Raising them strong – health

Kids need carers to help them grow healthy and strong and feel proud and safe. You are an important teacher in their lives. Show them you care about their health and safety.

Ways to help a child grow up strong and healthy
- Give them lots of fresh fruits & vegetables – home cooked food is cheaper!
- Drink lots of water – avoid fizzy drinks and sugary fruit juices
- Avoid fatty foods like hot chips and take-aways
- Make sure kids get plenty of sleep
- Keep them moving! Try bike riding, swimming, bushwalks, footy.

Ways to help them feel pride – personal hygiene
- Talk to kids about looking after their body and keeping safe
- Make bath time at the same time each day so it’s a regular thing
- Tell kids that being clean makes you feel good – remind them to wash their face, feet, hands, hair (show them how to rinse!)
- Teach the child how to blow their nose – this helps them breathe more easily
- Wash and freshen up clothes so they can feel proud and not feel different to other kids
- Check the child’s hair for lice especially if they are scratching.

Take them for a check up to a doctor and dentist.
Raising them strong – health

Start good habits early – like brushing teeth, washing hands, going to bed on time and brushing hair.

- Younger kids can be fussy eaters – be patient, try different foods (noodles, vegies, pasta, rice, fruit kebabs) and make some fun – try putting the food into a face shape!
- Make meal time good family time – eat together and turn off the TV. Praise them when they eat up or use the fork and spoon (“good girl you’re eating nicely!”)
- Breakfast gives kids a good start. Make sure they have a bowl of cereal or some wholemeal toast. Pack the school lunch box with a sandwich or wrap, fruit, a healthy snack and a water bottle.
- Even when they get a bit older, keep an eye on them. Know where they are and set limits. Ask who they are playing with and where they are going. Talk about being safe and what’s right and wrong.
- Remind kids that their body belongs to them. Give clear information about good and bad touching and what’s not good behaviour.

Watch out for worries, depression or self harm. Ask for help if you are worried about the child. Talk to your caseworker, agency, doctor, other carers or your child’s teacher.

Stay away from sweets and salty food! Make canteen food a treat – not an everyday thing.
Raising them strong – school

Talk to the agency and teacher about the child’s education and what support they will need. Do they have an education plan – Aboriginal kids have this to help them get the most out of school.

New school

Visit the school together and meet the teacher. Show the child around the school and talk about the classroom and what the school offers like sport and music and help with maths and reading.

Get kids to try on the uniform and shoes before the first day! Having the same uniform as everyone else helps kids fit in.

Explain the basic school rules – putting up your hand, asking before going to the toilet, listening quietly to the teacher, taking turns, sharing and doing what the teacher asks.

Pick them up on time so they don’t feel worried or alone.

Get them to bed on time on school nights – tuck 5-8 years olds into bed between 7.30pm and 8.30pm.

Pack a healthy lunch box – sandwich, fruit, a healthy snack and a water bottle. This gives kids the energy they need to listen and learn.

Kids with learning problems can get special help. This may include reading recovery programs at the school, seeing a speech therapist or even a home tutor. Ask what help is available.

- Contact your caseworker, agency or support worker.
- Talk to the teacher, school principal or Aboriginal Education Officer.
- Ask your doctor, health worker or Aboriginal Medical Service about it.
Raising them strong – school

Teach kids that school is a fun place to find out new things, make friends and be part of activities. Each child will go at their own speed – some learn quickly, while others need extra help.

Keep an eye on how they are going at school – so you can tell when things are going well or spot any problems. Ask them questions, talk to their teacher and other parents.

Talk to kids about school and about their teachers – notice how the child talks about school – for example, are they clamming up or sounding bored? There might be a problem.

Make a quiet spot for homework and study away from the TV, computer or phone. Keep an eye on them if they need to use the internet for study – keep to safe websites.

Talk about how reading, writing and maths can help you get a job, get into TAFE, uni or training. These skills also help us manage in life – like paying bills, filling out forms, finding a home or planning a holiday!

Let your child know that new friends are welcome in your home. Encourage them to invite friends over or be ready to take them to their houses.

Get involved in the school – go to school sports days, concerts, help out in the classroom or canteen or with NAIDOC Week. This shows kids you care about school too and how to be part of school life.

Talk to your child about how to handle questions about their name being different to yours or to manage feelings on Mother’s Day, Father’s Day or Grandparent’s Day.
Some of our kids have been through a hard time. They may feel sad, angry, confused, frightened and not trust anyone. Talk to them about how they are feeling even if they don’t say much. Help them to understand feelings. Teach them how to cope and deal with sadness and anger in a safe way.

Times when kids feel sad and grieve:
- Not living with Mum and Dad and brothers and sisters.
- Leaving the family home to go into foster care or to live with the relos – Aunt, Uncle, Cuz.
- Death in the family.
- Being neglected, injured or abused.
- When they leave behind friends, school, community or pets.
- At special times like birthdays and Christmas away from family.

Let them share their feelings when they are ready.

Tell them it is not their fault.

Tell them you are there for them and they will get through the sad time.
Raising them strong – Loss, trauma and sorry business

When kids are going through a tough time help them feel safe and secure – stick to family routines and make sure they get plenty of sleep. Comfort them if they are unsettled, feeling angry or upset, or have a bad dream. Tell them you care and that you are there for them.

Ways to help:
- Talk about feelings – be gentle and patient
- You could get them to draw a picture, write a letter or poem on how they feel
- Let them know they can trust you
- Let them know the truth about the loss in a gentle way
- Tell the child you understand, you feel sad too and pick up on signs that the child is not coping and seek help
- Don’t leave the child alone for a long time
- Teach kids how to cope by example – manage stress well yourself
- Explain sorry business – talk about what will happen and that funerals can let you say goodbye and may mean a big gathering
- Give them a choice about going to a funeral.

People you can talk to:
If you are worried about the child not coping, if they are depressed or hurting others or themselves then ask for help!
- Your caseworker, agency or carer support
- School counsellor, teacher or school principal
- Your doctor or Aboriginal Medical Service
- Aboriginal Carer Support 1800 888 698 or 9559 5299
- Connecting Carers NSW 1300 794 653
Raising them strong – Feeling safe and connected

Try and make kids feel safe and secure. They can find it hard to settle into your home because of what they’ve been through. Tell them you care and that you are there for them.

What you can do:
- listen to them, make time for them – this makes kids feel cared for
- make them feel welcome in your home, show them around and talk about routines and activities
- ask how they feel and talk about good and bad feelings
- support the child when they are feeling stressed, sad, scared
- be consistent and have a routine – make life stable for them
- tell them they can count on you on the good days and bad days

Some kids who have had a hard time can be emotionally and socially delayed (or behind) because they haven’t had a safe start to learn from. You might find that whenever they are scared or frustrated they act younger than their age. Be patient if this happens.

When our kids feel safe and cared for, they can start to feel good about who they are. They need to feel like they belong.

Help them feel proud of who they are.
Raising them strong – Feeling safe and connected

Kids in care sometimes have problems trusting adults and accepting love. They might not talk at all or get angry very easily. If a child needs help, the earlier they get it the better. Talk to the caseworker or agency if you are worried.

- Stick to routines and keep things calm. This helps kids feel safe and gives them comfort. If your routine is going to change, let the child know ahead of time and talk about it.
- Set limits and boundaries. Consistent, loving boundaries make the world seem safer and less scary. Let them know the rules and stick to them. Rules keep our family safe.
- Offer choices. If your child is given a choice or a say in an activity with an adult, they might feel more safe or comfortable. Involve them in some family decisions.
- Take charge but remain calm when your child is upset or misbehaving. Remember some kids don’t know how to handle feelings, they will need your help to say and handle how they feel.

People you can talk to:
- Your caseworker, agency or other carers
- School counsellor, teacher or school principal
- Your doctor or Aboriginal Medical Service
- Aboriginal Carer Support
  - 1800 888 698 or 9559 5299
- Connecting Carers NSW
  - 1300 794 653

Don’t forget to have a good laugh together – this opens hearts too!
Raising them strong – Support and financial help

Foster and kinship carers are able to access support from Centrelink and the Family Assistance Office. Below are the main benefits that may be available, depending on your income and eligibility. Find out more by calling:

**Centrelink**
www.centrelink.gov.au
Phone 13 6380
(to speak to the Aboriginal worker)
Or visit a Centrelink near you

**Family Assistance Office**
www.familyassist.gov.au
Phone 13 6150

Help, advice and training for carers raising kids

**Aboriginal Statewide Foster Carer Support Service**
1800 888 698 or 9559 5299
www.absec.org.au

**Connecting Carers NSW**
(advice, support & training)
1300 794 653
www.connectingcarersnsw.com.au

**Parentline** 24 hour
1300 1300 55

**Karitane Care Line**
1300 227 464

**CREATE Foundation**
1800 655 105
www.create.org.au

**Aboriginal Education Unit**
02 9582 5800
www.det.nsw.edu.au

**Child Care Access Hotline**
(find preschools/childcare)
1800 670 305

**Find an Aboriginal Medical Service**
02 9212 4777

**Helpline** (child protection concerns)
132 111 (24 hours)

**Children with disabilities:** You can get extra financial help and services if you care for a child with a disability. This may include money for home adjustments (like hand rails or wheelchair access); help with transport for your child; home care help – especially if you are an older carer; and respite care to give you a break.

**Talk to a caseworker or agency about what help is available. Your child may also be eligible for services and support from Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC).**
www.adhc.nsw.gov.au
Raising them strong – Support and financial help

Types of financial benefits you or your child may be eligible for:

**Family Tax Benefit (FTB):** helps carers with the cost of raising children and is income-tested. You can get payments fortnightly or annually.

**Parenting Payment:** You may qualify if you’re single and the primary carer of at least one child under eight, or you’re partnered with at least one child under six or your family has a low income.

**Welfare to Work exemption certificate:** Authorised carers who receive the Parenting Payment or Newstart Allowance can apply for an exemption from Centrelink’s work participation requirements. Community Services mails out the certificates to its carers or contact your agency.

**Health Care Card (HCC):** All kids in care are eligible. Concessions include cheaper prescription medicines and bulk-billed doctor appointments.

**Immunisation allowance:** Paid in two amounts – the first when the child is immunised between 18-24 months of age (you need to lodge a claim) and when the child is fully immunised – lodge claim before the child is five.

**Carer Allowance (child)** if you are caring for a child with a disability at home.

**Child Care Benefit** assists with the cost of approved child care.

**Child Care Rebate** assists with out-of-pocket approved child care costs for carers who are working, studying or training.

**Education Tax Refund** for certain educational expenses (refer to ATO).

**ABSTUDY** helps with school fees and term allowances if you’re caring for an Aboriginal student aged 14-16.

**Baby Bonus** assists with the costs of a newborn baby or adopted child.

**Assistance for isolated children** when a child can’t go to a local school because of distance.

**Talk to Centrelink, the caseworker or your agency to find out more.**