VISION FOR A COORDINATED SERVICE SYSTEM TO PROMOTE CHILD AND FAMILY WELLBEING

December 2015

NTCOSS

The NT Council of Social Service Inc. (NTCOSS) is proud to have been a part of developing the Vision for a Coordinated Service System to Promote Child and Family Wellbeing here in the Northern Territory.

This framework has been the result of over 18 months of consultation across the Northern Territory including focus groups, forums, group and individual meetings with key stakeholders. Some of these were led by NTCOSS but others were led by member organisations who all had the same commitment to the project. I want to thank all of those who contributed their time, expertise and resources, and in particular NTCOSS would like to acknowledge and thank Jenny Scott and PiC for their assistance in this project.

We have developed this framework because we want to see a better outcome for children and families in the NT. We believe it needs to be a coordinated system and one that starts well before a child is identified as 'at risk'. A whole of government approach to this, at both a Commonwealth and NT level is needed.

We hope this will generate discussion and lead to a change in the way we respond to our children and their families. We hope it will bring about positive change, a better future and a stronger society.

Wendy Morton
Executive Director
17 December 2015

Vision for a Coordinated Service System to Promote Child and Family Wellbeing

Vision	All Northern Territory children grow up in families and communities where they can be safe, healthy and have the opportunities to have a strong cultural identity and reach their full potential.
1. System Principles ***(what the evidence tells us works)***	• **The best interest's principle needs to drive the service system, not agencies and portfolios. Long term outcomes are important; hence service responses need to be longer term.** • **Aboriginal community controlled services are fundamental to providing culturally safe and accessible services for children and families.** • **Strengths based models and approaches.** • **Effective and comprehensive investment in prevention and early intervention as well as tertiary services is critical.** • **Therapeutic and trauma informed ways of working.** • **Services based at and outreaching from places where children and families already go e.g. schools, and delivered in ways that wrap services around families not the service providers.** • **Services and interventions are best when delivered in a coordinated and integrated way across the service system and between service providers, within appropriate information sharing.** • **Services are evidence based and in line with best practice standards.** • **The overarching principle is that the voice of the child must be heard.**

Target Groups	All Children and Families	Vulnerable Children and Families	Children and families involved in the statutory services (child protection and youth justice systems)	Children in statutory care or in juvenile detention
2. Outcomes for Children and Families	• Children have a safe and healthy start to live. • Children develop well and are able to meet their developmental milestones. • Children are well, and ready for school. • Children are safe from harm and injury. • Children and families have access to services that are responsive. • Family and children are well supported in the community. • Early learning and care programs for children.	• Families under pressure are able to access appropriate services. • Children and young people receive timely service provision. • Children and families and children receive timely and optimal support to meet their Special needs. • Families are able to manage crises and problems and children are safe. • Children are attending school. • Health, parenting and family support services to parents. • Services tailored to the needs of children and families. • Case co-ordination and outreach support for vulnerable children and families.	• Families are able to care for their children at home because safety concerns and risks are being managed. • Intensive family support services to assist families address issues impacting on their ability to care for their children. • Intensive mental health, AOD, • domestic violence, services to assist parents to address issues impacting on capacity to care for their children.	• Children in OOHC are safe, well and meeting developmental needs and have the opportunities to succeed as adults. • Children in juvenile detention are safe and well and have the opportunities to succeed as adults. • Families are connected to their children and see them thrive. • Families are able to have their children reunited to their care. • Our legal and statutory systems are child friendly. • Placement stability for children and young people in OOHC. • Aboriginal children are placed in accordance with ACPP. • Children in OOHC are meeting literacy benchmarks.

Target Groups	All Children and Families	Vulnerable Children and Families	Children and families involved in the statutory services (child protection and youth justice systems)	Children in statutory care or in juvenile detention
3. Service Focus Required	• Early childhood development and care e.g. playgroups, toy libraries, occasional care and long day care. • Child and maternal health, home visiting, preconception to 3 years. • Parenting-peer learning as informal support system. • Community child and family friendly facilities e.g. pools, libraries. • Community child and family focussed events. • Safe and secure housing. • Greater cultural awareness/understanding of mainstream services. • Targeted universal services across the continuum. • Need for Child and Youth Safety in rural and remote communities.	• Supported playgroups. • Outreach services. • Integrated child and family support close to or within universal services. • Family strengthening programs. • Intensive family support IFSS. • Domestic and family violence support. • Mental health and AOD services for parents. • Safe and secure housing. • Communities for Children. • Youth services. • Accessible and affordable recreational activities incl. school holidays. • Extend AOD services. • Family skills facilitator to assist families to navigate services. • Trauma informed practice in school settings.	• Investigation of reports of harm. • Intensive family support. • Legal advocacy and support. • Youth justice. • Domestic and family violence support. • Mental health and AOD interventions with parents. • Safe and secure housing. • Women's safe houses. • Children's safe Houses. • Targeted & intensive Family support. • ANFPP program. • Trauma informed practice. • Multidisciplinary approach to Care planning. • Family mediation and decision making including kinship care planning. • Wrap around services for families based on a consistent framework and consent. • Intensive case management. • Safe and secure housing. • Development of a "child protection 'info/law book' for families and carers.	• Family contact support. • Out of home care e.g. foster and kinship care, residential care. • Intensive case management and therapeutic interventions. • Family support for parents. • Continuity of care planning. • Permanency planning where necessary. • Carer training and placement support. • Legal advocacy. • Youth detention. • Safe and secure housing. • Targeted educational support. • Leaving care support. • Effective recruitment, training, support and retention of Carers. • After care for young people. • Mental health and AOD services for parents. • Family reunification support post return. • Safe and secure housing. • Ongoing family support –wider family focus based on a strength based approach. • Counselling support for family members as well as children and Young People. • Supported playgroups in Communities. • Safe and secure housing. • Investment in Family reunification and family support. • Trauma informed practice.

4. Service Improvement Steps

All Children and Families

1. Ante natal and post natal support programs.
2. Quality early learning and care services.
3. Integrated child and family services particularly for families with children in the 0 -5 year age group.
4. Need for partnership pathways
5. Need for more Aboriginal controlled services.
6. Greater representation of ATSI staff across the service continuum.
7. Need for extended mental health outreach services.
8. Need for more crèche, child care and affordable and accessible youth services.
9. Quality early learning and care services to support children and young people with disabilities.

Vulnerable Children and Families

10. Alternative intake system (dual pathway).
11. Access to ECEC services for at risk children.
12. Aboriginal workers.
13. Need for early identification and intervention of children with special needs.
14. Extended support services for children and YP requiring special needs support in schools.
15. Education for young mothers.
16. Intensive case management.
17. Family support programs prior to Child Protection intervention.
18. Access to disability supports/services to assist parents with children with disabilities.

Children and families involved in the statutory services(child protection and youth justice systems)

19. Aboriginal workers involved in investigation, planning and decision making.
20. Culturally competent intensive family support.
21. Dual pathway.
22. Family decision making models to assist families to remain involved with planning and care.
23. Family support for remote communities.
24. Integrated case management processes.
25. Innovative engagement, support strategies for families and educational curriculum development for mobile children.
26. Aboriginal workforce to work with families.
27. Staff stability –strengthen, support and built on Aboriginal workforce and capacity.
28. Development of a well resourced therapeutic OOHC model for the NT.
29. Support for Kinship care.

Children in statutory care or in juvenile detention

30. Community visitor for children in care.
31. Education support planning.
32. Family support programs for parents.
33. Common framework eg shared language, tools (Looking after children).
34. Independent investigator of abuse in care.
35. Improved youth detention through care and case management.
36. After care and mentoring.
37. Increase ATSI workforce in services.
38. Intensive case management with housing to maintain stable housing.

5. System Improvement Steps

Culturally appropriate service design

1. Establish an Aboriginal community controlled child and family service system.
2. Access to and use of interpreters.
3. Aboriginal placement principal to be applied consistently
4. Create local leadership and consultation processes with elders and community e.g. Ponki Mediators at Tiwi.
5. Strengthen remote services and utilize remote health clinics.
6. Strengthening community governance to assist in community safety
7. Commitment of mainstream agencies to culturally safe practice
8. The development of OOHC services closer to the communities of the families and children involved

Planning and Contracting

9. Service planning, tendering and procurement of services that encourages integration and partnering.
10. Ensure long term funding contracts.
11. Transparency of funding and outcomes.
12. Out of home care services outsourced to the NGO sector.
13. Establish a broad Ministerial Advisory Council to focus on the development and wellbeing of children.
14. Ongoing and inbuilt evaluation of program, outcomes and service improvements to built local evidence base.
15. Establish a senior coordination group in relation to the needs of children with FASD

Structural issues and Improved practices

16. Consideration of Signs of Safety as a foundational framework for reform.
17. Support for mobile families and placements across state and territory borders.
18. Families who have been reunified are a priority for ongoing support
19. Safe and Secure Housing.

Service Coordination and Integration

20. Integrated training system and programs to build a local integrated workforce.
21. Ensure the National Disability Scheme is coordinated with the child and family wellbeing system.
22. Develop governance structures that ensure the service system is accountable and integrated across federal, territory, local governments and NGO's.

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