

Appendix E

Consultation Questions

Best Practice models in Indigenous out-of-home care

ACCAP Research and Consultation Questions

[Revised 21 March 2005]

In each section, a general statement or question will open up the topic for discussion. Depending on the depth of answers provided, some or all of the additional prompts may be used, or other questions for clarification. The purpose is to elicit a narrative account from the participants, and the questions that are listed here are examples of prompts that may be used in doing so.

A. Questions for focus groups with Indigenous carers

1. Recruitment:

I want to begin by asking some questions about how you came to be carers.

- 1.1 How many foster children have you had? (past and current, length of placement; birth children - ages)
- 1.2 What is your relationship to the child in your care (to establish kith, kin, Indigenous foster carer, other)? What are the positive things about this arrangement? What are the challenges?
- 1.3 How were you recruited? (What prompted you to become a carer?)
- 1.4 What did you have to do to become a carer?
- 1.5 What type of agency is responsible for managing your placement?
- 1.6 What were the main reasons you became a foster carer? Have these reasons changed and if so how?

2. Assessment:

The next questions relate to the assessment process.

- 2.1 What checks were made on you and your home before children were placed in your care?
- 2.2 What medical/psychological tests were made of the child/young person before they come into your care? Do you think they were good enough?
- 2.3 Have there been any tests of the child/young person since he/she came into your care?

3. Training

These next questions are about what preparation you had for being an out-of-home carer.

- 3.1 How much training did you receive before having kids placed in your care?
- 3.2 What other training have you had since becoming a carer?
- 3.3 What kind of things were covered in your training? For example, understanding maltreatment; managing behaviours; legal issues; safe caring; child health; attachment disorders; cultural differences; grief and loss; foetal

alcohol children; sexual abuse and its effects; teenagers; non-violent crisis intervention for difficult children; sex offenders; kinship care-giving (dealing with government agencies, extended family).

- 3.4 Were you adequately prepared to care for the child/young person?
- 3.5 What other things needed to be covered to better prepare you?

4. Retention

Now I want to ask about why you have continued to care for children.

- 4.1 What is the best thing about being a carer?
- 4.2 What things might get in the way of you continuing to provide out-of-home care?
- 4.3 What factors affect your health and wellbeing as a carer?
- 4.4 Do you believe the role you play as a carer gets the recognition that it deserves? Are there ways in which you could be made to feel more valued?

5. Resources and supports

These next questions are about the resources and supports for you as a carer.

- 5.1 What financial support do you receive?
- 5.2 What types of help are available to support you: e.g., health care card; assessment, monitoring and support of children on placement; counselling/treatment services for children; supporting family access/contact; facilitating and mediating with state/territory CPS (e.g., case planning meetings).
- 5.3 Is respite care available? If so, type/frequency and how is it accessed? Are respite carers Indigenous?
- 5.4 What kind of interactions do you have with the department? What are the good and bad things about your case management? What is missing? How have you dealt with major disagreements between you and social workers or child protection staff?
- 5.5 What supports are there for the young person in your care? (e.g., mentoring schemes for Indigenous young people; planning for family reunification).
- 5.6 Have you had to deal with allegations of abuse of someone in your care or other complaints about you as a carer? Did you think the way allegations were handled were fair? How did you cope with this?
- 5.7 What tensions do you notice within your own family (between foster children and your own birth children if you have any)?
- 5.8 What is the most difficult thing you experience being a carer? What, if anything, could be done to help deal with things that make being a carer difficult? (Possible repetition)
- 5.9 What other supports do you need? (Possible repetition)

6. Successful placement characteristics

Finally, this last group of questions are about what you think makes for a successful placement for Indigenous young people.

- 6.1 How do you provide for children's need for connection with their birth family? (parents, siblings and extended family) (e.g., talk about family, family photos; phone calls; visits; seeing family on special occasions)
- 6.2 How often does the child/young person see family? Where? How long?

- 6.3 How do you provide for children's need for connection to their cultural community? (i.e., maintaining Indigenous identity)
- 6.4 What preparations do you or the department make for when it is time for the young person to leave care?
- 6.5 How have you coped with sudden breakdown/disruption to placements?
- 6.6 How have you dealt with the birth parents?

What aspects of out-of-home care are important for producing good outcomes for children? If you could make the ideal out-of-home care environment, what would it look like?

B. Questions for Consultations with Organisations:

Please describe your geographical location, size, the level of demand for services? How do these factors impact on the policies and practices employed in your organisation?

After each group of questions, prompt with:

- | How does this take into account specific cultural practices?
- | What is the rationale for employing these practices?
- | How effective are these practices?
- | What are the barriers to effective practice, and what are the mechanisms used to overcome these obstacles?

1. Recruitment

I want to begin by asking some questions about how you recruit carers.

- 1.1. Who do you recruit as out-of-home carers for Indigenous children? Family members (kinship care); those not biologically related, but part of the child's social network ("kith care"), other Indigenous carers; other non-Indigenous carers, Indigenous or non-Indigenous professional staff to run residential care facilities (lead-tenant, family group, specialist care facilities, etc.).
- 1.2. How are new carers recruited?
- 1.3. How does your organisation support the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle?
- 1.4. What happens when you cannot find an appropriate Indigenous carer?
- 1.5. Is it more difficult in some situations to find an appropriate Indigenous carer?
- 1.6. How do you monitor success in relation to the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle?
- 1.7. How are you working towards the permanent employment and retention of Indigenous carers (home, residential and respite)?
- 1.8. Geographically, where are carers recruited from?
- 1.9. What has been the **most** effective strategy for recruiting Indigenous carers?
- 1.10. What has been the **least** effective strategy for recruiting Indigenous carers?

2. Assessment

The next questions relate to the assessment processes you use.

- 2.1. How are children assessed? Monitored?
- 2.2. How do you try to achieve a match between child and carer (not just cultural match)?
- 2.3. How do you assess the appropriateness/quality of carers and placement options for children?
- 2.4. There is a view that some children are placed at risk by leaving Indigenous children in unsafe kinship placements. How do you deal with this issue? How do you measure safety? What types of screening/regulation are in place? How adequate are they? What is the rate of placement breakdown, or continued risk for the child?
- 2.5. Are there specialist placements for troubled children?

3. Training

These next questions are about what training you provide for out-of-home carers.

- 3.1. How do you train carers of Indigenous young people?
- 3.2. Do kinship carers receive the same training as non-kinship carers?
- 3.3. What types of training are provided?
 - (a) understanding maltreatment
 - (b) managing behaviour
 - (c) family dynamics
 - (d) legal issues
 - (e) safe caring
 - (f) child health
 - (g) attachment disorders
 - (h) cultural differences
 - (i) grief and loss
 - (j) foetal alcohol children
 - (k) sexual abuse and its effects
 - (l) teenagers
 - (m) non-violent crisis intervention for difficult children
 - (n) sex offenders
 - (o) kinship care-givers
 - (p) other.... [please state]

4. Retention

These next questions look at organisational strategies you use to keep your carers.

- 4.1. What is needed to prevent “drop out” of carers for Indigenous young people (particularly Indigenous carers)?
- 4.2. What are the most important and significant reasons that lead to Indigenous carers leaving caring?
- 4.3. What have you tried in order to improve retention? If it has been successful, why? If not, why not?

5. Resources

These questions concern the availability and types of resources for out-of-home care.

- 5.1. What resources are available for Indigenous carers and young people in care?
- 5.2. How do you provide placement choice (e.g., pooling with other agencies; partnering with other non-foster care organisations)?
- 5.3. What types of placement does your organisation make available for Aboriginal children unable to live within their biological family system (e.g., emergency, short-term, long-term, and respite foster care placements)?
- 5.4. Are counselling/treatment services available for young people?
- 5.5. Is “cultural mentoring” available?

6. Supports

I now want to ask about how you address the initial and ongoing support needs of carers.

- 6.1. How are kinship carers financially supported?
- 6.2. How is family access/contact for the young person supported? (is family reunification always planned for?; do you have parallel permanency planning?)

- 6.3. How do you ensure good relationships between the carer and the state/territory CPS (e.g., case planning meetings)? What kind of case support services do you provide?
- 6.4. What prevention services are available to assist birth families to remain intact and avoid entering the out-of-home care system?
- 6.5. What other family preservation, early intervention, community development services are provided? If not provided are they available within the community from another service?
- 6.6. What related adult-focused services (e.g., domestic violence) do you link with to support reunification or family preservation?
- 6.7. How do you encourage non-Indigenous carers to be involved or liaise with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (with whom does consultation take place; on what principles is it based; how is good liaison fostered; what does it look like)?
- 6.8. How else do you support carers and Indigenous young people in care?

7. Successful placement characteristics

Finally, this last group of questions are about what you think makes for a successful placement for Indigenous young people.

- 7.1. What factors do you believe have contributed—or continue to contribute—towards child removal (e.g., remote location/isolation/lack of services, etc.)?
- 7.2. What are the alternatives to child removal (e.g., intervention orders against perpetrators)? Are these used in your area?
- 7.3. What other factors affect carers' health and wellbeing?
- 7.4. What other factors contribute to good practice in the placement of Indigenous children in out of home care, such as:
 - a. type and level of liaison or involvement with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (with whom does consultation take place; on what principles is it based; how is good liaison fostered; what does it look like?)
 - b. connections with Aboriginal community policy officers or liaison officers?
 - c. Use of specific decision-making practices, such as family group conferencing?
 - d. relationship with CPS/police (e.g., perception of CPS as reactive cf. proactive)?
 - e. Ability of courts to meet Indigenous needs?
 - f. joint case management and active collaboration with other agencies involved in child and family services?
- 7.5. What is the impact on practice of type, level and ongoing commitment to funding (and any strictures around funding)?
- 7.6. What sort of coordination exists between stakeholders across local and state government boundaries to address disadvantage in Indigenous communities?
- 7.7. Where are foster care functions best located? (part of Indigenous community-based services that also provide early intervention and support services and intensive family support)
- 7.8. What are the most important and significant reasons that lead to placement breakdown?
- 7.9. What are the positive elements – and the challenges – with each of the following models of out-of-home care: kith, kin, indigenous foster carer, non-indigenous foster carer; group residential home; lead-tenant; family group

home model – children placed as part of a larger sibling group; specialist care facilities etc?

- 7.10. How are the following critical incidents addressed?
- a. sudden breakdown/disruption to placements
 - b. allegations of abuse in care or other complaints about carers
 - c. relationship between carers and birth parents
 - d. tensions within foster care families (between foster children and the carer's birth children)
 - e. public disagreements about who should be caring for the young person (particularly disputes between extended family members)
 - f. major disagreements between carers and either social workers or child protection staff (who are often much younger and perceived as inexperienced by the carers)

C. Questions for focus groups with young people:

In cooperation with CREATE, key contacts in a couple of jurisdictions will be responsible for facilitating access to young people in care to participate in focus groups. Target groups are:

- (a) Indigenous young people aged up to 16 currently in care
- (b) Indigenous young people aged up to 25 who have recently left care

Focus group discussions will be conducted using 4 to 6 young people in a group (less intimidating than one-on-one):

Ice-breaker activity:

1. Can you please write a story – or draw a picture – or both – to show me something about your family or those who care for you?
2. Can you please write a story – or draw a picture – or both – to show me about what being in care is like for you,

Questions:

3. Indigenous kids in care live in different types of situations. Some live with other aunts, uncles, or grandparents (kin), family friends (kith), another aboriginal person, someone who isn't aboriginal, in a group with other kids, etc. Who do you live with? What are the positive things about that? What things would you want to change?
4. What do you think makes someone good at caring for young people like you?
5. What opportunities do you get to be involved in Indigenous community activities? Is this important to you? Can you give us some examples?
6. How often do you see your birth family (mum/dad/brothers and sisters)? How does that happen? How do you feel about that?

Final question:

7. If the politician responsible for running foster care was here today, what would you want to tell her or him?

Additional questions for Indigenous young people who have recently left care:

CLAN and CREATE will be asked to help coordinate participation in a special focus group for indigenous young people who have recently left care. As well as asking the above questions (using past tense, as appropriate), additional questions for Indigenous young people who have recently left care will be:

- What has helped you in leaving care? What's made it difficult?
- What do you see as YOUR community?
- Who, if anybody, do you have a sense of connection with now that you have left care (e.g., birth family, birth community, foster family, foster community)?