Early Childhood Intervention National Guidelines Project

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Our Vision: for young children of all abilities to fully participate in family and community life

right from the start

Background

Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA) is the peak national organisation promoting the interests of young children with disabilities and developmental delays and their families. ECIA is dedicated to ensuring that young children of all abilities can fully participate in family and community life.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has asked ECIA to provide recommendations for a set of national guidelines for minimum standards in Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) service delivery for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The NDIS is new to disability service provision in Australia and provides a set of agreements which ensures that there is a single consistent scheme for the provision of disability support services across all Australian states and territories. It provides funding directly to individuals who are able to choose their own services and purchase directly to providers. The NDIS will essentially mean the end to 'block funding' from government to service providers.

Current models of service delivery in Australia vary across and within states and territories. Whilst diversity of practice is valued for its contribution to innovation and its capacity to tailor NDIS support to individual children and their families, there is a need to focus more on outcomes for children. As a national scheme the NDIS requires guidelines that may be consistently applied in all states and territories. The national guidelines will be based upon best practice evidence in ECI service delivery and guided by national consultation with key stakeholders.

This project commenced in February 2015 with a first draft of minimum standards supporting best practice in ECI to be delivered by 30 June 2015.

Resourcing

ECIA Victorian Chapter will lead the national project. Two project officers have been employed. One of the project officers is based in Western Australia and will focus on consultation and research within Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory. The second project officer is based in Eastern Australia and will focus on consultation and research within Queensland, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and Tasmania.
A national Steering Committee and an Expert Advisory group will also be formed to assist with the development of national guidelines.

Project deliverables

The project team will undertake the following steps to develop a set of evidenced based national guidelines which will go out for public consultation in the first half of 2015.

- Identify best practice in ECI drawing upon national and international ECI theory and practice.
- Review current models of service delivery across states and territories.
- Compare current models of service delivery with best practice.
- Recommend strategies, tools and resources to address any gaps identified between current practices and best practice.

Project methodology

This project will rely heavily on consultation with the ECI sector. Consultation will be undertaken nationally in a range of ways including workshops, online, one-on-one and through teleconferences.

Identifying best practice

ECI best practice will be identified by reviewing national and international ECI theory with guidance by the expert advisory group. In addition, broad consultation within the ECI sector will be undertaken to identify models of best practice currently in use within Australia.

Review of current models of service delivery

To identify current models of service delivery in Australia the project team will refer to Australian ECI literature and consult with the following stakeholders:

- ECI service providers
- Peak bodies representing ECI professionals
- State and Territory Government representative.

Comparison of current models with best practice

The project team will develop a matrix to compare current models with best practice. The project team will draw upon the technical advice of the expert advisory group to identify whether current models differ from best practice.

Recommendations for gaps

The project team will consult with key stakeholders to develop recommendation to address any identified gaps between best practice minimum standards and current models of ECI service delivery. Stakeholders include:

- ECI service providers
- Peak bodies representing ECI professionals
- Advocacy agencies
- Parent/Carer groups
- State and Territory Government representatives

This process will enable NDIA to create guidelines supporting consistency when considering 'reasonable and necessary' ECI services for children, while continuing to allow families choice and control.

Meet the Project Team

Leah Temme - Project Lead (Western and Central Australia)

Leah Temme is an Early Childhood Teacher who specialized in Vision Impairment after teaching mainstream classes for 12 years. She has worked throughout Western Australia as a Visiting Teacher for Visually Impaired children in the Great Southern, South West, Metropolitan, Mid-west, Goldfields and Pilbara areas when employed with the Department of Education at their School of Special Educational Needs: Sensory. More recently, she has worked in NSW as an Early Learning Program Consultant with the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Education, a Graduate Diploma in Language (ESL), a Graduate Certificate in Vision Impairment and a Masters in Special Education. Leah has a passion for early intervention and inclusion and enjoys working with families and allied health professionals to meet children's needs.

Dree Ballardin - Project Lead (Eastern Australia)

Dree Ballardin has a background in Aboriginal Health, Social Statistics, Social Planning, Community Development, Environmental Management and Project Management. She has worked for the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Department of the House of Representatives, and the Federal Department of Health and Ageing in Canberra, Darwin and Melbourne. Dree has also worked for the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment. Most recently, Dree worked as a Health Information Analyst for the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, Victoria's peak body for Aboriginal Health. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Australian Studies and a Masters of Social Science in International Urban and Environmental Management. Dree has a passion for social justice, environmental sustainability and participatory approaches to decision making and governance.