

Tips from Parents for Parents

This sheet was written by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents who have dealt with child protection during and after pregnancy.

Look after yourself



“Looking after yourself when you are pregnant and after the birth is ALSO caring for your baby.” – Renna Gayde

When you're not in a good headspace, it's hard to stand up for yourself with child protection. Before meetings, take some time for yourself by doing things like:

- Closing your eyes and taking some deep breaths
- Listening to a meditation or relaxing song
- Going to the bathroom for a few minutes before the meeting for some peace and quiet
- Holding something to touch like hand bands during meetings



Prepare for meeting



***“Show no hostility at a worker or the system. This will make things worse for you.”
– Sisters for Change***

Meetings can be hard.

The best way to get the most out of your meetings is to be prepared.

Disclaimer: This resource is part of a research project and is subject to change. Updated 17/03/2025. V.1.2.

© Indigenous Health Equity Unity 2024. Free to print out but material is not to be copied, altered, or adapted, without permission.

Contact details: rbt-project@unimelb.edu.au

Ask yourself:

1

PURPOSE:

What is the reason for the meeting?

2

PEOPLE:

Who will be there?
Do I need a support person?
Can I have a support person?

3

PREPARATION:

What information do I need before the meeting?
Who do I contact if I'm late?

4

POSITION:

What do I want to get from this meeting?
What is my 'bottom line'? Write it down.

5

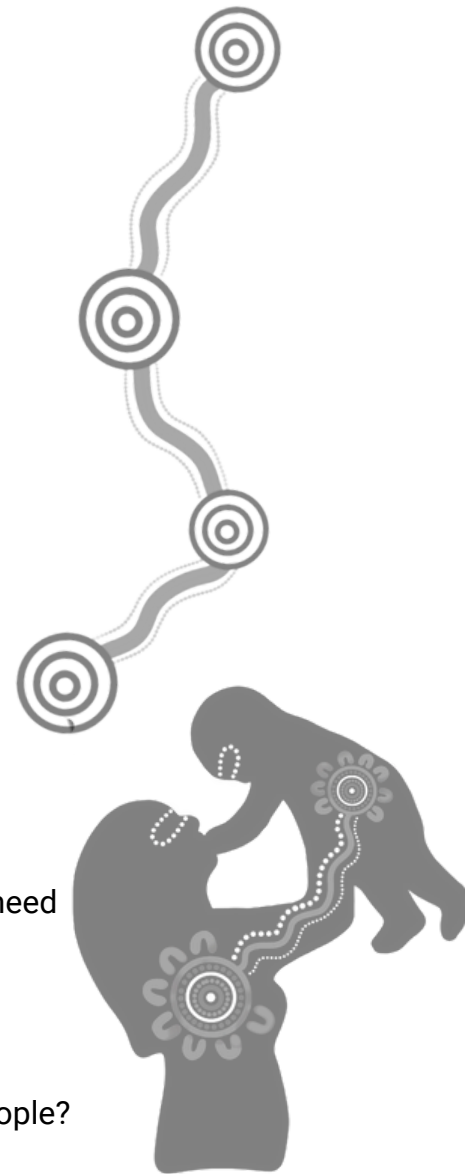
PLAN:

Managing big emotions is hard. What do I need to help me to stay calm and feel heard?

6

POST MEETING:

Who will write up notes about the meeting?
Will this be sent to me? And my support people?
When will this be done?



TIP!

It helps to make sure that everyone heard the same things in the meeting. You may need to ask questions to confirm that you are all on the same page.

Keep your own notes about everything



“Keep a journal. Make lots of notes about what happens with child safety.” – Sisters for Change

If you have to go to court, the judge and the lawyers will look at ‘evidence’.

Child protection takes notes about everything like:

- **The meetings that happen**
- **The phone calls**
- **The talks they have with midwives, support workers or other workers.**



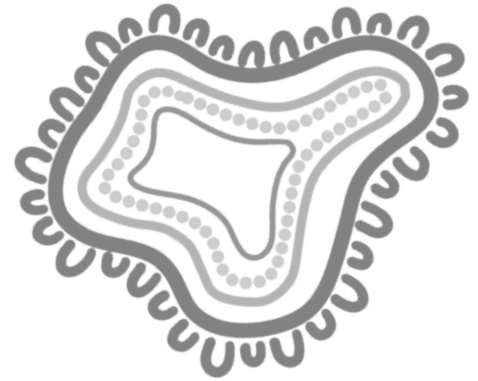
This is child protection's 'evidence'.

Without your side of the story, the judge can get one-sided information.

Keeping your own notes tells your side of the story. This may help the judge make a fairer decision.

Get an exercise book and keep notes about:

- ⦿ Every meeting
- ⦿ Every phone call
- ⦿ Every conversation that you have with child protection



Write down:

- ⦿ *The date*
- ⦿ *The time*
- ⦿ *Who you spoke to*
- ⦿ *What happened*

You can then give this to your lawyer to give to the court.

Taking notes also helps get everything out of your head. Notes don't have to be perfect.

Hint: If you don't like writing, try drawing or other ways of getting your story on paper.

Ask for and keep copies of all documents (E.g., letters, reports, legal documents)

It is important that you have the information child protection has about you.

Ask for copies of all documents and hold onto them.

Get a folder with plastic pockets so you can keep everything together. You can show this to your lawyer easily this way.

Get copies of anything you sign. This is for all services you work with, not just child protection.



“Women need to know they do not have to give their kids over. There has to be an order made. Make sure you see it.” – Sisters for Change

Disclaimer: This resource is part of a research project and is subject to change. Updated 17/03/2025. V.1.2.

© Indigenous Health Equity Unity 2024. Free to print out but material is not to be copied, altered, or adapted, without permission.

Contact details: rbt-project@unimelb.edu.au



Keep a list of all your workers and their contact details

You might have a lot of workers.

Keep your own list of workers and their contact details. You can show this to child protection, your support people and your lawyer.

Child protection like to see that parents have been getting support. They also like to see when parents are organised.



“Not engaging” is bad. So take up all supports and opportunities offered.” – Sisters for Change

Have a support person or people – like a family member or lawyer

It’s really hard to look after yourself when child protection is around.

Having a support person (or group of people) can make a big difference.

They can come to meetings with child protection. You can call them and have them on the phone when child protection visit you and they can write things down for you.

A support person can be your ‘mouthpiece’ when it comes to stuff about the law.



“Get legal help straight up.” – Sisters for Change



Child protection should give you contacts for lawyers and other support people, like advocates. If they don’t, call an Aboriginal Legal Service or another legal aid anywhere and they can direct you to the right lawyer for you.

Be visible in community

It is good to stay connected, even when you don’t want to be around people.

Having others to talk to is important when child protection is around.



***“First Nations kids should be with family, First Nations carers, or be close by to family.”
– Sisters for Change***

Other tips from parents: the hard truths

Child protection might be involved for lots of reasons that don't seem fair, like family and domestic violence. Some parents have lived this:



"I was targeted by child safety because of my family and the domestic violence going on."

– Sisters for Change



"I was 7 months pregnant and did a dirty UT (urine test) at parole." – Sisters for Change

Sometimes what child protection does isn't clear. Like, they might park the car around the corner. Or you might have an Aboriginal worker at first, and then only see non-Indigenous workers.



Being pregnant in prison also impacts Aboriginal families more

This might be hard to read. Here's some more information about being pregnant or giving birth in prison.

- ⦿ You might not have the same rights in prison.
- ⦿ Child protection might be involved because you are in prison.
- ⦿ Your pregnancy care may not be the same as being in the community.
- ⦿ Prisons can also share information about you with child protection.
- ⦿ Women in prison also have their births attended by officers.
- ⦿ Mums and bubs units are available in some prisons, but you might have to apply.



Disclaimer: This resource is part of a research project and is subject to change. Updated 17/03/2025. V.1.2.

© Indigenous Health Equity Unity 2024. Free to print out but material is not to be copied, altered, or adapted, without permission.

Contact details: rbt-project@unimelb.edu.au

