Victorian Early Childhood Intervention Services Guide (Project Code 718360)

Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) in Victoria are delivered by a range of non-government organisations and the Department of Education and Training’s (the Department) Specialist Children’s Services. ECIS aim to improve the lives of children with disability or developmental delay form birth to school entry, and their families through the provision of specialised supports and services.

These supports and services are provided with two outcomes in mind:

* Optimising the child’s learning, development and ability to participate in family, early childhood education and care settings (ECEC) and broader community life
* Assisting parents and families to have the knowledge, skills and support to respond to the needs of their child

The practices used by ECIS professionals are intrinsic to the delivery of these outcomes.

The Focus of ECIS

ECIS delivery is informed by recognition that:

* Children’s development and learning is shaped by the environments in which they live, and ECIS need to ensure that these environments are as fully supportive as they can be
* Young children’s main learning environments are the family, ECEC services and other community settings, and these are the environments that need to be able to support children’s learning and development

A major focus of ECIS is to work with and through the major providers of environments, experiences and learning opportunities that children need. ECIS use a flexible model of service delivery in which a large portion of the work is conducted in children’s everyday settings (the home, ECEC settings and the broader community) and the goals, values and priorities of the family inform the intervention approach, enabling the intervention to have the most significant impact.

Target Group

ECIS is targeted at children from birth to school entry who have either:

* a disability;

or

* a developmental delay which is the result of an impairment and causes substantial functional limitations

and who require a coordinated, long term, multidisciplinary service response.

Description

A funded ECIS place includes the following activities:

* Specialised therapeutic interventions for individuals in family homes or community settings
* Counselling and family support to assist families to manage the impact of caring for a child with disability
* Support to kindergarten and child care providers to promote the access and meaningful participation of children with disability in local community settings
* Planning and coordination of a range of services and supports to meet the needs of the child and family.

Features of Service Delivery

Delivery of ECIS is underpinned by the following practices and approaches:

* The provision of information, support and resources in a collaborative, timely and effective manner
* Family-centred practices that recognise and build on family strength, increase confidence and assist families to make informed choices and build family capacity to meet the needs of their children
* Individualised approaches that are tailored to meet child and family needs
* Responsiveness to the diversity of families, including vulnerable families, families who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background and those who are from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds
* Interventions that provide practical strategies to support the development of the child’s functional skills, including those skills that enable them to participate in the learning and development opportunities alongside their peers and in broader family and community life
* Where possible, the provision of services in everyday family environments to promote naturally occurring learning and development opportunities
* Consultation and advice to ECEC settings to promote sustainable inclusive learning and development opportunities and build the confidence of ECEC staff to meet the needs of children with disabilities or developmental delays
* Use of inclusive practices
* Maximising the use of universal and other targeted services to support an integrated children’s services system that can respond to the needs of families of children with a disability or developmental delay
* Key worker approaches supported through trans-disciplinary collaborative teamwork that includes a range of suitably qualified specialists
* Service delivery that strives to achieve greater coordination within and between specialist and generalist children’s services
* Regular planning, assessment and review of interventions and their outcomes, including measures for both child and family outcomes
* Services are delivered in accordance with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework practice principles recognising the importance of working in partnership with the family and other child and family services.

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) aims to advance all children’s learning and development from birth to eight years of age. The VEYLDF provides a common language for describing outcomes for all children, supporting ECEC professionals to set high expectations for every child and work together with families to achieve common outcomes for all children.

The VEYLDF:

* Identifies five early years learning and development outcomes for all children
* Identifies eight practice principles that describe the most effective ways for early childhood professionals to work together, with children and with families to promote learning and development.
* Emphasises the importance of supporting children’s and families’ transitions as they move within and across services throughout the early childhood period.

The VEYLDF practice principles are:

* Reflective practice
* Partnerships with families
* High expectations for every child
* Respectful relationships and responsive engagement
* Equity and diversity
* Assessment for learning and development
* Integrated teaching and learning approaches
* Partnerships with professionals

These practice principles form the foundation for professional practice of all early childhood professionals in Victoria, including ECIS professionals. It is an expectation that ECIS professionals use the VEYLDF to inform their practice.

Further information regarding the VEYLDF can be found at the following link:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/edcare/Pages/veyldf.aspx>

ECIS Workforce

ECIS organisations comprise practitioners with appropriate expertise and qualifications who use intervention strategies that are grounded in research and evidenced-based practice.

ECIS practitioners will hold specialist qualifications in teaching or a range of allied health disciplines. Where appropriate they will be registered with their regulatory body, and either hold, or be eligible for, membership of their professional association.

ECIS practitioners and providers should strive for continuous improvement and high quality services. Practitioners should be appropriately resourced, skilled and provided with ongoing supervision and professional development opportunities.

ECIS organisations must ensure appropriate employee screening is undertaken e.g. referee checks, police checks and current *Working With Children* checks for all practitioners providing direct services to children, prior to employing staff. Practitioners should have experience in working with children with disability and an understanding of early childhood development and the impact of disability on a child’s development. They should also be experienced in building family confidence and capacity so that families have the knowledge, skills and support to meet the needs of their child.

In 2009, the Department funded Early Childhood Intervention Association (Victorian Chapter) (ECIA-VC) to develop *Early Childhood Intervention Practitioner Competencies* to underpin high quality service provision for young children with a disability or developmental delay and their families. This document supports practitioners and service providers to understand the skills, knowledge, values and belief sets of capable early childhood intervention practitioners. Further information can be found on the ECIA (VC) website at the following link:

<https://www.eciavic.org.au/documents/item/24> .

Standards and Guidelines

* Victorian Early Childhood Intervention Standards 2016 (ECI Standards) (formerly the Specialist Children’s Services Program Standards 1998):

<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/earlychildhood/intervention/programstandards.pdf>

* Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) Program Framework (2005):

<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/earlychildhood/intervention/framework2005.pdf>

* Early Childhood Intervention Services vision and key priorities (2003):

<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/earlychildhood/intervention/visionstatement2003.pdf>

* Disability Act: www.legislation.vic.gov.au

Other resources

The Department commissioned the Centre for Community Child Health to conduct a literature review of research concerning contemporary Australian and international evidence based service delivery models for children with a disability, developmental delay or additional needs.

A copy of the report is available at the following link: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/needs/ecislitreviewrevised.pdf>

The *Disability Standards for Education* *(2005)* outline legal obligations for educational services under the *Disability Discrimination Act (1992)*. This legislation ensures the right of every child who experiences disability to education on the same basis as children without disabilities, including in kindergarten and school settings. The standards recognise that each child is different and that some children may require additional support to participate on the same basis. It also recognises that educators may need access to additional supports and resources to ensure they are able to provide a fully inclusive program. *Disability Standards for Education: A practical guide for individuals, families and communities* is available via the website: <http://resource.dse.theeducationinstitute.edu.au/>

The Victorian Government’s *Child Safe Standards* came into effect in January 2016 and apply to organisations working with children, including ECIS. They aim to drive cultural change in organisations that provide services for children, so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice. A list of the standards can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) website, along with the overarching principles which include safety for children with a disability: [http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies%2C-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards)

Service Agreement Information Kit

Organisations are obliged to comply with the specific departmental policies and certain legislative requirements outlined in the terms and conditions of the service agreement.

The *Service Agreement Information Kit for Funded Organisations 2015–18* (developed for Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Education and Training) provides funded organisations with important information on the relevant processes and reporting and accountability requirements. It contains:

* Departmental policies and procedures with which the funded organisation is expected to comply
* Terms and conditions of funding and service provision
* Roles and responsibilities regarding the agreement
* Financial accountability reporting requirements.

The kit’s terms and conditions may vary from time to time without notice. Further information about the kit is available at the following link:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/facs/bdb/fmu/service-agreement/contents>

Monitoring and Review

Organisations funded to deliver ECIS are monitored against the performance measures and targets specified in the service agreement. Performance measures are outlined below. Monitoring is undertaken through data collection requirements listed here and financial accountability requirements as specified in the service agreement.

Funded organisations are accountable for the appropriate use of funding and for the delivery of the services specified in the service agreement. To ensure accountability, all providers are required to regularly report on the services through data collections and other reporting. This allows the organisation and the Department to periodically review progress and to adjust the service agreement if necessary.

The Funded Organisation Performance Monitoring Framework is a critical part of the Department’s quality assurance approach to ensure that service users receive quality care and services meet appropriate standards and community expectations.

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/facs/bdb/fmu/service-agreement/4.departmental-policies-procedures-and-initiatives/4.10-funded-organisation-performance-monitoring-framework>

Performance Measures and Data Collections

Funding is based on actual service levels which may be adjusted in accordance with periodic reconciliations.

Funded community service organisations are required to enter details of all services in the client information system known as the Integrated Reporting Information System (IRIS). Internal services are required to enter details of all services in the Client Relationship Information System (CRIS).



Counting Rules

When a community service organisation is funded to provide a set number of ECIS places, it is expected that at any time, a minimum of this number of clients are receiving a service. New clients should be accepted from ECIS Intake as soon as the organisation has an ECIS place available.

Program-specific Requirements

The Department will continue to monitor service provision, and where necessary, may amend service specifications or funding allocations based on community needs or in response to changes to government policy and priorities.

During the 2016-2019 period, the National Disability Insurance Scheme will roll out across Victoria. The introduction of the scheme will mean changes in the way services are accessed and the funding arrangements for service providers.