DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SAFETY

September 30, 2026
DCS-5155

Cultural Brokers Program

The Cultural Broker is a partner to DCS and an advocate for the family at the same time. The role of the Broker is to help the family understand and participate in the DCS process while supporting communication and cultural understanding.

The Cultural Broker does:

- **Participate in the pre-commencement discussion**
- **Attend the initial in-person contact with the family**
- **Offer cultural insight on family dynamics and parenting practices**
- **Help the family understand DCS practice and what to expect**
- **Facilitate communication and reduce misunderstandings during contacts**
- **Advocate for the family's voice**
- **Connect the family to culturally relevant services and supports**

The Cultural Broker does not:

- **Assess child safety or make safety decisions**
- **Replace any required DCS contact or documentation**
- **Contact the family before DCS has made first contact**
- **Make promises to the family about case outcomes**

Description of Service

Cultural Brokers services are specifically designed to reduce the disproportionality and disparities that exist in the child welfare system, and address issues of fairness and equity. Cultural Brokers services support DCS Specialists in gathering information for the Family Functioning Assessment (FFA) to inform child safety and safety management decisions, strengthen family engagement in supportive services that promote family well-being, and foster improved relationships between DCS Specialists and families.

The initial joint response is a critical component of the Cultural Brokers service. Unlike most services, which are referred after DCS completes the investigation, Cultural Brokers services begin at the start of the investigation. When an eligible family is referred, a Cultural Broker is assigned with the goal of participating alongside the DCS Specialist during the initial in-person contact with the family. The Cultural Broker works alongside the DCS Specialist from the beginning of the investigation to support family engagement and connect families with services and supports while the investigation is underway.

Eligibility Determination

The Cultural Brokers program supports families in communities that experience disproportionately high levels of involvement with DCS. Eligibility is based on data showing which children and families are most overrepresented in the child welfare system.

In 2024, statewide data showed that certain communities had significantly higher rates of DCS intake reports, removals, and out-of-home placements relative to their proportion of the overall population. For example, children from some communities represented 5% of the statewide child population but accounted for approximately:

- 19% of DCS intake reports,
- 20% of removals, and
- 19% of the out-of-home population.

To ensure services are directed where they are most needed, the Cultural Brokers program is available to families residing in the following zip codes, which reflect the highest concentrations of families meeting the program's criteria at this time: 85033, 85035, 85037, 85043, 85353, and 85392.

Families who receive a DCS Hotline report (Priority 1–4) and meet the following eligibility criteria will be referred to the Cultural Brokers program, including reports involving criminal conduct allegations assigned to the section(s) implementing the Cultural Brokers program:

- Any victim child who identifies as Black/African American or multiracial Black/African American; or
- Any parent/caregiver/guardian who identifies as Black/African American or multiracial Black/African American and resides in the home of maltreatment.

If the family is referred for Cultural Brokers and it is determined during the initial contact that the family is not eligible, the Cultural Broker may continue to offer support during the initial contact; however, services will not continue beyond the initial contact.

The Cultural Brokers program incorporates and supports key Core Practice Elements of the Child and Family Practice Model (CFPM), which include:

- **Lean in**
- **Lift Up**
- **Connect**
- **Culture**

Cultural Brokers must be available as early as 30 minutes after referral receipt to accompany the Specialist during initial response.

In order for the Cultural Broker to continue providing services beyond the initial contact, the parent/caregiver must consent to participate.

Service Request Process

Once eligibility is determined, DCS will submit a referral via the online referral form (https://azdcs.sharepoint.com/sites/CulturalBrokers). If eligibility is determined prior to the first contact with the family (e.g. during pre-commencement activities), the referral should be submitted immediately upon determining eligibility. If eligibility is determined during the first contact with the family, submit the referral within 24 hours.

Referrals should be submitted in a timely manner in order to allow time for coordination with the Cultural Broker.

The provider will respond to referrals according to the following timeframes:

- Within 15 minutes, if the referral is received Monday-Friday between 8:00 am and 6:00 pm (excluding holidays); or
- By 8:15 am the following business day, if the referral is received outside of the hours noted above.

Once the provider responds to the request by either accepting or declining the referral, the DCS Specialist (DCSS) and Supervisor will receive email confirmation notifying them of the provider's response. If the referral is accepted, the confirmation email will include the information for the assigned Cultural Broker. A Service Request will be generated in Guardian for all referrals that are accepted by the Cultural Brokers provider.

The assigned Cultural Broker will reach out to DCS to coordinate participation in the pre-commencement discussion, and the time and location of the joint initial response. This outreach will occur according to the following timeframes:

- For Priority 1 reports: Within 15 minutes of referral receipt; or
- For Priority 2-4 reports: Within 1 hour of referral receipt.
- DCS may contact the Cultural Broker directly if earlier coordination is necessary.

Service Components

Cultural Brokers services may remain open for up to 120 days. Cultural Brokers services may include, but are not limited to, the following components:

Pre-commencement

Upon invitation from DCS, the Cultural Broker participates in the pre-commencement discussion to clarify roles, review safety considerations, and discuss culturally responsive engagement strategies for the initial contact with the family.

Joint Initial Response

The joint initial response is a coordinated in-person contact by DCS and the Cultural Broker with the family. During the initial contact with the family, the Cultural Broker:

- Explains the Cultural Brokers program
- Completes the Cultural Brokers intake tasks, including reviewing the Service Agreement
- Supports culturally responsive engagement
- Facilitates communication
- Helps reduce cultural misunderstandings

The DCS Specialist and Cultural Broker will make a minimum of three attempts to meet with the parent/caregiver in-person.

If the Cultural Broker is unable to accompany the DCS Specialist to the initial in-person contact with the family, the DCS Specialist will provide the Cultural Broker information regarding identified safety concerns and family needs following contact. The Cultural Broker will make concerted efforts to meet with the family in-person within 24 hours of receiving notification that DCS has completed initial contact with the

If a parent/caregiver initially declines Cultural Brokers services and later requests to receive the service, the services may resume if the request is made within 30 days of the date of the original referral. The Cultural Broker will inform DCS of the family's desire to participate and will begin working with the family. A new referral or Service Request does not need to be submitted.

Documents are to be submitted by the provider according to timeframes outlined in the Cultural Brokers Program Manual.

If the family's only identified need is connection to services, the DCS Specialist shall help connect the family with appropriate resources to support their needs and well-being. Cultural Brokers services are not intended to continue solely for service connection.

As services approach closure, the Cultural Broker will evaluate family progress, utilization of resources, and service efficacy.

family. The Cultural Broker will not contact the family prior to DCS.

Service Agreement

During initial contact with the family, the Cultural Broker will develop and review the Service Agreement with the family. The Service Agreement includes supports that will be provided to address concerns related to the reason for DCS involvement, reduce risk, and strengthen protective factors.

Family Assessment

The Cultural Broker meets with the family members to complete the Cultural Brokers Family Assessment within 48 hours of the initial contact using the Protective Factors Survey (2nd Edition) to identify strengths, needs, and barriers, which may be influencing child safety and well-being. The Family Assessment is used to inform service planning and evaluate parent progress over time and does not replace or serve as a DCS safety assessment. The family may decline participation in the Cultural Brokers Family Assessment.

Service Plan

Within seven (7) days of completing the Cultural Brokers Family Assessment, the Cultural Broker collaborates with the family and DCS to develop a Service Plan based on the Cultural Brokers Family Assessment, if one was completed. The Service Plan includes goals identified by the family, and activities that will be completed to achieve these goals. The Service Plan should align with applicable DCS plans (e.g. Present Danger Plans and Safety Plans) and guides Cultural Brokers service delivery throughout the service approval period.

Linkage to Services

The Cultural Broker supports the family in accessing culturally and linguistically appropriate services and resources, addressing barriers to engagement, and helping the family build support networks. Linkage activities focus on strengthening family protective factors, addressing unmet needs, and promoting child safety and well-being.

Attendance at Meetings

At the request of DCS or the family, the Cultural Broker attends meetings pertaining to the family. During these meetings, the Cultural Broker provides advocacy, supports the family's voice and understanding, and promotes culturally responsive communication across systems.

The Cultural Broker may attend meetings such as:

- Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings
- Case Plan staffings
- Adult Recovery Team (ART) meetings
- Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings
- Juvenile Court hearings and mediations
- DCS Clinical Supervision discussions
- Other similar meetings (such as school meetings, community support meetings, or other family support network meetings, when appropriate)

Closure

Service duration and intensity are guided by the family's needs and progress towards meeting the Service Plan goals. Services close when one of the applicable closure reasons listed in the Cultural Brokers Program Manual exists.

At closure, the Cultural Broker completes a final Family Assessment and documents the closure reason in the Weekly Progress Report.