

Thinking about open adoption



Carer resource

When it is not possible for a child in out-of-home care to live at home with their parents, open adoption can be considered. This resource is for carers who are thinking about open adoption for a child in their care.

Open adoption for a child in out-of-home care means being able to look after them now and into the future, independently. It includes supporting the child to remain connected with their family, community and culture, understanding their trauma, celebrating their strengths and continuing to support their physical and emotional health and development.

The questions below are grouped under five key focus areas. The questions are for carers to ask themselves and discuss with their family and their caseworker. They have been developed to help carers understand the requirements for open adoption and to identify areas where they might need some more support from their caseworker.

These key focus areas are considered in detail as part of the open adoption assessment.



Belonging

- How do I help the child feel comfortable and feel at home?
- How do I support the child to feel physically and emotionally safe?
- How does the child see their relationship with me and the rest of the family, including extended family? What do they think about staying with our family forever?
- How do I help the child to understand and manage big feelings?
- How do I feel about the child's family, how do we talk about them in our home and does the child feel comfortable talking about them during casual settings, like dinner or play time?
- How do I help the child belong to more than one family, so they have a big network of support?

Culture

- How do I keep the child connected to country?
- How does the child experience their culture and religion in our home? For example, through things in the home, the food we cook, the language we use.
- Do I actively build relationships with people of the same cultural background as the child?
- How do I engage with the child's family and learn from them about how to support the child's experience of culture?
- How will I support the child's changing cultural needs over time?
- If the child does not want to engage with their culture, how can I respect their views and provide options?

Life story

- Do I have enough information about the child's history to help them understand their life story?
- Do I need to increase my confidence or skills so I can talk with the child about their trauma, their history and their family to support their healing?
- How do I collect, store and display things that are important to the child?
- How do I include the child's parents, siblings and extended family in achievements and key milestones?
- Am I comfortable sharing new information about the child's family when I learn this? For example, the birth of a new sibling.

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Family time

- Do I know who is in the child's family, including extended family and siblings?
- How do we celebrate milestones from the child's family of origin?
- Do I need to build my skills so I can support the child to spend time with family and other people who are important to them?
- How do I support the child before, during and after family time?
- How do I strengthen the connection with the child's birth family, especially with their siblings? For example, through sharing the child's milestones and accomplishments with family or displaying photos of the child's family around the home.
- What do I do if there are periods when family time is not safe or family members are not available? How will I negotiate this and still maintain connection? Do I need support to develop my skills for the future?

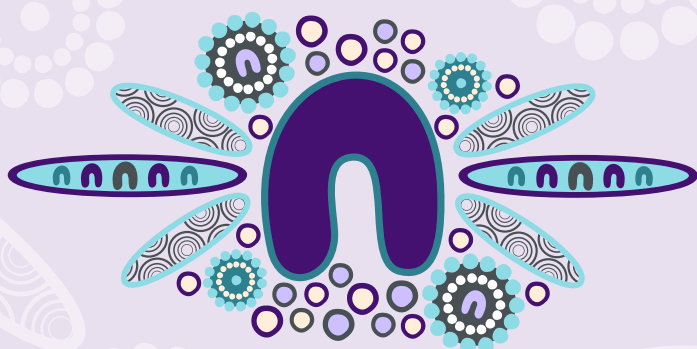
Carer readiness

- How confident am I to plan and advocate for the needs of the child in meetings with education, health and other services? Do I need some more practice?
- How do I include the child's needs into our family routine? For example, taking the child to appointments, family time and activities of interest.
- Am I parenting the child in a way that responds to their needs and their trauma?
- Who will I call on for support into the future? Do I need help to build our support networks? Can I care for this child without the help of the Department or an agency?
- Do I understand what financial support is and isn't available after an adoption order?

For more information

Visit the [Six steps to guardianship and open adoption webpage](#).

Talk with your caseworker.



NSW legislation guides decision making about placements through the permanent placement principles, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Young Persons Principle and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Young Person Placement Principles.

Living with family and kin is preferred for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are not able to live with their parents. Open adoption remains the last permanency option for Aboriginal children.