



## Services potentially required during Reunification (Attachment 2)

**Essential services** must be in place before a plan for reunification can be considered.

This may include Pathway Home Services funded by Disability and Community Services to work with Child Protection Services to assist in the process of reunification. Where applicable, see Pathway Home Service guidelines.

- Gateway Services can also be of great assistance to vulnerable families.
- Other essential services include adequate and stable housing and a reliable source of income to support the child. These also include the parent's capacity to manage income and to access community services, including the child's ongoing education and recreational activities, to support the child's positive development. Thus if the family does not have adequate housing or a demonstrated pattern of maintaining housing, the issue of inadequate housing must be resolved before clear objectives for reunification are set. The parent/s' capacity to manage within their income is a further important factor to be resolved prior to planning for reunification. Limited capacity to provide for the child, stemming from high levels of debt, problem gambling and alcohol and drug abuse, must be addressed before reunification goals are set.
- Reasonable access to community services, including childcare, education and health services, is a further important consideration. Vulnerable families are often marginalised in the community due to a lack of transport options, the limitations and inconvenience of using public transport (especially for families with small children) and the high cost of petrol and car maintenance. It may be necessary for the family to move to a location where access to essential services is easier for the family to manage as a precursor to the actual plan for reunification.

**Specific services for the child** will need to be involved in the planning process.

- These include any services that are directly involved with the child such as counselling services, educational support services and specialist therapeutic services. These services are likely to be in place during the period that the child has been placed in out of home care and they have a

significant role to play in supporting the child's successful reunification. They are able to contribute to the assessment of child's developmental needs and to monitor the child's progress during the period of reunification. The reunification may involve a change in the child's school and recreational activities. Thus the plan for reunification may involve significant adjustments by the child. Specific services for the child can support the child's transition. For instance, if the transition will involve a change in school, the child's previous teacher should support the transition to the new school.

- Enhancing continuity for the child during a period of transition and change is important.

**Specific services for the parents** will also need to be involved in the planning process.

- These include family support services, housing services, alcohol and drug services, mental health services and disability services. Although these services may see the parents as their client, the plan to reunify the child must always be in the interests of the child. Specific services working with the parents must be invited to work within the Tasmanian Child Protection Practice Framework which recognises the important contribution of parents but in the context of being child centred.

