

Keep Them Safe

A shared approach to child wellbeing

Keep Them Safe Factsheet No. 1

Overview

Keep Them Safe: A shared approach to child wellbeing is the NSW Government's response to the Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW, led by the Honourable James Wood, AO, QC, released in November 2008. Keep Them Safe recognises the importance of the wellbeing of all children and young people, with the aim of providing appropriate support to families earlier, to prevent children and young people requiring statutory child protection intervention. To achieve this, Keep Them Safe encourages families, communities, government agencies and non-government organisations to work together to support children, young people and families.

Keep Them Safe is a five-year action plan. This factsheet outlines the key changes for families, mandatory reporters, communities, service providers, government agencies, and non-government organisations.

Keep Them Safe involves a new approach to child wellbeing, one which builds on the strengths of the service system, rather than replacing agency action, expertise and capacity. Changes will be implemented and evaluated progressively over a five-year period.

Aim of the changes

The goal of Keep Them Safe is that: *All children in NSW are healthy, happy and safe, and grow up belonging in families and communities where they have opportunities to reach their full potential.*

In order to achieve this, the NSW Government will pursue the following outcomes for children and young people:

- Children have a safe and healthy start to life.
- Children develop well and are ready for school.
- Children and young people meet developmental and educational milestones at school.
- Children and young people live in families where their physical, emotional and social needs are met.
- Children and young people are safe from harm and injury.
- Children, young people and their families have access to appropriate and responsive services if needed.

A central theme of the changes is that care and protection of children and young people is a shared responsibility. As different families can experience a range of complex

and sometimes chronic factors, responsibility for child wellbeing needs to be broader than just Community Services. A number of agencies fund and/or deliver services to address issues such as substance abuse, limited social supports, imprisonment, domestic violence, homelessness, unemployment and mental health issues. These agencies can often provide timely support services to families where statutory intervention is not required.

Building stronger partnerships between the government and non-government sectors is critical to changing the way we support children and families. Giving non-government organisations greater responsibility in the delivery of family and community services is a way to take services into communities — to connect better with people and their needs through positive, constructive relationships. Agencies will also be able to more easily request and exchange information where it relates to the safety, wellbeing and welfare of a child.

Keep Them Safe incorporates a number of strategies designed to reduce Aboriginal representation in the child protection system, and to secure greater participation of Aboriginal agencies in child wellbeing services.

Summary of changes

The key changes in *Keep Them Safe* are:

- Increasing the threshold for reporting children and young people to Community Services from “risk of harm” to “risk of **significant** harm”.
- Increasing the role of non-government organisations in delivering services.
- Establishing Child Wellbeing Units in the major government agencies.



- Establishing a network of Family Referral Services to provide support for those families who fall below the risk of significant harm threshold.
- Enhanced service provision focusing on prevention and early intervention, including comprehensive universal and acute services.
- Improved outcomes for children in out-of-home care (OOHC) through system changes including the appointment of new health and education OOHC coordinators to improve health and educational outcomes for children and young people.
- Simplifying and streamlining Children's Court processes, making them more user-friendly.
- Providing greater participation and better services to Aboriginal children and young people, to reduce their representation in the child protection system.

What's new?

- Unblock the Child Protection Helpline by raising the mandatory reporting threshold.
- New intake, referral and management framework that provides alternate referral pathways for less serious cases (Child Wellbeing Units and Family Referral Services).
- Comprehensive universal, secondary and tertiary services.
- Information exchange and more cooperation between agencies.
- Enhanced role for the non-government sector.
- Responses to the over-representation of Aboriginal children in the system.
- Improve court processes.

For further information:

- Consult your Child Wellbeing Unit, if relevant
- Contact your supervisor or manager
- Consult your legal services branch
- Keep Them Safe: www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au
- HSNet ServiceLink: www.hsnet.nsw.gov.au
- Association of Childrens Welfare Agencies: www.acwa.asn.au
- Non-government organisations can contact the KTS Support Line: 1800 772 479