

Active Efforts

What This Means in Practice for OOHC Caseworkers

Active Efforts refers to the practical, ongoing steps you take to support families to address concerns impacting a child's safety and wellbeing. Under [Section 9A](#) of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)*, Active Efforts is a legislative requirement when working with Aboriginal children. It requires that meaningful efforts are made to:

- Prevent entry into care where possible
- Support restoration to family
- Maintain connection to family, kin, community and culture

For out-of-home care (OOHC) caseworkers, this means Active Efforts continues throughout the life of a case. It is not a one-off task, but something that is reflected in how you engage, plan, and make decisions over time.

Applying Section 9A in Everyday Practice

Section 9A is about being able to show how you have actively supported families, rather than simply identifying concerns or setting expectations.

In practice, this might look like:

- Working with parents to understand what is required of them, not assuming they already know
- Following up when engagement is inconsistent and exploring what is getting in the way
- Adjusting supports where needed, rather than relying on a single approach
- Continuing to explore opportunities for restoration and connection, even where progress is slow

For example, if a parent is not attending a service, Active Efforts involves understanding why and working through that barrier. This might include helping them make contact, adjusting appointment times, help with transport or identifying a more suitable service. Over time, this builds a clearer picture of what has been tried, what has worked, and where further support may be needed.

Early Identification of a Child's Culture

Early identification of a child's Aboriginal identity is an important part of meeting Active Efforts requirements.

This is because a child's culture should inform:

- Placement decisions
- Case planning
- Connection and identity support
- Engagement with family and community

In practice, this means:

- Asking about cultural identity early and respectfully
- Checking information with more than one source where possible
- Remaining open to new or updated information over time
- Linking with Aboriginal staff, ACCOs or cultural advisors early
- Utilising services such as LINKUP

Early identification supports more informed decision making and ensures that opportunities for connection are not missed.

Bringing the ATICPP into Practice

Active Efforts supports the application of the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles](#) (ATICPP). These principles guide how we work with Aboriginal children and families and are reflected in everyday practice. Rather than sitting separately, the principles are applied through the actions you take.

For example:

Prevention

Supporting families early to address concerns before they escalate. This might involve linking parents with supports, helping them navigate services, or addressing practical barriers that impact safety.

Partnership

Working alongside families, Aboriginal organisations and cultural advisors. In practice,

this includes seeking input early, checking your understanding, and ensuring decisions are informed by cultural knowledge.

Placement

Actively exploring family and kin options. This may involve speaking with multiple family members, revisiting options over time, and considering broader kinship networks.

Participation

Ensuring children and families understand what is happening and have opportunities to contribute. This includes explaining processes clearly, supporting attendance at meetings, and documenting their views.

Connection

Supporting the child's ongoing connection to culture, family and community. This might include facilitating family time, supporting community engagement, and ensuring cultural plans are meaningful and implemented.

What Active Efforts Can Look Like Day to Day

Active Efforts is often reflected in small, consistent actions. When supporting service engagement, this may include explaining the purpose of a service, helping make contact, or following up after missed appointments to understand what got in the way.

When working with family time, it may involve supporting parents during visits, modelling interactions, or reinforcing routines that support the child's development and sense of safety. When working with family and kin, it may involve exploring who else is important in the child's life, revisiting earlier conversations, or engaging extended family members over time. When coordinating supports, it may include aligning appointments, reducing duplication between services, or helping families manage multiple expectations. These actions, while often small, contribute to building engagement, reducing barriers, and supporting change over time.

Documenting Active Efforts

Demonstrating Active Efforts relies on clear and accurate documentation.

Good documentation helps show:

- What actions were taken
- Who was involved

- What barriers were identified
- How those barriers were addressed
- What the outcome was

For example, instead of recording that a referral was made, it can be helpful to include how the referral was explained, what support was provided to engage, and whether follow-up occurred. Similarly, where engagement is limited, documenting what has been tried and what adjustments have been made provides a clearer picture of the efforts undertaken.

Key Considerations for Practice

When thinking about Active Efforts, it can be helpful to reflect on:

- How have I supported this family to engage, not just referred them
- What barriers have been identified and addressed
- Who else could support this child or family
- How culture has been considered in decisions
- Whether my efforts are visible in my documentation

Key Message

Active Efforts is about how we work with families, not just what we ask of them.

It involves:

- Ongoing, practical support
- Thoughtful engagement with families and kin
- Early and meaningful consideration of culture
- Application of the ATICPP in everyday decisions
- Clear documentation of actions taken

When applied consistently, Active Efforts supports better engagement, more informed decision making, and stronger outcomes for children and families.