriginal Family-led Decision making approaches. Related to this, many participants noted the importance of better Family Finding, building a network of support.</p>
<p>5. Tailored, holistic response</p>	<p>Survey respondents repeatedly emphasized the need to place Aboriginal children at the centre of our work, and to see and consider the “whole” child in our work with families. This requires a tailored/individualized approach rather than prescriptive or programmatic guidelines. Respondents emphasized that an effective service system will wrap around Aboriginal families (including extended families and other significant people in the child’s life), providing key services to support the child to thrive. Survey respondents wanted strong partnerships across all services around children and families, including better information sharing and relationships between services. Most importantly, services must form genuine partnerships with those around children, who are the experts in their lives and must be at the heart of effective case plans. Survey respondents wanted a coordinated approach</p>

	that was open, participatory and transparent, with service integration/clear pathways across the service system.
6. The Aboriginal Case Management Policy must be culturally embedded	The importance of culture was a common theme across responses, emphasizing the need for culture to be embedded into the service system/case management processes for Aboriginal children and young people. It was clear that this was not about having different “thresholds”, and the primacy of the concept of safety and working in the “best interests” of children was noted, however it was important that our approach and application understands Aboriginal people in order to drive better engagement and more valid assessment and understanding. Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations were an essential part of embedded culture within service system design and delivery, with some respondents noting that ACCOs must be valued for the important role they play in community. Cultural understanding/cultural competence must be tailored to local communities, recognizing the diversity of the Aboriginal community, and should be broader than the service system but also seek to improve public understanding of culture.
7. The Aboriginal Case Management Policy should be oriented towards intervening early and minimizing harm, providing support to families and communities	It was clear across responses that survey respondents wanted a service system that was able to work at the community or early intervention end of the continuum to prevent harm wherever possible. However, survey respondents indicated that they felt that these services were often the most under-resourced, particularly in the Aboriginal service system.
8. Accountability to the Aboriginal community is a critical element of ensuring the Aboriginal Case Management Policy is implemented appropriately	Consistent with the issues regarding implementation noted above, survey respondents consistently noted the importance of accountability mechanisms with respect to policy and practice. Importantly, the emphasis was on accountability of systems and services to the Aboriginal community, including Aboriginal community controlled mechanisms for oversight and accountability. This included elements such as Aboriginal audit of cultural care plans and case plans, oversight of the full implementation of the ACPP and other elements of practice and policy. Consistent with other comments, survey respondents reiterated the need for community control at the local level, as well as a broader independent oversight body.
9. Building capacity and capability	While not specifically related to the Aboriginal Case Management Policy, survey respondents noted the need for greater capacity and capability building for services and supports to Aboriginal children and families. This included strengthening Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, better resourcing for services across the continuum of care, and improved training for all stakeholders,



Caring for our Aboriginal children and families

	<p>including practitioners and caregivers. This should also include greater cultural awareness/competency. However, survey respondents remained wary of tools and guidance becoming too prescriptive where responses tailored to the needs of individual children and family are needed. The focus was on skills, with templates reserved for key areas of coordination (recording issues/goals, sharing information across services etc). Additionally, technology was identified for its potential at reducing administrative burden of various tasks to allow practitioners to spend more time in the field (for example, voice to text software).</p>
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