



Section 7 – Placement Services

Standard 7.1

Placement Priorities for Children and Youth

When an **Indigenous** child/youth is found to be in need of protection and an out of home, out of family placement is unavoidable, the Child Protection Worker/Designate (including Authorized Persons, Foster Care and Adoptions Worker, or Supervisor/Manager) must place that child/youth in the following order of priority:

- I. another parent/care provider;
 - With the custodial parent's consent, a child/youth may be placed with a non-custodial parent. Where consent is not given, further consultation may be required to ensure that the non-custodial parent has been given every opportunity to demonstrate their ability to care.
- II. family member(s) who reside in the child/youth's home community, Region and or within the NWT (**placement in the extended family member(s) home or placement in an Extended Caregiver Home**);
- III. adults from the child/youth's Indigenous group, community, or people (**placement in the adults' home or placement in a Provisional Caregiver Home**);
- IV. adults from another Indigenous group, community, or people (**placement in the adult(s)' home or placement in a Provisional Caregiver Home**); and
- V. another adult (**placement in a Regular Foster Caregiver Home or In Territory or Out of Territory Specialized Service**).

For a **non-Indigenous** child/youth that requires an out of home placement, the Child Protection Worker/Designate must also give priority to placing that child/youth in the following order of priority:

- I. another parent;
 - With the custodial parent's consent, a child/youth may be placed with a non-custodial parent. If the custodial parent objects to this placement option, do not place the child/youth with the non-custodial parent until you have consulted further with others who are involved with planning for the child/youth and completed an assessment.
- II. family member(s) who reside in the child/youth's home community, Region and or within the NWT (**placement in the extended family member(s) home or placement in an Extended Caregiver Home**);

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- III. adults from the child/youth's cultural group, community or people (**placement in the adult(s)' home or placement in a Provisional Caregiver Home**); and
- IV. another adult (**placement in a Regular Foster Caregiver Home or In Territory or Out of Territory Specialized Service**).

REFERENCE

Child and Family Services Standard 9.3 - Custom Adoption for a Child/youth in the Care of the Director

Child and Family Services Standard 6.7 - Access Plan

Child and Family Services Standard 6.12 - Case Review

Child and Family Services Standard 10.16 Requirement to Provide Notice Before Taking a Significant Measure in Relation to an Indigenous Child/youth

NWT Child and Family Services Act, Section 71(2)

Federal Government's Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families, Section 10, 16 (1)(2) (2.1) (3), 17, 20 (1)(2)

PURPOSE

- Ensuring the best interests of a child/youth is a primary consideration in determining placement priority.
- A child/youth in need of out of home care should be in the least restrictive, most homelike environment available, and as close to the child/youth's own home as is possible.
- To involve extended family and others significant to the child/youth and family in supporting the health, safety, and wellbeing of the child/youth.
- Involve a child/youth, parent(s)/care provider(s)/caregiver(s) and members of the extended family in decision-making processes regarding their circumstances.
- To involve the Indigenous Governing Bodies and/or Aboriginal Organizations in decision making processes regarding a child/youth who is a member of their Organizations.
- To preserve the child/youth's cultural/racial/linguistic and religious heritage and sense of identity.

PROCEDURES

Responsibilities

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Child Protection Worker/Designate:

Determining the Cultural Identity of a Child/youth:

- At the initial contact, ask the child/youth and their parent(s)/care provider(s)/caregiver(s) about their cultural identity, i.e., Indigenous, etc.
- Use the **Genogram Code Key tool 9.1.1** as per **Standard 9.1 Concurrent Planning for Children and Youth and Standard 9.5 Permanency Planning for Children or Youth** to map out the family relationships and other significant relationships that can assist with identification of a child/youth and family's cultural community. Considering the following information while completing the **Genogram**:
 - Aim to gather information about at least **three (3)** generations: the child/youth's generation, their parents and grandparents;
 - Include significant others who lived with or cared for the child/youth;
 - Start with drawing the family structure, who is in the family, in which generations, how they are connected, birth/marriage, deaths etc.;
 - You may ask them to tell you a bit about each person and how they offer support to the child, youth or family;
 - As the child/youth tells you about family members and relationships, make a note alongside the name;
 - Ask about relationships between family members;
 - Ask about family values, beliefs and traditions; and
 - Try to explore patterns and themes.
- Upload a copy of the completed **Genogram Code Key** to MatrixNT and place a copy of it on the hard file.
- Consult with the parent(s)/care provider(s)/caregiver(s) if there are questions about the child/youth's cultural identity and if applicable, consult with members of the child/youth's extended family, Aboriginal Organization, Indigenous Governing Body, and other cultural

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organization for a non-Indigenous child/youth.

- If direct community connections are not available with the child/youth's Indigenous community, contact local Indigenous agencies and organizations for information about services, events and activities open to or specifically for Indigenous children, youth and families.
- Considering the impact of racism and systemic discrimination, work with racialized children, youth and families to assess strengths and recognize resiliency when planning and delivering services specific to them.
- On consent, reach out to cultural group or community members who can help foster the child/youth's connections to their cultural communities, and/or who could support the child/youth in an out-of-home placement if necessary.
- Document in MatrixNT the community or communities to which the child/youth is represented by or could belong to, including both maternal and parental cultural identities.

Placement of Indigenous Child/youth:

- Consult with the parent(s)/care provider(s)/caregiver(s) and the child 12 years of age or older to determine if there is second parent/care provider/caregiver (by consent/custody order), family members, and adults from the child of youth's Indigenous community or another Indigenous community who could provide care for the child/youth. This means that as soon as the parent(s)/care provider(s)/caregiver(s) is aware of a need for an out of home placement, they must begin efforts to identify individuals significant to the child/youth, who can safely care for the child/youth.
- As per Section 16.1 of the **Federal Government's Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families** and in the best interests of the Indigenous child/youth, ensure that placement occurs in the order of priority set out on page one (1) of this Standard.
- Consult with and obtain approval from the Supervisor/Manager before proceeding with an out of home placement. For a child/youth who is placed with Extended or Provisional Caregiver(s) or Regular Foster Caregiver(s) of a different religion, language, race or culture, provide the following information:
 - Ensure the child/youth is provided with information about their cultural identity at a level understood by the child/youth;
 - Ensure the Extended or Provisional Caregiver(s) or Regular Foster Caregiver(s) is

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provided with information about the child/youth cultural identity;

- Assist the child/youth and Extended or Provisional Caregiver(s) or Regular Foster Caregiver(s) to establish relationships with adults and peers of similar background to the child/youth, making sure that a child/youth placed in an Out of Territory or In Territory Specialized Service also has appropriate cultural role models and support persons from their cultural community; and
- Provide the Extended or Provisional Caregiver(s) or Regular Foster Caregiver(s) and the child/youth resources and information specific to the child/youth's cultural identity and community.
- Document all decisions related to placement in MatrixNT as a **Case Note** such as:
 - Notice provided of significant measure (the requirement of an out of home placement) and response received by IGB and the parent(s)/care provider(s)/caregiver(s);
 - Children, youth, parent(s)/care provider(s)/caregiver(s), extended family, Indigenous Governing Body and Aboriginal Organization's thoughts and suggestions about placing an Indigenous child/youth in an out of home placement respecting the priority placements identified above;
 - Reasons why the child/youth needed to be placed in an out of home placement and agreements reached among those involved in planning (including the Supervisor/Manager approval).
- Complete the **Child Placement Information Form** and provide to the caregiver(s). Upload this **form** to MatrixNT and place a copy on the hard file.

Note:

- Placement in a Regular Foster Caregiver Home or In Territory or Out of Territory Specialized Service should only occur if no other placement has been identified for the Indigenous child/youth as per the placement priority list. If placement is to occur, the Supervisor/Manager **must** be consulted prior to the placement.
- Placement priorities are to be applied in **every** placement move. If there is a breakdown or planned move in an out of home placement, reassess for the possibility for family unity and follow the placement priorities for the new placement.

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Placement of Non-Indigenous Child/youth:

- Consult with the parent(s)/care provider(s)/caregiver(s) and the child 12 years of age or older to determine if there is second parent/caregiver/caregiver (by consent/custody order), family members, and adults from the child/youth's cultural community who could provide care for the child/youth. This means that at the start of an intervention, the Child Protection Worker/Designate must begin efforts to identify extended family and community supports who can safely care for the child/youth.
- In planning for out of home care for a Non-Indigenous child/youth, ensure that placement occurs in the order of priority set out on page one (1) and two (2) of this Standard.
- Considering the impact of racism and systemic discrimination work with racialized children, youth and families to assess strengths and recognize resiliency when making placement arrangements. Consult with and obtain approval from the Supervisor/Manager before proceeding with an out of home placement.
- For a child/youth who is placed with Extended or Provisional Caregiver(s) or Regular Foster Caregiver(s) of a different religion, language, race, ethnicity and/or culture, attempt to provide the child/youth and Extended or Provisional Caregiver(s) or Regular Foster Caregiver(s) information to assist in maintaining and/or fostering the child/youth's identity.
 - Assist the child/youth and Extended or Provisional Caregiver(s) or Regular Foster Caregiver(s) to establish relationships with adults and peers of similar background to the child/youth, making sure that a child/youth placed in an Out of Territory or In Territory Specialized Service also has appropriate cultural role models and support persons from their cultural community;
 - Develop a list of appropriate cultural mentors for the child/youth; and
 - Provide the Extended or Provisional Caregiver(s) or Regular Foster Caregiver(s) and the child/youth a list of resources specific to the child/youth's cultural identity.
- Document all decisions related to placement in MatrixNT as a **Case Note** such as:
 - Children, youth, parent(s)/care provider(s)/caregiver(s), extended family's thoughts and suggestions about placing a Non-Indigenous child/youth in an out of home placement;
 - Reasons why the child/youth needed to be placed in an out of home placement and

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agreements reached among those involved in planning (including the Supervisor/Manager approval

- Complete the **Child Placement Information Form** and provide to the Extended or Provisional Caregiver(s) or Regular Foster Caregiver(s). Upload this **form** to MatrixNT and place a copy on the hard file.

Note:

- Preserving family connections is paramount. When out of home placements are required, place the child/youth with or near siblings who have the same parent(s)/care provider(s)/caregiver(s) as the child/youth, or with other children or youth who are members of the child/youth's family or community.
- Placement in a Regular Foster Caregiver Home or In Territory or Out of Territory Specialized Service should only occur if no other placement has been identified for the Non-Indigenous child/youth as per the placement priority list. If placement is to occur, the Supervisor/Manager **must** be consulted prior to the placement.
- Placement priorities are to be applied in **every** placement move. If there is a breakdown or planned move in an out of home placement, reassess for the possibility for family unity and follow the placement priorities for the new placement.

Considering Indigenous Customs and Traditions in Placement Decisions:

- Involve the Indigenous Governing Body in **all** out of home placement decisions where an Indigenous child/youth is placed in an Extended or Provisional Caregiver(s) or Regular Foster Caregiver(s) home by a Child Protection Worker/Designate. Follow procedures in **Standard 10.16 Requirement to Provide Notice Before Taking a Significant Measure in Relation to an Indigenous Child/youth**.
 - Please note: Where a Plan of Care Agreement exists with a child/youth placed in the home and it is determined that an out of home placement is needed, the parent/care provider can **consent to placing the child/youth with extended family**. If this kind placement happens, the out of home placement is **not** considered a significant measure and there is no need to give notice of the change in placement or the subsequent POCA process (i.e. review, extended, etc.). This is contingent on an apprehension not having occurred.
- Consult with the child/youth's Indigenous community to determine if a custom adoption is an appropriate option when determining placement. If so, follow procedures in **Standard 9.3**

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Custom Adoption for a Child/youth in the Care of the Director.

Promoting Child/Youth's Attachment and Emotional Ties to Family When Separated:

- Develop a plan to promote the child/youth's attachment and emotional ties to family members when not placed with them as per **Standard 6.7 Access Plan**, while taking into consideration the following factors:
 - Visitation and access between the child/youth and family members, unless such access is not in the best interests of the child/youth;
 - Role of the Extended or Provisional Caregiver(s) or Regular Foster Caregiver(s) or specialized service in promoting attachment and emotional ties through supporting ongoing contact with family members; and
 - Promoting attachment and emotional connections through changes in placement and transitioning out of care.
- Consult with the Supervisor/Manager to determine the appropriate frequency and duration of visits between the child/youth and their family members.

Ongoing Reassessment of Placement:

- Reassess the placement to determine if it is in the Indigenous and Non-Indigenous child/youth's best interest to continue the placement with anyone other than their parent(s)/care provider(s)/caregiver(s) or adult member of their family. The following situations must be taken into consideration when reassessing placement:
 - When a previously unknown parent/care provider/caregiver or adult family member is identified;
 - When requested by the child/youth's Indigenous and/or cultural group, community or people;
 - Whenever a change of placement or legal status is being considered;
 - When the child/youth's case plan is reviewed every **three (3) months** as per **Standard 6.12 Case Review**.

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- If a child/youth has been placed with an adult family member, continue to reassess a return to in-home placement with a parent/care provider/caregiver.
- Document all actions that have been taken in the ongoing reassessment of a return to in-home placement of an Indigenous and a Non-Indigenous child/youth with their parent(s)/care provider(s)/caregiver(s) or adult member of their family, and where applicable, the reason(s) why such placement is not in the child/youth's best interests.
- Continually work with parent(s)/care provider(s)/caregiver(s), other adult family members, and the child/youth's Indigenous and/or cultural community to address concerns identified during reassessment and support them in establishing safe placement for the child/youth.
- Help identify and bridge access to supports and services (i.e., on the land healing programs, counselling) for the Indigenous or Non-Indigenous child/youth when an out-of-home placement is required away from their parent(s)/care provider(s)/caregiver(s). Similar support is to be offered to the parent(s)/care provider(s)/caregiver(s) as the Child Protection Worker/Designate continues to assist in reunification efforts.

Supervisor/Manager:

- Remind the Child Protection Worker/Designate to speak to the child/youth and their parent(s)/care provider(s)/caregiver(s) about their cultural identity, i.e., Indigenous, etc. and to document in MatrixNT as a **Case Note** the community or communities to which the child/youth is represented by or could belong to, including both maternal and paternal cultural identities.
- Ensure the Child Protection Worker/Designate completes the **Genogram Code Key tool 9.1.1** to map out the family relationships and other significant relationships that can assist with identification of a youth and family's cultural community.
- Ensure the Child Protection Worker/Designate obtains the child 12 years of age or older and their parent(s)/care provider(s)/caregiver(s) views regarding alternative placement options and considers their opinions when making the placement decision. Moreover, ensure the placement decision is well documented in Matrix NT as a **Case Note**.
- Consult with and provide approval to the Child Protection Worker/Designate to place an Indigenous and a Non-Indigenous child/youth in an out of home placement.
- Remind the Child Protection Worker/Designate that whenever an Indigenous or a

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Non-Indigenous child/youth is placed out of the home or moved to a new placement, to follow the required priority of placement.

- Consult with the Child Protection Worker/Designate to determine the appropriate frequency and duration of contact between the Indigenous and Non-Indigenous child/youth and their family members when in an out of home placement.

NTHSSA Deputy Director of Practice:

- Ensure that all Supervisors/Managers are aware of and inform Child Protection Worker/Designate of the importance of the **Federal Government's Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families** and its importance on practice.
- Conduct quarterly reviews on all files to ensure the Child Protection Worker/Designate is reassessing placements to determine if it is in the Indigenous and Non-Indigenous child/youth's best interest to continue the placement with anyone other than their parent(s)/care provider(s)/caregiver(s) or adult member of their family. The Deputy Director of Practice must also report back on the findings to the Director or Deputy Director of Child and Family Services at the Department.

DHSS Director of Child and Family Services or Deputy Director:

- Provide the Regional Health and Social Services Authorities and the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority with a copy of the Community Agreement as per **Section 20(1) and (2) of the Federal Government's Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families**.
- Receive the Quality Reviews on a quarterly basis from the Deputy Director of Practice of Designate.

FORMS

- Form 6.1.1. Case Note
- Form 7.15.1 Child Placement Information
- 9.1.3 Genogram
- Form 10.16.1 Notice of Significant Measure to Parent(s), Care Provider(s), and Indigenous Government Body

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TOOLS

- Tool 9.1.1 Genogram Code Key
- Tool 10.15.2 Bill C-92 Compliance Guide for Social Workers and Service Providers by Wahkohtowin Law and Governance Lodge
- Tool 10.16.1 Notice of Significant Measures Flowchart
- Tool 10.16.2 Significant Measures Notice Schedule
- Tool 10.16.3 Notice to Parent and Care Provider Brochure

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