

Exploring the barriers and facilitators for safe and stable reunification: Parent experience and perspectives on the reunification process

Information for Parents and Caregivers

Dear Parents/Caregivers,

You are being invited to participate in a survey about reunification.

What is the project about?

This project aims to improve the way families are supported through the reunification process, including once their child has returned home, to make sure families can remain safely together after their child has returned home from out-of-home care. We know that families experience the process of reunification differently, and that there are many different challenges and supports which may impact their ability to work towards and maintain reunification, so their child remains in their care.

The project hopes to share parents' and caregivers' experiences of the reunification process and challenges experienced in working towards reunification, to help services and decision-makers better meet their needs and ensure families remain safely together once reunified.

Who is the project being led by?

The research project is being conducted by a PhD Candidate from the University of South Australia's Australian Centre for Child Protection, whose research project aims to improve the process and outcomes of reunification for families (i.e., help improve practices which see children return home to their family from out-of-home care and remain safely in their care after they return home).

What am I being asked to do?

You are being asked to complete an online survey regarding your **previous experience** when working towards having your child returned home from out-of-home care, including yours and your family's experience once your child returned home.

We are most interested in your past experience of working towards having your child returned home, the challenges and supports once your child did return home, and what safe and stable reunification means to you.

If you are currently working towards reunification (i.e., having your child returned home from out-of-home care), **you will not be asked about your current experience**. Parents and caregivers are being asked to reflect on their previous experience of reunification, where their child already returned home from out-of-home care.

The survey will take approximately 30-40 minutes to complete and can be accessed from your computer, phone, or tablet device. If you decide to take part in the survey, we ask that you do your best to answer all questions. However, if there are some questions you do not wish to answer, you may choose to skip it.

At the end of the survey, you will be given the option to provide your email address to go into the draw to win one of five \$50.00 Coles Group & Myer gift cards. If you would like to enter this draw, your email address will not be linked to your survey and nobody, including the research team, will know what your survey responses were.

At the end of the survey, you will also be given the option to provide your email address to be contacted for a follow-up interview. If you do not want to participate in a follow-up interview, you do not need to provide your email address for this. If you would like to participate in a follow-up interview, you can provide your email address and the research team will contact you with further information about an interview.

Am I eligible to participate in the project?

If you are a parent or caregiver aged 18 years or above and have experienced reunification with your child(ren) within the previous five years (*i.e., from January 2018*), following statutory removal from the Department for Child Protection, you are able to participate in this study. Only parents/caregivers who are able to read, understand, and write in English, or have someone who can support them in language translation when completing the survey, will be able to participate. If you have recently experienced a traumatic event or believe you will feel too uneasy or distressed thinking and writing about your previous experience of having your child returned home, you are encouraged not to complete the survey.

Who will know I participated in the project?

If you choose to take part and submit the online survey, you will remain completely anonymous. The survey will not ask about any personal information which could be used to identify you or your family in any way. Any information that you may have accidentally included in your submitted survey, which might risk revealing you or anyone else's identity, will be immediately deleted by the lead investigator (not seen by anyone else). If you choose to complete the survey, you do not need to tell anyone, including the organisation who provided you with this information, that you participated.

If you provide your email address to enter into the gift card prize pool, or to be contacted for a follow-up interview, nobody except for the lead investigator will see your email address. If you provide your email address, this will not be linked to your survey responses, so nobody (including the lead investigator) will know what information you provided. Your email address and survey responses will be kept entirely confidential. If you contact the lead investigator about the study, nobody else except for the lead investigator will know.

What will happen to the information I provide?

Findings from the surveys will be used in the chief investigator's PhD thesis and may be published in other ways, such as academic journal articles, conference presentations, and in the Australian Centre for Child Protection's resource page. Findings from the study may additionally be presented to industry, such as the Department for Child Protection, to help highlight the voices and perspectives of parents/caregivers on challenges in reunification and how practices can better help families working towards reunification.

The information collected from surveys will be stored for a maximum of 7 years by the research team. However, all information stored will remain anonymous (*i.e., nobody will know you submitted a survey or what information is yours*) and will not be seen by anyone else or used for any other purpose.

Can I withdraw from the project?

Participation in this project is completely voluntary and it is your choice whether you want to complete a survey or not. If you decide to begin the survey but later decide you do not wish to continue or submit your responses, you can exit the survey at any time before submitting and your responses provided up to that point will not be recorded.

However, by submitting the survey you are agreeing to send your responses to the research team. As we won't know which survey is yours, unfortunately, we are unable to remove your responses once you have submitted the survey if you change your mind.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

You will not have to answer any questions in the survey that you don't feel comfortable answering. However, some parents/caregivers might find some of the questions a bit uneasy or distressing. The researchers will try to avoid this as best as possible, but if needed, please discuss any discomfort or distress you are feeling from the survey with your organisations' support staff. You may also like to contact:

Lifeline Australia
Tel: 13 11 14 Website:
www.lifeline.org.au

Kids Helpline (help for parents)
Tel: 1800 55 1800 Website:
www.kidshelpline.com.au

UniSA Psychology Clinic
Tel: 08 8302 4875
Email:
psychologyclinic@unisa.edu.au

As you will remain completely anonymous if you decide to participate in this project, nobody will know if you completed the survey or not. No matter what you choose to do, your decision to participate will not affect your relationships with the organisation who has provided you this information or any other relationship. If you are currently working towards reunification (i.e., having your child returned home), your survey responses will have no impact on this process, or any decisions made about this.

What if I have a question about the study?

If you have any further questions about this study, including questions about the survey, whether you are eligible to participate, how to complete it, or anything else which this Information Sheet does not answer, please contact the lead researcher Ebony Tucker via email: ebony.tucker@mymail.unisa.edu.au

What if I have a complaint about the study?

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee (Ethics Protocol 205859). If you have any questions about being a research participant in general or should you have any concerns or complaints about any aspect of the project or the way it is being conducted, please contact the Executive Officer of this Committee on email: humanethics@unisa.edu.au or telephone: (+61) 8 8302 6330.

What do I do if I want to participate?

If you would like to complete the survey, please **scan the QR code below on your mobile device** or **click on the link below it**:



SURVEY LINK: https://unisasurveys.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cCutY9IGRnx56ZM

The survey will remain open for you to complete until 31/09/2024.

What do I do if I want to find out about the findings of the research?

If you are interested in reading about the findings of the research, results will be featured on the Australian Centre for Child Protection's website resources page (linked below). It is expected that the findings will be posted approximately 6 months after data collection.

<https://www.unisa.edu.au/research/australian-centre-for-child-protection/our-resources/#resources>

Yours sincerely,

Ebony Tucker (UniSA)

Lead Researcher

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