



Family &
Community Services
Community Services

Intensive Family Preservation Program Guidelines

Policy, Programs and Strategy
Statutory Child Protection
May 2014

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1. Legislative Framework

Community Services is a division of the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS). The primary legislation that underpins FACS' provision of funding to non-government organisations through Families NSW is the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* and the *Community Welfare Act 1987* and the regulations associated with these acts. Other legislation that impacts on Community Services' management of its funded programs includes the *Public Finance & Audit Act 1983*, and the *Privacy & Personal Information Protection Act 1998*.

The [NSW Interagency Guidelines for Child Protection Intervention](#) are guidelines to promote effective collaboration, cooperation and coordinated effort across all responsible service providers under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* and ultimately to improve the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people in NSW. The Intensive Family Preservation (IFP) program operates within the framework provided by the legislation and guidelines.

2. Policy Directions and Commitments

The IFP program contributes to a number of NSW Government policy directions and commitments as outlined in various plans.

NSW 2021 is the NSW Government's plan that guides policy and budget decisions. IFP services are funded as a means of achieving:-

- Goal 13 of the state plan - NSW 2021 – commits the State government to actions that “better protect the most vulnerable members of our community and break the cycle of disadvantage”. This goal includes a priority action specifically related to implementing intensive family preservation and support services to reduce entry into out-of-home care (OOHC).; and
- Goal 1 of the FACS–Community Services divisional plan for the period 2012 - 2015 is that “fewer children and young people are vulnerable to abuse and neglect”.

Community Services Plan 2012-15: Under this plan, Community Services works towards improving children's lives every day and contributes towards achieving the NSW 2021 plan. The human and economic cost of very high numbers of children in OOHC is too great and this plan outlines how Community Services will use prevention strategies to reduce the rate of children and young people entering statutory OOHC. As part of these strategies, non-government agencies deliver IFP services and support children and families.

Keep Them Safe: A Shared Approach to Child Wellbeing (KTS) is the response to the *Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW*. KTS recognises the need for sector-wide cultural change as well as the need to build the capacity of government and non-government agency partners. KTS also placed emphasis on strategies to intervene early to help families and in doing so, to prevent children and young

people from entering OOHC. IFP builds the capacity of non-government agencies to provide services that reduce the need to enter OOHC.

FACS Community Services Program Reform

Over the next two years, Community, Early Intervention and Intensive Programs will be undergoing reform with a focus on local need and outcome measurement. There will be many opportunities for your organisation to be a part of that reform process. Program reform will focus on how services' delivered to children, young people and families can have a greater impact and reduce the incidence and prevalence of behaviours that put children and young people at risk.

Over the next two years, these program guidelines will be revised and will require you to address impacts and connections with NSW Government reforms including:

- NSW Child Protection reforms "Safe Home For Life"
- NSW Homelessness reforms including "Going Home Staying Home"
- FACS localisation, including the requirement to participate in district plans
- NSW Family and Domestic Violence reforms "It Stops Here"
- Development in other programs

These reforms may lead to changes occurring during the contractual period. In this case, the existing agreement may be renegotiated with services to reflect new policy and program requirements.

Cultural issues in the provision of Community Services-funded services

As a Community Services-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 cultural 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 Community Services. They will also be required to report on their use of interpreter services through the annual Community Services acquittal/accountability process.

3. Program Description

The IFP service is Community Services' highest-intensity placement prevention program. It is designed to work with those families in crisis, whose children are at imminent risk of removal and placement in OOHC; and where it is safe and in their best interests that they remain in the care of their family. To make the decision to refer a family to the IFP service, Community Services must have sufficient evidence to indicate that the family will respond positively to action under the program.

IFP services are coordinated and delivered by non-government service providers, which are funded specifically to provide such services using a holistic approach to addressing families' needs. An IFP service intervention consists of a period of twelve weeks of intensive casework and 24-hour on call assistance, followed by a period of up to 40 weeks of continuous, multi-faceted and individually-tailored casework and assistance services. Since every family's situation is different, the IFP program allows service providers flexibility to determine the types of services offered to children and their families, consistent with their individual needs.

Aims

The IFP service aims to:

- Keep children at home in a safe, stable and nurturing family environment
- Improve parenting capacity and family functioning
- Improve children's well-being
- Prevent unnecessary placement in OOHC where this is consistent with the paramount concern of protecting the child from significant harm.

4. Program Scope and Boundary

The IFP program is suitable for those families whose children are at imminent risk of removal and where assessment is made that there is a reasonable prospect of improvement within the family with the right support.

Referrals for the IFP can only be made by Community Services or through a Court order.

A decision about which agency to refer to will be based on service availability and the 'best' match between the available service options and the needs of the child and their family.

The service provides intensive, in-home crisis intervention, practical assistance, counselling, and skill development for families who have children at imminent risk of placement in OOHC.

Outside the scope

The IFP program is not suitable for all families. Referrals are not made where the level or nature of the risk is such that an IFP service may not adequately ensure the child's safety. For example, in certain circumstances where intra-familial sexual abuse has been substantiated or abuse which may be a criminal offence has occurred.

5. Program Results and Outcomes

Program Results

The IFP program aims to achieve the following results:

- Families achieve case plan goals that enable their children to remain safe in the family home
- Parents are more confident, connected to their community and its services and equipped to support their children's development and wellbeing
- The number of children entering OOHC is reduced.

Program Outcomes

The program aims to achieve the following outcomes:

Children:

- Are safe

Parents / carers:

- Have improved parenting knowledge, skills, behaviours
- Have people to support them
- Know about and use community services and resources to meet their family's needs
- Have improved relationships with their children
- Feel more in control of their lives

Families:

- Have increased strengths / protective factors
- Have reduced stressors / risk factors
- Achieve their case plan goals.

6. Service Group Objectives

In Community Services' funded programs system, IFP forms part of the Statutory Intervention for Vulnerable Children, Young People & Families service group. The programs in this service group are all geared to meeting the needs of children, young people and families who have identified vulnerabilities. The shared, broad, objective of these programs is to prevent the further escalation of issues that contribute to this vulnerability.

The table below illustrates where this program is located within the Community Services funded programs continuum of services.

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	Strengthening Families	Statutory Child Protection Casework	Intensive Family Support/ Intensive Family Preservation	Intensive Family Based Services	OOHC Casework	OOHC Reform

7. Evidence Base

A literature review conducted by the Community Services Parenting and Research centre in 2008 concluded that programs adhering closely to the Homebuilders® Model are effective in preventing placement in out-of-home care and subsequent episodes of maltreatment.¹

The key characteristics of the Homebuilders® Model include:

- Contact with the family within 24 hours of the crisis
- Small caseload sizes for workers (2 families per worker at any point in time)
- Flexible service delivery where workers are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- Service duration of four to six weeks
- Intensive service delivery
- Individually tailored packages of support that capitalise on family strengths
- The use of evidence-based strategies to affect family change

The 2008 literature review found that greater flexibility in program duration may be needed for some families. A recent evaluation of the IFBS program in NSW also recommended extending the duration of the program as required.² In addition, this report pointed out that

¹ Department of Community Services, Centre for Parenting and Research, January 2008, *Literature Review - Family Preservation Services*

² Department of Community Services, March 2008, *Intensive Family based Services (IFBS) Evaluation Report*

extending the duration of family preservation services was appropriate because of a lack of 'step down' support services for families who were no longer in crisis, but still required support at a less intensive level than that typically delivered under the Homebuilders® Model.

The Intensive Family Preservation service model incorporates this advice by extending the duration of Homebuilders® programs from six weeks to six months and up to one year where needed, with intensive assistance available within the first 12 weeks, followed by up to 40 weeks of tailored support that consolidates and builds on progress made within the first 12 weeks. Apart from the anticipated improvement in outcomes for families, this approach should lead to greater continuity in service delivery, as it will avoid the need to refer families to a different service provider to access less intensive supports after 12 weeks.

8. Target Group

Families with children aged from birth to 15 years are eligible for referral to Intensive Family Preservation services if they meet the following criteria:

- The child is assessed as being at risk of significant harm AND
- A Safety Assessment and a Risk Assessment have been completed and the Safety Decision is either "Safe" or "Safe with plan" and the family's final risk level is "High" or "Very High". AND
- The child is considered to be at imminent risk of entering OOHC without intensive intervention AND
- The child is living at home (there may or may not be an existing Court order such as a supervision order) OR
- The child has been in an emergency OOHC placement and is to be or has been returned to the household with a Children's Court order (for provision of support services or supervision) OR
- The child is living independently of their family but not in an OOHC placement (e.g. the child may be living in a Youth Support Accommodation Assistance Program service)

AND (all of the following criteria **must** be met):

- At least one parent/carer is willing and available to work with the Intensive Family Preservation Service towards reaching the agreed case plan goals and shows a capacity to change AND
- Any child/children aged 12-15 years agree to receive and participate in the IFP service AND
- There are some family strengths, resources, or social supports available that can be used to increase safety for the children and enhance parenting capacity AND
- Other services have tried and failed, or less intensive services would not be enough to solve the problems that are likely to escalate to placement in OOHC AND
- Intensive case management and support particularly in relation to health and clinical intervention, parenting, household management (including budgeting), practical support and social integration, are required to address the family issues that place the child at risk of significant harm.

Referrals should **not** be made where:

- The risk of significant harm is so high that an IFP service is unlikely to adequately ensure child safety
- A parent has been charged by police with any allegation of abuse or neglect and it is found that the other parent is incapable or unwilling to protect the child/children against further harm
- Intra-familial sexual abuse has been substantiated, or after a report of sexual abuse, the outcomes of the Safety Assessment and Risk Assessment determine that the child is 'in need of care and protection' and there is no protective parent, or the offender still has access to the child
- There is abuse which may be a criminal offence and either or both parents may be complicit
- The service does not have the resources to adequately assure the safety of workers or others when working with the family
- Parents refuse services or are otherwise unavailable to take up the services offered.

9. Service Types / Activities to be funded

The service provides intensive, in-home crisis intervention, practical assistance, counselling, and skill development for families who have children at risk of significant harm and are at imminent risk of placement in out-of-home care (OOHC). The service aims to strengthen family functioning and prevent placement in out-of-home care whilst ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the child.

Under the IFP program, service providers will deliver a range of activities as set out below.

During the development of Program Level Agreements, Community Services and the service providers will negotiate the range and level of activities. Individual service providers will detail the work they will be undertaking that year against the relevant component. Not all service providers will undertake each of these activities.

The Unit Measure for this program is a Placement which relates to the capacity or number of places available at a point in time. When a place becomes vacant, it is to be made available and occupied via a new referral.

Activity Components	Service Description
Advice and referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing comprehensive information and advice to families experiencing crisis and chronic and entrenched problems (such as child's behaviour, financial stress, domestic violence, drug and alcohol or substance abuse or poor inappropriate housing needs for the family) ▪ Providing support so that families access appropriate services ▪ Providing practical support including housing and assistance to access Government financial support, basic household goods, transportation, cleaning, clothing, childcare, respite care and meeting essential financial expenses. <p>Duration/intensity of service (average): May be multiple access to advice and support services over 12 month period.</p>
Assessment and case planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing assessment & case planning to: assess the strengths, risks and needs of the child/ren and family; plan and co-ordinate a mix of services to meet the child/ren and family's needs; monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the services being delivered to the child/ren and family; plan family's transition out of this service.
Family focused case work: intervention component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing intensive support to implement the case plans of individual clients, including: information and advice; support, advocacy and counselling; mediation; referrals to relevant agencies or specialist services; skills development to help clients achieve outcomes; and the use of brokerage to purchase goods/services. ▪ Service delivery primarily in the home or community ▪ Access to brokerage funds for a variety of practical support and supportive counselling/skills training that meet the assessed needs of parents/children. <p>Duration/intensity of service (average): Intensive service delivery within the first 12 weeks that will involve caseworkers being available to families 24 hours a day, seven days a week. During this time a caseworker will typically meet with family members up to three to five times a week, with telephone contact between meetings. The frequency of home visits will be determined by the needs of the family. In general, it is anticipated that the frequency will reduce over the course of the 12 week intensive support phase of the program</p>
Family focused case work: consolidation component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing on-going support to implement the case plans of individual clients with the same services and delivery modes as in the intervention component above <p>Duration/intensity of service (average): Up to 40 weeks of tailored support with an average of 10 home visits that consolidates and builds on improvements made within the first 12 weeks</p>

Home visiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A structured program that provides support and skills development to parents and is delivered in a family's home or another location (e.g. Parents as Teachers). Includes individual parenting programs.
	Duration/intensity of service (average): Up to 12 months
Counselling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing counselling that meets the assessed needs of child/ren, parents and families.
	Duration/intensity of service (average): Up to 12 months
Skills focussed groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical skills development groups eg household management, money management. Can be one off or short term (approximately 2 to 8 weeks). Structured parenting programs to help parents improve their relationship with their child/ren, and to develop their skills in responding to children's needs and appropriately addressing challenging behaviours and emotional problems. Medium level program: 6 to 8 weeks; high level program: 8 to 12 weeks.
	Duration/intensity of service (average): varies with service type from one off to 12 weeks.
Parent Support Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitating self help/peer support groups for parents experiencing, for example, post natal depression.
	Duration/intensity of service (average): Approximately 6 to 12 weeks.

10. Performance Measures and Service Results

Examples of the outcomes / results typically sought by the IFP program funded organisations and related key performance measures are listed in the following table.

Individual service providers will be required to collect and report on data to support the specific performance targets outlined in 'Service Types / Activities to be Funded' section of the IFP Funding Program Guidelines.

Outcomes	Key Performance Measures	Performance Targets	Data Set	Source
<p>Children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are safe <p>Parents/carers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> have improved parenting knowledge, skills & behaviour have people to support them know about & use community services & resources to meet their family's needs have improved relationships with their children feel more in control of their lives <p>Families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> have increased strengths/protective factors have reduced stressors/risk factors achieve their case plan goals 	<p>Number of children who participated in the program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> aged 0-5 years aged 6-12 years aged 13 to 15 years 		<p>Number of children who participated in the program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> aged 0-5 years = <number> aged 6-12 years = <number> aged 13 to 15 years = <number> 	<p>To Be Determined. Options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual Service Provider
	<p>Number of parents/carers who participated in the program</p>		<p>Number of parents/carers who participated in the program = <number></p>	
	<p>Number and percentage of parents/carers who say that through the program they learnt new things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assist them in parenting about services & resources for families in our area 		<p>Number and percentage of parents/carers who say that through the program they learnt new things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assist them in parenting = <number>, <%> about services & resources for families in our area = <number>, <%> 	
	<p>Number of families referred to the program</p>		<p>Number of families referred to the program = <number></p>	
	<p>Number of referred families that were accepted & entered the program within 3 days of referral</p>		<p>Number of referred families that were accepted & entered the program within 30 days of referral = <number></p>	
	<p>Number of accepted families who participated in the program for the planned duration</p>		<p>Number of accepted families who participated in the program for the planned duration = <number>, <%></p>	

	<p>Number and percentage of families who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify as Aboriginal &/or Torres Strait Islander • speak a language other than English at home • have a parent with a disability • have a child with a disability 		<p>Number and percentage of families who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify as Aboriginal &/or Torres Strait Islander = <number>, <%> • speak a language other than English at home = <number>, <%> • have a parent with a disability = <number>, <%> • have a child with a disability= <number>, <%> 	
	<p>Number & percentage of accepted families who stayed in the program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • less than 3 months • 3 to 6 months • over 6 months to 12 months • over 12 months 		<p>Number & percentage of accepted families who stayed in the program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • less than 3 months = <number>, <%> • 3 to 6 months = <number>, <%> • over 6 months to 12 months = <number>, <%> • over 12 months = <number>, <%> 	
	<p>Number of families who received the following service components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice & referral • Practical support • Assessment and case planning • Co-ord of specialist assessments and referrals • Casework • Home Visits • Counselling • Practical skills groups • Parenting skills groups • Parent support groups • Formal child care 		<p>Number of families who received the following service components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice & referral = <number> • Practical support = <number> • Assessment and case planning = <number> • Co-ord of specialist = <number> • assessments and referrals = <number> • Casework = <number> • Home Visits = <number> • Counselling = <number> • Practical skills groups = <number> • Parenting skills groups = <number> • Parent support groups = <number> • Child care = <number> 	
	<p>Number & percentage of families where the worker assesses increased strengths</p>		<p>Number & percentage of families where the worker assesses increased strengths = <number>, <%></p>	

11. Identification of Data Collection Strategies

For purposes of accountability and monitoring, service providers are expected to maintain systems that collect the information detailed in the Service Results and Service Levels tables of the Program Level Agreement. IFP service providers will be required to give information to Community Services for performance monitoring and program improvement purposes.

It is important that those entering data comply with program policies and Community Services requirements to ensure necessary information is collected that demonstrates how the work of IFP is helping children and families in NSW.

Where new data collection systems are developed, service providers will be expected to collect performance, service provision and compliance data that is consistent with that data collection system.

12. Partnership Framework

Community Services works in partnership with other government agencies, non-government organisations, community groups and the public to meet the needs of children and young people and their families and communities.

While IFP does not require a formal partnership other than between Community Services and the IFP provider, it is expected that the IFP provider will work in partnership with local services to coordinate service delivery.

It is also appropriate for Community Services to convene forums that bring together IFP providers and the providers of similar programs that are delivered in the same geographical area.

Other partnerships

FACS enters into agreements with other government agencies to facilitate collaboration within the service system. An example of this is the 2013 Memorandum of Understanding between Family and Community Services and the Department of Attorney General and Justice regarding the regulation of minimum standards for men's domestic violence behaviour change programs.

Under this agreement, when providing referrals to domestic violence behaviour change programs, Community Services 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_mdv_bcp.html

INTENSIVE FAMILY PRESERVATION PROGRAM (IFP): RESULTS LOGIC DIAGRAM

