

Cultural Support and Advice

A guide for prospective advisers

Family Start West Coast/Buller | Tai Poutini Whānau Pō Kite Ata Trust

You may be suitable to become a cultural adviser if you have relevant cultural or community knowledge, standing and experience. You do not necessarily need to be a therapist. Family Start must assess and approve your suitability before you provide any services.

This guide explains the role, the checks we complete, and what you can and cannot do. It applies to Cultural Support and Advice under ACC's Sensitive Claims Service, which supports people affected by sexual abuse or assault. We use "client" for ACC's term "kiritaki".

What the service is for

Your role is to help remove cultural barriers that are making it harder for a particular client to engage with support or recover. Your work must connect with that client's treatment goals and be coordinated with their lead provider, usually their therapist. [1, 2]

For example, a client may feel misunderstood because of their beliefs, cultural identity or community experiences. You could help them explain what matters and help their provider respond appropriately.

Who might be suitable

ACC's examples include kaumātua, community elders, faith leaders, and leaders from Rainbow/Takatāpui or disability communities. Other people with appropriate expertise may also be suitable. The role is not limited to Māori cultural support. [1]

- You have knowledge and experience relevant to the client's cultural needs, with standing or trusted connections in the relevant community.
- You can explain how your contribution could help this client's engagement or recovery.
- You can respect the client's choices, privacy and boundaries, and work alongside their treating provider.
- You are willing to complete Family Start's suitability, safety and induction requirements.

Qualifications and approval

ACC does not specify a particular degree or professional registration for a third-party cultural adviser in the cultural-advice provisions. Cultural identity alone does not establish suitability, and a clinical qualification alone does not establish cultural expertise. Family Start assesses each person and proposed role. This approval does not authorise you to deliver counselling or another professional service. [1, 2, 3]

What you can do

The following examples can fit the service when they address an identified cultural barrier, are agreed with the client and lead provider, and are within your expertise. They are practical examples based on ACC's service description, not individual ACC approvals. [1, 2]

Example	Why it fits or does not fit
Help a therapist understand tikanga or cultural expectations	Explain a client's concerns about meeting arrangements, communication or whānau involvement, and agree suitable changes.
Support a client who feels disconnected from their culture	Explore what belonging means to them and help make appropriate community connections where disconnection is affecting recovery.
Help a Rainbow or Takatāpui client feel understood	Help them explain identity-related concerns and identify safe community support where these issues affect participation in therapy.
Discuss faith or spiritual concerns	Help the client and provider understand beliefs or community pressures affecting recovery, without imposing your own beliefs.
Connect a client with culturally relevant support	Facilitate an introduction to a suitable cultural organisation, elder or community network, with the client's agreement.
Attend a session with the client and therapist	Contribute cultural understanding and help communication. The therapist remains responsible for clinical treatment.
Give client-specific advice to the provider	Discuss the cultural barriers affecting that client, with the client's knowledge and consent, even when they are not present.

One to one sessions at Family Start

Family Start's position is that one-to-one time between an adviser and a client is acceptable where it serves the purpose of Cultural Support and Advice. The ACC documents reviewed do not expressly prohibit this arrangement. This is Family Start's interpretation and operating position, rather than an express ACC statement approving all one-to-one sessions.

Family Start undertakes responsibility for ensuring all required safety and suitability checks are completed before services begin. One-to-one work must be agreed with the client and coordinated with their lead provider, with a clear purpose, safe setting and appropriate feedback arrangements. The lead provider does not need to attend every session under Family Start's approach. The adviser must remain within the cultural-advice role.

Example: a client meets privately with an approved cultural adviser to discuss cultural disconnection affecting their engagement in therapy. With the client's consent, the adviser shares relevant recommendations with the therapist. This fits Family Start's approach; it is not a separate course of counselling.

What you cannot do under this service

A helpful activity is not automatically an activity ACC funds as Cultural Support and Advice. The purpose, your role and what actually happens in the session all matter.

Example	Why it fits or does not fit
Provide rongoā Māori treatment and bill it as cultural advice	ACC expressly excludes rongoā Māori from this service item. It has a separate funding pathway. A rongoā practitioner may give cultural advice, but must keep the services distinct. [1]
Provide counselling, EMDR or psychological assessment solely as a cultural adviser	This role does not authorise clinical treatment or assessment. Those services require the appropriate professional qualifications, ACC approval and service arrangements. [2, 3]
Use sessions for general staff cultural supervision or training	ACC distinguishes general cultural competence development from advice about the needs and treatment goals of a specific client. [1]
Offer a regular social visit with no identified cultural purpose	Companionship alone does not meet this service's purpose. Explain which cultural barrier the work addresses and how it supports recovery. [1, 2]
Automatically bill yoga, massage, energy healing or another wellbeing activity	These are not automatically authorised by the cultural-advice provisions. Family Start must establish the correct scope and funding before agreeing to any such activity. [1, 2]
Share the client's story with community members without agreement	The client's consent and privacy must be respected. A community connection does not give permission to disclose personal information. [2]

Spiritual and holistic support

ACC allows culturally specific spiritual or holistic aspects of healing to be addressed. This may include understanding a client's spiritual concerns and helping the provider respond appropriately. It is not blanket approval for every healing practice or treatment. Where an activity overlaps with rongoā Māori or another treatment, discuss it with Family Start before offering it under this service. [1]

Boundaries in every session

Follow the client's choices. Do not pressure them to adopt beliefs, take part in practices, reconnect with an unsafe person or community, or disclose details of sexual abuse. Do not change their clinical treatment plan or advise them to stop medication. These are Family Start practice expectations for keeping cultural advice safe and within role.

If the client becomes distressed, raises a safety concern, or needs help beyond your role, follow the agreed safety plan and contact the lead provider or Family Start. Use emergency services when urgent help is needed.

Getting started with Family Start

Before you provide any services

Contact the Family Start Manager to discuss your cultural expertise, relevant experience, community connections and the support you could offer. Being interested or meeting some of the criteria does not mean you are automatically approved.

Family Start takes responsibility for completing all required safety and suitability checks before services start. This includes assessing your experience and suitability, completing Police vetting and required children's workforce safety checks where you will work with children, and checking relevant restrictions under the ACC contract. [2]

The contract prohibits services by interns. It also prohibits personnel, including third-party providers, convicted of offences under sections 124–210 of the Crimes Act 1961 or similar overseas offences. Family Start will assess these requirements as part of its checking process. [2]

Before the first session, we will confirm your approved role, the client's consent, the purpose and planned hours, a safe location, privacy and recordkeeping requirements, and how to contact the lead provider. We will arrange applicable induction and training, including ACC requirements, and monitor suitability and safety over time. [1, 2]

During and after each session

To claim payment for hours delivered, you must submit Family Start's [Cultural Support and Advice – Claim for Hours Delivered form](#). Complete a separate form for each session you provide support; do not combine multiple sessions into one claim. Include your details, the requesting service provider, the client's purchase order number obtained from the lead provider, the date and time delivered, and a brief description explaining how your support helped remove barriers to the client engaging in therapy. Provide enough information for Family Start and ACC to understand the work completed, while protecting the client's privacy.

Keep a brief, secure record of each session and any agreed next steps. Share only information agreed and needed for care, subject to applicable safety and legal obligations. Promptly tell Family Start about concerns, boundary issues or work outside your agreed role. Check with Family Start before offering additional sessions or making commitments about funding.

Hours and payment

ACC provides up to 10 hours before a cover decision. After cover, up to 10 hours over 12 months are available alongside a Tailored Support to Wellbeing package, totalling up to 20 hours over 24 months. Lead Providers allocate hours according to need; these are limits, not a guaranteed allocation. [1, 2]

Agree your fee and invoicing arrangements with Family Start before starting. ACC's July 2026 maximum is \$148.35 per hour excluding GST, based on actual and reasonable cost under code SCSCA. This ceiling is not an automatic adviser pay rate. [2]

Sources and how to use this guide

This guide reflects the documents below as reviewed on 31 October 2026. ACC requirements are referenced by number; Family Start's one-to-one position and practice expectations are identified separately. The Service Schedule takes precedence over the Guidelines if they conflict. [2, clause 7.3(b)]

[1] ACC Sensitive Claims Service Operational Guidelines, November 2025: section 6.3, pp. 32–33; section 6.4, pp. 33–34; induction and invoicing provisions. <https://www.acc.co.nz/assets/contracts/Sensitive-Claims-Service-Operational-Guidelines.pdf>

[2] ACC Sensitive Claims Service Service Schedule, 1 July 2026: clauses 4.15 and 4.24; 6.1; 7.3–7.4; 10.4–10.9; Part C, SCSCA. <https://www.acc.co.nz/assets/contracts/Sensitive-Claims-Service-Service-Schedule.pdf>

[3] ACC How to apply for the Sensitive Claims Service contract: named service provider and service provider requirements. <https://www.acc.co.nz/for-providers/provider-contracts-and-services/sensitive-claims-service/how-to-apply>