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|  | Role of the Program Support GroupFact sheet | January 2015 |

The Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) Program contributes to the provision of a quality kindergarten program. The KIS Program focuses on enhancing a kindergarten’s capacity to provide a program that is responsive to the individual abilities, interests and needs of children with a disability and ongoing high support needs in an inclusive kindergarten environment.

The Program Support Group (PSG) brings together key people to support the planning for inclusion of children with disabilities or developmental delays, or on-going high-support needs or complex medical needs, from the time of enrolment in a kindergarten program.

What is the role of the Program Support Group?

The work of the Program Support Group (PSG) is underpinned by the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework and demonstrates the implementation of the associated practice principles; in particular, family centred practice and professional partnerships.

The PSG has an ongoing role beginning before the child commences the kindergarten program until they have transitioned into school.

The PSG:

* meets at least once per term to support to the child’s learning, development and wellbeing
* shares knowledge and understanding of the child’s interests, abilities and support requirements
* shares expertise to inform the development of an inclusive program that is responsive to the child’s learning and development needs
* identifies resources and staffing options to maximise opportunities existing within the kindergarten
* supports the development of an inclusive program that encourages the engagement of all children in a range of learning and development experiences and opportunities
* supports transition into the kindergarten program and into school
* coordinates services and supports for the child.

The agenda for the PSG meetings should be set around the outcomes of the review of the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Plan, celebrating the child’s achievements, discussing identified areas for additional support and planning for the child’s learning and development.

Membership of the PSG and their contributions

The early childhood teacher convenes the PSG and is the representative for the kindergarten program on the group. They organise meetings, and facilitate conversations to support planning for the child.

Parents attend PSG meetings to share and contribute to the development of a program that responds to their child’s interests, abilities and support needs.

Any other person who supports the child’s learning, development and wellbeing may be invited to attend the PSG meetings as appropriate. These people may include early childhood intervention service professionals, relevant therapists or allied health professionals.

What are the benefits of the PSG?

A key benefit of the PSG is the opportunity to develop collaborative partnerships with families and other professionals involved in supporting the child. Achieving high quality outcomes for all children requires active engagement with others who play a role in advancing children’s learning, development and wellbeing.

The PSG offers families an opportunity to share their knowledge and understanding of their child’s interests, abilities and needs. This supports family-centred-practice and enables families to feel respected and empowered to advocate for their child’s ongoing needs. As they develop a relationship with the educator and others involved with their child, they are able to contribute to planning an inclusive program.

Sharing information through regular meetings of the group means that planning reflects a common understanding of the child’s ongoing learning, development and wellbeing needs.

The PSG can assist families to feel supported through the transition into kindergarten and into school, and feel confident that all relevant people understand their child’s interests, abilities and support needs.

For more information on the KIS program visit <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/needs/pages/kinderinclusion.aspx>.