

1.17 Specialist Positions in District Offices

Last Amended: 28/10/2014 3:34 PM

Policy

Purpose

To provide information to child protection workers on the various specialist positions within district offices and the role each performs.

Legislative Authority

[Children and Community Services Act 2004](#)

Standards

[Better Care, Better Services - Standards for Children and Young People in Protection and Care](#)

Practice Requirements

Not applicable

Process Map

Not applicable

Procedures

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Procedure - 1.17 Specialist Positions in District Offices

General information

Please note: All positions have been placed in alphabetical order. There are no procedures – this section provides information on each position and their specific roles and responsibilities.

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Aboriginal practice leader

The Aboriginal practice leader is responsible for leading consistent high standards of services to Aboriginal children by contributing to the development and implementation of effective practices relating to Aboriginal children and their families.

The Aboriginal practice leader also provides high level advice to the district director and leadership team on issues relating to Aboriginal services that are proactive and responsive to the customers' needs.

When an Aboriginal child is to be placed in out of home care, an Aboriginal practice leader must be

consulted.

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Assistant district director

The assistant district director has a key role in driving the integration, implementation and management of Responsible Parenting Services (RPS) and support to vulnerable children and families in the district. Their duties are diverse and can vary depending on the needs of the district office.

The assistant district director provides high level advice on matters related to parenting issues and practice and is responsible for establishing responses within the framework of the Department's strategic plan and operational guidelines.

While the position has primary responsibility for Service 3 (Individual and Family Support) the assistant district director is also responsible for exploring how Service 3 can be integrated into Service 1 (Children in Care) and Service 2 (Protection of Children) to enhance supports to families and vulnerable children.

The assistant district director supports the district's operations and establishes and maintains partnerships with non-government agencies to work together to produce improved outcomes for children, individuals, families and communities. They also assist with the district's responses to protect children and improve the quality of care that children in care receive. The assistant district director does not have delegated authority to approve a child entering the CEO's care, nor to approve the use of s.33 of the Act – Access to child for purposes of investigation.

The role of the assistant district director also incorporates involvement in community projects/community organisations, not only to advance the profile of the Responsible Parenting Service but also to develop positive and proactive relationships within the community.

In addition, the position assists the district director in managing district teams, staffing and workload management, with the ongoing performance evaluation of the district and reports on any activities and issues within the district to the district director.

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Best Beginnings - Home Visitors

Best Beginnings are part of the RPS team and provide a voluntary home visiting service to parents with specific risk factors that make their child vulnerable to poor attachment, developmental delay and life outcomes.

Home visits commence antenatally or before the baby is three months of age and can continue until the child is two years of age. Best Beginnings home visitors focus on protecting, enhancing and maintaining infant wellbeing, parental wellbeing, family functioning and social connectedness.

Best Beginnings home visitors are experienced in engaging hard to reach at risk families, have extensive knowledge of infant attachment, health, safety, and developmental needs, and have the ability to develop collaborative professional networks.

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Case support officer

The case support officers contribute to the effective management of case work in the district by providing direct case support and administrative assistance to designated child protection/care for children case management teams as required. Their work includes maintaining all related client and administrative files and the provision of data entry and retrieval from casework information systems.

Under direction from the case manager or team leader, the case support officer also provides information to clients relating to casework matters and liaises with and provides information to government and non-government agencies in relation to client needs.

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Child protection worker - parent support

As part of the RPS team, the child protection worker - parent support provides support to vulnerable and hard to reach families participating in the Parent Support service.

The child protection worker - parent support works with parents of school aged children up to 18

years who are exhibiting criminal and/or antisocial behaviour and truancy if in combination with these behaviours.

These staff work with parents to develop a Responsible Parenting Agreement which serves as a case plan, identifying the family's goals and outlining the roles and responsibilities of the parents, child protection worker - parent support and any other persons or agencies involved.

A range of tools are used to work with families; these tools are designed to track the progress of both the parents and the child or young person toward achieving the goals of the RPA.

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Community child protection worker

Community child protection worker (country and metropolitan Services)

Community child protection workers (CCPW) are part of the RPS team, but work across all service areas, with key areas of responsibility in each. CCPWs provide up to 50% case work, with the balance of their time focused on meeting other district priorities through community child protection work.

The CCPW role builds relationships with at risk children, young people and families and often works to connect families who have disengaged from the Department. These workers provide important information on local issues affecting Aboriginal families, have extensive knowledge of Aboriginal family structures and assist in building a positive image of the Department with Aboriginal families.

Remote community child protection worker (Country Services)

The role of the remote community child protection worker (CCPW) is to provide responses within the full spectrum of activity to ensure the protection of children. This includes developing community capacity, safeguarding the wellbeing of children, providing individual support to families and intervening when children have experienced substantial harm or are at risk of substantial harm.

This broad range of responses includes some case management responsibilities; however, the maximum number of cases to be case managed by remote CCPWs is seven.

For more information about the remote community child protection worker (country services) role please refer to the Remote CCPW Practice Development Guidelines ([click here](#)). For more information relating to the remote community child protection worker (country services) program please [click here](#).

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District director

The district director oversees the day to day functioning of the district's operations and establishes and maintains partnerships with other government and non-government agencies to develop improved outcomes for children, individuals, families and communities.

The district director has a key role in assisting the Department fulfill its statutory responsibilities and is responsible for establishing district responses within the framework of the Department's strategic plan and operational guidelines.

The district director has delegated responsibility and authority for the decision to bring a child into the CEO's care and the use of s.33 of the Act: that is to have access to a child for the purposes of investigation. The district director is also responsible for the implementation of policies and practices to protect children and improve the quality of care that children in care receive and to ensure quality assurance mechanisms are applied and maintained for practice standards, casework and community initiatives within their district.

The district director provides supervision to professional staff who deliver case advice and interventions and is responsible for managing district staffing and overseeing workload management within the district.

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District mentor

The district mentor supports field staff in the use of Assist and its relationship with Objective. District mentors provide training and one-on-one support and advice to increase the skills of all staff who use Assist. The district mentor is the first port of call for any issues or questions about how to use Assist and they advise whether issues need to be raised as a formal support request.

[top](#)**Education officer**

The education officer (EO) is a qualified teacher with specialist knowledge, skills and experience. The EO provides services for children in the care of the CEO and to children who come to the attention of the Department for Child Protection and Family Support. The EO provides information and advice to child protection workers on education issues and support children in care, their families and carers to:

- prepare for school
- access education opportunities
- maintain participation in school and education.

In consultation and negotiation with relevant internal and external stakeholders, EOs:

- case manage Education Services referrals
- develop, identify and maintain local educational resources and programs for children, carers and families
- provide educational and social skill development to support the child, family or carer
- coordinate and monitor tuition services
- determine the most appropriate school or alternative education programs for children
- assess children's educational abilities and identify appropriate programs or activities to support their development, and
- provide education information, advice and assistance to Department staff.

Senior education officer

Senior education officers (SEOs) are located in some district offices, residential care and secure care. SEOs provide education services for children in the care of the CEO and to children who come to the attention of the Department for Child Protection and Family Support. SEOs fulfil the same function as an EO but are also responsible for:

- case management of complex Education Services referrals
- coordinating and implementing education related Department projects
- providing case practice support to EOs.

[top](#)**Family resource worker**

Family resource workers (FRWs) are non-statutory, non-case carrying roles whose duties across the Department are extremely diverse and depend largely on the needs of the District Office.

Activities undertaken by FRWs may include: arranging contact visits and undertaking supervision of these in a way which will provide a stabilising support to this process; working closely with carers to provide support in their care of children; participating in community work projects and initiatives; implementing parenting skills training, one to one or group work; undertaking administrative case support tasks, for example organising camps; and assisting with issues which arise in their support work with clients, for example, budgeting, social isolation, parenting etc.

[top](#)**Child protection worker - generic**

The child protection worker (CPW) works in the areas of child protection and children in care and is responsible for engaging, building and maintaining relationships with families and their children and communities to strengthen their capacity to provide care and safety to children.

The CPW assists and supports families and their children to identify their strengths, and refers families and children to relevant agencies and community resources where required.

When necessary, the CPW may take legal action to promote the safety and wellbeing of children.

[top](#)**Parent visitor - parent support**

Parent visitors work in collaboration with child protection workers - parent support to identify parent's strengths and provide input into the development of goals for the Responsible Parenting Agreement, support to achieve them and the review process. This could include:

- building parenting skills
- role modelling
- household management
- routines
- discipline
- linking children and young people into meaningful activities.

Parent visitors provide detailed feedback to the child protection workers - parent support in relation to the work they have undertaken with the family and identify strengths, difficulties and progress.

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Psychologist

Each metropolitan district will have at least two psychologists available. Most have specialised skill sets in clinical, counselling or forensic psychology. All are registered with the Psychology Board of Australia.

Psychologists provide assessment, intervention and consultation. This includes support and training for foster carers as well as interagency liaison with health and education professionals.

Experienced senior psychologists can provide Court reports and parent capacity assessments and have some capacity for forensic assessment or to assist with referrals to a private psychologist where appropriate.

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Family resource employee

The resource officer (also known as the financial assistance officer) administers the Family Crisis Program. Under this service the resource officer assesses a client's eligibility for monetary assistance where the Department considers it appropriate. They are also responsible for monitoring expenditure and providing information and advice to the district director on relevant Family Crisis Program matters.

The resource officer assists customers to develop budget management skills and provides information to customers of community resources available, makes referrals and negotiates support, where appropriate, within the Department, to government or to non-government agencies. They also provide information and advice to child protection workers, government and non-government agencies regarding customer needs.

The resource officer is also in a position to identify and refer to the duty officer, children and families involved in domestic violence situations or who are experiencing other "welfare" related difficulties.

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Senior child protection workers

The senior child protection worker (SCPW) provides a professional assessment, planning and intervention service to individuals, groups and communities within a service delivery team.

The SCPW can be consulted about all aspects of child protection work including the provision of supports and services to families and communities to enhance the safety and wellbeing of children and other vulnerable individuals.

The SCPW provides advice and training to District staff on matters concerning the care, safety and protection of children and is also available for consultation to other service delivery agencies. Other responsibilities include: participating in planning forums on cases, co-working with field staff on difficult cases and providing specialist advice in allegations of abuse in care and to co-work child protection investigations.

The SCPW also works with stakeholders to provide community education and information to raise awareness of child safety issues and promote the wellbeing of children and other vulnerable people in the community.

The SCPW may also, as directed, manage a small local office and ensures the efficient and effective use of resources. This includes supervising and supporting staff in the performance of their duties, prioritising and allocating work and ensuring it is performed in accordance with departmental standards and practice guidelines, representing the Department in the local community and reporting to the Team Leader and District Director on local issues and operations.

Some country districts also employ Aboriginal child protection workers. These officers are employed

on the basis of their cultural knowledge and expertise.

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Senior child protection worker placement services

Senior child protection worker placement services (SCPWPS) primary responsibility is to guide and supervise the district placement practices and procedures.

The most important function of the SCPWPS is to find placements for children who are brought into care. A SCPWPS must always be consulted when the placement of a child is being considered and be involved in case discussions where there are difficulties with the placement.

Placements can be with general foster carers, relative or kinship carers, non-government agencies, group homes or hostels. It is the responsibility of the SCPWPS to assess the suitability of the placement and to ensure that it matches the child's needs and provide support to the caregiver when a child is in placement.

In metropolitan districts, the recruitment and assessment of general foster carers is the responsibility of Fostering Services, but in country districts this is carried out by the SCPWPS who are also responsible for the recruitment, assessment and training of group homes and hostel carers. SCPWPS also assist child protection workers in the recruitment and assessment of relative and kinship carers.

Metropolitan SCPWPS work with Fostering Services in the recruitment of general foster carers through local advertising and by regularly hosting information evenings. SCPWPS also sit on the Fostering Services selection panel.

The SCPWPS must quality assure all relative and kinship carers interim and final assessments, ensure that record checks and Working with Children cards have been correctly completed, register the carer, approve carer subsidy payments and support and guide child protection workers in the timely completion of Special Needs Loading Applications.

The SCPWPS' other duties include annual reviews of general foster carers and Chairing care plan/care plan review meetings.

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Senior child protection worker family and domestic violence

Senior child protection worker family and domestic violence work together with the Family Protection Unit (Western Australia Police) to ensure a specialised and integrated response to situations of family and domestic violence. The safety of children and adult victims is the key focus of the collaboration and ensures that individuals enacting violence or abuse will be held accountable through the criminal justice and child protection systems. The co-occurrence of family and domestic violence and the abuse of children is well documented and senior child protection worker family and domestic violence ensure a collaborative approach through improved information sharing, collaborative management, coordinated responses, resource sharing and mutual assistance.

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Senior practice development officer

The senior practice development officer (SPDO) provides advice and consultation to the district director, unit manager, team leaders and other staff in the district on operational policy and practice matters and complex casework practice issues. They also monitor and review departmental practice standards within the district and contribute to the professional development and practice development of staff, providing guidance and training.

The SPDO may also Chair complex or contentious care plans/care plan reviews as required.

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StrongFamilies coordinator

The role of the StrongFamilies coordinator is to promote coordination and collaboration between agencies in their work with families who have complex needs, with a particular emphasis on Aboriginal families. StrongFamilies coordinators do not themselves provide a case management service or direct services to families. Their role is to support the agencies to bring about an interagency case management approach and build the capacity of the agencies to work collaboratively.

StrongFamilies coordinators have a key role in ensuring agencies are held accountable for doing what they agreed to do within StrongFamilies processes. The Monitoring Group requires StrongFamilies coordinators to provide feedback to agencies regarding agency staff participation in StrongFamilies' processes.

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Team leader

The team leader is generally responsible for the day to day functioning of the team including the allocation of work to team members, the supervision of team members and provides consultation and advice on casework matters and decisions. They also have administrative responsibilities for the approval of case expenditure, staff leave arrangements and performance management appraisals.

The team leader has delegated responsibility and authority for case practice within their district team and for maintaining and ensuring quality assurance mechanisms in relation to case practice. This may include providing direction and advice in relation to the case plan, being available for consultation, Chairing meetings (including care plans), ensuring consultations occur with specialist staff and forwarding information to line management as required.

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Youth and family support worker

Youth and family support workers (YFSW) assist in building relationships with isolated and vulnerable young people and their families who are disengaged from the Department and other services. This work is targeted, focused on increasing the safety and wellbeing of at risk young people and includes partnering with other agencies.

As part of the RPS, YFSWs work with Aboriginal young people at risk and their families across all service areas, including child protection and children in care areas, primarily through co-working and mentoring.

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