

CREATING COLLABORATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKS



In this tool, you will find:

- » An overview of how to create collaborative and sustainable partnerships and networks
- » Principles for working collaboratively with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations
- » Information about the Multi-Agency Community and Child Safety Framework in the NT
- » Links to further information and resources

KEY GUIDANCE

What is a partnership?

A partnership is typically a one-to-one relationship between two agencies, organisations or individuals. Partnerships can be established formally (eg through a partnership agreement) or informally.

It is useful for CaFIS providers to establish individual partnerships with other services and community representatives so that you can be clear on your roles and responsibilities in working together to support families and children.

What is a network?

A network refers to a group of agencies, organisations or individuals that agree to work collaboratively to achieve a common goal. Networks can be established formally (eg through a Memorandum of Understanding) or informally.

CaFIS providers should be part of a network of local services and community representatives that link closely with the community and provide coordinated services to enhance family functioning and increase children's safety and wellbeing.

What are the benefits of working collaboratively?

For CaFIS providers, working collaboratively with other service providers can help your CaFIS service to:

- help families to access the supports they need
- create a “no wrong door” approach in the community in responding to families and children's needs, by being able to link them with the right services
- collaborate with other services and community representatives to identify and address any service gaps or duplication and problem solve issues
- get the word out to the community and other service providers about CaFIS and how it can support families and children
- work together with other services and community representatives to reach cohorts of families and children who may need help.

Considerations to inform collaborative and sustainable partnerships

There are a number of considerations in how your CaFIS service might approach creating a partnership or network. These are set out below:

- **Time:** Investing time in building a relationship that involves regular and open communication is likely to lead to a sustainable, long-term relationship.
- **Common goals or objectives:** It is important to ensure that members of a partnership or network have a shared understanding of the goals and objectives they are working together to achieve.
- **Defined roles:** Clearly defining the role of other members of the partnership or network will ensure that each member is accountable and clear on their responsibilities. For a network, this includes agreeing on which organisations or individuals will help to keep the network running, for example by arranging and chairing meetings and taking minutes. For a partnership, the specific roles and responsibilities of each partner organisation are clearly defined.
- **Formal agreements:** While partnerships and networks can be informal arrangements, it can be useful to have a formal agreement in place (such as a Memorandum of Understanding) to ensure

mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities, particularly if there are changes in personnel.

- Strengths and gaps: Each service provider in a community will have particular strengths and challenges. Acknowledging and building on the strengths of members of a partnership or network and exploring how to address any gaps together can lead to a positive, collaborative relationship.
- Transparency: Ensure all members of the partnership and network agree on key actions and decisions coming out of each meeting, and that someone is assigned to follow up on any outstanding actions. This will ensure that partnerships or networks lead to concrete actions and investing time in working together feels worthwhile.

Working collaboratively with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) has several resources that describe how to create genuine and successful partnerships and networks with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations that work with children and families. SNAICC has developed the following partnership principles to inform partnerships or networks that involve both Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations:

- Commitment to developing long-term sustainable relationships based on trust
- Respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge, history, lived experience and connection to community and country
- Commitment to self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Aim to improve long-term wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities
- Shared responsibility and accountability for shared objectives and activities
- Valuing process elements as integral to support and enable partnership
- A commitment to redressing structures, relationships and outcomes that are unequal and/or discriminatory
- Openness to working differently with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, recognising that mainstream approaches are frequently not the most appropriate or effective.

These principles could be used to inform partnerships or networks that CaFIS providers are involved in.

Multi-Agency Community and Child Safety Framework (MACCSF)

CaFIS providers need to be aware of the MACCSF. The MACCSF provides a framework to guide information sharing and joint case planning between child and family service providers in Northern Territory communities.

The MACCSF brings together community members with cultural authority, locally-based heads of government agencies, and non-government organisations through MACCS Teams (MACCSTs) to identify issues, create action plans for child, family and community safety, and carry out actions together.

MACCST membership must include:

- At least two Aboriginal members of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, local staff of the relevant government agencies and /or members with cultural authority.
- Locally based non-government service providers that provide services for families, children, young people and communities.
- The most senior delegate based in the community from each of the following agencies:
 - Territory Families, Housing and Communities
 - Northern Territory Police
 - Department of Health and/or Aboriginal Medical Service
 - Department of Education and/or Independent School
 - Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet
 - Department of Attorney-General and Justice (Correctional Services)
 - Manager, Children and Families Centre.
 - Government Engagement Coordinator (Commonwealth).

Not all organisations and agencies have permanent representatives in each community and the members of the MACCST may vary in different locations.

Where to go for more information on this topic

SNAICC, *Opening Doors Through Partnerships: Practical approaches to developing genuine partnerships that address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community needs*, April 2012.

<https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/02804.pdf>

NT Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities, links to information on MACCSF:

<https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/children-and-families/multi-agency-community-and-child-safety-framework>

https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/97950/9/fact-sheet-community-members.pdf

SNAICC Genuine Partnerships Project

SNAICC Genuine Partnerships Project | Australian Institute of Family Studies (aifs.gov.au)

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