MAINTAINING VICTORIAN APPROVED NDIS PROVIDER STATUS

# INTRODUCTION

Under the agreed transitional arrangements for NDIS providers who hold Victorian Approved NDIS Provider status to deliver the NDIS registration group Early Childhood Supports, every provider holding this status will be required to engage an endorsed independent review body to undertake independent review of the provider’s compliance with the Victorian Early Childhood Intervention ECI Standards 2016.

# BACKGROUND

**Independent reviews and verification against the Victorian ECI Standards**

Independent review processes help ensure that providers have acceptable levels of management and service delivery in place and encourage continual provider self-improvement.

Independent review bodies assess and compile evidence that indicates if a provider is meeting the *ECI Standards*.

The independent review will encompass:

* review of provider’s policies, documented processes, reports, information for clients
* site visits (with prior notification)
* client/staff file review
* client (ie.Child’s guardian) interviews or participation in the review
* client and other stakeholder feedback.

Where a provider does not meet a standard, the provider is required to:

* immediately resolve any non-compliance with the *ECI Standards* that places a client at significant risk; or
* resolve any other non-compliance within three months.

The independent review body will advise the Department immediately if it suspects, or has evidence of, or receives allegations of the following:

* safety concerns, abuse or risk to a child who receives *early childhood supports* from a provider
* a provider who puts a client at risk of significant harm
* faulty governance, financial accountability or criminal activity of a provider
* inadequate professional qualifications or failure to maintain qualifications and registration.

The Department may publish information about the service provider’s performance against the *Victorian* *ECI Standards*.

Further information is provided in [*Procedures and Forms for NDIS Early Childhood Supports Service Providers in Victoria*](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/needs/Procedures%20and%20Forms%20for%20NDIS%20ECS%20providers%20in%20Victoria.docx)*.*

# Subcontractors

Under the service agreement conditions and conditions contained in the NDIA *Guide to Suitability*, providers may only subcontract services where there is prior written consent from the Department. Providers that subcontract any services must have a contract with the subcontractor that includes a term that the subcontractor agrees to allow an independent review body to access its premises to conduct an independent review of subcontracted services delivered on behalf of the provider. The subcontracted provider may be included in the scope of the independent review against the provider.

# Endorsed independent review bodies

The Department has endorsed a number of independent review bodies to undertake independent reviews against the *ECI Standards*. Providers are required to choose an independent review body from the range of Department endorsed review bodies.

The scheduling of reviews will be negotiated between the provider and the independent review body. An independent review body will inform the Department that it has been engaged by a provider and the scheduled date for the independent review.

The independent review body must submit their review report including any verification of the provider’s performance against the Victorian ECI Standards to the provider and forward a copy to the Department. The Department will be notified by the independent review body of any significant risk issues identified during independent review.

Purchase of review by an endorsed independent review body is at the provider’s expense.

A list of endorsed independent review bodies is available on the Department’s website: [ECIS and the NDIS](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/needs/Pages/ecisframework.aspx).

# Preparing for independent review

Please note that you may need to wait several months for an independent review body to commence a review of your organisation. For this reason, the Department recommends you book your review well in advance of your VANP status expiry date.

To prepare for an independent review, it is recommended you are familiar with *the* [*ECI Standards 2016*](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/needs/victorianecistandards.docx) and the [*Victorian Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) Standards 2016 Evidence Guide*](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/needs/Victorian%20ECI%20Standards%20Evidence%20Guide.docx). The Evidence Guide details an overview/explanation of each standard and the criteria to be addressed to meet each standard. It also includes evidence indicators used to measure each criterion. The Department suggests providers prepare potential evidence of meeting the ECI Standards, in advance of the independent review, e.g. ensure the business meets the requirements of the Staff File Audit Tool and Client File Audit Tool.

# Other requirements to maintain ‘Victorian Approved NDIS Providers of Early Childhood Supports’ status

In addition to achieving and maintaining compliance with the ECI Standards, all *Victorian Approved NDIS Providers of Early Childhood Supports* must:

* comply with the NDIS [*Terms of Business*](https://www.ndis.gov.au/providers/provider-toolkit#m3)
* comply with conditions listed in the [*NDIS* *Guide to Suitability*](https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwiB2MnktNXVAhXFVrwKHT8KBtYQFggmMAA&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ndis.gov.au%2Fmedias%2Fdocuments%2Fh05%2Fh6f%2F8798368202782%2FModule-4-Guide-to-Suitability-PDF-634-KB-.pdf&usg=AFQjCNExFE9d2f_ZFzoDGgDosAjNSvC9ZQ)
* comply with Departmental regional monitoring.

A failure to comply with these requirements will result in loss of *Victorian Approved NDIS Provider (Early Childhood Supports)* status, and NDIS registration to deliver NDIS funded *Early Childhood Supports*. More information about being an NDIS registered provider can be found in the [*NDIS provider tool kit*](https://www.ndis.gov.au/providers/provider-toolkit).

# considerations when SELECTING AN INDEPENDENT REVIEW BODY

* Start to look for an independent review body as soon as possible, taking into consideration the expiry date of your *Victorian Approved NDIS Provider* status and potential waiting times for a review.
* Approach more than one independent review body as part of your selection process, as you would with other suppliers.
	+ Consider the support each independent review body is able to provide throughout the process to assist you to meet the verification requirements.
* Is there a pre-audit process?
* What is the process if non-conformities are identified?
* What is the total cost of the audit including potential travel and accommodation costs, and are there any extra costs (e.g. specialist team members)? What is included in the total package? Ensure that all terms and conditions are fully stated with the quote in a written format.
* What is the likely audit duration and how will that fit your schedule?
* What is required of your staff during the audit?
* What processes does the independent review body have in place to involve and interview service users (note that parents/guardians/carers can be interviewed, but not children)
* What is the grievance procedure should there be a dispute any time during or after the audit?
* How long will it take to receive the review report?
	+ Is there a ‘right of reply’ period once you have received the review report?

**Multi-funded organisations**

* If your organisation has other standards it is audited against, such as the Human Services Standards, you may wish to combine audits across the whole organisation.
* Which review methodology best suits the business needs of all program areas that your organisation is funded for?
* Does the independent review body have the ability to complete more than one quality assessment at the same time? For example, can they audit against the National Standards for Disability Services, Human Services Standards and the Victorian Early Childhood Intervention Standards at the same time?
* What qualifications and technical expertise is required of the independent review body to cover all aspects of your business?

**Questions**

* If you have questions about the ECI reviews after reading the available information, please email: ECI.reviews@edumail.vic.gov.au.