



Walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of- home care online course

About this course

Walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care provides ways for practitioners to be aware of their own cultural lens and the importance of connection to culture to apply to their practice. It invites you to be an ally and enhance communication strategies to align with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing.

Shaped through the lens of storytelling, and based on the social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) domains, this course will provide you with simple practical examples that support a strong sense of identity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care (OOHC). Using rich story development, children can explore SEWB through an externalising process which enables children and young people's autonomy and safety.

Why was this course developed?

The reasons for the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care are complex, such as systemic racism, the legacy of prior forced removal, and the generational effects of being separated from family and culture. The high rates of identified physical health, mental health and developmental needs support existing recommendations that children in the OOHC system need high-quality, comprehensive health care. This includes culturally appropriate referral and long-term follow-up and coordination of care. Cultural connection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people is essential for health and wellbeing.¹

Who is this course for?

This course is designed for non-Indigenous practitioners working in child protection and foster care services to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in OOHC. It focuses on the types of cultural support that can be applied in everyday practice to support cultural identity and the SEWB needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care.

What is included in the course?

¹ SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children. (2023). *Family matters report 2023*. SNAICC

This course provides tangible examples of how SEWB can be applied to equip Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care with opportunities for:

- telling their own truth story
- exploring solution-driven opportunities to enhance self-determination and empowerment
- identifying allies who will support and mentor them
- connecting with practitioners through shared understandings and building deeper connections through relationships.

It includes a series of reflection questions to:

- prompt you to think about applying decolonising trauma-informed practice when supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC
- implement culturally responsive strategies that support children's social and emotional wellbeing and mental health outcomes.

How was this course developed?

This course was developed with the support of a select reference group including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, practitioners and lived experience advocates under the guidance and approval of our National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultancy Group. We would like to recognise all the dedicated people who inform our work for the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, and who played an integral role in shaping this course by generously offering their time, wisdom and stories.

Walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care was co-authored by Dana Shen, Director, DS Consultancy, and created in partnership with ac.care, Aboriginal Family Support Services Limited (AFSS) and SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children.

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