

# Charter of Parent Participation

**This charter outlines the rights of birth parents with child protection contact. It is written for parents, by parents.**

A charter lists the rights and privileges people have. We all have rights, and as members of the community, we need to respect each other's rights.

This Charter is for birth parents who have contact with child protection and child and family services. These parents may have current care of their children, children in out-of-home care (kinship, foster and residential care), permanent care arrangements, or children who have been reunified with them.

The Charter of Parent Participation talks about what parents expect when engaging with child protection and the child and family service system. When the rights listed in this Charter are listened to and acted on by people working in these services, birth parents are better supported to engage and participate in decisions and processes that affect their lives.

The Charter of Parent Participation has been developed by birth parents with lived experience of child protection and service contact; this means it is written for parents, by parents.

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## Relationship with organisations and services

### Parents have the right:

- To be **listened to** and **valued** as someone who is:
  - » An expert in their child's life,
  - » An expert in their life,
  - » An important influence in their child's sense of identity,
  - » A key member of the child's family and life.
- To be **respected** — (our definition of 'respected' means that parents are spoken to in a way that is polite, accessible to them as an individual, and culturally appropriate).
- To **work in partnership** with their worker. This means:
  - » Their views and voice are listened to,
  - » Their time is respected,
  - » They are given information as required.
- To be **understood** as a person.
- To be **supported** by workers who understand their individual circumstances and who can be flexible — not following a textbook.
- To a **fully trained worker** who supports parents holistically. This means taking into account the parent/child/family unit as a unique and complex structure comprised of its own environment, culture, needs, history, significant people in the child/ren's lives.
- To have a worker who is **available and replies** to emails, phone calls and questions.

## Access to Information

### Parents have the right:

- To have a **clear understanding** of why child protection are involved.
- To know their **rights**.
- To be given an accurate **timeline**.
- To early access of **legal information**.
- To know the **justification and evidence** for ongoing involvement of child protection.
- To have **information** about what is happening with their children, especially if they are in someone else's care (unless this compromises the child's safety).
- To have information that is **jargon-free** and **easy to understand**.
- To know how they can **give feedback** and **challenge decisions** without negative consequences.
- To have their information and views **recorded accurately**.
- To have **access to minutes and information** that is shared about them.

## Supportive Engagement

### Parents have the right:

- To have with them an:
  - » **Independent advocate** and/or
  - » **Support person**.
- To an appropriate mechanism of sharing their story that **reduces the need to keep having to re-tell the story**. This may include a birth parent approved:
  - » Pre-recorded video or audio;
  - » Written information and/or timelines;
  - » Emails and other material that helps capture that parents' story; To be updated at the birth parents' request, or every 6-12 months.
- The mechanism of sharing should allow for **stories to be shared**, with the parents' consent, among relevant workers working with birth parents' and/or children.
  - » To be supported in developing, maintaining and improving parenting connection to their children by making sure they have input into their child's upbringing whether or not in care, for example, by:
    - » creating a parenting plan;
    - » being provided with regular updates on
      1. child's health and wellbeing;
      2. school reports and other educational information;
      3. child's interests and hobbies;
    - » being supported to engage with children through letters, gifts, meetings and other mechanisms for connection as appropriate.
    - » To have support for their children that acknowledges the trauma of a child protection intervention.
- To **practical support** for full participation.
- To have **every avenue of support explored** before their child is removed.