



# **Brighter Futures Service Provision Guidelines**

**JULY 2014**

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# Chapter 1 – Background

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## Purpose of these guidelines

The Guidelines provide Lead Agency workers with the core policy and operational requirements for delivering the Brighter Futures program, and operate as a companion resource to be implemented alongside:

- the Brighter Futures Program Guidelines
- an agency's own policies and procedures.

## Review of the guidelines

Family and Community Services (FACS) is continuing to improve collaborative practice with the service sector for children, young people and families at risk, and specifically children and families at risk of entering or escalating within the child protection system, including how the reach and impact of Brighter Futures could be extended to better meet the aims of the program. From July 2014 the Brighter Futures target group will begin to transition from children whose risk level does not currently meet the risk of significant harm (ROSH) threshold, to include eligible children and families where the ROSH threshold has been met.

As part of a phased approach to implementation, this document signals this transition and allows time for FACS and Brighter Futures Lead Agencies to further develop the revised service model and build capacity for implementation. It provides interim policy and procedural advice to support the transition and will be updated as our understanding of how Brighter Futures can best support children and families at ROSH increases.

Changes to program policy and implementation will occur incrementally from July 2014 and these Brighter Futures Service Provision Guidelines will be updated as required.

## Chapter 2 – Overview of the Brighter Futures program

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The Brighter Futures is a voluntary program that delivers targeted early intervention services to families with children aged under 9 years, or who are expecting a child, where the child/ren are at high risk of entering or escalating within the statutory child protection system. The program is a component of a suite of prevention and early intervention responses along a Continuum of Service ([Figure 1](#)).

Brighter Futures is predicated on strengths-based practice principles that recognise a parent's motivation to change and participate in a service is greatly increased when their strengths are recognised and fostered.

### Brighter Futures program aims

The Brighter Futures program aims to enable children to live safely at home and thereby:

- Reduce the rate of ROSH re-reports to the Helpline
- Reduce the rate of entry to and length of time in OOHC
- Reduce future demand for services, such as child protection, corrective or mental health services.

The Brighter Futures results logic ([Figure 2](#)) reflects program aims and supports monitoring of the following program performance measures:

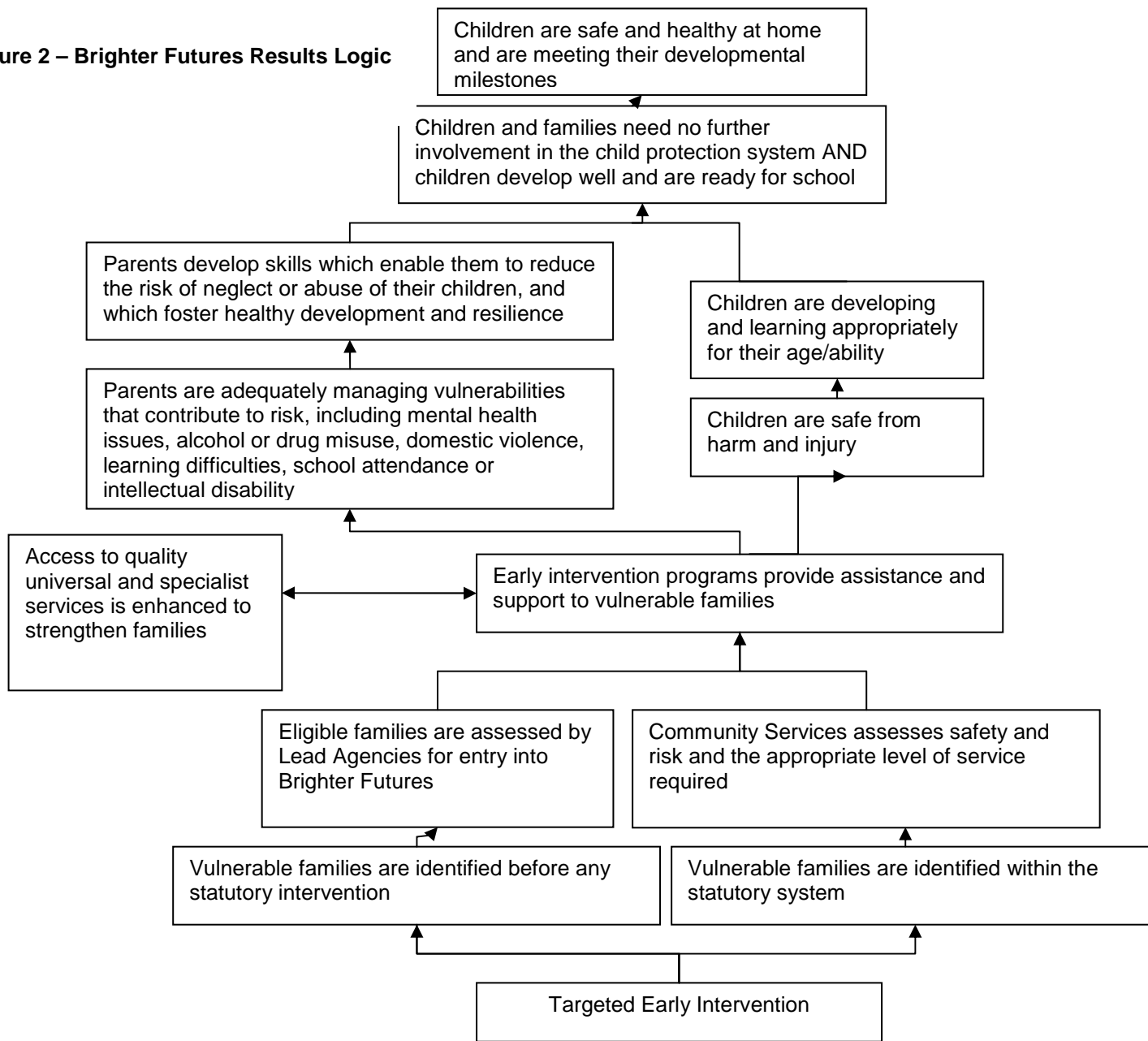
- Eligible children and families receive Brighter Futures services
- Children live safely at home following participation in Brighter Futures.

Figure 1

Community Services' Continuum of Service

Universal		Targeted							Statutory Intervention					
Prevention and Early Intervention									Child Protection		OOHC			
Community Builders	Families NSW	Aboriginal Child Youth & Family Strategy	Aboriginal Child & Family Centres	Integrated Domestic & Family Violence Services Program	Staying Home Leaving Violence	Child, Youth & Family Support	Getting it Together	Brighter Futures	Youth Hope	Statutory Child Protection Casework	Intensive Family Support/ Intensive Family Preservation	Intensive Family Based Services	OOHC Casework	OOHC Reform

**Figure 2 – Brighter Futures Results Logic**



## Brighter Futures program model

Brighter Futures delivers targeted services and support to families with at least one child aged under 9 years or who are expecting a child, where the child/ren are at high risk of entering or escalating within the statutory child protection system, including Out-of-Home Care (OOHC).

### Case management

Families eligible for Brighter Futures will require on average 12 months (and up to 24 months) of sustained case management, delivering coordinated services and support to meet individual and collective needs within the family.

### Casework and core service options

The purpose of intervention is to effectively address the key drivers of child protection. To participate in Brighter Futures, families must be assessed as requiring **casework focused on parental vulnerability** and will receive approximately 12 months of casework and sustained case management, plus at least two of the following Brighter Futures core service options to improve the child's safety at home:

- Quality children's services
- Parenting programs (group based)
- Structured home visiting programs (including parenting programs delivered one-to-one)
- Brokerage funded support

## Referrals to the Brighter Futures program

There are two referral pathways into Brighter Futures:

1. **FACS Child Protection referrals (Non-ROSH and ROSH)** – Families referred to a Lead Agency by FACS following a report to the Child Protection Helpline. A referral may meet the Risk of Significant Harm (ROSH) threshold or not (Non-ROSH).
2. **Community referrals (Non-ROSH)** – Families referred directly to a Lead Agency by an agency or individual. Community referrals may be made by:
  - a community agency or program, including Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Strategy and Building Strong Foundations services
  - a Family Referral Service (FRS)
  - a Child Wellbeing Unit (CWU)
  - an individual, including self referrals
  - other professionals.



## **Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Strategy/Building Strong Foundations**

The New South Wales (NSW) Health Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Strategy (AMIHS) is a community based maternity service while Building Strong Foundations (BSF) is a strategy to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal children aged 0 – 5 years. AMIHS involves a midwife and an Aboriginal Health Worker (or Aboriginal Education Officer) working in partnership to provide culturally appropriate care to pregnant Aboriginal women, new mothers and their babies. BSF involves a partnership between a Child & Family Health Nurse and Aboriginal Health Education Officer to ensure the delivery of culturally sensitive and accessible antenatal and child health services to Aboriginal families.

Brighter Futures provides Aboriginal families priority access to the program, including eligible families referred by AMIHS and BSF services. A family's successful transition from an AMIHS or BSF service to the Brighter Futures program should be carefully planned and implemented with the family.

Following successful referral of an AMIHS/BSF family there will be a transitional period where both the AMIHS/BSF worker and the Brighter Futures worker are collaboratively involved with the family, prior to the family exiting the AMIHS/BSF service. This has proven to be an effective strategy in maximising engagement with the Brighter Futures program and enables seamless service delivery with the family.

## **Family Referral Services**

Family Referral Services (FRS) assist children and young people who do not meet the statutory threshold for child protection intervention but would benefit from accessing support to address current problems and prevent escalation.

Family Referral Services are managed by NSW Health, with eleven services across NSW that provide advice, referral and needs assessment to vulnerable children, young people and families. FRSs are an important referral pathway for Brighter Futures and in NSW five sites are trialing positioning of a Community Services Caseworker in the FRS. The role of the Caseworker is to assist the service in coordinating referrals for children and young people who are above the threshold for statutory child protection intervention.

## **Child Wellbeing Units**

Child Wellbeing Units (CWUs) are located in three NSW Government agencies: NSW Health; NSW Police and the Department of Education and Communities.

CWUs undertake assessment and provide advice, support and education to their individual agency's mandatory reporters when they make contact about concerns for the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child, young person or unborn child.

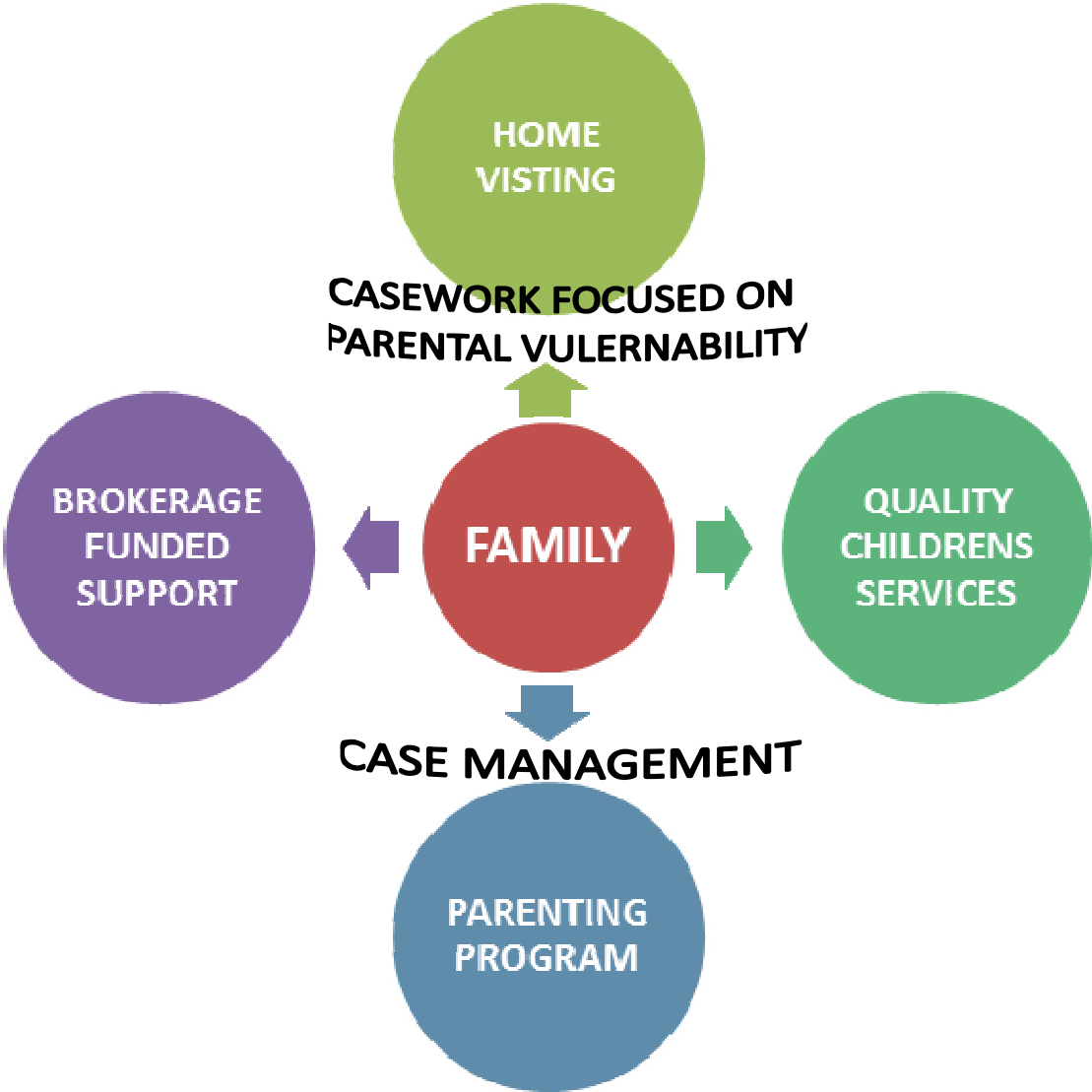
CWUs assess the level of risk, what initial action to take and help to determine who is best placed to undertake that action. When a concern is assessed as suspected ROSH, the CWU will ensure that a report to the Child Protection Helpline is made. Where the concern is assessed by the CWU as below suspected ROSH, the CWU will focus on identifying what additional services or responses can be put in place to reduce risk factors and provide support to children and families.

Where appropriate, CWUs, on behalf of their agency’s mandatory reporters, will make referrals to support services for families. This occurs only after the matching of families’ needs with available service providers (including Brighter Futures). Where appropriate, CWU’s will make direct referrals to a Brighter Futures Lead Agency using the [“Child Wellbeing Unit referral to Brighter Futures”](#) referral form.

**Brighter Futures service model**

Brighter Futures offers an integrated service designed to enhance child safety, parenting capacity and family functioning. The Brighter Futures service model is illustrated below.

**Figure 3**



## **Case management**

Case management is central to the Brighter Futures service model and will enable the provision of integrated and coordinated services tailored to address parental vulnerabilities and keep children safe within their home. On average a family will receive approximately 12 months (and up to 24 months) of sustained case management from a Brighter Futures worker.

Case management practice will be informed by each Lead Agency's case management policy and guidelines. Brighter Futures workers need to apply a child focussed and strengths-based approach to practice; building relationships and working collaboratively with families, other services and professionals to empower families to create their own change.

Case management provided as part of Brighter Futures will ensure that services and supports provided to families are tailored and do not duplicate other universal and/or specialist services the family may access.

## **Casework focused on parental vulnerability**

Casework focused on parental vulnerability has a specific focus on the impact of program vulnerabilities including domestic violence, mental health issues and drug or alcohol misuse, on parental capacity and on children. Parents are supported to implement strategies and develop the necessary skills and resources to increase the safety of their children at home.

## **Quality children's services**

Quality children's services include any of the following services licensed under the [Children \(Education and Care Services\) Supplementary Provisions Act 2011](#) and [Children \(Education and Care Services\) Supplementary Provisions Regulation 2012](#):

- centre-based child care services such as a long-day care or preschools
- mobile services in rural and remote areas
- family day care or home-based services.

For further information on quality children's services refer to [Community Services Research to Practice Note - Quality child care as an intervention: Issues for caseworkers](#).

The Australian Government provides assistance with the cost of child care provided by eligible child care services. For information eligibility and payments refer to the Centrelink website on [www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au). Lead Agencies will generally only pay the amount owing to the child care centre after government fee reduction (if applicable) and contribution by the parent for the child care place have been subtracted.

For information about the fee reduction process for families receiving Child Care Benefit (CCB) and/or Child Care Rebate (CCR) refer to **Resources** - [Accessing existing services, benefits or subsidies](#).

## **Parenting programs (group based)**

In the Brighter Futures context, parenting programs are usually:

- delivered in a group
- delivered outside the home
- often aimed to address a specific issue e.g. child behaviour
- short term interventions delivered by a facilitator.

For further information on parenting programs refer to [Parenting programs: What makes them effective?](#)

## **Structured home visiting programs (including parenting programs delivered one-to-one)**

The aim of home visiting services in Brighter Futures is to provide support and skill development to parents in the home environment. The key elements of home visiting in Brighter Futures will include:

- providing information, practical support and advice to parents about the care of their children
- modelling good parenting practices
- assisting families to develop supportive networks.

Consistent with research evidence, Brighter Futures structured home visiting programs will be:

- evidence-based
- goal-oriented
- structured in design (i.e. a coherent program comprised of a set of related elements or modules which can be delivered in a structured and flexible manner)
- sustained (i.e. designed to run for a medium to long term timeframe)
- delivered on a one-to-one (i.e. not group based) basis in the home or another agreed, family-friendly environment
- delivered by well trained and supported staff.

**Note:** Visits as part of a structured home visiting program are not the same as visits to the family home by the Brighter Futures worker for other purposes. A worker may visit a person's normal residence for the purposes of casework, strengths and needs assessment, reassessment etc., which do not form part of a structured home visiting program. Workers may visit the family home for more than one purpose.

For additional information on home visiting programs see [Community Services Research to Practice Note: Effective components of home visiting programs.](#)

## Brokerage funded support

The Brighter Futures program includes the use of 'brokerage' funds to purchase goods and services to support case plan goals and promote positive outcomes for children participating in the program.

## Working with children and families at ROSH

From July 2014 Brighter Futures will begin to transition the program's target group from children whose risk level does not currently meet the ROSH threshold to include eligible children and families where the ROSH threshold has been met.

This transition will enable the program to extend its reach and impact and enhance its potential to achieve key program aims, particularly to:

- Increase the number of children and families at ROSH who receive a face-to-face service response
- Decrease in the number of children re-reported at ROSH
- Decrease in the number of children who enter OOHC
- Increase the capacity of the non government sector in providing support and intervention to high risk families with complex needs.

Children at ROSH referred to Brighter Futures will meet program eligibility requirements (outlined on page 15). Referrals will not be made where:

- the parent/carer has children currently in OOHC with an open OOHC case plan goal of restoration, and
- the parent/carer receives a Statutory Care Allowance or Supported Care Allowance
- sexual abuse is the primary reported issue
- any member of the family is the subject of criminal proceedings and/or a current Joint Investigative Review Team (JIRT) investigation that relates to an allegation of abuse or neglect of a child or young person
- the child has an open case plan and there has been a recent safety assessment with an outcome of unsafe.

Working effectively with children and families at ROSH will rely on strong collaboration and partnership at a local level, where roles and responsibilities are determined amongst all agencies involved with the child/ren and family and agreed to, based on the intervention and support a family needs.

The [Care and Protection Practice Framework](#) describes FACS Community Services' mandate and approach to working with children and families in NSW and highlights FACS's commitment to building and sustaining relationships that lead to positive change for vulnerable children, young people, families and communities. It promotes common language and understanding across the entire NSW child protection sector, creating stronger connections and partnerships.

The Framework articulates principles and values and clarifies the knowledge and skills required for good casework practice. It provides clarity, direction and a shared vision for staff within FACS, its funded programs and across the broader sector to improve children's lives everyday.

The Care and Protection Practice Framework principles are:

- We keep children and young people at the centre of our practice with families
- We use contemporary skills and knowledge in a work culture that shares risk
- We build relationships to create change
- We respect culture and context

Alongside these principles of practice, the following approaches will ensure that children and families at ROSH participating in Brighter Futures will receive high quality integrated services and support:

### **Collaboration and partnership is necessary to protect vulnerable children and young people**

Working together is crucial to achieving positive outcomes for vulnerable children and their families. An integrated system relies on agencies and professionals working collaboratively to ensure that services are responsive and service delivery is focussed on defined outcomes.

As Brighter Futures transitions to include children and families at ROSH, it is increasingly important that FACS and Brighter Futures Lead Agencies work together effectively especially:

- during referral and program engagement
- if families seek to disengage from services and there are ongoing concerns regarding children's safety and wellbeing remain
- if risk escalates for the child/young person.

### **Open, clear and respectful communication facilitates engagement and service delivery**

Successful collaboration with families and interagency partners is demonstrated by transparent communication with the family and between FACS and Brighter Futures Lead Agencies and any other agencies involved with the family/children, carefully managed to ensure that families:

- maintain a clear understanding of each service's role and responsibilities and share information to help them meet their goals
- are actively engaged with the service and broader network, participating in planning, actions, reviews and decision making.

## **Service flexibility and best endeavours will mean that fewer children and families will require ongoing or any statutory child protection intervention**

Brighter Futures aims to sustainably reduce risk and enable children to live safely at home. On some occasions it may be necessary for children participating in Brighter Futures to enter OOHC for a short period with a goal of restoration. In these circumstances the Brighter Futures Lead Agency and FACS may jointly consider how restoration can be successfully achieved.

In some circumstances the Brighter Futures Lead Agency will have achieved active engagement and/or have established an effective working relationship with the families – in these circumstances Brighter Futures and FACS should work together to identify roles and responsibilities to ensure the family are provided with the most appropriate response.

## **Sharing information enables better service outcomes for children and families.**

Prescribed agencies should share information where appropriate, for coordination of service delivery as well as identification of safety, welfare and wellbeing concerns. This is part of the process of delivering effective outcomes for children and their families. However, it is important that the privacy rights of a person are protected throughout their participation in the program.

Information on the legislative framework for government and non-government organisations and agencies exchanging information is detailed in the [Child Wellbeing & Child Protection – NSW Interagency Guidelines](#).

Where families referred to Brighter Futures have received a face to face response from FACS including assessment, Chapter 16A enables the outcomes and any relevant narrative of this response or assessment to be shared with the Brighter Futures Lead Agency. Exemptions to exchange of information are outlined on page 29.

## Chapter 3 – Entry into the Brighter Futures program

### Determining eligibility

Brighter Futures delivers targeted services and support to vulnerable families with complex needs who are at high risk of entering or escalating within the child protection system. Eligibility for Brighter Futures is determined by Lead Agencies, in consultation with the referring agency. Lead Agencies will ensure that eligibility for the Brighter Futures program is consistently assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

- **Age of the child/ren** – The family will have at least one child under the age of nine or be expecting a child
- **Vulnerabilities** – The parent/carer will have at least one Brighter Futures program vulnerability, where the impact of that vulnerability on the child/ren if left unaddressed places them at high risk of entering or escalating within the statutory child protection system.

Further information regarding the possible impact of program vulnerabilities on children is provided in the vulnerability guidelines.

### Vulnerability guidelines

The descriptive information provided for each parental vulnerability is included to assist Lead Agencies to determine the impact of the vulnerability on the safety and wellbeing of the child/ren. The information provided is not a 'definition' of the vulnerability and Lead Agencies should ensure they use all available information to assess the impact of parental vulnerabilities on children's safety.

#### Domestic and family violence

Includes any behaviour, in an intimate or family relationship, which is violent, threatening, coercive or controlling, causing a person to live in fear. It is usually manifested as part of a pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour.

At least one parent is a victim or perpetrator of violence that represents a risk of significant abuse and/or psychological harm to a child. Behaviours that may constitute domestic and family violence include:

- physical violence including physical assault or abuse
- sexual assault and other sexually abusive or coercive behaviour
- emotional or psychological abuse including verbal abuse and threats of violence
- economic abuse; for example denying a person reasonable financial autonomy or financial support



- stalking; for example harassment, intimidation or coercion of the other person's family in order to cause fear or ongoing harassment, including through the use of electronic communication or social media
- kidnapping or deprivation of liberty, as well as unreasonably preventing the other person from making or keeping connections with her or his family or kin, friends, faith or culture
- damage to property irrespective of whether the victim owns the property
- causing injury or death to an animal irrespective of whether the victim owns the animal
- ongoing violence by any family members
- breaches or disregard of an Apprehended Violence Order by either party.

### **Drug or alcohol misuse**

A parent's current drug or alcohol misuse interferes with his/her daily functioning. Indicators may include:

- family conflict over substance abuse
- inability or unwillingness to carry out daily household tasks/responsibilities
- recent criminal behaviour associated with drug use
- domestic violence associated with substance abuse
- this substance abuse problem negatively impacts his/her care and supervision of the child to the extent there is risk of abuse and/or neglect.

### **Parental mental health issues**

A parent has a mental health problem or diagnosed mental illness that interferes with his/her daily functioning. Indicators may include:

- family conflict due to mental health concerns
- inability or unwillingness to carry out daily household tasks/responsibilities
- frequent mental health hospitalisations
- domestic violence associated with emotional instability
- the mental health issue or diagnosed mental illness negatively impacts his/her care and supervision of the child to the extent that there is risk of abuse and/or neglect.

### **Parent(s) with significant learning difficulties or intellectual disability**

The parent's learning difficulty or intellectual disability impairs the following:

- his/her ability to manage his/her own life, e.g., managing finances or household
- his/her ability to provide adequate care, supervise or protect an infant/child to the extent that there is a risk of abuse and/or neglect.

## **Lack of parenting skills or inadequate supervision**

The parent's current lack of capacity and/or skills to consistently supervise and/or provide for the child/children's basic care places the child/children at risk of ongoing neglect. Indicators may include:

- child's behaviour indicates the impact of excessive/inappropriate discipline
- circumstances/stressors that may result in volatile parental behaviour resulting in increased frequency or severity of discipline
- developmental milestones not met
- a health condition that does not need immediate care but does require ongoing treatment which has not been sought and the parent is willing to access services
- underweight/overweight (medically diagnosed) for age and/or difficulty concentrating that you suspect may be due to poor nutrition
- incidences of the child/children being left alone in circumstances that may place them at risk of injury or harm.

### **KEY MESSAGES FOR FAMILIES ENTERING BRIGHTER FUTURES**

- The program is voluntary and strengths-based where the Brighter Futures worker works with the family to identify their strengths and concerns, and the goals they would like to achieve
- If you agree to participate, your identifying information will be provided to (and stored by) FACS to record your family's participation in the program
- If you agree to participate, consent will be sought wherever possible, before personal information will be provided to (and stored by) other agencies for the purpose of determining your eligibility for the program and service needs
- Brighter Futures workers are mandatory reporters

## **Eligibility assessment process**

Following allocation of a referral to Brighter Futures, additional information to inform the determination of eligibility will be obtained through direct contact with the family and information exchanged with relevant agencies and services.

Assessment of a family's eligibility for Brighter Futures will usually require between one to three contacts with the family (and for some ROSH referrals may be conducted jointly where FACS is actively engaged with the family). Lead Agencies should ensure they have a comprehensive understanding of the risks and protective factors present in a child's family and environment.

Lead Agencies will work in partnership with a family and consult with relevant agencies and services, when determining whether families are likely to benefit from the Brighter Futures program. Families participating in Brighter Futures will:

- agree to actively participate in assessment and case planning and work towards achieving goals that will improve the safety and wellbeing of their children
- require sustained case management to achieve lasting positive change
- require the delivery of Brighter Futures core services to meet the family's needs, and referral to other appropriate services where necessary
- agree to information being provided and/or exchanged from/or between agencies working with the family.

### **Priority of access criteria**

Priority of access for new families entering the Brighter Futures program, in order of priority, is provided for:

1. FACS ROSH referrals
2. Families with children under 3 years of age
3. Aboriginal families - including those families receiving services through the NSW Health Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Strategy and the Building Strong Foundations program
4. Pregnant young women or young parents in OOHC, or leaving OOHC
5. Families who have been on the eligibility list the longest

Whenever possible, a family already in Brighter Futures who moves to a new area should continue to receive services.

After prioritisation of FACS ROSH referrals, priority of access is given to families with children under three years of age. This is based on current research evidence that highlights that the first three years of life is a period of crucial brain development which lays the foundation for later cognitive and emotional development.

## **Brighter Futures Unit**

A central unit within FACS called the '*Brighter Futures Unit*' exists to:

- Provide relevant information to Lead Agencies that will assist in the determination a family's eligibility for Brighter Futures where consent has been provided for this to occur
- Transfer cases where a report has been received at the Child Protection Helpline and the family meet the Brighter Futures program criteria

A family's participation in Brighter Futures is recorded on DoCS Connect and stored by FACS. Brighter Futures referrals received by the BFU via DoCS Connect will be processed to:

- verify the family members against existing KiDS records, or create new person record where necessary
- confirm whether an open FACS case exists for any family member

- provide the Lead Agency with any recent and relevant child protection history information that is not visible in DoCS Connect or provided by the local CSC; where a family is eligible for Brighter Futures

The FACS Brighter Futures Unit will provide a response via *DoCS Connect* to FACS ROSH referrals within 24 hours and Community Non-ROSH referrals within 3 working days of submission of the Referral Information eForm.

The **Brighter Futures Unit** can be contacted on:

Telephone	9633 8585
Fax	9633 7411
Email	BrighterFuturesAssessmentUnit@facs.nsw.gov.au

## **FACS Child Protection referrals**

Referrals to Brighter Futures will predominantly be made following a child protection report to the FACS Helpline. As Brighter Futures is transitioning to working with children and families where the Risk of Significant Harm (ROSH) threshold has been met, a FACS Child Protection referral may meet the ROSH threshold or not (Non-ROSH).

Referral to the program can occur from multiple points of contact with the Helpline/FACS including from:

- a CS Caseworker placed within a Family Referral Service (FRS) following a ROSH report referral from the CSC
- a CSC Manager Triage following the referral of a ROSH report to the CSC
- a CSC Caseworker following a ROSH report and subsequent face to face assessment, with an outcome of safe or safe with a plan and high or very high risk
- the Brighter Futures Unit (BFU) following a non-ROSH report to the Helpline

## ***Processing ROSH referrals from a Family Referral Service***

The Child Protection Caseworker in Family Referral Service (FRS) Pilot involves the placement of FACS child protection caseworkers in five FRS and aims to improve the provision of referral services for certain families whose children are the subject of a ROSH report with a less than ten day response priority (i.e. a low priority) and who may benefit from assistance by the FRS.

When making a referral to the local Brighter Futures Lead Agency the FACS Child Protection caseworker, in consultation with their CSC Manager Casework will:

- determine program eligibility
- complete a Brighter Futures referral and record this in a referral record

- complete a SAS 1 record and close the plan on KiDS

When receiving a referral from an FRS, the Brighter Futures Lead Agency will process the referral using the referral pathway procedures (outlined on page 24)

Where necessary FACS Child Protection caseworkers based in an FRS can support Brighter Futures Lead Agency caseworkers to actively engage a family in the program (e.g. initial joint home visits).

### ***Processing ROSH referrals from a CSC Manager Triage***

Where following receipt of a ROSH report and it is determined that Brighter Futures could provide an appropriate response to the type of abuse and risk of harm identified, a CSC Manager Triage can make a referral to Brighter Futures.

When making a referral to the local Brighter Futures Lead Agency the CSC Manager Triage will:

- confirm Lead Agency capacity and availability of a place in the program
- if capacity exists, invite the Brighter Futures Lead Agency and where appropriate, the family, to participate in an appropriate joint decision making forum for example a WAM or ICD meeting or peer review to discuss the potential referral and family's suitability for the program
- if there is no capacity or a waiting list with the Brighter Futures Lead Agency, local arrangements will be made to ensure the family receive the support they need, such as an ICD meeting with other agencies involved with the family
- where agreement is reached that a referral will be made to Brighter Futures, CS will complete a Brighter Futures referral and send this referral to the Lead Agency
- Lead Agency will liaise with the CSC and/or Brighter Futures Unit to determine if any further child protection history is required
- a referral record is completed, attaching the referral form and any other relevant referral information, for example WAM/ICD meeting notes
- a SAS1 record is completed and the plan is closed on KiDS

On receipt of this referral and relevant information, the Brighter Futures Lead Agency will initiate contact with the family and will process the referral using referral pathway procedures (outlined on page 24).

## **Processing ROSH referrals from a CSC Caseworker**

Where following face to face assessment 1 it is determined that a child is in need of care and protection and is not in immediate danger of serious harm and it is considered that Brighter Futures can provide an appropriate service response, the CSC will:

- confirm Lead Agency willingness and capacity to immediately allocate a place in Brighter Futures
- where capacity is confirmed and agreement for referral is reached, the family's agreement for the referral and confirmation of their willingness to actively participate in the program should be sought. A joint CSC and Brighter Futures home visit may facilitate active referral and early program engagement with the family
- where allocation and program engagement is confirmed, the CSC will complete a Brighter Futures referral, and send this referral to the Lead Agency
- a referral record is completed, attaching the referral form and any other relevant referral information
- a SAS1 record is completed and the plan is closed on KiDS

Upon receiving a referral following a face to face assessment or response from a CSC, the Brighter Futures Lead Agency will process the referral using referral pathway procedures (outlined on page 24).

### **KEY MESSAGES FOR PROCESSING FACS CHILD PROTECTION ROSH REFERRALS**

- ROSH referrals will be processed with a strong focus on collaboration and partnership at a local level
- Brighter Futures Lead Agencies and FACS will collaboratively determine local arrangements for processing ROSH referrals and which comply with these Service Provision Guidelines
- This includes developing an MoU for the whole district or with individual CSCs, which outlines agreed local processes for making and accepting eligible referrals that meet the ROSH threshold
- Open, clear and respectful communication between agencies is crucial to processing ROSH referrals and facilitating engagement and effective service
- Sharing of information to facilitate ROSH referrals will enable better outcomes for children and families and is supported by Chapter 16A

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<sup>1</sup> A referral to Brighter Futures can be considered where a Safety and Risk Assessment has been conducted and there is an outcome of high or very high risk and safe or safe with a plan.

## **Processing referrals following a Non-ROSH Report to the Helpline**

Families eligible for Brighter Futures will be transferred to a Lead Agency by the FACS Brighter Futures Unit.

This unit will create the Transfer to Lead Agency for CM record in KiDS which when completed will become a visible task in DoCS Connect, to provide Lead Agencies with appropriate referral information, including any recent and relevant child protection history information.

Where a Lead Agency receives a case via DoCS Connect the agency will:

- generate and print the Transfer to Lead Agency Report in DoCS Connect
- enter an Allocation Date when the case is allocated
- leave the Allocation Date field blank if the agency does not have capacity to allocate the case\*
- use the “3 months period exceeded” in the Lead Agency Closure Reason field to close those cases on Brighter Futures eligibility list for longer than 28 days

\* Until the Allocation Date is entered FACS will presume the case is on the agency’s Brighter Futures eligibility list and has not been allocated for case management.

### **DoCS Connect procedures for Non-ROSH Helpline referrals**

1. Navigate to the Tasks screen and Query for:
  - **Subtype** = Transfer to Lead Agency for CM
  - **Status** = Incomplete
2. This should return all new / incomplete FACS Transfers
3. Select the relevant case
4. Change the task status to Complete
5. Navigate to the Case screen by clicking the link in the Family ID field
6. Generate and Print the Community Services Transfer to Lead Agency report

See Online Help topic [‘Case transfer from Family and Community Services’](#) for detailed instructions

### **Cases with no allocation date**

There is a Pre-Defined Query (PDQ) which identifies families transferred to Lead Agencies with no Allocation Date after 30 days. This PDQ will retrieve all Child Protection Helpline pathway families who have been transferred to a Lead Agency but case management has not started within 30 days.

It can be used to quickly identify families that have been transferred to Lead Agencies but have not commenced case management and identifies families who may not be visible through DoCS Connect. It is a good idea to run this monthly.

### **DoCS Connect procedures**

Navigate to the Case Management screen, select the *No Allocation Date* pre-defined query

1. This will display all FACS cases transferred to your lead agency for more than 30 days and have no Allocation Date entered
2. If there's no capacity to allocate, select "3 months period exceeded" value from the Lead Agency Closure Reason & enter the date in the Case Closure Date

See Online Help topic '[Process a Community Services Service Request](#)' for detailed instructions

### **Allocation for Brighter Futures case management**

Where a Lead Agency has capacity to allocate a case transferred from FACS for case management, the agency will:

- enter a date in the Allocation Date field on the Case in DoCS Connect
- initiate contact with the family and determine if the family is likely to benefit from participation in the program.

Where Brighter Futures can offer appropriate services and support formal agreement to participate in Brighter Futures can be sought from the family. Agreement to participate is recorded on the Brighter Futures Agreement to Participate form and in DoCS Connect. If the family agrees to participate in the Brighter Futures program the Lead Agency should:

- complete the Agreement to Participate form
- complete the Agreement to Participate procedures in DoCS Connect.

### **DoCS Connect procedures to record agreement to participate**

1. Navigate to the Case Management view and select the relevant case
2. Edit the person's details as required
3. Update the agreement to participate information details as required

Note: This should reflect the date on which the person agreed to participate in the program

See Online Help topic '[Update person details](#)' for detailed instructions

The Child Wellbeing Unit database WellNet enables CWUs to view when a family is participating in the Brighter Futures program, provided that an Allocation Date and the client's Agreement to Participate has been updated in DoCS Connect.

Timely completion of these fields by Brighter Futures Lead Agency staff will facilitate efficient information exchange and service coordination for families participating in the Brighter Futures program. It will also enable exchange of information for families where there has been new information (ROSH or Non-ROSH) reported to the Child Protection Helpline.



## **KEY MESSAGES FOR PROCESSING FACS CHILD PROTECTION NON-ROSH REFERRALS**

- Generate and print the Transfer to Lead Agency Report in *DoCS Connect*
- Only enter an Allocation Date when the case is allocated
- Leave the Allocation Date field blank if the agency does not have capacity to allocate the case\*
- use the “3 months period exceeded” in Lead Agency Closure Reason field to close those cases on Brighter Futures eligibility list for longer than 28 days

## **Community referrals**

Participation in Brighter Futures can also occur via a Community (Non-ROSH) referral, where the child is not the subject of a report to the Helpline. Community referrals go directly to the Lead Agency from another agency or individual (i.e. self referrals), for families who are below the risk of significant harm threshold.

These referrals are entered onto DOCS Connect by the Lead Agency and then processed by the Brighter Futures Unit (BFU) who assist in determining a family’s eligibility for the program, where consent has been provided for this to occur. Community referrals can be made by:

- a community agency or program, including Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Strategy and Building Strong Foundations services
- a Family Referral Service (FRS)
- a Child Wellbeing Unit (CWU)
- an individual, including self referrals
- other professionals

## **Processing FACS Child Protection and Community referrals**

Lead Agencies will facilitate appropriate FACS Child Protection and Community referrals, Non-ROSH and ROSH, to Brighter Futures by:

- Supporting referring agencies to make appropriate referrals by keeping the referral network informed of the program’s target group and program eligibility criteria
- Establishing appropriate mechanisms for referring agencies to provide the Lead Agency with complete referral information
- Establishing appropriate mechanisms for referring agencies to receive timely feedback on the outcome of families referred to Brighter Futures

Consultation with FACS regarding a family's eligibility for Brighter Futures will occur through DoCS Connect. When the Lead Agency has capacity to offer the Brighter Futures service a completed Referral Information eForm is submitted to the FACS Brighter Futures Unit via *DoCS Connect*.

The Referral Information eForm will contain identifying information on family members who may or may not have given the Lead Agency consent to release and information exchange for the purpose of determining eligibility. (For more information refer to Chapter 4, Part A – [Information exchange](#)).

Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* enables a referral to the Brighter Futures program where it has not been possible to obtain parental consent from the family. For example, following short term Police intervention. Referrals made without prior consent should be accepted and allocated for participation in Brighter Futures in accordance with program eligibility and priority of access criteria in accordance with Chapter 16A.

All Brighter Futures referrals submitted in DoCS Connect will include information on:

- parent/carers that reside with the children\*
- all children under the age of 16 years
- young people aged 16 and over who have provided consent.

**\* Notes:**

- At least one adult that resides with the children must agree to participate in the program
- Parents/carers who do not live with the child and who meet the following criteria should also be included in Brighter Futures referral information submitted to DoCS Connect. The parent/carer has:
  - parental responsibility for the child/ren; and
  - regular contact with the child/ren; and
  - provided consent for the release and exchange of personal information recorded on the Brighter Futures referral form

When submitting a Brighter Futures referral in DoCS Connect, only details about individuals that may have regular contact with children in the family are submitted. However other relevant individuals and services should also be considered in program delivery, and where appropriate, included in assessment, case planning and review

Information provided in the Referral Information eForm will be used by FACS to:

- provide Lead Agencies relevant information to assist in the determination of eligibility for the program
- record participation in Brighter Futures
- appropriately manage new risk of harm information regarding children and families participating in Brighter Futures that may be provided to FACS

### **DoCS Connect procedures for referrals**

1. Navigate to the Eligibility Referral view
2. Create a new Eligibility Referral

See the Online Help topic '[Edit an eForm](#)', and '[Cancel eForm](#)' for detailed instructions

3. Complete the Referral Information eForm

**Note:** Only Submit Referral Information eForm when there is capacity to case manage & the answer to "Does the Lead Agency currently have the capacity to case manage this family if determined eligible?" is **Yes**

4. Submit Referral Information eForm for processing by FACS

See the Online Help topic '[Create Referral Information eForm](#)' for detailed instructions

**Note:** The entry made in the eForm 'Lead Agency Reference' field will appear in the Eligibility Referral view after the eForm is saved or sent

**Note:** There are three statuses in the Eligibility Referral view, **New**, **Draft** and **Sent**. A Family ID is created only after the eForm is sent. The case is then visible in the Case Management view

See the Online Help topic '[View Referral Information eForm](#)' for detailed instructions

The following DoCS Connect procedures enable Lead Agencies to review and monitor the outcome of Brighter Futures referrals submitted to FACS via the Brighter Futures Referral Information eForm.

### **DoCS Connect procedures to monitor and manage eligibility referral outcomes**

1. Navigate to the Tasks screen tab. Query for
  - **Subtype** = Eligibility Referral
  - **Status** = Incomplete
2. This should return all new / incomplete Eligibility referral decision tasks
3. Once you reviewed this task, you should set it to Complete

There are two possible decisions that can be made by FACS and these are found in the **Task Description**: Eligible, Ineligible

See the Online Help topic '[Managing tasks in DoCS Connect](#)' for detailed instructions

Where '*Ineligible*' is recorded in DoCS Connect the family should not be offered the Brighter Futures program.

When the outcome of the Referral Information eForm will be '*Lead Agency Case Managed*' and formal agreement to participate in Brighter Futures can be sought from the family, agreement to participate in the Brighter Futures program is recorded on the Brighter Futures Agreement to Participate form and in DoCS Connect.

### **DoCS Connect procedures to record agreement to participate**

1. Navigate to the Case Management view and select the relevant case
2. Edit the person's details as required
3. Update the agreement to participate information details as required

Note: This should reflect the date on which the person agreed to participate in the program

See Online Help topic '[Update person details](#)' for detailed instructions

### **KEY MESSAGES FOR PROCESSING FACS CHILD PROTECTION and COMMUNITY REFERRALS**

- On some occasions, Brighter Futures Lead Agencies will receive a referral where it has not been possible to obtain consent. These referrals should be accepted and allocated for participation in Brighter Futures in accordance with program eligibility and priority of access criteria
- Brighter Futures Referral eForms should only be completed and submitted to FACS where the Lead Agency has capacity to offer case management
- Cases with the Status of Lead Agency Managed in *DoCS Connect* should be offered the program
- Families for whom the outcome of processing the referral by Community Services is '*Ineligible*' in *DoCS Connect* should not be offered the Brighter Futures program

### **Lead Agency Brighter Futures eligibility lists**

Lead Agencies will establish appropriate internal procedures to effectively monitor the provision of Brighter Futures services to eligible families. These procedures should ensure that:

- Referrals are consistently assessed for Brighter Futures program eligibility (i.e. age and vulnerabilities)
- Brighter Futures priority of access criteria can be consistently applied
- Referrals unable to be allocated after 28 days are closed (end dated) and removed from the agencies Brighter Futures eligibility list
- Referral agencies are advised of the outcome of a referral, including if the referral is closed without being allocated

## Chapter 4 – Administering the Brighter Futures program

### PART A: INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Chapter 16A of the [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#) allows government agencies and NGOs who are prescribed bodies to exchange information that relates to a child or young person's safety, welfare or wellbeing, whether or not the child or young person is known to FACS and whether or not the child or young person or their parent/carer consents to the information exchange.

Prescribed agencies may share information as part of the process of delivering effective outcomes for children and their families in order to ensure a child/young person's safety, welfare or wellbeing as paramount. However, it is important that the privacy rights of a person are protected throughout their participation in the program.

**Section 29** of the [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#) places an important restriction on information exchange by protecting the identity of people who report concerns about children and young people to the Child Protection Helpline. A person who acts in good faith to provide information in accordance with the legislation is not liable to any legal or disciplinary action and cannot be held to have breached any professional ethics, code or standards.

In addition to the protection of the privacy of individuals generally, agencies must maintain confidentiality to ensure the identity of the reporter and disclosure of any information in a way that is contrary to the interests of the person or organisation that provided it in the first place.

Confidentiality is an obligation to the provider of the information whereas privacy is an obligation to the subject of the information.

There will be circumstances where a child or young person engaged with Brighter Futures has been identified at ROSH prior to entry into the program or while participating in the program and subject to a Safety and Risk Assessment (SARA) by FACS or an assessment administered by a Brighter Futures Lead Agency. Narrative and assessment outcomes from these assessments can be exchanged in accordance with Chapter 16A, that may assist an agency in:

- making a decision, assessment or plan
- initiating or conducting an investigation
- providing a service relating to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of the child or young person (or class of children or young persons) and/or
- managing a risk to a child or young person.

The identity of the reporter or any information from which the identity of the reporter can be deduced must be removed from the document/s before they are provided under Chapter 16A.

Information on the legislative framework for government and non-government organisations and agencies exchanging information is detailed in the [Child Wellbeing & Child Protection – NSW Interagency Guidelines](#).

Information and resources about obligations under NSW privacy legislation can be obtained from.

## Privacy and personal and health information

### Information protection and health privacy principles

The Information Protection Principles under the [NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998](#) and the Health Privacy Principles under the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002* are the legal obligations that cover the collection, storage, access and accuracy, use and disclosure of personal and health information. The Act also provides for an appropriate complaint mechanism regarding the perceived mishandling of personal information. More information about privacy can be accessed on the Family and Community Services, Community Services [website](#).

### Exemptions to the information protection principles

Agencies should have the consent of family members before they share information, unless:

- information is necessary to prevent a serious and imminent threat to any person's health or safety
- information is required by law (e.g. subpoena or warrant or mandated reporters making a risk of significant harm report to Family and Community Services)
- information is provided or exchanged under Chapter 16A or section 248 of the [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#).

### Storage of personal information by Lead Agencies

Lead Agencies must have policies and procedures that ensure the effective management and security of client files and records. This is necessary to ensure that the Brighter Futures program meets NSW privacy legislation requirements for the storage and security of personal information and appropriate practice standards that comply with New South Wales State Recordkeeping framework.

For further information on practice standards for the storage and management of records refer to the Government Recordkeeping Manual on the [State Records NSW](#) website.

### Storage of personal information by FACS

A family's personal information provided to FACS by Lead Agencies during the referral process (for the purpose of checking child protection status/history) may be stored on a FACS database. Any personal information not stored on the database will be filed by FACS in accordance with existing FACS record keeping procedures.

Information on families entering the program via a referral will be limited to information contained in the [Referral Information form](#), unless FACS holds information gained after receiving a risk of significant harm report on a child in this family.

Information provided to FACS may constitute a State Record which must be treated in accordance with legislative requirements.

### **Access to personal information**

Agencies must have policies and procedures relating to an individual's access to their personal information that ensures compliance with privacy legislation. A person may request access to their personal information under Section 14 of the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* or access to their health information consistent with health privacy principle 7 of the [Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002](#) or the [Government Information \(Public Access\) Act 2009](#).

Agencies will inform parents/carers they may make a verbal or written request to access their personal information held as part of the Brighter Futures program, at no cost. If a parent has a complaint with the timeframe or process for accessing personal information, the Agency's dispute and resolution procedures will be followed.

Information is only ever to be shared to the extent that the recipient is entitled to receive the information. If a person's parental responsibility has been limited by a court order this may affect their legal entitlement to access their children's information. Information provided by mandatory reporters or other confidential information provided by service providers will not necessarily be provided.

Individuals are not entitled to access:

- information about any risk of significant harm or other risk of harm reports made to FACS about their children; in particular, section 29 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* prohibits the release of the identity of any person who has made a risk of significant harm report, or any information from which a person could deduce the identity of a reporter
- information about other people, unless that person gives consent to the release of their personal information to the person who has requested access.

If a person is seeking information that relates to a child over the age of ten, the child should be consulted prior to making a decision about the release of information. In addition to the child's opinion, the following factors should also be taken into consideration in making the decision to release information:

- the nature of the information requested
- the circumstances in which the information was obtained
- the degree of invasion into privacy
- the motives for the request for information.



If a request for information is made directly to FACS under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* the application will be processed by Family and Community Services' Right to Information Unit.

### **Requests for amendment of personal information**

Parents/carers may seek to have their personal information amended if they believe that a Lead Agency or FACS holds incorrect or out of date personal information about them. Agencies are required to have standard procedures in place for responding to requests to amend personal information.

Information about making a request to FACS to amend personal information can be found on the FACS website.

### **Complaints about the handling of personal information**

Agency policy and procedures on information protection must outline the agency's complaints handling and dispute resolution procedures. Families should be fully informed of how complaints can be made and how complaints are addressed.

If family members feel their information has not been adequately protected by the Department of Family Community Services, complaints can also be made to the privacy contact officer at [privacy@facs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:privacy@facs.nsw.gov.au) or advice can be obtained from the Privacy Commissioner. More information about making a privacy complaint to the Privacy Commissioner can be found on the [Information and Privacy Commission NSW](#) website.

## **Consent requirements**

Brighter Futures is a voluntary program and personal information exchanged between agencies will be made with consent, wherever possible, once the family has agreed to participate.

For all referrals, agencies obtain consent, wherever possible, for information exchange to facilitate referral to the program using the [Referral Information form](#).

[N.B. Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* ] enables referral to the Brighter Futures program where it has not been possible to obtain parental consent or seeking consent would place the child at greater risk. See also page 22 of these Guidelines.

For Child Protection Helpline referrals, FACS provides information to a Lead Agency using Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*.

Lead Agencies obtain consent, wherever possible, for further information exchange following the family's agreement to participate in Brighter Futures using the [Consent to exchange and release information form](#).

Where information which relates to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a particular child or young person needs to be exchanged without parental consent or



knowledge, agencies will do so using Chapter 16A of *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*.

### **Who can give consent?**

The Child Wellbeing & Child Protection – NSW Interagency Guidelines provide advice regarding consent and the release/exchange of information.

In the case of families with two parents/carers, where one parent/carer provides consent and the other declines, only information relating to the consenting parent/carer can be disclosed and exchanged with other agencies.

Section 9(2)(a) Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 provides that where a child is able to form his or her own views on a matter concerning his safety, welfare and well-being, he or she must be given an opportunity to express those views freely and those views are to be given due weight in accordance with developmental capacity of the child or young person.

Further information on consent and legal capacity can be sought by referring to the:

- [Child Wellbeing & Child Protection – NSW Interagency Guidelines](#)
- [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#)

### **Informed consent by CALD parents who cannot speak or read English**

For CALD parents/carers who cannot read English or have little English and therefore may not be able to read or understand the applicable consent forms, Brighter Futures workers should obtain verbal consent from these CALD parents/carers. However, it is imperative that accredited interpreters are used when obtaining verbal consent and that the presence of an interpreter is noted on the consent form. For more information on accredited interpreters please see page 52.

### **Informed consent by parents with an intellectual disability, learning difficulties or mental illness**

A parent's legal capacity to consent to the release and exchange of personal information should only be doubted if there is a factual basis to doubt it. A person has capacity if they are able to understand the general nature and effect of a particular decision or action and can communicate their intentions or consent (or refusal of consent) to the decision or action.

More detailed guidance on assessing a person's decision-making capacity is provided in the Office of the NSW Privacy Commissioner's [Best practice guide: Privacy and people with decision-making disabilities](#).

### **Ensuring consent is valid**

To be valid, consent must be voluntary, informed, specific and current. Parents/carers must have reasonable knowledge of all relevant facts before they give or refuse consent. Providing incorrect or misleading information to parents/carers may mean that the consent is invalid.

It is an offence (subject to some limited exceptions) to disclose information obtained as part of the Brighter Futures program, other than in connection with the program. The exceptions relate to mandatory reporting, supplying information to the Ombudsman, or for the purposes of litigation or for the exchange of information under Chapter 16A or Section 248 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*.

Parents/carers should be made aware that the Lead Agency may be legally obligated to disclose information to other 'prescribed bodies' that request information under Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*.

### **Written and verbal consent**

All reasonable steps must be made to gain the parent's/carer's consent in writing. If verbal consent is provided, but the parent/carer declines to sign the relevant consent form, the consent is still considered valid. In these cases, the Brighter Futures worker must clearly document on the relevant consent form that consent was provided verbally.

### **Withdrawing consent**

Parents/carers have the right to withdraw their consent to further collection, exchange or storage of their family's personal information during their participation in the program. Personal information previously provided by parents/carers will be retained by Agencies.

Notice of withdrawal of consent may be given by parents/carers completing the [Withdrawal of Consent form](#), providing a written letter outlining the details of their withdrawal of consent or by making a verbal request to the Brighter Futures worker. All agencies included in the original consent must be informed of the parent's/carer's withdrawal of consent.

If parents/carers choose to withdraw their consent to allow information exchange during participation in the program, agencies may then assess whether they need to seek information from other agencies at times under Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* in order to continue delivering the program effectively.

## **PART B: CASE MANAGEMENT PROCESSES**

Case management is client-centred, involving one worker as a key worker for a particular client. It is a two-pronged approach incorporating direct client service based on sound assessment and support planning, and coordination of access to and delivery of, a range of other support services.

Case management is a collaborative, client-focused approach aimed at meeting individual needs. Case management involves providing assistance to clients with a complex range of needs, who require access to a broad range of services and different forms of assistance. Most clients need and use a wide range of services including housing, income, health, employment, education and training.

A case manager is responsible for ensuring clients maintain access to the services identified as appropriate to meet case plan goals. There is limited control any one agency or worker has over client outcomes; therefore coordination of services is a major focus of case management, including shared responsibility between service providers, other agencies and clients for client outcomes.

On average families will participate in the Brighter Futures program for 12 months (and up to 24 months). During this time the Brighter Futures worker will work in partnership with the family to:

- identify family strengths and needs
- design and document a plan that builds on the family's strengths and addresses identified needs
- deliver direct services
- coordinate and monitor the delivery of a suite of flexible services consistent with the case plan
- regularly review the plan to assess whether the plan has been met or requires change
- close the case when appropriate

### **Family strengths and needs assessment**

An initial strengths and needs assessment is completed by the Brighter Futures worker when a family has been allocated to the worker and as soon as practicable, to inform the development of a case plan. This includes obtaining agreement to participate from the family.

The strengths and needs assessment tool used by the Lead Agency must:

- adopt an ecological, child-centred, family-focussed and strengths-based practice approach, including working collaboratively with interagency partners
- identify and record information about the family in the broad domains of:
  - child safety and wellbeing

- parenting capacity
- social and environmental issues impacting on the family

The assessment should be repeated at least every three months and at other significant times to ensure the case plan remains aligned with the family's changing strengths, concerns and priorities.

## Casework

Brighter Futures casework is child-centred and is based on the analysis of information gathered in the strengths and needs assessment. Case plans are always developed in partnership with the family and agencies involved with the family and should be viewed as a shared commitment to action between the Brighter Futures worker and the family.

## Casework focused on parental vulnerability

Domestic violence, parental mental health issues, drug or alcohol misuse are often associated with poor child wellbeing and safety outcomes. Casework focused on parent vulnerabilities uses a counselling<sup>2</sup> approach to assist parents to understand the impact of domestic violence, drug or alcohol misuse and mental health issues on their children and on their capacity to parent.

Casework focused on parental vulnerabilities will:

- commence early in a family's participation in the Brighter Futures program
- assist parents to understand and acknowledge the impact of the vulnerability on their children and capacity to parent
- enable parents to develop skills and implement strategies that reduces the impact of the vulnerability on children and increases their safety

Families who experience and/or are affected in other ways by homelessness, are at greater risk of entering the statutory child protection system. Brighter Futures caseworkers will identify families at risk of homelessness and consider the impact on parental vulnerabilities as part of holistic case planning and case management.

Casework addressing domestic violence needs to comply with the 2013 Memorandum of Understanding between FACS and the Department of Attorney General and Justice regarding the regulation of minimum standards for men's

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<sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup> The term 'counselling' in Brighter Futures does not refer to therapy. It refers to structured discussions, in the context of the casework relationship, and casework tasks of assessment and case planning. These discussions are designed to help parents to identify the impacts of their vulnerability on their children and on their parenting capacity and to support them to implement strategies to reduce these impacts and increase safety and wellbeing for their children. This process involves the use of fundamental counselling skills such as active and reflective listening. It also involves skills in formulating and asking questions appropriate to achieving the above aims and techniques for responding effectively to minimisation, rationalisation, and avoidance.

domestic violence behaviour change programs. Under this agreement, when providing referrals to domestic violence behaviour change programs, FACS funded Service Providers will only refer domestic violence perpetrators to behaviour change programs that meet the [minimum standards](#). A list of approved providers can be found at

[http://www.domesticviolence.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/domesticviolence/minimum\\_standards\\_mdvbcp.html](http://www.domesticviolence.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/domesticviolence/minimum_standards_mdvbcp.html)

## Quality children's services

The Australian Government provides assistance with the cost of child care provided by eligible child care services through the Child Care Benefit (CCB) depending on family income, and the Child Care Rebate (CCR) for parents/carers who are working, studying or training. CCR is paid in addition to CCB and is not income tested. For information about CCB and CCR eligibility and payments refer to the Centrelink website on [www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au).

Families receiving CCB and/or CCR should choose for it to be paid directly to the approved child care service on a fortnightly basis, as reduced fees.

Lead Agencies will generally only pay the amount owing to the child care centre after CCB and/or CCR, and JET Child Care fee assistance (if applicable), and contribution by the parent for the child care place have been subtracted.

It is recommended that the following steps are followed:

1. The need for child care in Brighter Futures must be identified during the family's strengths and needs assessment and be documented in the family's case plan
2. The parent completes the application for CCB, acknowledging liability for costs
3. The parent enrolls the child at the child care centre and accepts liability for the costs and is recorded by the centre as the person liable to pay the child care fees
4. The child care centre invoices the parent for the cost of child care and sends a copy of the invoice to the Lead Agency
5. The Lead Agency pays the amount owing after CCB and/or CCR, and JET Child Care (if applicable) fee reductions and any parent contribution

## Brokerage funded support

Brokerage in the Brighter Futures program enables workers to purchase material aid, specialist services, and/or other essential services to meet the immediate and/or short term needs of children and families. For example, a Brighter Futures worker may use program brokerage funds to purchase a place at a child care centre for up to three months to provide short term assistance for a family, but not to purchase an ongoing place in a child care centre.

Brokerage may also be used to purchase specialist services to support children experiencing trauma as a result of these parental vulnerabilities, and, where a domestic violence perpetrator is participating in Brighter Futures, services that work intensively with domestic violence perpetrators.

Brighter Futures brokerage funds are only used to purchase goods or services required to support the achievement of outcomes identified in the family's case plan.

Program brokerage funds may be spent on any person in the Brighter Futures family and workers should consider whether:

- the required service is already available through Brighter Futures funded services
- the family has the capacity to pay for the goods/service
- other services, benefits or subsidies can be accessed for the family within a reasonable timeframe

### **Types of assistance**

Brokerage funding will be used in the following broad areas:

Material aid: Material aid is the one-off purchase of goods or equipment by the family's Brighter Futures worker to assist families to deal with an immediate need. This includes such things as a washing machine, nappies, or bedding.

Financial aid: Financial aid is the provision of one-off financial assistance to families to enable the family to purchase goods or service. For example, fares for travel or lunch. Purchases should be small in value and only used in exceptional circumstances.

Fee for service: Fee for service is the purchase of immediate and/or short term (e.g. up to three months) access to private, government or non-government services that are not otherwise available, such as:

- specialist counselling/support, family counselling, mediation
- short term access to quality children's services (e.g. where this is not already available through services funded as part of Brighter Futures)
- respite care (see below).

### **Respite care**

In Brighter Futures respite care arrangements are made with the consent of the parent/carer (i.e. voluntary). Short term respite care may be used to provide care of a child or children to achieve a case plan goal, including parent participation in a short term treatment or rehabilitation program, or care during an unplanned event or issue (e.g. parental/carer accident or illness).

When respite is provided, the Brighter Futures worker will ensure that:

- the family will remain on the active caseload of the worker

- all services and support provided to the family (parent/s and child/ren) will remain in place where appropriate and possible, in particular the provision of child care
- if a respite arrangement requires that the child/ren is placed outside the local area, the worker will liaise to ensure that services to the child/ren are maintained.

### **Child care**

Long term access to key Brighter Futures services such as child care where appropriate will be provided as a component of the Brighter Futures service model. A Brighter Futures worker may use brokerage funds to purchase a place at a child care centre for up to three months to provide short term assistance for a family.

### **Administrative and financial accountability requirements**

Agencies providing Brighter Futures brokerage funds must develop appropriate administrative and financial accountability policies and processes (including processes for approving expenditure within their agency). This is to ensure the effective management of brokerage funds and equitable access for families.

Brighter Futures funded agencies must ensure that they keep detailed records to meet the financial accountability and reporting requirements consistent with the Service Agreement and Service Specification.

## **Case monitoring and review**

Lead Agencies must develop and maintain a comprehensive and current understanding of the broad family context to inform case planning, with a focus on the child's safety in the home. A formal review of the family's strengths, needs and goals, and revising the case plan with the family should be undertaken at least every three months and at other significant times to ensure it accurately reflects the family's current situation. Case closure should be considered where Brighter Futures is no longer an appropriate program response including where families are no longer willing to participate in case management and/or services.

In addition to formal reviews, Lead Agencies are responsible for monitoring the family's circumstances to identify significant changes in circumstances and/or services required. Ongoing monitoring may occur during general day to day contact with the family, and gathering information from other relevant sources (e.g. services). Significant changes to family circumstances include changes that may impact on the child's safety in the home and their development.

If concerns about the safety of a child are identified following a significant change in family circumstances, the Lead Agency should refer to the [NSW Online Mandatory Reporter Guide](#) to assist in determining the level of risk.

## Exit planning and case closure

Exit planning is an important component of the Brighter Futures program and will enable families to smoothly transition from Brighter Futures to universal services and support. Exit planning that commences early in a family's participation in Brighter Futures will assist families to sustain changes achieved while participating in the program.

Planning for a family's exit from Brighter Futures, should be considered as part of each case plan review. Regular discussion with parents/carers and consultation with relevant agencies and services will ensure that exit and transition strategies are in place and being actioned, and that an exit timeframe is identified.

Brighter Futures is a voluntary program and families can choose to leave the program at any time. Where a family chooses to exit Brighter Futures, a referral to appropriate services and support should be made with the consent of the family wherever possible, and the case should be closed.

If, when working with a family, the parents do not engage and/or withdraw from the program, the local CSC (and other relevant services) should be contacted in the first instance to determine the best response for engaging the family (i.e. a joint home visit) and to discuss safety and risk issues.

If there are concerns that the safety and/or risk of the child/ren has escalated Brighter Futures should:

1. Apply the NSW Online Mandatory Reporter Guide and follow the outcome decision
2. If the MRG outcome is suspected risk of significant harm or suspected imminent risk of significant harm, the Child Protection Helpline should be contacted AND
3. The Brighter Futures agency should contact the local CSC to notify them of the report made

Brighter Futures agencies using Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools may conduct an assessment to help inform an appropriate response. Local collaboration involving information sharing and joint work between CSCs and Brighter Futures is encouraged.

The exit of a family from Brighter Futures and case closure must be recorded on DoCS Connect and any service/s involved with the family should be informed to ensure the family receive any ongoing support they need.



### **DoCS Connect procedures to close a case**

1. Navigate to Case Management view
2. Select an appropriate option from the 'Lead Agency Closure Reason' list and enter the date that case management ended into the Case Closure Date field
3. This information is essential as it informs FACS and Child Wellbeing Units whether you are still working with the family. These fields must be entered as soon as possible

**Note:** If Services Requested exist they must be completed prior to attempting to close a case in DoCS Connect

See Online Help topic 'Close a case' for detailed instructions

### **Case transfer when a family moves to a new area**

When a family plans to move and wishes to continue to participate in Brighter Futures, Lead Agencies are required to work in partnership to negotiate a smooth transfer of the family from one region and Brighter Futures Lead agency to another.

Whenever possible, a family already in the Brighter Futures program who moves to a new area should continue to receive services and Lead Agencies will:

- provide up to date case plan information to the receiving Lead Agency as soon as possible, with the consent of the parent/carer
- refer families to universal and specialist services in the new region where appropriate
- facilitate that family being placed on the Brighter Futures eligibility list if the receiving Lead Agency does not have capacity to provide the program at the time of the transfer

Where the case originated from a FACS referral, the case is ended in DoCS Connect by the existing Lead Agency and FACS will re-transfer the family to the new Lead Agency.

Where the case originated from a referral, the case is ended in DoCS Connect by the existing Lead Agency and the new Lead Agency creates a new case. The new Lead Agency should indicate that the family has transferred from another Lead Agency in the Referral Information eForm question, 'Referring agency's involvement with the child/family?'

### **DoCS Connect procedures for the Lead Agency which previously had case management of the family**

1. Navigate to Case Management view
2. Select 'Family relocated' from the 'Lead Agency Closure Reason' list and enter the date that case management by your agency ended into the End Date field

See Online Help topic ['Close a case'](#) for detailed instructions

### **DoCS Connect procedures for the Lead Agency to which the family is being transferred**

1. Navigate to the Case Management view
2. Create a new Eligibility Referral
3. Complete and submit the Referral Information eForm
4. Submit Referral Information eForm for assessment by Family and Community Services

See Online Help topic [‘Create referral information eForm’](#) for detailed instructions

### **Conflict and dispute resolution**

The Service Agreement requires all FACS funded agencies to provide their service users with an effective complaint and dispute resolution process. Families must be fully informed of how complaints can be made to Lead Agencies and other service providers, and how each agency will deal with them.

Guidance on responsibility for raising and addressing differences between agencies is detailed in the Child Wellbeing & Child Protection – NSW Interagency Guidelines.

## PART C: DATA COLLECTION, MAINTENANCE AND REPORTING

Participation in the Brighter Futures program is recorded and monitored by FACS in order to:

- monitor program capacity and utilisation
- monitor program effectiveness
- meet agency reporting requirements

To ensure that the delivery of Brighter Futures can be accurately monitored and reported, it is important that Lead Agencies consistently record the following data:

- family details including demographic information
- agreement to participate in the Brighter Futures program
- exit from the Brighter Futures program

Lead Agencies are not required to enter services requested. While this **section** appears in DoCS Connect it is redundant and should be left blank. However **if Services Requested are created, they must be completed.**

Detailed procedural advice regarding the collection of personal information and the completion of DoCS Connect procedures is provided throughout the Service Provisions Guidelines.

For further information Lead Agencies may also contact the FACS DoCS Connect Service desk on 1300 760 641 or email [DoCSConnectServiceDesk@facs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:DoCSConnectServiceDesk@facs.nsw.gov.au).

### Family membership records

Lead Agencies must ensure that they maintain an accurate and up to date record of family membership and advise FACS through DoCS Connect when:

- an adult or child/ren joins a family that is already in the program
- an adult or child/ren leaves a family that is already in the program
- a family withdraws/exits from the program

#### **Adding new family members**

The Lead Agency will notify FACS of new family members joining the Brighter Futures family (e.g. there is a newborn or new partner residing in the home) by adding the new person to an existing case they manage. The Lead Agency will provide the new person details on the New Person eForm and submits it via DoCS Connect and seek to obtain a consent form to exchange information wherever possible.

**Note:** Agreement to participate is required from all persons over 16 years before submission of the form.

### **DoCS Connect procedures**

1. Navigate to the Case Management view
2. Navigate to Case eForms view
3. Click the Create New Persons button
4. Enter details into the Additional Family Members eForm, and then submit eForm for processing by Family and Community Services

See Online Help topic [‘Create new person\(s\) eForm’](#) for detailed instructions

### **Updating family membership**

#### **DoCS Connect procedures**

1. Navigate to the Case Management view and select the relevant case.
2. Ensure the Allocation Date is entered  
Once an Allocation Date has been entered, the system will automatically generate a case management record for the family
3. When new information is gained about a person’s name, address, disability and/or contact details, that person’s details should be updated in DoCS Connect
4. Update the agreement to participate as required

Note: This should reflect the date on which the person agreed to participate in the program

See Online Help topic [‘Update person details’](#) for detailed instructions

### **Withdrawing family members**

When a member of a Brighter Futures family withdraws from a case, the Lead Agency is required to advise FACS by entering the Person’s withdrawal details in DoCS Connect. This will automatically notify FACS of the change.

If a family member who had previously withdrawn from the Brighter Futures family wishes to rejoin, the Lead Agency will need to obtain their agreement to participate and consent to exchange information again before re-adding them to the family. Then procedures for adding a new person should be followed.

**Note: This process is not to be used to close a case.** If all family members wish to withdraw from the Brighter Futures program then refer to the section regarding Case Closure.

**DoCS Connect procedures**

1. Navigate to the Case Management view and highlight the required case
2. Click the Persons view below the case list
3. Enter a Withdrawal Reason for the person(s) being withdrawn from the case.
4. Enter a Withdrawal date

See Online Help topic ['Withdraw persons from lead agency managed cases'](#) for detailed instructions

## Chapter 5 – Risk of significant harm

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Families participating in Brighter Futures and who are subject to a new risk of significant harm report shall, where appropriate, continue to be provided with Brighter Futures services until a determination is made that the family is no longer eligible to participate in the program or Brighter Futures is no longer suitable for the family. Universal and/or specialist services should be maintained where possible and appropriate. Service continuity to a child who is the subject of a risk of harm report can provide a means of monitoring a child's safety, welfare and wellbeing.

If the delivery of some services (e.g. a structured home visiting program) to a family cannot continue due to worker safety concerns, then only this service should be suspended. At all times the best interests of the child/ren should inform decisions regarding service provision and, if at all possible, services that directly benefit the child (e.g. child care) should be maintained.

### Reporting risk of significant harm concerns

The *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* provides the legislative basis for reporting and responding to concerns about risk of significant harm. The *Child Wellbeing & Child Protection – NSW Interagency Guidelines* articulates a partnership approach to child protection and explain roles and responsibilities in the exchange of information in a child protection context.

All agencies and staff providing services as part of Brighter Futures are mandated to make a new risk of significant harm report to the Child Protection Helpline (telephone 133 627) if they suspect that a child is currently at significant risk of harm. Lead Agencies and other service providers should refer to the [NSW Online Mandatory Reporter Guide](#) to assist in determining the level of risk prior to contacting the Child Protection Helpline.

Brighter Futures workers are encouraged to discuss their mandatory reporting obligations with families at the start of contact, and as necessary, throughout the family's participation in the program. On some occasions a report may need to be made before informing the parent(s) due to the urgency of a child's situation or the perceived risk to the child or worker's safety.

#### Feedback to mandatory reporters from the Child Protection Helpline

The [Child Wellbeing & Child Protection – NSW Interagency Guidelines](#) specify that the Child Protection Helpline will provide feedback to mandatory reporters on whether or not reports assessed meet the threshold of significant harm. Lead Agency workers will therefore receive feedback from the Child Protection Helpline if they have made a report.

## **New risk of significant harm reports**

If a new report received at the Child Protection Helpline meets the risk of significant harm (ROSH) threshold:

- The local FACS CSC will inform the Lead Agency that the family is subject to a ROSH report and exchange relevant information. Roles and responsibilities will then be determined to ensure the family are provided with the most appropriate response
- If a face to face response is to be provided, FACS will invite the Lead Agency to participate in pre-assessment and/or assessment consultation meetings as appropriate
- Working in partnership, Lead Agency and FACS caseworkers will ensure that Brighter Futures services and support continue as appropriate while CS completes the child protection investigation. FACS has lead responsibility for case management throughout a child protection investigation
- Where a child and their family will not receive ongoing statutory child protection services and the family remains eligible for Brighter Futures – FACS should provide Lead Agency caseworkers with advice and support to improve the safety for children at home
- If the child and family will receive ongoing statutory child protection services, FACS and the Lead Agency will determine whether a family will continue to participate in Brighter Futures and how services will be managed, including roles and responsibilities to ensure against service duplication and inefficiency

Consideration of whether a family remains suitable for Brighter Futures should focus on whether Brighter Futures is able to provide services and support necessary to adequately maintain a child/ren's safety in the home.

For ROSH reports unable to be allocated, FACS will:

- contact and advise the Lead Agency of the report
- create a SAS1 record to document communication with the Lead Agency and the allocation status
- forward the plan to 'Intake Brighter Futures Unit' to merge if there is already an open plan at the Brighter Futures Unit (BFU)
- close plan at the CSC where there is an incomplete EI Lead Agency Eligibility record but no open plan at the Brighter Futures Unit

### **Information about persons on the NSW Child Protection Register**

When FACS has information which indicates that a child resides with, or is in regular contact with a person on the NSW Child Protection Register, FACS may respond and may implement risk of significant harm procedures depending on the family's circumstances. When advice to FACS from the Police indicates the risk of harm to the child has been sufficiently reduced, the family may remain in Brighter Futures.

### **KEY MESSAGES FOR FAMILIES**

- All children have the right to be protected from harm, and the safety of a child/ren is considered paramount
- A report to the Helpline does not necessarily mean that the family will be required to leave the Brighter Futures program or that the services they are receiving will be withdrawn



## Chapter 6 – Resources

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### Forms

**Note:** Where forms and support materials have not been specifically referenced, it is expected that agencies will use their own procedures and business tools to support practice.

#### [Referral Information form](#)

**Note:** The Referral Information form (Word version) is only for the use of referring agencies to send information to the Lead Agency. Lead Agencies must use the equivalent form in DoCS Connect to send information to Family and Community Services. The Referral Information form (Word version) has been updated to reflect changes to the Brighter Futures program commencing from January 2012.

[Child Wellbeing Unit referral to Brighter Futures.](#) This referral form is used by Child Wellbeing Units when they make direct referrals to a Lead Agency.

**DoCS Connect** - The Referral Information form will continue to be used in DoCS Connect, however the form has not yet been updated due to restrictions on the capacity to make ad hoc technical changes with the broader system. When using the Referral Information form in DoCS Connect, Lead Agencies should note:

- Instructions point 6 (p.1) – A family may remain on the Lead Agency eligibility list for a period of 28 days
- Instructions point 7 (p.1) - Disregard (eligibility is now confirmed by the Lead Agency)
- Family's identified issues (p.5) – Do not record family vulnerabilities for '*Lack of extended family and social support*' or '*Child behaviour management problems*' (no longer included in the updated vulnerabilities)
- Case management capacity (p.6) – Disregard (Lead Agencies only enter family information in DoCS Connect when they have capacity to allocate)
- Wherever possible, consent should be obtained from a family when making a referral to Brighter Futures. Where consent cannot be sought for a referral, the principles of Chapter 16A should be applied.

#### [Consent to exchange and release information form](#)

#### [Withdrawal of consent form](#)

#### [Agreement to participate form](#)

## Information exchange under Chapter 16A

Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* allows any 'prescribed body' to request information from another prescribed body for the purpose of assisting the requesting agency:

- making any decisions, assessments or plans or initiating or conducting any investigations, or providing a service, or
- managing any risk to the child or young person or class of children or young people that might arise in the agency's capacity as an employer or designated agency.

Prescribed bodies may only request information that already exists. They cannot ask another prescribed body to collect new information, or to undertake a separate assessment and report, to meet the information request or direction.

A prescribed body is any organisation specified in section 248(6) of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and protection) Act 1998*, or clause 7 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Regulation 2000*. Prescribed bodies include:

- the Police Force, a government department or a public authority
- a government school or a registered non-government school
- a TAFE establishment
- a public health organisation
- a private hospital
- a private fostering agency
- a body that conducts a residential child care centre or a child care service
- a designated OOHC agency
- a private adoption agency
- any other organisation that has direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of health care, welfare, education, children's services, residential services, or law enforcement, wholly or partly to children or young people.

## Using DoCS Connect and Online Help

'Online Help' is a guidance tool that provides assistance as you work in DoCS Connect. The Online Help in DoCS Connect is called iHelp. There is an iHelp topic for each task you need to complete in DoCS Connect, including a topic that explains how to use Online Help. There are references and internet hyperlinks to iHelp topics throughout the Brighter Futures Service Provision Guidelines. Each Online Help topic has step-by-step instructions to help you to complete the task.

FACS has developed an online training site that gives Lead Agencies access to ongoing, hands-on practise in using DoCS Connect. Ongoing support is also offered around Brighter Futures transactional matters and technical issues.

Answers to technical questions such as how to login and set up new users can be found within DoCS Connect which offers:

- online links to DoCS Connect Support pages such as the 'Help' and 'FAQs' (Frequently Asked Questions). For ease of use the 'Help' pages group issues into topical areas such as 'Help on logging in', 'DoCS Connect Features', 'about Brighter Futures' etc
- 'Online Help' using 'iHelp'. Each iHelp topic has a link to a printable version of the topic
- 'Contact Us' page where users fill in a simple online form with their question or feedback and send the form to the DoCS Connect Service Desk.

For further, more complex technical assistance, the DoCS Connect Service Desk gives Lead Agencies the opportunity to speak with service desk operators Monday to Friday (except public holidays) from 8.30am to 5.30pm on 1300 760 641 and fax on 1300 760 863.

## Working with Aboriginal families

An understanding of the historical and socio-cultural factors that have shaped parenting practices in Aboriginal communities is a critical aspect of working with Aboriginal families and communities. In the past, Aboriginal people have been subject to government policies that resulted in dispossession of their land and the removal of children from families and communities. These practices have had a significant effect on traditional relationships, cultural identity, kinships ties, Aboriginal law and parenting practices.

Brighter Futures workers need to:

- confirm early in the relationship whether the family identifies as Aboriginal and then allow time to build trust and respect
- understand the different family structures and how these influence decision-making
- be aware of subtle communication styles that can influence outcomes
- consult appropriately with specialist Aboriginal workers for cultural guidance and document.

The [Engaging with Aboriginal Children and Families](#) resource has been developed to assist workers in their work with Aboriginal children and families. The [Brighter Futures Brochure \(Aboriginal\): Raising a Family Can Be Hard](#) is specifically designed for use by workers who want to provide initial information to Aboriginal families and help with engagement into the program.

A Brighter Futures PowerPoint presentation - [Working with Aboriginal Communities](#) – and an [associated case study](#) - are also available to support Brighter Futures Lead Agencies in engaging services and groups who work with Aboriginal children, families and communities.

These resources are aimed at creating greater awareness about how Aboriginal families can benefit from the Brighter Futures program. They will be particularly useful for non-Indigenous Brighter Futures workers as they offer practical and respectful tools to use at the community level.

### **Resources for working with Aboriginal families**

[Engaging with Aboriginal Children and Families](#)

[Brighter Futures PowerPoint presentation: Working with Aboriginal Communities and associated case study](#)

[Link Up Aboriginal Corporation NSW](#)

[Aboriginal Health Services](#) directory

[Aboriginal Legal Service](#)

### **Working with families from a culturally and linguistically diverse background**

Use of the [CALD Assessment Checklist](#) may assist in identifying any needs before a visit. The checklist is a concise, comprehensive and user friendly tool that can be readily used by Brighter Futures workers to systematically canvass and plan for key cultural and linguistic issues that may impact on or need to be covered as part of subsequent assessments.

Before visiting a family from a CALD background, Brighter Futures workers should identify whether the family will need the assistance of an accredited interpreter or bilingual multicultural worker. Workers should also attempt to seek advice and support from bilingual/multicultural workers in external migrant, refugee and multicultural organisations. (See: Refugee and Migrant Services and Links).

### **Interpreting services for Brighter Futures Lead Agencies**

As a FACS funded organisation, you are responsible for ensuring that the services you provide are 'culturally capable'. This means that your organisation takes account of cultural, linguistic and religious issues in the design and delivery of services so that services are appropriate to the characteristics and circumstances of children, young people and their families. Some practical aspects of culturally capability include:

- The employees of the service reflect the cultural diversity of the Service's target population
- Your service has clear policies and strategies in place for working with families from culturally diverse backgrounds
- Employees are able to provide information to clients and to use resources that are linguistically and culturally appropriate
- Training is provided for service staff in culturally reflective casework practices that are appropriate for refugee and migrant communities
- Your staff have access to interpreter services where this is necessary to support a client.

Funded organisations will source interpreter services independent of FACS. They will also be required to report on their use of interpreter services through the annual FACS acquittal/accountability process.

\* An interpreter accredited with the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Ltd (NAATI) must be used for all Brighter Futures families.

### **Resources for working with CALD families**

[Refugee and Migrant Services and Links](#)

[CALD Assessment Checklist](#)

## **Accessing existing services, benefits or subsidies**

A range of services, benefits and subsidies provided through State and Commonwealth Governments and other non-government agencies are available and may be appropriate for families participating in Brighter Futures. These include:

- services provided by other FACS funded programs such as Families NSW, Early Intervention and Placement Prevention Services and Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS)
- services accessed from OOHC program funding that relate primarily to the young person in OOHC (e.g. driving lessons or education fees)
- NSW Government programs such as:
  - assistance with emergency accommodation or payment of rental bond/advance available from the Housing NSW
  - programs available through community health centres or out-patient services at local hospitals
  - Program of Appliances for Disabled People (PADP)
  - NSW Energy Account Payment Assistance (EAPA) scheme, which is delivered through a range of community, religious and charitable organisations
  - transport concessions e.g. State Transit Authority concessions.
- Commonwealth programs and benefits such as:
  - Child Care Benefit (CCB), Special Child Care Benefit (SCCB), Child Care Rebate (CCR) and Jobs Education and Training (JET) Child Care fee assistance
  - unemployment benefits
  - parenting payments
  - Emergency Relief program (which usually includes vouchers for food).
- exemptions, discounts on bills, or negotiated payment schedules available through some utilities and service providers

- other services that offer discounts, exemptions or subsidies to families in need, such as clothing and household goods provided through large charitable organisations.

## Support materials for Brighter Futures workers

### Practice resources

[Brighter Futures Practice Resource: Parental Mental Health Vulnerability](#)

[Brighter Futures Practice Resource: Drug and Alcohol Vulnerability](#)

[Brighter Futures Practice Resource: Domestic and Family Violence Vulnerability](#)

[Brighter Futures Practice Resource: Parental Intellectual Disability/ Learning Difficulties Vulnerability](#)

[Brighter Futures Practice Resource: Including fathers in work with vulnerable families](#)

### Research to Practice notes

[Community Services Research to Practice Note: Parenting websites](#)

[Community Services Research to Practice Note: Quality Child care as an intervention: Issues for caseworkers](#)

[Community Services Research to Practice Note: Parenting programs: What makes them effective](#)

[Community Services Research to Practice Note: Effective components of home visiting programs](#)

[Community Services Research to Practice Note: Active Engagement: Strategies to increase service participation by vulnerable families](#)

[Community Services Research to Practice Note: Neglect: Key issues](#)

[Community Services Research to Practice Note: Neglect: Key intervention strategies](#)

## Support materials for families

[Being a Parent can be Tough \(brochure for parents\)](#) Also available in 12 languages [Arabic](#), [Chinese](#), [Dari](#), [Dinka](#), [Farsi](#), [Korean](#), [Spanish](#), [Somali](#), [Samoan](#), [Tamil](#), [Turkish](#) and [Vietnamese](#)

[Raising a Family Can Be Hard](#) (brochure for Aboriginal parents)

[Information for Parents fact sheet: Brighter Futures program](#) Also available in 12 languages [Arabic](#), [Chinese](#), [Dari](#), [Dinka](#), [Farsi](#), [Korean](#), [Spanish](#), [Somali](#), [Samoan](#), [Tamil](#), [Turkish](#) and [Vietnamese](#)

[About the Brighter Futures program: Key Facts](#)

[Domestic and Family Violence](#)

[Dads Make a Difference: information sheet for fathers: 0 – 6 months](#)

[Dads Make a Difference: information sheet for fathers: 6 – 12 months](#)

[Dads Make a difference: information sheets for fathers: 1 – 3 years](#)

[Dads Make a difference: information sheet for fathers: 3 – 5 years](#)

[Dads Make a difference: information sheets for fathers: 5 – 8 years](#)

[Being Dad, Being Proud: information sheet for Aboriginal fathers: 0 – 6 months](#)

[Being Dad, Being Proud: information sheet for Aboriginal fathers: 6- 12 months](#)

[Being Dad, Being Proud: information sheet for Aboriginal fathers: 1 – 3 years](#)

[Being Dad, Being Proud: information sheet for Aboriginal fathers: 3 – 5 years](#)

[Being Dad, Being Proud: information sheet for Aboriginal fathers: 5- 8 years](#)

## **Useful websites**

Further information about the Blue Book (including availability in community languages) can be accessed at the [NSW Health website](#).

Parenting websites that provide high quality, accessible information include [Resourcing Parents](#). A wide range of parenting topics are identified in the [Research to Practice Note: Parenting websites](#) list.