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HUNTER ABORIGINAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES INC.

Policy and Procedure Manual
Revised 2006

Program Objectives - Out of Home Care

The Hunter Aboriginal Children's Service strive to secure the accreditation of a designated agency for the purpose of providing effective support to Aboriginal children and young persons in the communities the service covers.

Out-of-home care is defined as the care and control of a child or young person at a place other than their usual home s. 135(1)(a). It entails care by a person other than a parent or relative of the child or young person s. 135(1)(b).

Care can only be provided by a person who is an authorised carer.

Subject to the above, a child or young person is defined as being in out-of-home care:

- If care and control is provided under an order of the Children's Court for a period of more than fourteen days.
- by the virtue of the child or young person being a protected person for a period of more than fourteen days.
- If subject to a voluntary care arrangement, immediately upon the child or young person being placed in and out-of-home care arrangement for more than 28 days.

It is an offence for a person, not being an authorised carer, to provide out-of-home care for a period or periods in the aggregate, exceeding 28 days within the period of 12 months.

The objectives of the Out of Home Care program are to:

- provide safe, stable and nurturing homes for Aboriginal children in need of Out of Home Care
- support children to maintain close relationships with the significant people in their lives, such as their parents, siblings, extended family, peers, family, friends and community
- provide specialised and culturally appropriate services and resources to Aboriginal children and their carers

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- offer a professional, culturally appropriate placement planning process that seeks to reunite children with their families
- deliver services that are holistic and focus on the 'whole' child, meeting the child's physical, social, emotional, cultural and psychological needs
- provide placements which promote a positive understanding of Aboriginal culture
- foster strong partnerships between children and their carers, which help make stable placements that meet the goals of the case plan
- support carers and involve them in decision-making and value them by providing them with ongoing supervision, training and development and by recognising their efforts and accomplishments.
- provide out of home care as a last resort and only when such care is seen to be the least restrictive alternative for the child or young person.
- limit care to the shortest duration so as not to jeopardise existing and established relationships.
- promote the principle of continuity of care by facilitating family contact and familiar community support.
- support the family in the promotion of primary cultural values consistent with what is in the child's best interest.
- meet the child's physical, social, emotional and cultural needs while within a Hunter Aboriginal Children's Services program.
- protect children from abuse and exploitation by offering a place of safety in times when it is needed.