Building early childhood teaching capability through pre-service and in-service training is central to making early childhood settings more inclusive and improving outcomes for children with disabilities and special needs.

The Government is committed to supporting teachers in Victoria, including early childhood teachers, to build their capability to provide inclusive education settings for all children, by requiring them to engage in professional learning activities that focus on children with disabilities and special needs.

# Professional development for registered early childhood teachers

Professional learning is ongoing and early childhood teachers require support to access opportunities to update their knowledge and skills. To help teachers build their capability to make learning environments more inclusive, all registered early childhood teachers should complete professional development activities relevant to teaching children with disabilities and special needs in preparation for the renewal of registration process in September 2016. At the 2016 renewal, early childhood teachers will be required to declare that they have either undertaken relevant professional development in the previous two years or will undertake it prior to their renewal of registration in September 2017.

This means that within the annual 20 hour minimum requirement of standards referenced professional development activities, every early childhood teacher should undertake professional learning activities that can be referenced to the following descriptors within the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers:

* Develop teaching activities that incorporate differentiated strategies to meet the specific learning needs of learners across the full range of abilities. (Descriptor 1.5)
* Design and implement teaching activities that support the learning and participation of learners with disability and address relevant policy and legislative requirements. (Descriptor 1.6)
* Establish and implement inclusive and positive interactions to engage and support all learners in learning activities. (Descriptor 4.1)

Teachers will need to keep records of the relevant professional development activities they undertake.

See below for professional learning options that meet this requirement.

# Pre-service early childhood teacher education

Pre-service education that includes a focus on teaching children with disabilities will enable the next generation of teachers to be better prepared. To support undergraduate teachers to develop the skills they need to teach in an inclusive environment, teacher education providers seeking Victorian Institute of Teaching (the Institute) accreditation of their programs will be required to detail how their programs prepare future teachers to teach children with disabilities.

# From provisional to proficient teacher

New early childhood teachers need time, support and professional learning opportunities to build their capabilities, including how to teach children with disabilities. Provisionally registered early childhood teachers will demonstrate the Australian Professional Standards at the Proficient Teacher level to achieve the registration status of early childhood teacher as outlined at: [www.vit.vic.edu.au/registered-teacher/standards](http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/registered-teacher/standards). The Institute’s information about gathering evidence of practice to apply for early childhood teacher registration will include specific requirements relating to teaching children with disabilities and special needs.

# Professional learning options to meet this requirement

As with the current registration renewal requirements, professional development may involve a variety of professional learning activities such as courses and programs, workplace-based learning, online learning, coaching and mentoring, lectures and conferences.

To support teachers to access professional learning relevant to teaching children with disabilities and special needs the Department currently offers the following options to early childhood teachers in Victoria:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Professional learning option** | **Description** | **Access and availability** |
| Disability Standards for Education (DSE) eLearning | Free online resources about legal obligations under the DSE and Disability Discrimination Act. | Available to all early childhood teachers through the Department’s website at:  [www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/Pages/legislation.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/Pages/legislation.aspx) |
| Early ABLES Online Professional Learning | An online assessment, reporting and pedagogical tool for early childhood teachers that assesses the development of children with disabilities or developmental delay in regards to the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework outcomes. This online professional learning shows educators how to use this tool to benefit the children in their care. | Available to all early childhood educators including teachers through the Department’s website at:  [www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/profdev/Pages/earlyables.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/profdev/Pages/earlyables.aspx) |
| Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA) | Provides professional development programs in partnership with the Department focused on improving the quality of early childhood intervention. | Available to all early childhood education and care professionals at:  [www.eciavic.org.au/](http://www.eciavic.org.au/) |
| Victorian Deaf Education Institute (VDEI) Professional Learning Program | A range of professional learning activities catering to all Victorian education professionals supporting deaf and hard of hearing children and young people aged 0 to 18 years, across a range of educational settings. | Available to all early childhood education and care professionals through the VDEI website at:  [www.deafeducation.vic.edu.au](http://www.deafeducation.vic.edu.au) |

Early childhood teachers and services may also choose to explore other professional learning options provided by their employers, consultants, external organisations and associations. A sample of organisations and associations where professional learning options may be explored are detailed in the table below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Organisation** | **Description** | **Access and availability** |
| Amaze (formerly Autism Victoria) | Amaze delivers a range of autism training, workshops and courses. | Available for organisations, community groups, employers, and those working with children at:  [www.amaze.org.au/discover/how-we-can-help-you/learning-education/](http://www.amaze.org.au/discover/how-we-can-help-you/learning-education/) |
| BIALA | Provides a range of professional development programs to support educators working with children with additional needs, delays and disabilities. | Available for all early childhood education and care professionals at:  [www.bialapeninsula.org.au/ForProfessionals.html](http://www.bialapeninsula.org.au/ForProfessionals.html) |
| Early Childhood Australia (ECA) | Offers web-based resources to support professional learning for early childhood educators working in education and care services for young children (aged birth to eight years). | Available to all early childhood education and care professionals through the eLearning Hub at: [www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/learning-hub/](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/learning-hub/) |
| Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) | Provides training programs, seminars and workshops for early childhood educators. | Available to early childhood educators, educational leaders and service managers at: [www.elaa.org.au/services\_resources/training](http://www.elaa.org.au/services_resources/training) |
| Elwyn Morey Centre | Provides professional learning that focuses on the inclusion of children with a diverse range of needs in early childhood programs. | Available to all early childhood education and care professionals at:  [www.monash.edu/education/about/community-clinics/elwyn-morey-centre](http://www.monash.edu/education/about/community-clinics/elwyn-morey-centre) |
| Gowrie Victoria | Gowrie Victoria is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, under the Inclusion and Professional Support Program, as the Professional Support Coordinator for Victoria. | Available for inclusion and professional support services:  www.gowrievictoria.org.au/PSC.aspx |
| Irabina Autism Services | Education and training events ranging from workshops to conferences and seminars featuring international autism research experts. | Available for parents and professionals at:  [www.irabina.com/services-2/education-training/](http://www.irabina.com/services-2/education-training/) |
| Kalparrin | Provides a range of education and training programs to support educators working with children with disabilities and developmental delays | Available to all early childhood education and care professionals at:  [www.kalparrin.com.au/about-us/our-organisation/](http://www.kalparrin.com.au/about-us/our-organisation/) |
| Noah’s Ark | ECII (Early Childhood Intervention and Inclusion) is a project of Noah’s Ark that provides training courses and resources to professionals working in the fields of early childhood intervention and inclusion. | Available for early childhood intervention and inclusion professionals, early childhood educators and teachers at:  [www.noahsarkinc.org.au/resources/training-books/](http://noahsarkinc.org.au/resources/training-books/) |

The Institute is working with education stakeholders and the Department to provide further guidance for teachers, leaders and professional development providers on what professional learning activities are suitable to meet this requirement.

For more information visit: [www.vit.vic.edu.au/registered-teacher/special-needs-plan](http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/registered-teacher/special-needs-plan)