



# Designated Teacher Training

**LOOKOUT**  
Centre

**Guidance for School Principals,  
Designated Teachers and School  
Staff to work effectively with  
students  
in out-of-home care**



***“We acknowledge and respect the traditional custodians whose ancestral lands the LOOKOUT Centre team journey’s onto. We acknowledge the deep feelings of attachment and relationship of Aboriginal people to country and pay our respect to their Elders past and present” We have a deep desire that LOOKOUT as an education response can redress some of the harm caused to our first Nations People.***

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**A huge thank you for offering to undertake the really important role of the Designated Teacher.**

**We are really appreciative that you have agreed to take on this role, a role that will make a real difference to the education and life of our most vulnerable children.**

**The importance of this role cannot be underestimated and you will have a positive impact on the lives of children and young people you work with**

**– thank you.**

**LOOKOUT Centre**





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Victorian Government has committed \$13.2 million over four years with an additional \$4.8 million annually ongoing to establish the LOOKOUT Centres, which are based on an innovative virtual model. An Education State Initiative, LOOKOUT Centres are focused on and have been designed to:

- **lift educational outcomes** for students in out-of-home care
- **increase the accountability** of Department of Education and Training (DET) and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) systems and services for the educational achievement of students in care
- **build the capability** of schools, carers and case managers to effectively support learning for this vulnerable cohort.

LOOKOUT Centres are an additional resource to support schools, Child Protection Practitioners and case workers to meet their obligations under the Partnering Agreement. This includes ensuring that all students have:

- an Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- a Student Support Group (SSG)
- a Learning Mentor
- appropriate and structured contact between schools, case workers and carers.

There are clear links between educational attainment, life trajectory and wellbeing. A collaborative systems approach is required to improve outcomes for students in out-of-home care. DET and DHHS are committed to working together to establish the LOOKOUT Centres and ensuring Victoria's most vulnerable students receive a consistent, high quality education in order to thrive.

As an additional support to schools and students in out-of-home care, LOOKOUT has introduced Designated Teachers to Victorian schools. A Designated Teacher, nominated by their principal, is trained by LOOKOUT Centre staff to be the advocate for and champion of out-of-home care students at their school. In conjunction with LOOKOUT Centres, the Designated Teacher will monitor students' IEPs and ensure students are meeting their learning goals.



LOOKOUT Centres are an additional resource to support compliance with the Partnering Agreement. LOOKOUT Centre staff are part of a multidisciplinary team which support and guide Designated Teachers. However, within the school setting, Designated Teachers will have lead responsibility for helping school staff understand factors which will best support the learning and achievement outcomes of students in out-of-home care.

The Designated Teacher will:

- promote a culture of high expectations and aspirations for how students in out-of-home care learn
- make sure the student has a voice in setting learning targets
- be a source of advice for staff about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual students
- make full use of assessment for learning
- ensure that students in out-of-home care are prioritised in one-to-one tuition arrangements
- ensure carers understand the importance of supporting learning at home
- have lead responsibility to ensure each student in out-of-home care has a quality IEP
- promote implementation of all elements of the Partnering Agreement
- be the lead contact for the LOOKOUT Centre within their school
- ensure all Koorie students have a cultural support plan and are linked with the Koorie Education Support Officer (KESO) (Government schools).

Under the obligations of the Partnering Agreement all students in out-of-home care must have an IEP as part of their overall care plan.

The Designated Teacher needs to ensure an IEP is developed within the first week of enrolment or when entering out-of-home care.

The IEP is a shared document which includes the information that everyone needs to help their conversations, planning and the delivery of strategies required to make sure the student gets the support and provision needed to succeed with their education.

The Designated Teacher leads on how the school uses the IEP to monitor education progress against targets. They make sure that it is updated and available in time for review of the student's wider education plan. For each review, the IEP must include any new information about progress towards education targets since the last IEP review.



The Designated Teacher has a key role in supporting students in out-of-home care to make a smooth transition to their new school, including making sure there are effective arrangements in place for the speedy transfer of information between relevant agencies.

The Designated Teacher is the first point of contact within the school, who will facilitate the school's engagement with others (e.g. DHHS and LOOKOUT Centre staff).

The Designated Teacher will work collaboratively with the school's wellbeing staff and other agency representatives to minimise any disruption to the student's education.

The Designated Teacher will ensure that:

- there is an agreed process in place for how the school will work with other agencies, focusing the collective on promoting the student's educational achievement
- school policies are communicated to DHHS and carers
- the school maximises educational stability for the student, especially by sharing information through the IEP and in providing advice to the region about the impact of disrupting education.





# FRAMEWORK

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## Why have a Designated Teacher?

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Many students in out-of-home care have suffered disrupted learning and may have missed extended periods of school. The gaps in their learning and in many cases the emotional impact of their experiences are likely to have become significant barriers to their educational progress. The complexity of this fragmented educational experience needs careful assessment and planning. Excellent practice in supporting out-of-home care students already exists in many schools. Making the Designated Teacher role mandatory in all schools is intended to help ensure that effective practice becomes universal.

The Designated Teacher role requires that the person:

- is a qualified teacher who has completed the appropriate induction period and is working as a teacher at the school
- receives adequate and appropriate training on their role as the Designated Teacher from LOOKOUT Centre staff
- has opportunity to attend the Designated Teacher Professional Network.





# ROLE OF DESIGNATED TEACHER

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## Promoting Education Achievement

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The Designated Teacher has a significant role in promoting the educational achievement of every student in out-of-home care attending the school. They make a positive difference by promoting a whole school culture where the personalised learning needs of every student in out-of-home care matters and their unique personal, emotional and academic needs are prioritised.

The Designated Teacher is responsible for supporting school staff to understand the complex factors impacting students in out-of-home care, and how these factors can affect learning outcomes. They ensure staff involved in supporting students in out-of-home care:

- set high expectations and that the students are actively involved in achieving their learning and educational goals
- are aware of the emotional, psychological and social impacts of loss and separation from birth families, the complex reasons for that separation and, that some students may find it difficult to build relationships of trust with adults because of their experiences
- understand why a student in out-of-home care may need more support than other students
- understand how important it is to see out-of-home care students as individuals rather than as a homogeneous group and to not publicly treat them differently from their peers
- appreciate the importance of showing sensitivity and confidentiality about who else knows about a student's out-of-home care status
- appreciate the central importance of the student's IEP in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers and KESOs. Most importantly, depending on age and understanding of the student, what everyone needs to do to help them to achieve their full potential
- have an understanding of how trauma effects brain development and impacts learning.



In promoting the educational achievement of students in out-of-home care, the Designated Teacher should:

- contribute to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure that they do not unintentionally put out-of-home care students at a disadvantage
- make sure, in partnership with other staff, that there are effective and well understood school procedures in place to support the learning of students in out-of-home care. Particular account should be taken of the student's needs when enrolling at the school and of the importance of promoting an ethos of high expectations about what can be achieved
- promote a culture in which students with experiences with the care system believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education
- promote a culture in which students in out-of-home care discuss their progress, are involved in setting their own targets, have their views taken seriously and are empowered to take responsibility for their own learning
- be a source of advice for school staff about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual students who are in out-of-home care
- make sure the school makes full use of assessment and learning approaches to improve the short and medium term progress of students in out-of-home care
- support them, and their teachers, to understand their educational status and how to develop strategies to achieve the student's individual goals
- make sure that students in out-of-home care are prioritised for any additional one-on-one support
- promote good home-school links through contact with the student's carer and ensure effective and consistent communication with carers.





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## The role of the Designated Teacher in developing the IEP

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The LOOKOUT Centre team have developed an IEP template specifically for students in out-of-home care.

What are IEPs and why are they important?

- all students in out-of-home care must have an IEP (as per the Partnering Agreement)
- the SSG is responsible for the development of an IEP, to support the educational achievement and engagement of the student in out-of-home care. IEPs may also be known as Individual Learning Plans. The purpose of an IEP is to describe a set of strategies to address the particular educational needs of the student
- IEPs should be reviewed on a regular basis according to the needs of the student, and at least twice per year. If a student changes school, the IEP must be forwarded by the existing school to the new school for consideration. The new school should also request a copy of the IEP if this has not been forwarded in a timely manner
- the IEP, in addition to being part of the overall education plan, is part of an out-of-home care student's official school record. If the student moves schools, it should be forwarded along with other school records, to their new school. If known in advance, it should be sent to the Designated Teacher at the new school
- more adults are involved with students in out-of-home care which adds complexity when developing a shared understanding of roles and expectations. In the past, this has meant that there has been no common understanding of how to meet a student's educational needs. The IEP is a vital document because it provides a 'collective memory' about the student's education and aspirations
- where they are used effectively, IEPs improve the educational experience of the student by helping everyone gain a clear and shared understanding about the teaching and learning provision necessary to meet the student's education needs, how that will be provided and by whom.



When a student on the school's roll enters into out-of-home care, the LOOKOUT Centre team must ensure the Designated Teacher is notified and the SSG develops an IEP. This should include information about:

- demographics such as age; care status; where the student lives; school history
- the student's carers
- the student's parents and what restrictions might apply in relation to contact with the student.

If a student has been in out-of-home for some time, the IEP should include information about educational progress and how the student learns best.

What should the school do with the IEP?

- when a student in out-of-home care enrolls at the school, the Designated Teacher should make sure the student's specific educational needs are assessed without delay, as outlined in the Partnering Agreement
- the Designated Teacher will work closely with other teachers as necessary to identify the student's strengths and weaknesses and any barriers to learning. This assessment of learning needs should form the basis for the development or – if it already exists – the review and refinement of the IEP.

A robust IEP sets high quality expectations of progress and puts in place the additional support the student needs in order to succeed.

The IEP should:

- outline a meaningful education program
- be age and developmentally appropriate
- be flexible and future-oriented
- be a strength-based model with a focus on the student's potential to achieve good educational, social and behavioural outcomes
- aim to retain the student at school
- clearly articulate individual and shared responsibilities
- provide/document information to reflect about how the student is progressing
- provide guidance for the SSG
- contain a record of important decisions and actions
- be reviewed regularly, according to the needs of the student (at least twice annually).

IEP guidance and proforma are available at: [www.education.vic.gov.au/LOOKOUT](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/LOOKOUT)



The Designated Teacher will make sure that the IEP is an effective tool to help the school do everything possible to support the student's educational progress. The IEP must:

- identify developmental and educational needs in relation to skills, knowledge, subject areas and experiences
- set short, mid and long term educational attainment targets agreed in partnership with the student and the carer, where appropriate
- be a record of planned actions, (e.g. on homework, extra tuition, study support, including the date by which these should be done), that the school and others will take to promote the educational achievement of the student based on an assessment of their educational needs
- include information on how the progress of the student is to be rigorously monitored and supported
- record details of specific interventions and targeted support that will be used to make sure personal education targets are met. In particular, one-to-one tuition has a particularly significant impact on the progress of students in out-of-home care, therefore this should be employed wherever appropriate as one of the key strategies for raising attainment
- include what will happen or is already happening in regards to any additional support which may be required
- set out how a student's aspiration, self confidence and ambition is being nurtured, especially in consideration of longer term goals towards further and higher education, work experience and career plans
- ensure student voice
- be a record of the student's academic achievements and participation in the wider activities of the school and other out of school learning activities (e.g. sporting, personal development, community)
- provide information which helps all who are supporting the student's educational achievement to understand what works for them
- have clear accountability in terms of who, within the school, is responsible for making the actions identified in the plan happen.

The Designated Teacher will work closely with other staff especially the Assistant Principal and Wellbeing staff in school to make sure the student's progress is rigorously monitored and evaluated.



# WORKING WITH OTHERS

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## The relationship of the Designated Teacher with others beyond the school

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Schools will already have arrangements in place for how they engage with outside agencies. The Designated Teacher is the first point of contact with LOOKOUT Centre and are the advocates for students in out-of-home care. Designated Teachers do not replace the role of the Student Wellbeing staff in working with external agencies to support students in out-of-home care. This is important in order to make sure that the school plays its role to the full in making sure arrangements are joined up and minimise any disruption to a student's learning.

It is also vital that the school works closely with a student's carers in ways which will support students in out-of-home care to achieve their full potential. How this is achieved is likely to depend on the school's existing arrangements for engaging with those who have parental responsibility for a student. These arrangements should be clear to everyone who is involved in caring for the student.

In putting these arrangements in place, Designated Teachers should make sure that:

- there is an agreed process in place for how the school works in partnership with other professionals, such as the student's case manager and the student's carer, in order to review and develop the student's educational progress and how each person will contribute to improving the student's educational achievement
- school policies in relation to, for example, home-school agreements, engagement and attendance, homework diaries and parents' evenings, are communicated to carers and social workers and, where appropriate, parents, so that out-of-home care students are not disadvantaged
- the student's teachers know the most appropriate person to contact where necessary. For example, signing permission slips for school trips will be delegated to the foster carer by the child protection worker but for some students permission will be needed from the student's child protection worker
- there are positive and effective channels of communication and partnership working between the school and relevant agencies to help out-of-home care students gain the most from their school experience.



Securing school stability for out-of-home care students is an integral part of narrowing the gap between what they achieve compared to other students. The stronger the working links and cooperation between the school and DHHS, as well as the student's carers and agencies involved in providing support, the greater the chances are of keeping the student's education on track. This does not mean that the Designated Teacher has to do everything in relation to every point of contact. The Designated Teacher should, however, make sure that the ways in which the school works with others outside of the school maximise the stability of education for the student. In particular, Designated Teachers will:

- make sure that the latest information about educational progress, primarily through the IEP is communicated to all
- be consulted by the student's case manager and/or others such as the LOOKOUT Centre about any decision relating to changes in care placements which will disrupt a student's education or training
- provide advice in such cases about the likely impact of disrupting the student's education and what the school should do in order to minimise the disruption if a move in educational placement cannot be avoided
- make sure that if an out-of-home care student moves school the Designated Teacher at the new school is provided with any information they need to assist the transition process as quickly as possible.

Every school does its best to avoid excluding students. In the case of out-of-home care students it is even more important. Designated Teachers, in partnership with others in the school should:

- be involved in any discussions related to decisions about potential exclusions of out-of-home care students
- ensure that DHHS and the student's carers are involved in such a decision
- ensure any possible expulsion must be directed to the Area Director.



# CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE

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## Developing good practice: checklist of questions

As schools implement this guidance they may find the following questions useful as a starting point for reviewing policies which impact on how the role of the Designated Teacher is implemented out in the context of wider school policies and taking account of numbers of out-of-home care students on roll.

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### Planning

- How will the school include raising the educational attainment of out-of-home care students in the school improvement plan?
  - What policies has the school developed to encourage collaboration with other agencies and services (e.g. health professionals, CAMHS, school attendance services)?
  - What is the policy on professional development for all staff working with vulnerable students?
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### Raising staff awareness

- What safeguards does the school have in place for sharing sensitive information about individual out-of-home care students with relevant staff members?
  - What is the procedure for liaising with carers/residential student's homes and social services to ensure that the school has relevant information about a student's care history?
  - How are the student's achievements communicated to the carer?
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### Enrolment

- How quickly are enrolments activated?
- What are the arrangements for welcoming new (out-of-home care) students to the school? Does this take into account that out-of-home care students (perhaps arriving mid-term) may require additional supports?
- What does the school do to ensure that new students are well supported by their peers?
- How does the school provide information to carers and case workers about the school's enrolment and appeal process?
- Who liaises with other agencies to ensure that an education placement works?



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## **Record keeping and transfer**

- Who reviews and keeps the student's IEP up-to-date?
- Who updates school records with current addresses of carers, parents, social workers, etc?
- What is the procedure for preparing information for transfer if a student in out-of-home care changes school?

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## **Promoting inclusive schooling and good home-school communication**

- How does the school record who is entitled to receive a student's report, invitation to parent evenings and other school events?
- Are carers given a named person, such as the Designated Teacher, to contact if they have concerns?
- What is the school fees policy to ensure equal access of trips among certain groups of students, such as those who are out-of-home care?
- Are a range of study support and out-of-school opportunities such as homework clubs, careers guidance and work experience available to students in out-of-home care?

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## **Promoting inclusive schooling: curriculum and options**

- Have the needs of students in out-of-home care been considered in the context of the school's curriculum policy?
- What is the process when making a decision to place a student on an alternative curriculum? Does the school always consult relevant professionals, the student and his or her carers?
- Is flexible personalised learning available to all students in out-of-home care?
- Does the school have a good baseline of information – informed by transfer of school records and thorough assessments – so that barriers to learning are quickly identified and actions are put in place to secure each student's progress?
- Is the school timetable flexible with regard to outside fixed activities?

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## **Promoting high expectations and achievement**

- What targets are there for students in out-of-home care in the school?
- Does the school include measures of individual student's progress?
- What are the specific barriers to achievement facing students in out-of-home care and can the school take action to remove them?
- Is there good liaison with carers and residential units to support student's learning?
- If students in out-of-home care fall behind, how is this identified and help provided?



- How does the school celebrate the educational successes of students in out-of-home care?
  - Do students have regular access to a learning mentor to assist them to succeed?
  - What revision support is available for senior students? How are students in out-of-home care encouraged and supported to attend these?
  - How are students in out-of-home care encouraged and supported to access Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning activities for further and higher education?
  - Are students in out-of-home care engaged in gifted and talented programmes?
  - Are scholarships promoted for Koorie students and are they encouraged to apply?
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### **Educational Needs Assessment (ENA)**

- How does the school ensure prompt identification of special educational needs of students in out-of-home care?
  - Are carers informed that the student has special educational needs and where they can access support?
  - How are carers/case workers involved in assessments and reviews?
  - How are students involved in reviews and target setting?
  - Is the level of support given to students in out-of-home care with special educational needs sufficient?
  - Are there particular staff training needs in connection with meeting the needs of students in out-of-home care?
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### **Exclusions / Suspension / Expulsion**

- Is there any trend in exclusion rates of students in out-of-home care?
- What strategies does the school use to avoid exclusion of vulnerable students including students in out-of-home care?
- Has the appropriate person/team in the school with responsibility for attendance been notified of the student's exclusion?
- What are the reintegration arrangements for students in out-of-home care who have been excluded?
- What other agencies are working with the student and have they delivered the necessary support (e.g. clinical psychology/CAMHS)?
- Where students in out-of-home care are at risk of exclusion, does their IEP include wellbeing support provision?
- Is work sent home when a student is suspended?



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## Promoting health

- Are students in out-of-home care considered for health promoting activities, such as breakfast club?

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## Wellbeing support

- What targeted interventions can the school initiate that focus on groups of students who have known risk factors, such as being in care?
- How does the school behaviour policy pre-empt escalating behavioural problems?
- How does the school ensure that initiatives such as lunchtime clubs and anti-bullying work include specific vulnerable groups such as students in out-of-home care?
- Are carers contacted on the first day of any unexplained absence?
- Are carers aware of the school's anti-bullying policies?
- Is there a safety plan/behaviour plan? Who knows about the plan?

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## Koorie students

- Have KESOs been notified of enrolments for Koorie students in out-of-home care?
- Is there a Koorie Cultural Plan in place?



# RESOURCES

## Useful resources and further guidance

### Websites

<http://www.childhood.org.au/for-professionals/smart-online-training>

<http://www.childhood.org.au/search-results?keywords=Making%20SPACE%20for%20Learning%20>

<http://www.socialthinking.com.au/index.php/the-zones-of-regulation.html>

[http://www.ccp.vic.gov.au/childsafetycommissioner/downloads/calmer\\_classrooms.pdf](http://www.ccp.vic.gov.au/childsafetycommissioner/downloads/calmer_classrooms.pdf)

<http://www.ccp.vic.gov.au/childsafetycommissioner/downloads/final-version-caring-classrooms.pdf>

[http://www.ccp.vic.gov.au/childsafetycommissioner/downloads/great\\_expectations.pdf](http://www.ccp.vic.gov.au/childsafetycommissioner/downloads/great_expectations.pdf)

<https://traumasensitiveschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/HTCL-Vol-2-Creating-and-Advocating-for-TSS.pdf>

<http://earlytraumagrief.anu.edu.au/resource-centre/trust-schools>

**LOOKOUT**  
centre

THE EDUCATION STATE  
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'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world'  
Nelson Mandela