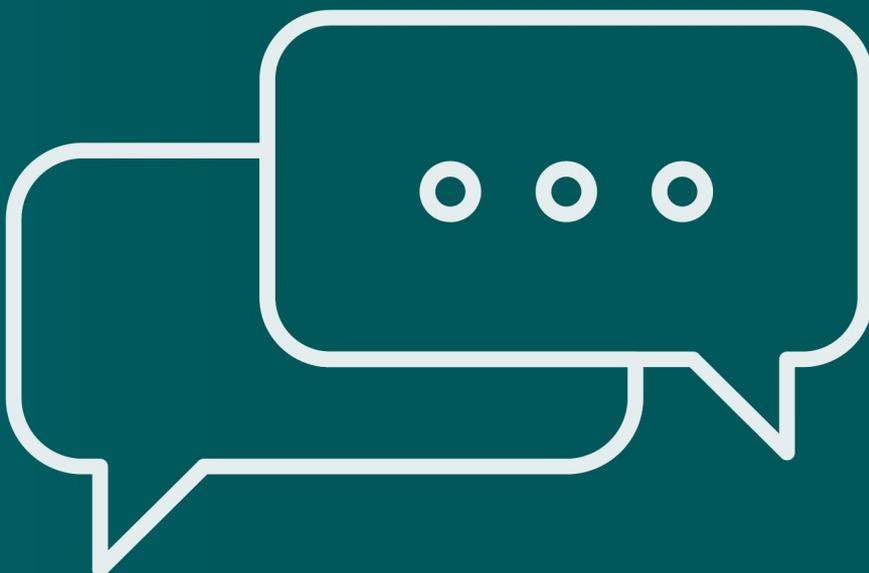




Easy Read guide

NSW Department of
Communities and Justice

Staying connected with your child while they are in out of home care



How to use this guide



The NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice wrote this guide.

When you see the word 'we', it means the NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice.



We wrote this guide in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

Bold
Not bold

We wrote some important words in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these words mean.

There is a list of these words on page 39



This Easy Read guide is a summary of a booklet.

This means it only includes the most important ideas.



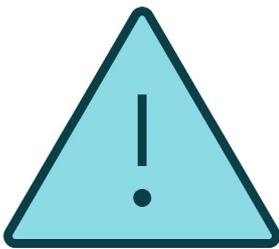
You can find the booklet on our website.

www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/children-and-families/nsw-child-protection-guide-for-families/keeping-connected-while-your-child-is-in-care.html



You can ask for help to read this guide.

A friend, family member or support person might be able to help you.



This guide includes photos of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It might contain photos of people who have passed away.



We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of the land we live on – Australia.

They were the first people to live on and use the:

- land
- waters.



This guide is quite long.

It includes a lot of information.



You don't need to read it all at once.

What's in this guide?

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What is this guide about?



We deliver **child protection services**.



This means we work with families and communities to make sure children are safe.

We can decide if a child is not safe in their home.

We always aim to:



- keep your child safely at home with you



- treat families and communities with respect



- work with you and your community to build skills and knowledge.

We also aim to:



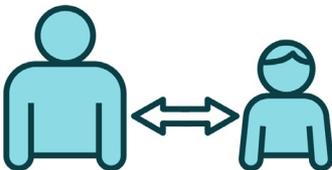
- be honest



- listen to your ideas and respond when you ask for help



- connect you to supports.



This guide is about how you can stay connected to your child while they're in out of home care.

We explain how you can support your child by working with:



- us



- your child's carer.



Your child's carer is the person who will care for your child while they're in out of home care.



We also explain what happens when you visit your child.

Staying connected with your child



It's important to have a healthy relationship with your child while they're in out of home care.

This can happen by staying connected to them.



You can stay connected to your child by:

- visiting them
- talking to them.



How you do this will depend on what your child needs and wants.

It also depends on what is safe.

Our **caseworkers** can support you to:



- care for your child



- live safely.



It's their job to support you and your child to have a healthy relationship.

How you can stay connected



There are different ways you can stay connected to your child while they're in out of home care.

You can:



- visit them



- video call them



- talk on the phone or send a text.

You can also:



- chat on social media, like Facebook



- give gifts



- write letters or emails.



You can also talk with your child's carer.

They can tell you how your child is going.

And they can tell your child how you are.

Meeting your child's carer



You might be able to contact your child's carer.



This will depend on the best plan for your child's safety and care.



Keeping in contact with your child's carer gives you both a chance to:

- get to know each other
- share information about your child.



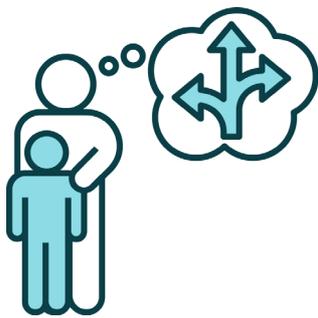
Getting to know your child's carer can also help you feel more comfortable.

It will also make life better for your child.



It might be hard for you and the carer.

You might feel angry because your child is living with them and not you.



You might have different ideas about the best way to raise a child.



It's important to work with your child's carer.

And get support if you need it.

Keeping your child connected to their culture



It's important that your child stays connected to their:

- family
- community
- **culture.**



Your culture is:

- your way of life
- how you think or act now because of how you grew up
- your beliefs
- what is important to you.



Tell your caseworker who you'd like your child to spend more time with.

For example, someone from your family or community.

And tell your caseworker the different ways you'd like to keep your child connected to their:



- family
- community
- culture.



Your child can spend time with their family or community separately to the time they spend with you.

Your caseworker should work with you to create a plan if your child:



- is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person
- comes from a different background
- speaks a language other than English.

This plan should include:



- information for your child to understand their culture and who they are
- ways for your child to take part in their culture.

We call this a 'cultural support plan'.

Supporting your child before a visit

To make visits the best they can be for your child, you need to work with:



- your child's carer



- your caseworker.



You should work together to support your child around the time of a visit.

For example, your child might feel stressed or sad.

Before each visit, your child's carer will:



- make sure your child is ready and has everything they need



- be open to talking with you, your child and your caseworker about how your child feels.



You should always visit your child when you say you will.



Tell your child when they'll see you next.



And ask what they'd like to do next time you see each other.

Getting ready to visit your child



It might feel strange to spend time with your child on a visit.



Talk to someone you trust to help you get ready.



You can talk to your child about what you're going to do together.

This can help you feel less stressed about the visit.



You can contact them and say that you love them and can't wait to see them.



Your child might want someone special to be there, like a grandparent or sibling.

Before you visit



Before you visit, it's a good idea to set a reminder on your phone.



Organise how you'll get there on time.

You should also bring things if you know you'll need them.



For example:

- food, if the visit happens during a meal time
- nappies
- games.



If your child is going to stay over, make sure they have things like a clean bed and toothbrush.



Visiting your child

You can visit your child at:



- home



- a public place like a playground or park.

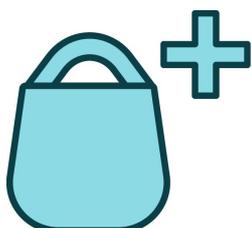


You can also visit them at a family member's home.



You can ask your caseworker where you could visit with your child.

Try to think of somewhere your child won't get bored.



You might want to bring something with you.

For example:



- some family photographs



- a book to read



- an art activity.



Even if you have lots of questions to ask, children can get bored talking.



Doing an activity while talking can help your child:



- relax
- share more about their lives.



If your caseworker decides your home is safe, your child can visit you.

They might even be able to stay overnight.



You are able to ask your caseworker for:

- more time with your child
- overnight stays.

Don't worry if you get upset



It's normal to cry or get nervous during a visit.



Children look up to their parents and often feel what their parents are feeling.



This means if you're sad, your child might feel sad too.



Things might not go to plan.

But if you or your child gets upset, don't worry.



Try to set the goal of making a nice memory for them.

Breastfeeding visits



It can be hard to be away from your child if you're still breastfeeding.



Be kind to yourself and reach out for support.

Share how you feel with a:

- friend or family member
- support person.



Your body will need to get used to not breastfeeding as often.



You might be able to have extra visits with your baby so you can keep breastfeeding.

Your caseworker will talk to:



- you and your baby's carer



- your baby's doctor.



Or you might be able to pump breastmilk to give to your baby's carer.



You can get free advice from the Australian Breastfeeding Association.



You can visit their website.

www.breastfeeding.asn.au



You can call them.

1800 686 268

Supervised visits



The **Children’s Court** makes legal decisions about children.

They don’t work for us.

This means they make their own decisions.



In this guide, we call them the Court.



The Court might decide that you need **supervised visits**.

This is when someone needs to stay with you during visits to make sure your child is safe.



Ask your caseworker:

- why you need supervised visits
- how you can have unsupervised visits – this is when you can visit your child alone.



The person who comes with you on supervised visits can be:

- your caseworker
- someone that we know is safe.



Someone you and your child know might be able to come to the supervised visits.

For example, a grandparent.



They need to put in an **application** with us.

An application is a form they need to fill out.

This will help us decide if they're a safe person.



The person who comes to the supervised visit will write a report about how it went.

The Court might ask for these reports.



You should be able to enjoy the time you spend with your child.



If you're not happy, you can ask your caseworker for someone else to come to the supervised visits.

Supervised visits can be hard



Supervised visits can be hard.

You might feel stressed or worried.



It's best to stay calm, even if you're uncomfortable.

This will help your child stay calm and feel safe.



You might feel you can't be yourself around your child when someone else is there.



If you feel this way, you can talk to:

- your caseworker
- their manager
- someone you trust.



It helps to have a good relationship with the person who comes to the supervised visit.

If you don't have a good relationship with them, you can talk to:



- your caseworker
- their manager
- your **lawyer**.

A lawyer is someone who knows and understands the law.

Having unsupervised visits



Your caseworker will let you know how you can work towards having unsupervised visits.



The Court will decide if you can have unsupervised visits.

But it depends on:



- what's best for your child
- whether your time with them has been going well
- what the plan is for returning them to your care.

After the visit



Leaving your child after a visit can be very sad.

Ask your caseworker to help you plan for a healthy way to deal with your feelings.

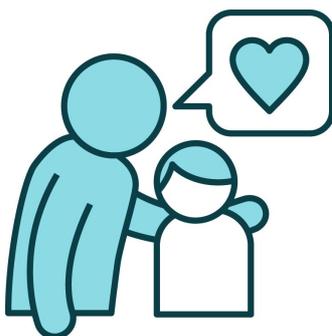


For example, sharing your feelings with a:

- friend
- service
- support person.



It can also be hard for your child.



You can:

- comfort them
- tell them that you love them.



But be careful of saying things you can't promise will happen in the future.



Try to show them as much love as you can while you're with them.

Spending time together can create a happy memory.

If you're worried about your child



You might notice that your child seems stressed or sad.

Or that they're acting in a strange way.



If you're worried about something in your child's life, let your caseworker know.



This could be important information.

Legal services

Aboriginal Legal Service



You can contact the Aboriginal Legal Service for legal advice.



You can call them.

1800 733 233



You can visit their website.

www.alsnswact.org.au

Legal Aid NSW



You can contact Legal Aid NSW for legal advice.



You can call them.

1300 888 529



You can visit their website.

www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au

Women's Legal Service



You can contact the Women's Legal Service for legal advice.



You can call them.

1800 801 501



You can visit their website.

www.wlsnsw.org.au

Disability Advocacy NSW



You can contact Disability Advocacy NSW for support to speak up for yourself.



You can call them.

1300 365 085



You can visit their website.

www.da.org.au

Intellectual Disability Rights Service



You can contact the Intellectual Disability Rights Service for support:

- to speak up for yourself
- if you have an **intellectual disability**.



An intellectual disability affects how you:

- learn new things
- solve problems
- communicate
- do things on your own.



You can call them.

02 9265 6300



You can visit their website.

www.idrs.org.au

Contact us

Asking for help can show that you:



- are a strong parent



- want your child to be safe.



If you want support, you can visit our website.

www.dcj.nsw.gov.au

Your caseworker



You can also contact your caseworker for information about how to get support.

You can write their contact details below.



Your caseworker's name:



Your caseworker's phone number:



Your caseworker's email address:

Your local Community Services Centre



You can contact your local Community Services Centre for information about how to get support.

You can write their phone number below.

Make a complaint about our services



When you make a **complaint**, you tell someone that something:

- has gone wrong
- isn't working well.



If you want to make a complaint about our services, you can contact the Enquiry, Feedback and Complaints Unit.



You can call them.

1800 000 164



You can also send them an email.

complaints@facs.nsw.gov.au

Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words in this guide mean.



Application

An application is a form someone needs to fill out.



Caseworkers

Our caseworkers can support you to:

- care for your child
- live safely.



Child protection services

Child protection services work with families and communities to make sure children are safe.

They can decide if a child is not safe in their home.



Children's Court

The Children's Court makes legal decisions about children.

They don't work for us.

This means they make their own decisions.



Complaint

When you make a complaint, you tell someone that something:

- has gone wrong
- isn't working well.

Culture

Your culture is:



- your way of life
- how you think or act now because of how you grew up
- your beliefs
- what is important to you.



Intellectual disability

An intellectual disability affects how you:

- learn new things
- solve problems
- communicate
- do things on your own.



Lawyer

A lawyer is someone who knows and understands the law.



Supervised visits

Supervised visits are when someone needs to stay with you during visits to make sure your child is safe.



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