

Referrals Acceptance Procedure

1. Purpose

This procedure provides detailed guidance about how to accept a referral to the Inala Community House (ICH) Family Intervention Services (FIS).

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all employees, contractors, students and volunteers within ICH FIS. For the purpose of this procedure, these persons shall be referred to as workers.

3. Definitions

Child: an individual under 18 years (*Child Protection Act 1999*).

The Department: refers to the Queensland Government Department responsible for Family Services programs and/or Child Protection or Child Safety.

Reunification: the safe return of a child or young person to the care of their family.

Active reunification: refers to the case plan goal for a child or young person to be returned to the care of their family, within 12 months.

Intervention with Parental Agreement (IPA): allows ICH FIS to work intensively with a family to meet the protection and care needs of a child/children with the parent's agreement. Child/children will usually remain in the family home for all or most of this type of intervention but may be placed in out-of-home care.

JAP: refers to a Joint Action Plan developed by the Department with the Department of Housing, when housing for the service user is the last barrier to reunification.

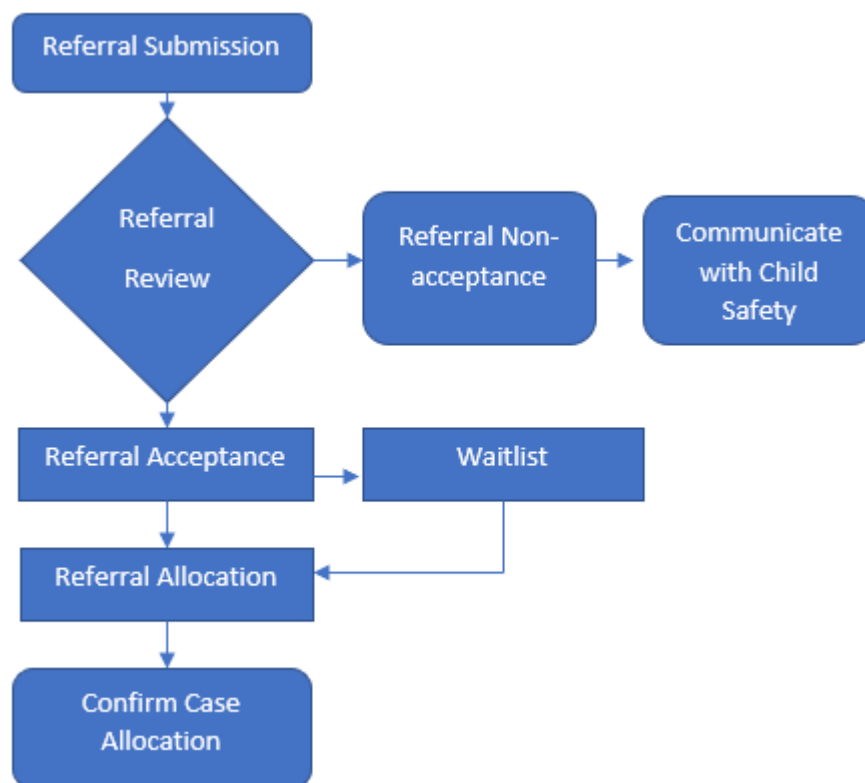
Service User: any parents or family, or carer named in the referral for whom services will be provided, including children.

Case Management: a collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation / implementation /coordination, advocacy, monitoring and evaluation for options and services to meet a service user's needs.

Initial Case Consult: the first formal meeting between the Department and ICH FIS to discuss the case, including the worries, needs and supports required, and risks.

4. Procedure

The referral acceptance process is mapped in the flowchart below. The procedure provides details about each step of the process.



4.1 Referral submission

ICH FIS is funded to receive referrals exclusively from Inala and Forest Lake CSSC. Service users may also be referred from other CSSC's where case work is undertaken by Inala and Forest Lake CSSC.

Inala and Forest Lake CSSCs will refer cases using the *ICH FIS Client Referral form* and send via email to FIS@ich.org.au.

The *ICH FIS Client Referral Form* clearly outlines that families (potential service users) must either be on an Intervention with Parental Agreement (IPA), Support Service Case (SCC) or a Child Protection Order (CPO) working towards reunification. Critical to eligibility and entry is the family's agreement to work intensively with ICH FIS. Refer to the Referral Acceptance Policy for further detail.

In some instances, referrals are received from a CSSC outside of Inala and Forest Lake CSSC. In these instances, ICH FIS will seek permission from the Department - Contracts to accept the out of catchment referral if there are no other viable options for the family to receive FIS.

ICH FIS may also be requested to work with families who are not on an IPA or in active reunification. These are regarded as exceptional circumstances and as such these cases will be considered by the ICH FIS Manager. These cases may be accepted on a fee-for-service arrangement dependent upon service capacity.

4.2 Referral review

Before a referral is accepted, the ICH FIS Manager will ensure the *ICH Client Referral form* is complete and the referral meets the criteria set out in the Referrals Acceptance Policy.

If the referral is not complete, or it does not appear to meet the service criteria, the ICH FIS Manager will contact the referring officer (e.g., the Department's Child Safety Officer).

In instances where the referral is for both parents, however it appears that they are no longer in a spousal relationship, the ICH FIS Manager will contact the referring officer and request separate referrals. This is particularly important where domestic and family violence is an area of concern because two separate case workers will need to be allocated.

4.3 Referral Acceptance

Referral acceptance is confirmed by the ICH FIS Manager emailing the referring officer and the Department's Senior Team Leader within two business days. Acceptance notification will indicate if the case has been allocated or placed on the ICH FIS waiting list.

Referrals are recorded on the Master Record Spreadsheet in the Referral Tracker tab and placed on the case management system, SRS in accordance with the SRS Checklist. When the case is allocated to an ICH FIS Worker, the date of allocation is recorded in the Referral Tracker and the family is added to the Open Cases tab.

Referral Amendment

In instances where a spouse (or significant other) in the same residence as an existing service user is identified as needing support, they can be added to an existing referral, providing it does not substantially change the case work approach and they can be serviced by the allocated case worker. The Department will be requested to send an email to the ICH FIS Manager requesting that the person be added to the existing referral, or a case note can be recorded on the file documenting a verbal request.

Referral Wait List

In circumstances where the ICH FIS is at capacity, a case will remain on the Referral Tracker tab unallocated. This is recognised as the ICH FIS Wait List.

The ICH FIS Manager will advise the referring officer and the Department's Senior Team Leader via email of:

- The expected wait timeframe for allocating from wait list to active status, if known.
- Noting that when capacity is available, the Department's Senior Team Leader will be consulted about priority allocations from the ICH FIS Wait List.

Cases on the ICH FIS Wait List will be allocated:

- Based on priority of need/risk for the family as identified by the ICH FIS Manager in consultation with the Department
- With consideration to the family's needs and the suitability for an available ICH FIS Worker based on service user / worker matching; or

- In the order they were received if there are no clear priorities or ICH FIS Worker considerations identified.

The ICH FIS Manager will maintain regular contact with the Department to keep them informed of ICH FIS service capacity. ICH FIS Manager will consult with the Department about cases which have been on the waiting list for over four months to determine if other service options are a possibility or if the referral should remain on the waiting list.

In accordance with 5.1.1 in the Families Investment Specifications, FIS will seek to provide the family with appropriate alternative services. While the parents are on the waiting list, they will be considered for upcoming FIS parenting programs and other supporting programs which may be suitable based on the needs identified in the referral. Communication about upcoming events with an invitation for the parent to express interest will be made via the Department. In the event that the parent engages with a FIS program while on the waiting list, they will be considered a FIS service user. This will mean that FIS can support them with transport to and from the program and case notes will be recorded about their attendance and shared with the CSO. If the family is on the waiting list for over three months, FIS Manager will discuss with the Department if there are suitable alternative referral avenues for support.

4.4 Referral not Accepted

Referrals may not be accepted based upon:

- Not meeting the ICH FIS service criteria
- Service provision is outside of ICH FIS service delivery geographical area (ideally not outside of a 25 km radius)
- ICH FIS is not considered suitable to meet the support needs of the family
- The likelihood of harm for any ICH Worker is deemed unacceptable (e.g., cannot be prevented or mitigated against).

The ICH FIS Manager will notify the Department via e-mail of non-acceptance of a referral and the reasons why, and where possible, alternate referral pathways will be provided.

4.5 Referral Allocation

Referrals are allocated by the ICH FIS Manager to an ICH FIS Worker. ICH FIS Workers will have an average caseload of 12 families per year, and ideally good practice is five - six families at any given time if families are actively engaged with the service.

The ICH FIS Manager will give full consideration to:

- Service user needs, context, cultural sensitivities and known preferences
- Service capacity; and
- Case Worker experience and attributes.

If homelessness is present, and housing is deemed a critical element, consideration will be given to requesting the Department complete a Joint Action Plan (JAP) as part of ICH FIS referral procedure.

The ICH FIS Manager is responsible for ensuring that the ICH FIS Worker is aware of any risks identified during the referral procedure, and to ensure that risk management strategies are in place regarding safety and to eliminate, mitigate or manage any risk, especially harm, from occurring.

Refer to Personal Safety in the Community Procedure for further detail.

4.6 Confirm Case Allocation

Once a family is allocated an ICH FIS Worker, and the Initial Case Consult is completed, they are then referred to as a service user.

Confirming Case Allocation with Department

The ICH FIS Manager will email the Department's Child Safety Officer and Senior Team Leader to advise and communicate:

- Worker name and contact details
- That the ICH FIS Worker will make contact to organise an Initial Case Consult.

Case Allocation to the ICH FIS Worker

The ICH FIS Manager will inform the ICH FIS Worker of the new case allocation and provide referral information.

The ICH FIS Manager initiates the case by sharing all referral documentation, and the assigned Worker is responsible for placing on SRS all email correspondence relating to the case allocation and any other new documents/case notes.

Within five business days of being allocated a referral, the ICH FIS Worker will arrange an Initial Case Consult. This is a joint meeting of the:

- ICH FIS Worker
- ICH FIS Manager
- Department's Child Safety Officer, Senior Team Leader and Cultural Practice Advisor (where appropriate)
- Any other key parties who can provide context about the family (i.e., Family Support services).

The purpose of the Initial Case Consult is to discuss the referral, including:

- Service user needs
- Identified risks and potential mitigations
- Scope of the service support
- How the service user feels about working with ICH FIS and any updates to the referral
- Advice about how to best communicate with the service user
- History about the family's involvement with Child Safety
- Cultural connections
- Barriers to engagement and strategies to support engagement
- Other stakeholders who are involved with the family – other service providers, other family support, where children are placed if they are not at home. to be undertaken by ICH FIS.

During the Initial Case Consult, it is normally agreed that the Department's Child Safety Officer will inform the family about the allocated ICH FIS Worker and that they will be making contact within seven days. If during the case consults it is identified that the worker risks are unacceptable and cannot be mitigated, the ICH FIS Manager may advise that the referral is unable to be accepted.

The conclusion of the Initial Case Consult marks the formal acceptance of the referral and case management begins.

Extension to the Initial Referral

ICH FIS works in accordance with the Investment Specification issued by the Department – Child Safety

Approaching the conclusion of the 12-month intervention period, the ICH FIS Manager will raise with the Department the potential for a further six months of intervention if this is required. The Department will be requested to complete a subsequent referral form if they want ICH FIS to continue working with the family for a further six months. ICH FIS determines if the extension request is approved.

4.7 Documentation Compliance

ICH FIS use the Master Case Management Spreadsheet and SRS, and all referral information is recorded within these two systems.

5. Review

This procedure shall be reviewed in accordance with the Referral Acceptance Policy.

6. Related Documents

Policies

- ICH Privacy Policy
- ICH Human Rights Policy
- ICH Confidentiality Policy
- ICH Client Protection Policy
- ICH Code of Conduct
- ICH Risk Management Policy
- ICH FIS Case Management Policy
- ICH FIS Referral Acceptance Policy

Procedures

- ICH FIS Personal Safety in the Community Procedure
- ICH FIS Assessment Procedure
- ICH FIS Case Planning Procedure
- ICH FIS Sharing Personal Information Procedure

Other documents

- SRS Checklist
- Master Record Spreadsheet

Forms

- ICH FIS Referral Form
- ICH FIS Subsequent Referral Form

References

Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)

The Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)

Qld Human Services Quality Framework

The Department's Families Investment Specifications