

Working with Family and Community Services (FACS) Factsheet 1

Be aware of roles and responsibilities of FACS and its staff.



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FACS has several departments including Community Services; Aboriginal Housing Office; Ageing, Disability and Home Care; Housing, Land and Housing Corporation; Multicultural NSW; and Women NSW. For more details see www.facs.nsw.gov.au.

Community Services (CS) is the department responsible for keeping children and young people safe from abuse and neglect. Its services include: child protection, parenting support and early intervention, out of-home care (including adoption) and disaster welfare. See www.community.nsw.gov.au for more details.

CS works across 15 districts that align with NSW Local Health Districts. Leading each district is an Executive District Director (EDD) and reporting to the EDD is the Director Community Services (DCS) who is responsible for Community Services (CS). Every district has Community Services offices that are referred to as Community Service Centres (CSC). For more information about your local CSC, DCS or EDD see www.community.nsw.gov.au/about-us.

There are a range of staff who work at the CSCs including:

Managers client services (MCS) is the practice leader of the Community Service Centre (CSC). They have overall responsibility for the CSC.

Managers casework (MCW) is the lead practitioner for their team. They focus on the team's practice skills and take responsibility for casework.

Caseworkers (CW) work directly with children and families. They work as a part of a team. CWs must have a university undergraduate degree as a minimum qualification and mainly come from a social work background.

Prenatal caseworkers work specifically with pregnant mothers, their partners and family, when their unborn child is at risk of significant harm. Most CSCs have an allocated prenatal caseworker.

Casework specialists (CWS) provide direct, practice-based professional support and development to MCS, MCW and CWs. This includes specialist advice and consultation on case practice matters, supporting case practice skills, undertaking complex case reviews, and acting as a conduit between CS and other agencies regarding current practice, professional support and service development and delivery.

Practice points

- If you're working with a pregnant woman involved with FACS the prenatal caseworker can be a useful contact.
- The CWS can help enhance working relationships with your local CSC.
- If you are working with a woman experiencing domestic violence the Domestic Violence Line can provide invaluable support.

Casework support workers help caseworkers in their daily work (eg: transport clients, supervise contact).

Aboriginal caseworkers provide services to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children, young people and families. They advocate on behalf of Aboriginal people in the community and use their cultural knowledge to help shape service delivery. When an Aboriginal child or young person is first involved with Community Services an Aboriginal consultation with an Aboriginal practitioner is mandatory and this should continue throughout CS involvement with this child or young person. FACS Aboriginal Consultation Guide provides advice about the consultation process. We recommend you review their www.community.nsw.gov.au/aboriginal_consultation_guide.pdf.

Multicultural caseworkers provide generalist casework and also services to children, young people and families from culturally and linguistic diverse (CALD) backgrounds. When a child or young person from a CALD background is involved with CS, staff are encouraged to conduct a consultation with a multicultural case worker to support culturally appropriate ways of working.

Community Services also has state-wide services and some that are useful for you to be aware of include:

Child Protection Helpline (132 111) is 24 hours/7 days, state-wide call centre staffed by professionally qualified caseworkers to receive and screen all reports made about suspected child abuse or neglect.

Office of the Senior Practitioner (OSP) is made up of various units (Practice Quality and Clinical Support Unit, Serious Case Review Unit, Reportable Conduct Unit, and Practice Support) that promote best practice, undertake independent reviews of casework practice and provide evidence based advice and guidance to field staff. They conduct research and organise practice conferences.

Practice point

The Clinical Issues Team are available for consultation to all casework staff. If issues arise for your client around case practice and alcohol and other drugs, ask if the Clinical Issues Team have been consulted.

Clinical Issues Team is a small specialist team in the OSP that provides advice and support to practitioners when AOD, mental health issues, domestic/family violence and/or child sexual abuse are a concern. The team is staffed by professionals with experience in related areas prior to working at FACS. The team provide advice via email, telephone and face-to-face consultations or through participating in group supervision. They also deliver training to casework staff and promote interagency collaboration.

Psychologists are allocated to specific districts. They work with children and families in both child protection and out of home care to address the effects of trauma, grief and loss. They also provide consultation support to caseworkers, managers and other specialists on complex cases.

Legal Services provide care litigation in the Children's and District Courts across NSW and give legal advice and support to casework staff.

Domestic Violence Line provides 24 hrs/7 days telephone counselling, information and referrals for women and same-sex partners who are or have experienced domestic violence. They provide a range of services including, referrals to women's refuges, family support services, police and courts. They assist with funding for emergency transport and accommodation. See www.domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au.

Joint Investigation Response Teams (JIRT) responds to serious child protection reports about children that may involve a criminal offence (eg: sexual abuse, physical assault). JIRT comprises of three equal partners; NSW Police, NSW Health and CS.

For more details and copies of these Factsheets go to <http://www.nada.org.au/>