

## *Policy: Sibling Groups in Care*

### Policy Purpose

To ensure that relationships and attachments between siblings who enter care are maintained.

### Policy Statement

The term 'sibling' refers to brothers and sisters, half brothers and sisters, step siblings and children who have no biological connection but have been raised within a relationship where they identify as brothers and sisters.

Territory Families is committed to maintaining sibling relationships, and ensuring that they continue to develop, even when one or more children in a family group are living in care. It is essential that siblings in the care of the CEO are placed together, in the same care arrangement when:

- It is in their best interest; and
- There are no safety concerns.

If siblings cannot be placed together, regular contact must be facilitated unless there is evidence that this would not be in the best interest of the children.

When making decisions regarding placement for sibling groups, Territory Families will:

- Make active efforts to identify family or kinship group members who may be able to care for the children, utilising funded Family Finding services where available;
- Consider the views and wishes of the children;
- Include the participation of the children's family, kinship group, or representative organisation nominated by the children or family in the decision process;
- Ensure that the placement is willing and able to maintain and support the children's connection to their family, language, community and culture;
- Commit to supporting the placement to preserve and promote positive relations between the children and their parents, family members, kinship group and other persons who are significant in the children's lives;
- As far as practicable place the children in close proximity to their family and community.

### Placement of Aboriginal Children

Territory Families complies with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle of the [Care and Protection of Children Act 2007](#). In addition all placement decisions in relation to Aboriginal Children must demonstrate Territory Families' commitment to the five core elements of the **Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care's (SNAICC), Aboriginal Child Placement Principle:**

- **Prevention** – Protecting children's right to grow up in family, community and culture by redressing the causes of child protection intervention;
- **Partnership** – Ensuring the participation of community representatives in service design, delivery and individual case decisions;
- **Placement** – Placing children in out-of-home care in accordance with the established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle placement hierarchy;
- **Participation** – Aboriginal children and their parents and family members have a right to participate, and be enabled to participate, in administrative and judicial decision making processes; and

- **Connection** – Aboriginal children have a right to be supported to develop and maintain a connection with the child’s family, community, culture, traditions and language, particularly where a child is in the care of a person who is not an Aboriginal person.

Refer to *Policy: Placements for more information on the five core elements of the SNAICC Aboriginal Child Placement Principle*.

The **Placement** element of the SNAICC Aboriginal Child Placement Principle references the placement hierarchy which is defined in Section 12(3) of the [Care and Protection of Children Act 2007](#):

An Aboriginal child should as far as practicable be placed in the following order of priority:

- (a) A member of the child’s family;
- (b) An Aboriginal person in the child's community in accordance with local community practice;
- (c) Any other Aboriginal person;
- (d) A person who:
  - (i) Is not an Aboriginal person; but
  - (ii) In the CEO's opinion, is sensitive to the child's needs and capable of promoting the child's ongoing affiliation with the culture of the child's community (and, if possible, ongoing contact with the child's family).

All possible options at the highest level of the hierarchy should be actively explored before considering the next option.

## Legislative Basis

[Care and Protection of Children Act 2007](#) s10, s12

## Related Resources

[Understanding and Applying the Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Child Placement Principle. A Resource for Legislation, Policy, and Program Development.](#)

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<b>Version 1.0</b>	To ensure sibling relationships are maintained for children in care.		

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<b>Update:</b>	Added section “Placement of Aboriginal Children” to align with legislative requirements and to highlight the need for Territory Families to commit to the five elements of the SNAICC placement principles.			
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