

Child and Family Research Agenda

Purpose

The Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services (DCSSDS, the department) supports and invests in research to build an evidence base that informs best policy and practice to ensure Queensland’s children, young people, and families are safe, thriving, and empowered in their culture and communities.

The Child and Family Research Agenda aligns the department’s strategic priorities with the corresponding research priorities to support improved performance. The purpose of the Child and Family Research Agenda is to:

- articulate DCSSDS research priorities
- guide the department’s decision making to prioritise investment in and support for evidence-based and translatable research projects
- ensure research supported by the department aligns with our strategic priorities
- provide the foundation for communicating our research priorities to researchers.

Legislative and ethical framework

The department has a legislated function to promote and conduct research into the causes and effects of harm to children, the life outcomes of children in care and the relationships between the criminal justice system and the child protection system (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 7).

Child and Family research must be undertaken according to provisions outlined in the [Child Protection Act 1999](#) and the [Right to Information Act 2009](#). Research must be conducted in accordance with the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 \(Updated 2018\) \(NHMRC\)](#) and the [Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities \(2018\)](#).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Sovereignty and Governance

All research projects should adhere to the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance.

AIATSIS defines Indigenous Data Sovereignty as the right of Indigenous peoples to govern the collection, ownership and application of data about Indigenous communities, peoples, lands, and resources. Its enactment mechanism, Indigenous Data Governance, is built around two central premises: the rights of Indigenous nations over data about them, regardless of where it is held and by whom; and the right to the data Indigenous peoples require to support nation rebuilding¹.

The Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit in Canberra held in 2018 determined that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to:

- exercise control of the data ecosystem including creation, development, stewardship, analysis, dissemination and infrastructure
- data that is contextual and disaggregated (available and accessible at individual, community and First Nations levels)
- data that is relevant and empowers sustainable self-determination and effective self-governance
- data structures that are accountable to Indigenous peoples and First Nations
- data that is protective and respects our individual and collective interests².

All research applications should describe how they will adhere to the principle of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance. Where research involves or relates to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and families, the department prioritises research led by or developed in partnership with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researchers. Methodologies must reflect a cultural lens and/or decolonising approaches.

DCSSDS Research priorities

The strategic objectives of DCSSDS’s Child Safety portfolio are to:

- meet the needs of children and families; and
- eliminate the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system.

Research projects should contribute to informing the design of a child and family support system to meet increasingly complex demands on families and ensure the safety, care and development of children. This includes the intersection of mental illness, domestic and family violence, child sexual abuse, disability, criminal history, drug use and parental alcohol exposure. The following table details the research themes that will assist the department to develop a contemporary evidence base to achieve our strategic objectives, improve our performance, and support families, young people, and children. The research themes and priorities explain the areas of research that DCSSDS is actively seeking.

DCSSDS Strategic Objectives This column details what the department wants to achieve	Research Themes and Priorities This column lists areas of research themes to build the evidence-base to support DCSSDS strategic objectives
<p>Reduce the disproportionate rate of representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue active efforts to embed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle in everything we do • Expand the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services sector in the delivery of family support services, and delegate additional authorities to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations have choice and control over decisions affecting their children 	<p><u>Research</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploratory research to increase understanding of the application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle to the standard of Active Efforts within the department • Use qualitative and mixed methods research using decolonising frameworks, to amplify the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and practitioners, under the principles of self-determination and community-level decision making • Explore culturally safe, trauma-informed models to improve and promote the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people • Explore contemporary service models which support the department to provide a service system that meets the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. <p><u>Reviews and evaluations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review interventions, models and programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families, in Queensland and in other jurisdictions, to ascertain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ elements required to ensure culturally safe, trauma-focused environments ○ elements that promote and strengthen connections to family, kin, culture and country

¹ AIATSIS 2019, *Delivering Indigenous Data Sovereignty*, <https://aiatsis.gov.au/publication/116530>, accessed 2 June 2023.

² Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit 2018, *Communique*, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3043afb40b9d20411f3512/t/5b6c0f9a0e2e725e9cabf4a6/1533808545167/Communique%2B-%2BIndigenous%2BData%2BSovereignty%2BSummit.pdf>, 20th June 2018, Canberra, ACT, accessed 2 June 2023.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the proportion of children in kinship care by working with parents, families, and carers to support kin to care for children. • Support participation of parents in child protection matters (e.g. supporting the charter of rights of parents, working with parents not just at investigation but throughout all stages of involvement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test existing approaches to reunification, to identify what is working and what keeps families together • Evaluate the implementation of delegated decision making for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, and the impact on families and organisations of increasing the number of decisions delegated
<p>Improve outcomes for vulnerable young people, and children in or at risk of entering the child protection system</p>	<p><u>Research</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the specialised support and response needs for children and young people with disability and/or mental illness who are in care, and those receiving support across the child and family support continuum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ what are the lived experiences of these children and young people? ○ what is the nature and extent of disability or mental health challenges? ○ how are these currently identified and addressed within the system? ○ what could be done to extend and improve this support? • Examine ways to better understand and address the support needs of children and young people with a parent with a disability and/ or mental illness • Investigate and capture the experiences and support needs of families from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds in, or at risk of entering the child protection system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What interventions are required to improve responses for this cohort? • Explore the impact of child sexual abuse in the context of child safety contact, including allegations within families and communities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ how are these experiences currently addressed? • Examine the common trajectories, experiences and drivers of young people exhibiting high risk behaviours • Investigate the effectiveness of approaches to increase school retention for young people engaged in child safety • Examine the needs of older young people entering care for the first time • Understand the recovery needs of children and young people with experience of trauma: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ what are the current supports available? ○ what are the barriers to accessing these supports? ○ what are the gaps in the service system in providing effective recovery support for children and young people recovering from trauma? <p><u>Reviews and evaluations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore interventions to improve the stability of living arrangements for children in residential, foster, and kinship care (including placement of siblings together) • Review evidence to understand the cohort of children and young people with suicidal ideation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ determine the effectiveness of models of care and interventions for children and young people with suicidal ideation • Assess and evaluate the short and long-term outcomes for young people as a result of extending care support to 21 • Review evidence to gain understanding of effective interventions for parents to improve life outcomes for unborn children, infants at risk, and children aged 0-5 years. • Review evidence to better understand the positive impacts of the child protection system on children (e.g. what works, and why?)
<p>Reduce the proportion of children in residential care</p>	<p><u>Research</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand what works in improving residential care models • Investigate and review evidence to understand responses to suicide and suicidal ideation in residential care settings in the Australian context • Determine factors and settings that support young people in residential care to transition into family-based care arrangements <p><u>Reviews and evaluations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine the use of Individual Placement Support Packages and identify alternative funding approaches to support young people in residential care settings • Identify the prevalence of undiagnosed disability of young people in residential care settings in Queensland
<p>Work with our partners to ensure that our assessments, court processes and supports prioritise child wellbeing and family reunification</p>	<p><u>Research</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the experiences of families at the intersection of child protection and family law involvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Based on these experiences, assess the implications for integrated practice at the intersection between child protection, domestic and family violence, and family law and court processes • Explore the support needs of parents with mental illness and/or disability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify current approaches targeting the support needs of this cohort ○ Test the effectiveness of the existing interventions and supports

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Value, support and improve the safety, wellbeing, and capability of our staff

Research

- How do Queensland child protection practitioners understand and apply trauma-informed practice?
- How does the Department develop and support a resilient workforce

Reviews and evaluations

- Identify the support needs of the department's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce