

Going through the child protection system during pregnancy

These tip sheets were made for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and families when child protection steps in.

Why have these tip sheets been created?

Being a parent is hard.

Every child is different, and they don't come with instructions.

Life can be hard too.

It can be even harder when child protection steps in.

The system can be confusing to understand.

So, these sheets have been created to help you:

- Understand the child protection system
- Know your rights
- Talk up (advocate) for yourself and your family
- And, for you to know that you are not alone



TIP!

These sheets are made for when child protection is involved during pregnancy and shortly after birth. So, some of the information might not be helpful or included if you have older kids.

Who are we?

These sheets have been written by the **SAFeST Start Coalition**. SAFeST Start stands for Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families to Stay Together from the Start.

SAFeST Start is an Aboriginal-led group. We are worried about the rising number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bubs being removed from their families and placed into out-of-home care. We talk up and work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and babies.

These sheets were reviewed by parents with lived experience of child protection getting involved during pregnancy and shortly after birth.

We want to give a special thank you to Renna Gayde for the *'Tips for Parents from Parents'* sheet and for all of your important contributions to SAFeST Start.

We also want to give a huge thank you to the *Sisters for Change*. Thank you for sharing your stories and feedback, which played a big role in shaping these tip sheets. The *Sisters for Change* are women in prison at Townsville Women's Correctional Centre. About half are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and about half are non-Indigenous women. Most are mothers. Almost all have dealt with the child protection system before, many while pregnant.



About the artist

Artist Bio:

My name is Emily Nupurrula Maloney and I am proud Warlpiri Woman from Willowra Community located North West of Alice Springs in the Tanami Desert on the Lander River. I am the daughter of artist Malcolm Jagamarra Maloney and niece to artists Doreen Dickson and Janet Long.

I have the privilege of living and working on Wurundjeri Country for the past 10 years. I grew up on Larrakia Country in Darwin but spent school holidays and other important ceremonial occasions out on community learning my Songlines (River/Water Systems) and Jukurpa (Dreaming/Dreamtime). I grew up with a strong sense of culture and identity always guided by my strong matriarchs, my grandmother Minnie and aunties through cultural ceremonies and Warlpiri ways of knowing and being. For many years I watched and learnt from my dad as he travelled Australia and the world with his art and cultural showcasing.

I am a natural storyteller and have over the years been an educator of Cultural Awareness training to government, corporate and not for profit organisations and have now extended that through to my art. Sharing my knowledge and spiritual upbringing through this medium has been a way of keeping my connection to country and family strong, always guided by my aunties and Ancestors before me.

Artwork - *Our Culture Keeps Us Strong*

As Aboriginal people our culture gives us life and when we wrap our children, mothers and fathers and community as a whole in culture we are safe. It reminds us of our ability to care for each other knowing our resilience and ability to stay connected during and after pregnancy. Our children even before birth are surrounded by culture. This piece is also about freshwater and how it flows and connects us all. Sometimes it flows underground without us knowing it's there, like our connection through culture and ways of being, it flows and is strong and is alive.



Aboriginal artwork provided by Emily Nupurrula Maloney.

Cultural sensitivity and copyright apply.

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Illustrations and Graphic Design



Artist Bio:

My name is Carly Mercier and I am a proud Kongabula Woman, born, raised and still currently living on Dharug Land. I started learning and creating Aboriginal Art from a young age, learning traditional symbols, meanings and stories from family members.

I continued having a strong passion for Art and Design after school, so decided to study at University. From there, I created my small business 'Inala Designs' where I now create Aboriginal paintings and digital designs, as well as provide graphic design services.

Aboriginal graphic design and illustrations provided by Carly Mercier from Inala Designs.

Cultural sensitivity and copyright apply.

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In these sheets, we talk about hard stuff

TIP!

Pay extra notice to yourself when reading these sheets.

**If your heartbeat is going up,
If you are holding your breath,
If you keep going over the same sentence**

These might be signs that it is a good time to take a break.

- ⦿ You can go for a walk,
- ⦿ Take a deep breath,
- ⦿ Talk to a support person

The information will be here when you get back.



Be mindful of your heart and take care when going through the sheets

Key Messages

- ◉ **Each Australian state and territory has its own child protection laws**
See our tip sheets '**Child Protection Process**' and '**Child Protection during Pregnancy**'.

- ◉ **You have rights when child protection steps in**
See our tip sheet '**The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle**'.

- ◉ **Keep your own records and write everything down**
See our tip sheet '**Tips from Parents for Parents**'.

- ◉ **Ask for and keep copies of all documents (e.g., letters, reports, legal documents)**
See our tip sheet '**Tips from Parents for Parents**'.

- ◉ **Create your own safety plan**
See our tip sheet '**Safety Planning**'.

- ◉ **Look after yourself and ask for help when you need it**
See our tip sheet '**Tips from Parents for Parents**'.

The best thing to do is to talk to a trusted person like a:

- Advocate or trusted family member
- Elder or trusted community member
- Lawyer
- Aboriginal Health Worker
- Worker at an Aboriginal Organisation
- Aboriginal midwife



Someone who knows about child protection and how they do business during pregnancy can be a big help for you.

Build a village of support people around you

Disclaimer

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