

## **Fact Sheet 1: Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care: Alignment with the *Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people* protocol**

This Fact Sheet provides information on the alignment between the Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care (the Agreement) and requirements in the *Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people* protocol.

### **The Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care**

The Agreement is a partnership between the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Municipal Association of Victoria and Early Learning Association Australia. It aims to **increase the participation and engagement of young children in out-of-home care (OoHC)** in:

- Maternal and Child Health services; and
- high-quality ECEC services, with a focus on three and four year old kindergarten programs.

In considering the placement of young children in OoHC into high-quality ECEC services, National Quality Framework ratings in key quality areas may provide a particular focus. These include:

- Quality Area 1 – Educational program and practice
- Quality Area 5 – Relationships with children
- Quality Area 6 – Building collaborative partnerships with families and communities.

Quality Area 1 includes a requirement that each child's learning and development program is documented and assessed by educators and teachers, and that each child's progress is made available to families and carers.

### ***Protecting the Safety and Wellbeing of Children and Young People* Protocol**

The protocol aims to promote and support the safety and wellbeing of children in Victorian licensed children's services and schools. The protocol defines the roles and responsibilities of DHS, DEECD, and staff and carers in licensed children's services and Victorian schools in **taking appropriate action when it is believed that a child has suffered harm, or is likely to suffer harm, through abuse or neglect**. It provides key information including:

- reporting requirements in line with the Children Youth and Families Act (2005) including responsibilities of mandated/non mandated persons;
- the obligations and responsibilities of staff in licensed children's services and departmental authorised officers regarding children at risk of abuse or neglect; and
- how to access appropriate support services for children at risk of abuse or neglect and their families.

The protocol is currently being updated to reflect the requirements of the *Education and Care Services National Law*. The principles and content of the protocol document continue to apply.

### **Regulatory authority support**

In Victoria, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Quality Assessment and Regulation Division (QARD) is the **regulatory authority** responsible for the licensing and regulating children's services, as required by the Education and Care Services National Law 2010 and Children's Services Act 1996 and the respective Regulations. The regulatory authority is a resource and can be a source of identification of children in OoHC who need more support in order to access and benefit from ECEC and/or identifying services that may be well placed to support children in OoHC. QARD can also receive and investigate complaints arising from alleged breaches of the National Law and Children's Services Act (which can include concerns about inappropriate programming for children).

### **More information**

The Agreement and links to related materials and contacts is at: [www.education.vic.gov.au/careagreement](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/careagreement)