



OUT-OF-HOME CARE EDUCATION COMMITMENT

A PARTNERING AGREEMENT BETWEEN:

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION OF VICTORIA
INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA

VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE AGENCY
CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE IN CHILD AND FAMILY WELFARE



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All parties to this Agreement acknowledge and pay respects to Elders and all Victorian Aboriginal communities. We honour and respect Traditional Owners, past and present, and value the rich culture and history of the First Peoples of this land. Throughout this document the term Aboriginal is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Use of the terms Koorie, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Indigenous are retained in the names of programs and initiatives and unless noted otherwise are inclusive of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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ACRONYMS

ACAC	Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care program
ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
BSIM	Behaviour Support and Intervention Meeting
CASES21	Computerised Administrative System Environment for Schools
CCYP	Commission for Children and Young People
CECV	Catholic Education Commission of Victoria
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CP	Child Protection, a unit of the Department of Health and Human Services
CPP	Child Protection Practitioner
CRIS	Client Relationship Information System (DHHS)
CRISSP	Client Relationship Information System for Service Providers (DHHS)
CSO	Community Service Organisation
CYFA	Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
DET	Department of Education and Training
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ENA	Educational Needs Analysis
FLO	Flexible Learning Option
HEAC	Health and Education Assessment Coordinator (DHHS)
IEP	Individual Education Plan
ISV	Independent Schools Victoria
KEC	Koorie Education Coordinator (DET)
KESO	Koorie Engagement Support Officer (DET)
KEW	Koorie Education Workforce (DET)
LIG	LOOKOUT Implementation Group (DET)
NCCP	Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (Catholic schools)
OOHC	Out-of-home care
PLP	Personalised Learning Plan (Catholic schools)
PSD	Program for Students with Disabilities
PSG	Program Support Group (Catholic schools)
SSG	Student Support Group
SSS	Student Support Services (government schools) Learning Diversity/Learning Adjustments (Catholic schools)
VACCA	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
VAEAI	Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.

GLOSSARY

Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC):

Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care is a new program for Aboriginal children and young people subject to a Children's Court protection order. Section 18 of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* enables the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to authorise the principal officer of an Aboriginal agency to undertake specified functions and powers in relation to a Children's Court protection order for a specified Aboriginal child. Once a protection order for an Aboriginal child has been made by the Children's Court, an approved Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) delivering ACAC may be authorised to take on total responsibility for administration of the child's protection order, including case planning and case management.

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO):

an Aboriginal organisation governed by the local Aboriginal community to deliver holistic and culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal people, children and families.

Behaviour Support Plan (BSP): is a document used by schools, designed to assist individual students who have experienced harm, are at risk of harm, or have caused harm to others.

Care manager: care managers are sometimes referred to as key workers and can be residential care workers, foster care agency workers or kinship support service workers. Care managers have responsibility for a child or young person's day-to-day care, including ensuring their needs are met in the areas of education, health, wellbeing, identity and relationships. Care managers coordinate the care planning process, attend case planning meetings and student support meetings.

Care team: led by the care manager (see above), a care team is the group of people who jointly plan for and support the care of a child or young person in out-of-home care (OOHC). The team work together to determine and undertake the tasks that parents ordinarily do to provide good care for a child or young person.

The care team develops and reviews the care and placement plan and contributes to the case planning process. The care team for an Aboriginal child should include an Aboriginal representative. A representative from the child's school should also attend care team meetings where possible.

Carer: carers include foster carers, kinship carers, residential carers and permanent carers. Carers provide direct day-to-day care for children and young people. They provide the primary relationship through which children and young people can feel secure, develop and grow.

Case manager: the person responsible for implementing the child's statutory case plan. While case management is most commonly undertaken by child protection, case management of children/young people subject to a Children's Court order can be contracted to a Community Sector Organisation (CSO) or ACCO.

Case plan: it is a legislative requirement that a case plan is prepared at substantiation that guides assessment, planning, and action by case managers and others involved in the life of a child subject to protective intervention. The plan is succinct and high level and is based on the Best Interest Case Practice Model.

Centre for Excellence in Child and Family

Welfare: is the peak body for children and family service providers in Victoria. The Centre plays a key role in advocacy, policy and training in relation to raising awareness about the needs of children in OOHC. As a signatory to the Partnering Agreement, the Centre will provide guidance and advice to community service organisations (CSOs) and individual service providers to assist in the interpretation and application of the Partnering Agreement.

Child and young person: in this Agreement, is defined as a person who is under the age of 18 years, but in some cases, can be up to the age of 21 years.

GLOSSARY (CONT.)

Child Protection Manual: contains the requirements for statutory child protection practice in Victoria. The manual provides essential procedural guidance for Child Protection Practitioners and managers, community service organisation staff providing case management and OOHC services and carers. The manual can be accessed at:

www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au

Community Service Organisation (CSO): appropriately qualified organisations contracted by government to provide case and care management for children and young people in out-of-home care. CSOs may also provide support to carers.

Cultural plan: a cultural plan is one part of an holistic approach to planning for Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC. The Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (CYFA) requires a cultural plan for every Aboriginal child in OOHC that aims to retain connections to family, community and culture regardless of placement. The care team prepares and implements the cultural plan which is reviewed with the Senior Cultural Advisor and endorsed by the ACCO CEO. While the Case Manager (Child Protection, ACAC provider or contracted agency) has the responsibility for the cultural plan created for the child, the care team is expected to lead and ensure implementation of the plan.

Designated Teacher: Designated Teachers were introduced to Victorian schools as part of the LOOKOUT Centre model. The Designated Teacher is the main point of contact in Victorian schools for LOOKOUT Centres and has a key role in advocating for and supporting students in OOHC to engage with education and to meet their learning goals. They assist LOOKOUT Centres in monitoring and building the capacity of schools to implement the Partnering Agreement requirements. The DET website provides further information on [*Designated Teachers*](#).

Educational Needs Analysis (ENA): the process of identifying and planning around the socio-emotional and educational needs and strengths of students in OOHC. It involves collecting, reviewing and analysing personal, health and educational information from several sources, determining the need for additional services and interventions, contributing to the development of a comprehensive Individual Education Plan or Personalised Learning Plan.

Flexible Learning Option (FLO): an educational setting that supports students who are disengaged from education or at risk of disengaging. FLOs may be registered schools such as community schools, flexible learning campuses of mainstream schools or flexible in-school programs. FLOs are generally characterised by highly individualised learning structures and plans coupled with a strong focus on providing holistic support for a child or young person's engagement and wellbeing.

Health and Education Assessment Coordinators (HEACs): senior program officers in DHHS divisions, whose focus is on improving systemic responses to health and education assessment, planning and intervention for children and young people in residential care. The HEAC role involves providing advice and support to professionals working with children and young people, liaising with care teams to promote health and education assessments and facilitating access to brokerage funds to support the recommendations from assessments.

Individual Education Plan (IEP, government schools) or Personalised Learning Plan (PLP, Catholic schools): is a living document that is essential in guiding the educational planning and monitoring of each student's unique learning needs. This requires collaboration from all stakeholders to develop goals and strategies that support the student to reach their potential. All students in OOHC must have an IEP/PLP.

Koorie Education Workforce: DET employs Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESOs) and Koorie Education Coordinators (KECs). The role of this dedicated workforce is to build the capacity of DET funded services and schools to better engage with Aboriginal learners and communities. They are available to provide expert advice and support regarding culturally inclusive strategies to improve engagement and student performance.

GLOSSARY (CONT.)

Learning Mentors: are appointed by a school, in consultation with the student, to support a student in OOHC with their learning, academic achievement and wellbeing in the learning environment. The DET website provides guidance about the role of the [Learning Mentor](#).

LOOKOUT Education Support Centres: are not physical structures and do not deliver curriculum. LOOKOUT Centre staff are based in regional offices of DET and build the capacity of schools, carers, Child Protection Practitioners (CPP) and OOHC services to improve educational outcomes for children and young people in OOHC. The Centres are led by experienced school Principals and are staffed by multidisciplinary teams of education specialists, allied health professionals, Koorie Cultural Advisors and data and administration officers.

Out-of-home care (OOHC): a temporary, medium or long-term living arrangement for children and young people who cannot live with their parents and who are on statutory care orders or voluntary child care agreements. Children and young people living in statutory OOHC may be subject to a child protection investigation, protective intervention or a Children's Court Order (and have oversight by DHHS). Types of OOHC include kinship, foster, residential, lead tenant and permanent care. Excluded from this definition are children and young people who are in informal care, and who have transitioned from OOHC to adoption or family reunification.

Permanent Care Order: an order made by the Children's Court appointing a specified person or persons as the parent to the exclusion of all others. Following the granting of a Permanent Care Order, Child Protection is no longer involved.

Protective Orders: are issued by the Children's Court and include: Interim Accommodation Order to OOHC, Family Preservation, Family Reunification Order, Care by Secretary Order, Long Term Care Order and Therapeutic Treatment Placement Order. Children and young people in statutory OOHC can be living in foster care, kinship care or residential care. The DHHS website contains further information on [protective orders](#).

School: a place from which education is provided to children and young people of compulsory school age (6–17 years) during normal school hours. Every school in Victoria must be registered with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA). Registered schools need to meet minimum standards, contained in the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017.

Student Support Group (SSG) (SSG, government schools) or Program Support Group (PSG, Catholic schools): the primary mechanism through which schools, case managers, care managers, carers, parents and support services collaborate to plan and support the education and wellbeing of a student in OOHC. The aim of the SSG/PSG is to ensure that those with the knowledge of and responsibility for the student work together to support engagement, attendance and achievement, and establish shared educational and social goals. An SSG or PSG is required for every student in OOHC.

Student Support Services (SSS): (Learning Diversity/Learning Adjustments for Catholic Schools) comprise a broad range of professionals including psychologists, speech pathologists and social workers. SSS staff work as part of an integrated health and wellbeing team within Areas of schools, focusing on providing group-based and individual support, workforce capacity building and the provision of specialised services.

Transitions: refer to the main transitional points for children in OOHC in the Victorian education system when children move from early childhood services to school, from primary school to secondary school, between schools, and from secondary school to higher education, training and employment.

Voluntary Child Care Agreement: is an agreement entered into under part 3.5 of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (CYFA) whereby the parent retains guardianship but places the child in OOHC.

ENDORSEMENT

We, the undersigned, on behalf of our respective departments and organisations endorse the *Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment: A Partnering Agreement between the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Education and Training, the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, Independent Schools Victoria, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency and Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare* (the Partnering Agreement).

The Partnering Agreement reflects the shared commitment to children and young people who live in statutory out-of-home care by the out-of-home care, primary and secondary education sectors. The Partnering Agreement outlines the requirements and responsibilities of all parties to work collaboratively to improve the educational experience and outcomes of children in OOHc.



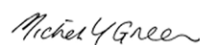
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INTRODUCTION

The Partnering Agreement is a commitment between:

- the Department of Education and Training (DET)
- the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
- the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV)
- Independent Schools Victoria (ISV)
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)
- the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (CfECFW)

Building upon the Partnering Agreement first released in 2003 and revised in 2011, the changes in this version reflect current knowledge of the factors that lead to children and young people being placed in statutory out-of-home care (OOHC);¹ changes in legislation and new initiatives that support their educational needs.

They also reflect action aimed at breaking the link between disadvantage and educational outcomes by supporting more students to stay in school and reach their educational potential.²

¹ See Glossary for definition of out-of-home care.

² Throughout the Partnering Agreement, the terms child, young person and student are used interchangeably.

The Partnering Agreement strengthens the shared commitment between partners to improve education and health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people in OOHC.

The Partnering Agreement:

- outlines the supports required to address the educational and social/emotional needs of students in OOHC during the years they attend school³
- promotes common practices across Victoria and provides a framework to monitor educational engagement and achievement
- provides guidance about key areas in which students in OOHC require support, including school enrolment, transition planning, attendance and engagement (including flexible learning options), achievement, case planning and school retention
- outlines a process for implementing the Partnering Agreement and monitoring outcomes
- affirms the Victorian Government's commitment to the principle of self-determination, including strengthening the role and influence of Aboriginal people, communities and organisations, particularly in their relationships with government
- promotes the agency and involvement of children and young people in OOHC in decision making and in actions that affect them.

³ While compulsory school age is 6-17 years, students in OOHC may be at school from 5-18+ years.

The Partnering Agreement applies to:

- children and young people who are in OOHC
- children and young people who have been placed on a Permanent Care Order within the last twelve months, in consultation with the permanent carer(s)
- staff who work in government, Catholic and independent schools, including Principals and other school leaders, teachers, education support staff, guiding the work of student wellbeing staff such as student wellbeing coordinators, primary wellbeing officers, student support services, school nurses and wellbeing staff employed locally by schools such as youth workers, psychologists, social workers, speech pathologists, visiting teachers and chaplains
- regional (government school) or Diocesan (Catholic school) staff who have responsibility for providing advice to schools and case managers about the requirements of the Partnering Agreement. This includes the LOOKOUT Centres and the Designated Teachers across the state as well as the Koorie Education Workforce (KEW)
- case managers who work within the DHHS Child Protection or Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC) programs and Community Service Organisations (CSO) or Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO) contracted by DHHS to provide case management services
- care managers in CSOs and ACCOs delivering the ACAC program
- approved kinship carers, accredited foster carers and residential carers.

Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care

The Partnering Agreement complements the 2014 *Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care*, an agreement between DHHS, DET, the Municipal Association of Victoria and the Early Learning Association Victoria.

The Early Childhood Agreement outlines the shared responsibility for ensuring all children up to five years of age in statutory OOHC in Victoria are engaged with Maternal and Child Health services and high-quality early education and care. The Early Childhood Agreement will be refreshed in 2018–19.





1 / REQUIREMENTS OF THE PARTNERING AGREEMENT

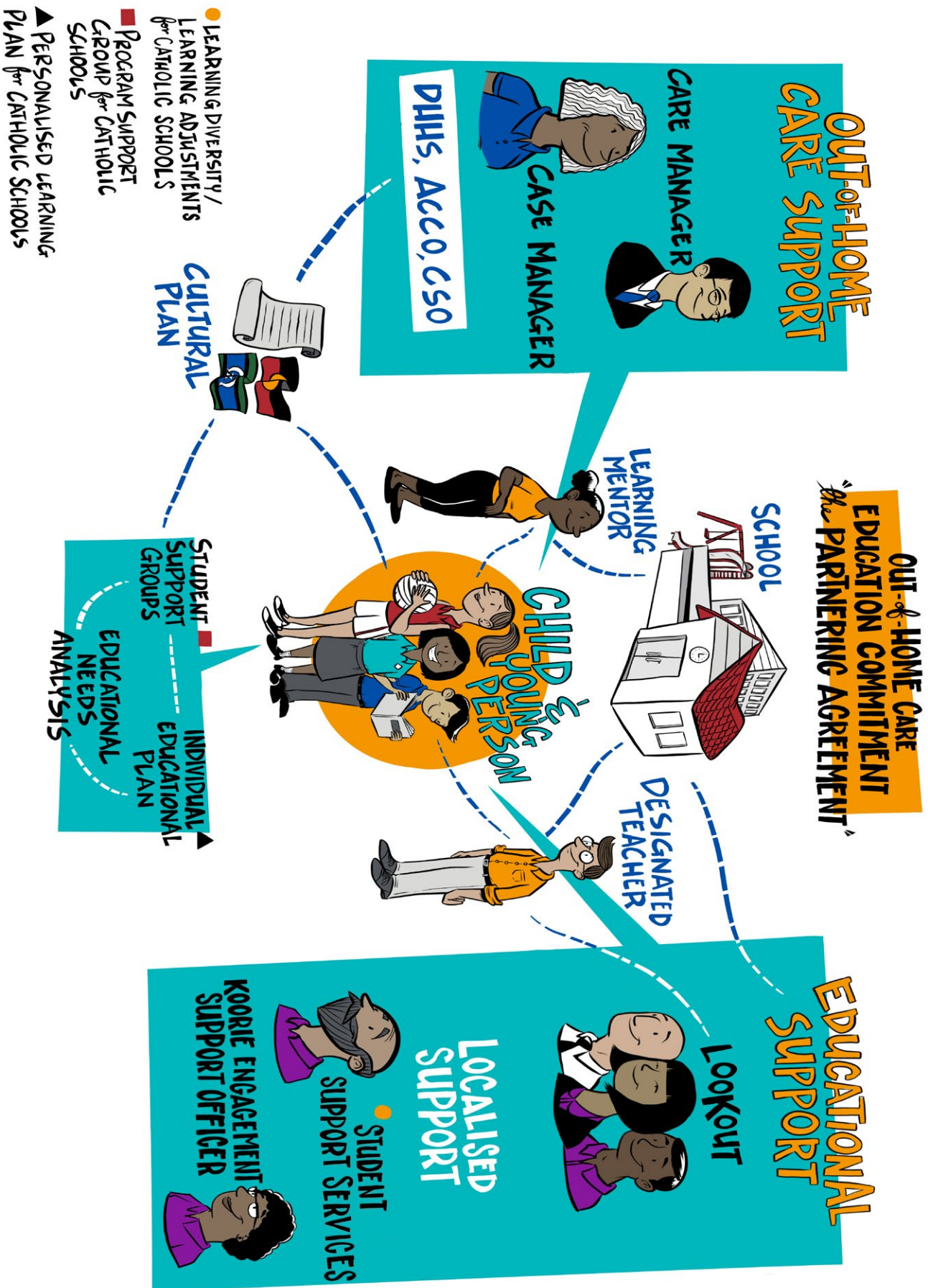
The Partnering Agreement aims to ensure that:

- processes are in place to actively support the educational achievement of every child and young person in OOHC
- there is a coordinated approach to supporting the educational, health and social, cultural and emotional needs of children and young people in OOHC
- all parties understand each other's roles and responsibilities and work cooperatively and in the best interests of the child and young person
- strategies are implemented to improve outcomes related to student enrolment, attendance, educational achievement, case planning, retention and school completion and educational transitions.

The Partnering Agreement requirements include:

- allocation of a teacher or staff member, in consultation with the student, as a Learning Mentor to each student in OOHC enrolled in a school
- a Student Support Group (SSG)/Program Support Group (PSG) for each student
- an Educational Needs Analysis (ENA) for every child or young person who has been in OOHC for at least three months (consecutively or for a period that adds up to three months) or longer to identify their individual learning needs and to inform their Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Personalised Learning Plan (PLP). If there are immediate concerns about a child's overall presentation and rate of progression, this process should start earlier
- an IEP/PLP for each student which is current, meaningful, regularly reviewed and updated, contains clear educational expectations of the student and meets quality criteria
- prioritisation of referrals by schools for students to education-related health and wellbeing services to ensure that services are readily accessible and responsive to the needs of these students⁴
- priority attention for applications to the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) for students in OOHC enrolled at a government school.

⁴ Education-related health and wellbeing services may include: *Student Support Services* (government schools) or Student Services/Learning Diversity (Catholic schools); *school nurses*; *Doctors in Secondary Schools*; *Visiting Teacher Service*; *Navigator program*; and specialist external services including family violence specialists.



2 / CONTEXT OF THE PARTNERING AGREEMENT

Victoria has around 10,300 children and young people living in OOHC.⁵ They live away from their parents in a range of alternative care arrangements. This includes living with relatives or friends (kinship care), foster care, residential care units with rostered care staff (residential care), lead tenant or with permanent carers. Some live in OOHC for only a few days or weeks, while others are in OOHC for many years. When children and young people are placed in OOHC, the preferred placement option is kinship care.

The *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (CYFA) is the legislative foundation for the protection of children and young people and the provision of community services to support children, young people and their families, promoting safety, wellbeing and development.

The CYFA outlines a set of best-interest principles that CSOs, ACCOs delivering the ACAC program, Child Protection and the Children's Court must consider when taking any action or making any decision. These principles require that child and family services keep children and young people safe from harm, protect their rights and promote their development in culturally, age and gender appropriate ways.

POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE FOCUS

Like any other child or young person, those in OOHC have a right to be protected, cared for and educated in a way that maximises their life opportunities. International human rights instruments and declarations, in particular the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989)*⁶ and the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)*,⁷ set out the specific ways these rights should be enacted for children, young people and their carers/families.

⁵ As at 30 June 2017, Australian Government Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2018. This figure includes children on Permanent Care Orders.

⁶ The four core principles of the CRC are: non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child.

⁷ The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms the minimum standards for the survival, dignity, security and well-being of Indigenous peoples worldwide and enshrines Indigenous peoples' right to be different.

Established in 2011, the *National Standards for out-of-home care* state that children and young people in OOHC should have their rights respected and should be treated in accordance with the CRC. The National Standards focus on key factors that influence better outcomes for children and young people living in OOHC. Three standards relate to education, health and wellbeing:

- **Standard 5:** Children and young people have their physical, developmental, psychosocial and mental health needs assessed and attended to in a timely way
- **Standard 6:** Children in care access and participate in education and early childhood services to maximise their educational outcomes
- **Standard 7:** Children up to at least 18 years are supported to be engaged in appropriate education, training and/or employment.

The *2013 Victorian Charter for Children in Out-of-Home Care* states that a child or young person in care has a right to be provided with the best possible education and training.

In November 2013, the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Non-Government Organisations tabled its report, *Betrayal of Trust*. The Victorian Government responded by establishing the *Child Safe Standards*. Made under Ministerial Order 870, these are compulsory minimum standards for all Victorian early childhood services and schools, to ensure they are well prepared to protect children from organisational abuse and neglect.

Following the *Betrayal of Trust* report, the Victorian Government passed legislation in February 2017 to introduce a *Reportable Conduct Scheme* in Victoria. The Reportable Conduct Scheme complements the child safe standards and other existing child safety measures. All Victorian school Principals will be required to bring allegations of reportable conduct by employees to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP).

In October 2016, the Commission for Children and Young People tabled *two reports* on Aboriginal children in OOHC.⁸ The Systemic Inquiry reports drew upon evidence from Taskforce 1000, which investigated the over-representation of Aboriginal children in OOHC and critically reviewed the case plans and circumstances of 980 Aboriginal children.

The two reports made 133 recommendations that promote cultural safety and connection for Aboriginal children in OOHC and access to Aboriginal-specific education services and mainstream schooling. The Victorian government accepted all recommendations, in full, in part or in principle.

In 2016, DET released *Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026*. Marrung is a key document in guiding the Victorian Government's commitment to improving the educational outcomes of all Aboriginal students, including those in OOHC.

In 2010, the Victorian Government established *Safe Schools* to ensure schools are free of discrimination and are safe places for all students, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) students.

⁸ Always was, always will be Koori children: systemic Inquiry into services provided to Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC in Victoria, Commission for Children and Young People and In the child's best interest: inquiry into compliance with the intent of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle in Victoria, Commission for Children and Young People

LOOKOUT EDUCATION SUPPORT CENTRES (LOOKOUT CENTRES)

LOOKOUT Centres work with and build the capacity of all schools, carers, Child Protection Practitioners (CPP) and OOHC services to improve educational outcomes for children and young people in OOHC. Each LOOKOUT Centre (four in total statewide, with one per region) is led by an experienced school Principal and staffed by teams of education specialists, allied health professionals, Koorie Cultural Advisors and data and administration officers.

The Koorie Cultural Advisors are specialised in intergenerational trauma and trauma-informed practice and work with schools to support the educational and cultural needs of Aboriginal students in OOHC. The Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESO) may make a referral to Koorie Cultural Advisors.

In partnership with schools, the LOOKOUT Centres support the enrolment of children and young people, set targets, monitor and evaluate educational progress, and coordinate resources and activities to support the student's education at school and at home. They focus on improving school attendance, engagement and educational achievement and provide professional development for school staff, making schools more inclusive for all students.

For more information see: [*LOOKOUT Centres*](#).



STUDENT VOICE AND PARTICIPATION

Article 12 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* states that children have the right to participate in decision-making processes that may be relevant in their lives and to influence decisions taken in their regard within the family, the school or the community.

Student participation in decision-making and having agency in learning is pivotal to positive academic and social outcomes. Participation leads to greater motivation in students, satisfaction in learning and a higher likelihood of academic success.⁹

The Victorian Government recognises that students have unique perspectives on issues such as teaching and learning, school operations and governance, health and wellbeing and education policy drivers and supports. All parties to this Partnering Agreement should ensure that children and young people in OOHC are involved in decision-making and actions that affect them, including involvement in the SSG/PSG, the ENA process, development of their IEP/PLP and the selection of their Learning Mentor and support person if required.

⁹ Williams, P (2017) 'Student agency for powerful learning' Knowledge Quest 45(4), 9–16.

BACKGROUNDS OF STUDENTS IN OOHC

Trauma experience

Children and young people in OOHC may share the common experience of having been exposed to significant physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse, neglect, and trauma (including family violence). These circumstances have resulted in their removal from the care of their parents by the Children's Court.

Abuse and neglect can impact on academic performance in various ways, including reduced cognitive capacity, sleep disturbance, memory difficulties and language delays. It can also affect social functioning, including the need for control, attachment difficulties (including school engagement and building healthy attachments with staff), poor peer relationships and instability arising from frequent moving.¹⁰

As a result, students in OOHC may need extra and individualised support to stay engaged in learning and to achieve their best.

The diversity of children and young people in OOHC

While they may share some common experiences, children and young people in OOHC are a diverse group, including those:

- from Aboriginal backgrounds
- from refugee or migrant backgrounds
- living in cities or in regional or rural areas
- in different OOHC arrangements
- having a disability or additional learning needs
- identifying as LGBTI
- on youth justice orders or having transitioned from the youth justice system.

¹⁰ Office of the Child Safety Commissioner (2007). *Calmer Classrooms: A Guide to Working with Traumatized Children*, Victorian Government: Melbourne. Reproduced with permission by the Queensland Government. Access at: education.qld.gov.au/schools/healthy/pdfs/calmer-classrooms-guide.pdf

In line with *Victoria's Multicultural Education Policy*, the *Education for All policy* and Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan, schools, Child Protection, CSO, ACCO workers and professionals should make schools and OOHC services inclusive by building culturally safe environments that celebrate the diverse identities of learners. Fundamental to this is having high expectations for the development and educational achievement of all students.

Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC

Aboriginal children and young people are over-represented in OOHC. In Victoria, an Aboriginal child or young person is almost 16 times more likely than a non-Aboriginal child or young person to be placed in OOHC.¹¹

Consistent with the Victorian Government's commitment to Aboriginal self-determination, DHHS has been working in partnership with ACCOs to implement a new approach called Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC).

Once a protection order for an Aboriginal child or young person has been made by the Children's Court, the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) may be authorised to take on the responsibility for the child's case management and case plan. Work is underway to increase the number of children authorised to attend care facilitated by VACCA and for other Aboriginal agencies to implement ACAC across Victoria. This will enable a greater number of Aboriginal children to be authorised to a Principal Officer of an Aboriginal agency in the near future.

Culturally inclusive practices in schools are important for promoting engagement, achievement and retention of Aboriginal students, especially vulnerable cohorts such as Aboriginal students in OOHC. Schools are able to access training and advice through the KEW and the LOOKOUT Centres to build their capacity to support Aboriginal children in OOHC. From 2018, each school will be provided

¹¹ *Report on Government Services, Australian Productivity Commission (2018)*, <http://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services>.

Cultural Understanding and Safety Training (CUST) (developed by DET in consultation with VAEAI), which will support schools and teachers to build their capacity to better support Koorie learners and through embedding local Aboriginal perspectives, cultures and histories in the curriculum and implement more culturally inclusive practices.

For more information see: *Education resources to support Aboriginal children in OOHC* in Section 9.

Children and Young People with a Disability and additional needs in OOHC

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimated that prevalence of disability in OOHC was approximately 15 per cent at 30 June 2017.¹² With the transition to the NDIS it is very important to understand the prevalence of disability and provide appropriate, coordinated supports to ensure that the best interests of the child or young person are met. For further information see: *Supporting students with disabilities* in Section 4.

Children and young people on Permanent Care Orders

For the first time, this revised Partnering Agreement provides for educational support for children and young people who are placed on Permanent Care Orders. Permanent Care Orders aim to provide long-term security and certainty for children, young people and their carers about the child and young person's future care when a decision has been made that they cannot live safely with their birth parent/s.

Children and young people subject to Permanent Care Orders do not have ongoing involvement from DHHS or the CSO/ACCO by which they were previously supported, however, schools retain responsibilities to support children and young people on Permanent Care Orders for up to 12 months.

¹² Child Protection in Australia 2016-17, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Accessed at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2016-17/data>



After 12 months, schools should review this process for each child or young person to determine whether further support is required. Schools should have a conversation with permanent carers about their willingness for their child to continue receiving support as stipulated in this Agreement.

INFORMATION SHARING

Protecting children and young people from harm and promoting their development is best achieved where assessments and case plans are based on comprehensive, relevant and accurate information. This may require everyone involved with the child and young person to be able to share relevant information with each other, to the extent they have a need to know, in a timely and effective manner.

Schools, case managers, care managers, carers, and other members of the care team are permitted to collect and share information relevant to the safety and development of a child and young person in accordance with the CYFA 2005. Outside of any specific provisions about reporting or sharing information under the CYFA 2005, information about a child and young person and their family can be shared in accordance with applicable privacy and health records legislation.¹³

Organisations bound by the Federal Privacy Act are required to take certain steps in response to any data breach, including notification of the breach to affected individuals, in accordance with the Notifiable Data Breach Scheme.¹⁴

Commencing in September 2018 for a first phase of organisations, the Child Information Sharing (CIS) Scheme¹⁵ will allow information sharing between authorised professionals (including OOHC, family services and maternal and child health services) to promote children's wellbeing and safety.

A second phase of implementation will occur in 2020, where most education and health services will be included. The CIS Scheme will help to improve early identification, intervention and prevention by allowing universal, secondary and tertiary services to work together to form a comprehensive picture of risk and need for children and young people. The reform is also intended to promote shared responsibility for children's wellbeing and safety across the system.

The parties acknowledge that it is not the intention of applicable privacy and health record legislation to prevent the disclosure and use of personal and health information about a child and young person where this is required, for example, to protect them from serious threat. In the context of OOHC, this means that personal or health information may be disclosed to the extent required to provide effective care or protection from serious threat for a child or young person. The parties also acknowledge that personal and health information must be handled with care and that people should only be provided with information that is relevant to assist the process of promoting a child or young person's best interests.

RESOLVING DIFFICULTIES

Where there are differences or disagreements between parties while supporting the education of a student in OOHC, the issues should be raised with a school's Designated Teacher or another staff member, case managers or other professionals involved.

In the instance where more senior expertise or a review of a decision may be required, the matter should be raised at the local level with the Principal or DHHS, CSO or ACCO manager to achieve a resolution. It is important that the carer's views are considered in decisions regarding their child's education.

¹³ Including the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*, the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2011*, the *Health Records Act 2001* and *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*

¹⁴ See <https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy-law/privacy-act/notifiable-data-breaches-scheme>

¹⁵ Created through the *Children Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2018*, amending the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*

3/ ENROLMENT

In Victoria, it is compulsory for children and young people from 6 to 17 years to attend school. A well-planned, welcoming introduction into a school community is particularly important for a child or young person in OOHC to effectively engage with and regularly attend school. Enrolment needs to occur quickly and efficiently to limit disruption to a child's learning and ensure they are welcomed into their new learning environment as soon as possible.

Some children and young people in OOHC may not have participated in schooling for some time and may need extra attention and support to re-engage in a school. Schools, regional offices of DET and Catholic Education Dioceses can provide advice and assistance to case managers to identify an appropriate education or training program and support enrolment processes. Many students in OOHC are eligible for additional assistance from various sources, including targeted funding for students with a disability.

A child or young person in OOHC will generally be enrolled in the neighbourhood school, defined as the closest school to the student's permanent address or placement. However, given the transient nature and unpredictable placement of children and young people in OOHC, it may be in the best interests of the student to attend another school or a quality Flexible Learning Option (FLO) that is outside the student's residential boundary. If a child or young person moves to a new placement and is closer to another school it may be in the child or young person's best interests to remain at their current school where they have supports, networks and friends.

In considering a school, it is important to confirm if the school is registered with the [VRQA](#). For any difficulties in enrolling a child or young person in a school, contact the relevant LOOKOUT Centre or Diocesan Catholic Education Office.

RESPONSIBILITIES: SCHOOL ENROLMENT

Schools will:

- enrol a child or young person in OOHC without delay. Any delay of more than one day must be reported to the DET Regional Director or Catholic Education Diocesan Director and any delay of more than one week needs to be endorsed by the DET Regional Director or Catholic Education Diocesan Director
- ensure LOOKOUT Centres and the Designated Teacher are aware of a child or young person's OOHC status and provide the welcome and support required
- the Principal must ensure that accurate information regarding statutory OOHC status is recorded in the school's student information record-keeping mechanism (under 'living arrangements' 'Category A' within CASES21 for government schools)
- ensure that Aboriginality is recorded for Aboriginal students and that supports are appropriately provided, including inviting the KESO to the first SSG
- establish a SSG or PSG in the first week of the student's enrolment or upon entering OOHC
- liaise with the student's ECEC service or previous school to ensure the transfer of all relevant information to begin developing a comprehensive IEP/PLP
- notify the school nurse or wellbeing team when staff or case managers have any health concerns about a newly enrolled child or young person in OOHC
- establish a relationship with the case manager
- ensure where possible that a school staff member attends care team meetings



- facilitate the student's smooth enrolment by putting in place the personal, social and organisational supports that welcome the child and promote engagement and wellbeing
- advise the carer and/or case manager of their eligibility for support from the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (government schools) or any equivalent relevant source
- support the student to stay at the school or maintain a connection with their school and if a change must occur, undertake any reasonable adjustments that may be required for each individual case.

DET Regions (including LOOKOUT Centres) and Catholic Education Diocesan offices will:

- facilitate the timely and effective enrolment of each child and young person in OOHHC by providing advice and support to schools - there should be no reason to delay enrolment
- work with schools, DHHS and carers/CSOs/ ACCOs to resolve any enrolment difficulties in a timely manner
- support Aboriginal students by ensuring that LOOKOUT Centre Principals notify the Koorie Education Coordinator (KEC) of the enrolment and that the KESO is invited to the first SSG meeting.

Case managers will:

- assist administrative staff, where required, to provide notifications of new OOHHC entrants on a weekly basis to the Principal in writing (copying the LOOKOUT Centre Principal)
- assist administrative staff, where required, to advise the Principal in writing (copying in the LOOKOUT Centre Principal) before or on enrolment that the student lives in OOHHC and ensure that relevant and up-to-date information is provided about the student's circumstances and care arrangements (including carer authorisations). This information needs to include Aboriginal status and be updated on an ongoing basis should circumstances change

- advise the Principal in writing (copying the LOOKOUT Centre Principal) if the student returns home and is no longer in OOHHC
- provide relevant education history, so schools can wrap the appropriate learning and wellbeing supports around the student and engage relevant support services.

Case managers and care managers will:

- Work with the carers/families to ensure that the child or young person has access to everything required to be able to participate in a timely manner including materials, textbooks, technology, transport to school, excursions and camps, see: [*State Schools Relief*](#)
- provide information to the school on key roles and responsibilities of DHHS and the case manager, placement provider and carer
- ensure that up-to-date information, including an accurate school name, year level and attendance level, is recorded in the education screen on the DHHS Client Relationship Information System (CRIS) or Client Relationship Information System for Service Providers (CRISSP)
- maintain an ongoing dialogue with the school and ensure that case managers, placement providers, carers and families are known to the school and promote their involvement in decision-making
- make all efforts to support the student to continue to attend their current school when making case management decisions

LOOKOUT Centres will:

- assist with the transfer of information between DHHS, DET and the school about the student to support timely and successful enrolment and transition
- attend meetings to support transition and address barriers to enrolment
- liaise with case managers to facilitate communication between the school and DHHS/ CSOs/ACCOs as needed.



4 / PROMOTING ENGAGEMENT, ACHIEVEMENT AND RETENTION

SUPPORTING ATTENDANCE

Schools, case managers, care managers, carers and parents need to work together to maximise the school attendance and participation of children and young people in OOHC. Assessments indicate that 80 per cent of children and young people in OOHC are attending school full-time, compared to close to 100 per cent of their peers in the community.¹⁶ Poor school attendance is linked to adverse student outcomes including early school leaving, poverty, substance use, unemployment and negative health outcomes. It can also affect the stability of a child or young person's placement in OOHC.

Students are expected to attend the school in which they are enrolled, on a full-time basis, every day of each term, unless:

- there is an approved exemption from school attendance or enrolment for the student, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in a school for particular activities.

A Principal or Regional Director (depending on the circumstances) may authorise an exemption and provide written approval for student attendance or enrolment to be exempt or reduced to less than full time.

Arrangements for part-time attendance for any other reason are exceptional, should be **short-term only** and if the arrangement continues longer it must be **reviewed regularly**.

Any part-time arrangements must be made in consultation with the SSG/PSG, have a clear rationale that it is in the best interest of the child and identify relevant achievable goals. The school, with the SSG/PSG should undertake appropriate planning to increase attendance and gradually transition the student back into full-time schooling. The decision and the plan should be documented in writing, for example through the student's

IEP/PLP or a specific plan for increasing school attendance such as a [Return to School Plan](#). Case managers should ensure that a student's case plan includes specific strategies to support full-time school attendance. Case managers should facilitate referrals and engagement with service providers in accordance with the case plan.

Ensuring full-time attendance may require that schools examine their environment and culture, curriculum and structures to ensure that the needs of a diverse range of students are met. It is important to listen to the student to find out what would help them to attend and participate more in school.

The [School Attendance Guidelines \(2018\)](#) provide information for schools in supporting full-time attendance for all students. They outline whole school, targeted and intervention strategies to ensure student attendance and engagement. See: [Working with Diverse and Vulnerable Students](#) for more information about how to support and improve a student's attendance.

Every government school has a [Student Engagement Policy](#) that supports and promotes a safe and inclusive educational environment.¹⁷ Catholic schools are encouraged to develop their own Pastoral Care Policy to support students, where those experiencing difficulty or with special needs receive particular care and support. Independent schools have similar student engagement and wellbeing policies.

There are a range of options available to support students who are finding it hard to stay in school, including FLOs that offer alternative settings to traditional school. The referral of a student to a FLO should always be agreed between the referring school, the case manager, the student, their family and the FLO (and, in some cases, the region), and should first and foremost consider the best interests of the child.

¹⁷ See the DET website for information on [creating student engagement policies](#).

¹⁶ Looking After Children (LAC) assessments of 353 children and young people conducted between January 2013 and January 2015 in Victoria. *Children in Care Report Card*, Report No. 3, Anglicare Victoria (2015)

Schools should make every effort to be inclusive and responsive to the needs of each of their students, and only in circumstances where this is not possible (and for the period that this is not possible), should referral to a FLO be considered.

SUPPORTING ACHIEVEMENT

Schools must have strategies in place to support individual children and young people in OOHC to reach levels of achievement appropriate for their age. This may include innovative curriculum options, the provision of intensive academic support options, mentoring programs, cultural support programs or peer support programs to ensure participation in learning and assist the transition to further education and training.

Student Support Group or Program Support Group

The SSG/PSG is the primary mechanism through which schools, case managers, care managers, carers, families and support services collaborate to plan and support the education and wellbeing of a student in OOHC. The aim of the SSG/PSG is to ensure that those with the knowledge of and responsibility for the student work together to support engagement, attendance and achievement, and establish shared educational and social-emotional goals.

Schools must hold **at least one SSG/PSG meeting per term** and more frequently when a student's engagement, wellbeing, attendance or behaviour is of concern. Meetings should be inclusive of the student and all relevant professionals involved and focus on solutions and the individual strengths of the student. The SSG may include the school Principal or delegate, the case manager, SSS, the student's learning mentor, the classroom teacher, the student (where appropriate), the parent/guardian/carer/advocate and other agencies as needed. For Aboriginal students, the KESO will attend the first SSG meeting and should continue to attend in complex matters such as a student with a disability/PSD, multiple accommodation and/or school placements, significant attendance issues and multiple behavioural challenges.

Schools should conduct SSGs internally even if other support agencies/carers/families are disengaged from the process.

It is important that the student plays an active and age-appropriate role in the SSG/PSG and contributes to the decisions and actions that are agreed, either in person or via a trusted adult (e.g. Learning Mentor). It is important that there is transparent and immediate action in response to any problems identified by the school, case manager, care manager, student, carers or (when appropriate) parents.

Students, carers (or care managers in residential care) and parents (where appropriate) should also participate in the regular parent/carer/teacher interviews scheduled by the school. In Catholic schools, a PSG will be established.

The DET website provides additional information about the [*composition and role of the SSG*](#).

Individual Education Plans (IEP)/ Personalised Learning Plans (PLP)

The SSG/PSG is responsible for developing an IEP (also known as an Individual Learning Plan) or a PLP to guide the educational planning and monitoring of each student's unique learning needs. This requires collaboration from all stakeholders, to develop goals and strategies that support high expectations for the student to reach their potential.

The goals should prioritise learning needs and could be focused on academic, physical, social and emotional or behavioural skills to achieve quality learning outcomes for the student.

Many schools will already have a plan in place, however there is an [*Individual Education Plan template*](#) that is available for use.

The SSG/PSG should ensure that the IEP/PLP has an emphasis on engaging the child and is based on a good understanding of their strengths, needs and circumstances.



An IEP/PLP should:

- be developed in consultation with the student and the members of the SSG/PSG
- outline a meaningful educational program with high expectations for the student
- be age appropriate, holistic in its approach, support cultural needs and safety, and be flexible and future oriented
- consider key long-term goals that reflect learning outcomes in social, academic and life skills development
- establish short-term goals that will lead sequentially to the achievement of long-term goals
- ensure that the goals are SMARTAR goals: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, timely, agreed and reviewed
- clearly articulate individual and shared responsibilities
- be a strength-based model with a focus on the student's potential to achieve good educational, social and behavioural outcomes
- be supported and informed by other relevant plans such as a Cultural Plan, Behaviour Support Plan or a Safety Plan
- aim to retain the student at school
- provide guidance for the SSG/PSG
- contain a record of important decisions and actions
- be reviewed regularly in accordance with the timeline as agreed by all members of the SSG/PSG (or at least once per term).

For a child commencing school (enrolling in Foundation year), development of the plan should involve early childhood professionals and build from information about the child's learning and development as recorded in the Transition Learning and Development Statement (government schools).

If a student changes school, the IEP/PLP must be forwarded by the existing school to the new school for consideration. This can be done using the appropriate processes for exchanging information. The new school should request a copy of the plan if this has not been forwarded in a timely manner.

The IEP should be shared with the case manager and care manager and recorded on CRIS and CRISP.

Educational Needs Analysis (ENA)

Every child and young person who has been living in out-of-home-care for at least three months (consecutively or for a period that adds up to three months) requires an ENA. If the school, carer, case manager or the child has concerns about the child's overall presentation and rate of progression, this process should begin immediately, regardless of how long the student has been in OOHC. The purpose of the ENA is to analyse the socio-emotional and educational needs and strengths of the students. The ENA should take a holistic view of the child, including understanding the impact of trauma, with consideration of existing strategies, assessing what is working and what needs to change. The ENA will support schools to develop or revise a student's IEP/PLP.

For Aboriginal students, the ENA should involve a local ACCO or other culturally appropriate health and wellbeing support. The ENA will also identify whether an application may be submitted for the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) (government schools) or the Students with Disabilities (SWD) program and/or whether information about adjustments for the student should be included in the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disabilities (NCCD) (Catholic schools).

In government schools, the school will make a referral to the SSS to analyse existing information about the student and, if needed, make recommendations for further assessments, services or supports.

In Catholic schools, the school leading the PSG will review existing documentation about the student. If it is determined that additional information is required, the PSG will provide a referral to Learning Diversity/Learning Adjustments for further assessments.

In independent schools, ENAs are undertaken on an as-needs basis as soon as possible after enrolment, with each school bearing the cost.

For children and young people entering residential OOHC, who for a range of reasons are not attending school or have not attended for prolonged periods of time, the DHHS Health and Education Assessment Coordinator (HEAC) can assist schools, LOOKOUT Centres, case managers and care teams with identifying local education resources and supports and with the administration of brokerage to support the implementation of health and education plans. When the child or young person is Aboriginal, an ACCO should be consulted.

For further information on ENAs see: [Educational Needs Analysis](#)

Supporting the health needs of children

All Victorian health services play a vital role in the early identification and effective response to vulnerable children at risk of child abuse and neglect. [Healthcare that counts framework](#) supports all health services including hospitals, community health services, alcohol and drug services, mental health and dental services to identify and respond to vulnerability by embedding organisational governance, systems and structures focused on vulnerable children and families. The framework aligns with and supports the implementation of mandatory Child Safe Standards and supports the Victorian government's reform direction to deliver effective and integrated services to vulnerable children and families at risk of or experiencing child abuse, neglect, family violence and other forms of social disadvantage.

Supporting students with disabilities and additional needs

A significant proportion of children and young people who enter the OOHC system have some degree of disability or additional learning needs. Using resources allocated through the Student Resource Package, each school is responsible for developing teaching and learning programs for all children in its care and has flexibility to determine the most appropriate learning program for individuals including the use of support staff, as appropriate, to achieve educational outcomes.

Students with disabilities with high needs may receive support through the [Program for Students with Disabilities \(PSD\)](#). The PSD provides additional support within the Student Resource Package for eligible students with disabilities in mainstream and specialist schools. Approximately one quarter of students in OOHC are eligible for the PSD and PSD applications for children and young people in OOHC receive priority attention.

Victorian government schools also have access to a range of student support services, including psychologists, social workers, speech pathologists, and visiting teachers, to help cater for all students and particularly those with additional needs. Access to this service is not dependent on eligibility for the PSD.

Children and young people in OOHC who attend Catholic or Independent Schools may be eligible for support through the [Students With Disabilities program](#) in Catholic schools or the [Independent Schools Victoria SWD program](#).

Schools and case managers should be proactive in arranging and supporting relevant assessments and work collaboratively to apply for relevant programs for children and young people in OOHC. DET regional offices have a Regional Disability Coordinator who can provide advice to government schools. Each Diocesan Catholic Education Office has a Student Services unit that advises Catholic schools and Independent Schools. Victoria has a student services contact person.

Students who attend their designated government specialist school may also get help with travel through the [Students with Disabilities Transport Program](#).

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

Students with disabilities in OOHC may be eligible for the NDIS, which will provide all Australians under the age of 65 who have a permanent and significant disability with the reasonable and necessary supports they need to enjoy an ordinary life. Eligibility is focused on lifelong, functional impairment.



Funding is allocated to the person, who can choose who they will purchase services from and when, where and how they receive services. A phased rollout of the NDIS began in Victoria on 1 July 2016 and will occur progressively, area by area, until 30 June 2019. The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) administers the NDIS.

More information about the NDIS is available at www.ndis.gov.au

Schools play a role in supporting students with disabilities to access the NDIS and maximise the benefits available to them through the scheme. Victorian government schools can find [information resources](#) about the NDIS and what it means for students with disabilities.

SUPPORTING RETENTION

The behaviours that some children and young people in OOHC use to cope with situations of extreme stress and anxiety may not be useful or appropriate in the classroom, although they may have been crucial to their survival in other environments.¹⁸ When a child or young person appears to be disengaging from school, as evidenced by low levels of attendance and engagement, the SSG or PSG should address these issues as early as possible.

School exclusion, through suspension or expulsion, has significant impact on children and young people's educational and life outcomes, and can lead to further disengagement from schooling.

Suspension or expulsion

Any discipline measures should always be proportionate to the nature of the behaviour, and are best used with support measures to identify and address causes of the behaviour.

Ministerial Order 1125 (Procedures for Suspension and Expulsion)¹⁹ defines the grounds and process for suspensions, expulsions and appeals relating to expulsions of students in government schools.

¹⁸ *Great Expectations: Supporting children and young people in out-of-home care to achieve at school*, Office of the Child Safety Commissioner (2007). Access at: https://www.pcafamilies.org.au/uploaded-files/great_expectations%5B1%5D_1326688869.pdf

¹⁹ Ministerial Order 1125 will come into effect on 16 July 2018.

Principals must ensure that the Ministerial Order, policy and guidance processes are followed when suspension or expulsion is being considered. Suspension and expulsion are the most extreme disciplinary measures available to a Principal and should only be used where all other interventions and supports have been exhausted. Schools can suspend or expel students for behaviour that occurs:

- at school
- at a school activity away from the school grounds
- while travelling to or from school or a school activity.

Suspension is the process of excluding a student from the standard instruction or educational opportunities being provided to other students at the school for part of a day, a full day, or multiple days. Suspension is a serious disciplinary measure and is best reserved for incidents when other measures have not produced a satisfactory response. The Principal is responsible for ensuring students are provided with meaningful work during a suspension period.

If a suspension of more than three consecutive days occurs, a Student Absence Learning Plan and Return to School Plan must be developed. If a suspension of more than five consecutive days occurs, the Principal must seek approval from the Regional Director and designate a teacher to be a key point of contact for the child or young person during the suspension period. A student cannot be suspended for more than 15 days in a school year without written approval from the Regional Director. For more information about suspensions and expulsions in government schools, see [School Policy and Advisory Guide, Suspension Considerations and Suspension Process](#).

Catholic schools and independent schools have their own student behaviour management procedures. Catholic schools should refer to Diocesan policies and behaviour support guidelines for advice regarding suspension, negotiated transfer or expulsions. The Catholic Education Office Diocesan Director must be informed in all cases where expulsion is being considered.

Expulsions and OOHC

The Ministerial Order 1125 supports vulnerable cohorts with specific oversight over expulsions. Secretary approval is required to expel a child aged eight or less, and the Regional Director must be informed when expulsion is being considered for students who belong to one or more of the following cohorts:

- a student in OOHC
- a student with a disability who is eligible for PSD provided by DET
- an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student.

In addition, schools must:

- ensure that all available and appropriate supports and interventions to address the behaviours of concern have been provided for the student, such as universal, targeted and one to one interventions
- convene a Behaviour Support and Intervention Meeting²⁰ (BSIM), (government schools) or PSG (Catholic schools) when expulsion is under consideration, in which the student and their carer or other relevant person can be heard

- advise students at risk of expulsion, and their parents/carers, that during the expulsion process they can be accompanied to meetings by an independent support person of their choice. The independent support person can be anyone not acting for a fee or reward, including the KESO. Aboriginal students may also seek advocacy assistance from the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc (VAEAI).
- identify the future educational, training and/or employment options most suited to the student's needs and agree to a course of action if expulsion is decided
- carers have a right to appeal an expulsion decision and must be provided with information about how to lodge an appeal when they are notified of a decision to expel the child.

Further mandatory requirements apply to the expulsions process. For detailed guidance see [expulsion considerations](#), [expulsion process](#) and [expulsion appeal](#).

²⁰ Formally known as Behaviour Review Conference



RESPONSIBILITIES: ENGAGEMENT, ATTENDANCE AND RETENTION

Schools will:

- implement policies and strategies that incorporate universal, targeted and individual interventions for student achievement, engagement and attendance to support students in OOHC engage in and attend school on a regular basis
- ensure that school-based health and wellbeing staff prioritise support for these students and arrange to meet them upon enrolment or soon after entering care
- engage a school nurse or wellbeing staff to assist in managing the student's engagement, attendance and retention, where these issues relate to health concerns
- establish a SSG or PSG for each student in OOHC with appropriate membership to meet at least once a term, including within a week of initial enrolment
- ensure that the KESO is present at the first SSG for all Aboriginal students and continues to receive SSG minutes and notices
- draft SSG/PSG meeting minutes and an IEP/PLP for each student in OOHC and provide copies to all members of the SSG/PSG (a copy of all minutes should be kept in the student file)
- use the SSG/PSG process to identify and implement appropriate strategies to support transitions, attendance, engagement and achievement, convening additional SSG/PSG meetings if engagement, attendance or wellbeing issues arise
- identify a teacher or staff member within the school to act as a Learning Mentor for each student in OOHC
- ensure each student is meaningfully involved in the decisions and actions that affect them, including selecting their Learning Mentor, participating in the SSG/PSG and in the development of the IEP/PLP and the ENA
- ensure that an IEP/PLP for each student is developed and regularly reviewed (at least once per term) and provide this to the new school in a timely manner when there is a change
- make a referral to the SSS for an ENA for each child who has been in OOHC for at least three months. If there are immediate concerns held by the school, carer, case manager or the child themselves about a child's overall level of wellbeing and rate of progression, this process should start earlier. In Catholic schools, the school leading the PSG will review existing documentation about the student. If it is determined that further assessments are required, the PSG will provide a referral to Student Services/Learning Diversity/Learning Adjustments for an ENA
- ensure where possible that a school staff member attends care team meetings
- provide the care manager, carer and case manager with a copy of the latest school report and NAPLAN results
- follow appropriate DET processes to address low attendance, including developing an Attendance Improvement Plan, a Return to School Plan and/or an Absence Learning Plan and contacting regional Wellbeing and Engagement officers for support
- notify the regional LOOKOUT Principal and follow appropriate DET processes when considering an exemption for students in OOHC of compulsory school age
- follow appropriate processes regarding any suspension or expulsion as outlined in Ministerial Order 1125 (Procedures for Suspension and Expulsion). Catholic schools should refer to Diocesan policies and behaviour support guidelines for advice regarding suspension, negotiated transfer or expulsions
- notify the LOOKOUT Principal in your region when expulsion is being considered
- in consultation with the student's care team, identify an appropriate education or training pathway if efforts to retain a student at the school are not successful.

DET Regions (including LOOKOUT Centres) and Catholic Education Diocesan offices will:

- provide information and advice to schools and case managers about services and programs available to support each student in OOHC, with particular attention to appropriate supports for Aboriginal students
- participate in SSG/PSG meetings where required to resolve complex issues. The KESO should attend the first SSG meeting for each Aboriginal student in OOHC and continue to attend in complex matters, as determined by their professional judgment
- have processes in place to ensure priority access for each student in OOHC to education and wellbeing support services and programs.

LOOKOUT will:

- attend meetings where appropriate, such as SSG/PSG or care team meetings to address barriers to attendance and engagement
- draw on Area and Regional teams to provide resources, interventions and supports to the school, as well as assist with tracking of information in cases where the student has had several school placements
- provide professional development to build the capacity of school staff, including Designated Teachers, and other stakeholders to support and meet the educational and socio-emotional needs of students in OOHC, including using trauma-informed practices.

Case managers and care managers will:

- participate in the SSG/PSG at a minimum of once per term and in the development of the IEP/PLP
- share relevant information about the student's background and history with the SSG/PSG and Student Support Services/Learning Diversity/Learning Adjustments to allow comprehensive understanding and trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive planning
- provide advice to the SSG/PSG and work with the school and carers to develop strategies to maximise the student's attendance and engagement, with particular attention to Aboriginal students
- ensure the timely completion of a cultural plan for Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC, inclusive of input from LOOKOUT Centre Koorie Cultural Advisor
- provide schools and SSG/PSG with relevant information contained in the child or young person's cultural plan to inform the IEP
- advise the SSG/PSG of the most appropriate person (or people) to have access to online programs used by schools (where appropriate) to communicate the student's progress and attendance
- ensure that carers inform the school when the student will be absent and alert the school as soon as possible to any issues affecting attendance or engagement
- support referrals or applications for a student in OOHC who may be eligible for a range of programs and services
- maintain accurate client records in CRIS and CRISP, including updating school details as they change and keeping a copy of the IEP and school progress reports
- in conjunction with the SSG/PSG, consider all options for meeting the educational needs of the child in OOHC
- support schools to understand the circumstances and needs of the student in OOHC, develop strategies, and refer to other appropriate services and supports.



SSS Learning Diversity/ Learning Adjustments will:

- participate in the initial SSG/PSG upon enrolment or when a student enters OOHC, and in review SSGs/PSGs where necessary
- transfer the Department Confidential Student file (for Government Schools) or relevant information (Catholic schools and independent schools) when a student in OOHC is transferring to a new school
- undertake an ENA for every student in OOHC who has been living in out-of-home-care for at least three months (consecutively or for a period that adds up to three months)
- collate, review and analyse existing information and documentation provided by the school, the case manager, the residential care manager or the carer, and other agencies as part of the ENA process
- engage in direct assessment or other interventions with the student where necessary
- advise on appropriate referral pathways for additional funding support
- provide a comprehensive written account of the student's strengths, needs and educational recommendations that stem from the ENA and support the development of the IEP/PLP. For further information see [*SSS Handbook*](#).

DHHS HEACs will:

- provide advice and support to professionals working with children and young people entering residential OOHC
- liaise with care teams and LOOKOUT Centre staff to arrange for an ENA where this not readily available through the routine pathways (e.g. students in residential care who are enrolled but not attending a school)
- provide advice and DHHS Health and Education Assessment Initiative brokerage funds to assist in implementing the recommendations of the ENA and IEP





5 / CARING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN OOHC

Several people are involved in supporting children and young people in OOHC. The following three roles will be involved for each child: a case manager; a care manager and a carer (or carers). The core roles and responsibilities of these people in relation to education are outlined below.

Case managers

The case manager may be a DHHS CPP, an ACAC case manager or a CSO or ACCO contracted case manager.

If the child is Aboriginal, the case manager may be from an ACCO. Children who are case managed by an ACCO delivering ACAC are not case contracted rather the case manager in the ACCO has the same statutory delegations as a CPP.

The allocated CPP or ACAC case manager will always be responsible for:

- investigating and assessing any reports of child abuse and neglect
- overall implementation of the case plan. The case plan is a succinct high-level plan that includes the permanency objective and all significant decisions made by Child Protection or ACAC in relation to the present and future care and wellbeing of the child, including placement and contact decisions. This includes decisions regarding school enrolment
- reviewing the case plan, including reviewing the operation of a statutory order, and preparation of court reports.

Where appropriate, case managers may facilitate the participation of the school in case planning meetings.

Care managers

Care managers are sometimes referred to as key workers. A child's care manager is someone in the placement agency who has been allocated a key role to support a child. The care manager could be a residential service key worker, a foster care agency worker or kinship support service worker.

Care managers have responsibility for a child's day-to-day care, including ensuring their needs are met in the areas of education, health, wellbeing, identity and relationships. Care managers coordinate the care planning process and make sure the case plan and care plan are aligned. Care managers may call meetings (care team meeting) of professionals to discuss a child's care.

If the child is in a departmental placement or a kinship placement and not receiving kinship support from a CSO, the child protection case manager is also the child's care manager.

Carers

Carers include foster carers, kinship carer, residential carers and permanent carers or parents. They provide direct day-to-day care for children and young people. They provide the primary relationship through which children and young people can feel secure, develop and grow. Carers play a key role in supporting enrolment and engagement at school. Carers ensure the home environment supports school engagement, attendance and progress.

Child Protection or ACAC may *authorise* carers to make certain decisions about specified issues in relation to a child in their care. Authorising carers assists with normalising the experience of children and young people in OOHC and supports their access to similar care and opportunities available to other children and young people, including school excursions, social or sporting activities. The type of decisions the carer is authorised to make will be influenced by the specific court order and the permanency objective for the child, as well as the type of placement.

Roles and responsibilities are summarised in the following table:

Type of case or care manager	Management of the statutory case plan	Participate in the student support group	Endorse placement changes and school enrolment	Share information with services	Contribute to an application for Program for Students with Disabilities	Provide day-to-day support	Respond to new allegations of abuse or neglect
DHHS CPP or ACAC case manager	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
CSO/ACCO contracted case manager	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
CSO/ACCO care manager		✓		✓		✓	
Carer		✓		✓		✓	





CULTURAL PLANS FOR ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The CYFA states that a cultural plan is required for every Aboriginal child or young person in OOHC to maintain and strengthen their Aboriginal identity, and encourage their connection to their Aboriginal culture, community and country.

While the DHHS or ACAC case manager retains the legislative responsibility for ensuring that a cultural plan is provided to the child and young person, it is the shared responsibility of all members of the care team to contribute to it. It is important that the cultural plan, no matter the circumstances or permanency objective, be prepared as soon as possible to maintain and encourage cultural connectedness.

Further information about cultural planning is available in the [*Child Protection Manual*](#).

While it is the responsibility of the care team to develop cultural plans, the LOOKOUT Centre Koorie Cultural Advisor works closely with case managers, care managers and schools to monitor the development of appropriate cultural plans for all Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC.

The case manager will advise the care team of key review dates. The care team must review the cultural plan in the lead-up to the planned review date, with the support of the Senior Advisor, Aboriginal Cultural Planning. Consistent with requirements for case plans, the cultural plan should be reviewed earlier if there is a significant change in the child or young person's circumstances. For example, a review of the cultural plan is required if the child or young person changes placement from a non-Aboriginal carer to an Aboriginal carer, or vice versa.

The cultural plan informs the student's IEP/PLP. The case manager should provide schools and SSGs with relevant information about the child's cultural support plan. Relevant information may include:

- where the child is from (Cultural identity - clan/nation, language group, totem, traditional land or water)
- what the child would like to learn about and connect with (cultural aspirations)
- how the care team and other important people in the child's life is keeping them connected
- any goals, tasks, information about responsibility, timing and frequency.

RESPONSIBILITIES: CASE PLANNING AND CARE PLANNING

Case managers will:

- assist administrative staff, where required, to provide notifications of new OOHC entrants on a weekly basis to the Principal in writing (copying the LOOKOUT Centre Principal)
- advise the Principal in writing (copying in the LOOKOUT Centre Principal), before or on enrolment or upon entering care, that the student has been placed in OOHC and of any change in the child or young person's legal status or care arrangements. This information should include the Aboriginal status of the child or young person
- advise the Principal in writing (copying the LOOKOUT Centre Principal) if the student returns home and is no longer in OOHC
- ensure the school is registered on the [Schools Entity Register](#) and that the correct name of the school is recorded on CRIS/CRISPP in accordance with DET naming conventions as well as the year level
- provide information about the child or young person's history, care arrangements and carer authorisation to the school as soon as possible, including a record of schools or early childhood centres the child or young person has attended
- ensure that information is provided to the school about changes to the child or young person's circumstances and care arrangements
- participate in the SSG/PSG at a minimum of once per term, maintain proactive engagement with school contacts and ensure continued involvement with the student's IEP/PLP
- participate in any suspension or expulsion conferences involving members of the SSG/PSG to consider wellbeing and disciplinary strategies and other options to assist in meeting the child or young person's educational needs
- work with the care team to complete a cultural plan for Aboriginal students
- support the ENA by participating in the SSG/PSG and sharing personal and health information relevant to the ENA process including working with the school to submit an application where the child or young person may be eligible for PSD funding
- upload all school assessments, plans and reports to CRIS
- work with the care team to ensure family contact arrangements, non-urgent or critical child protection related assessments and interviews occur outside of school hours, to avoid disruption to learning.



Care managers will:

- lead and coordinate the child or young person's care team
- assist children and young people to commence and continue with education programs
- support children and young people to live in an environment in which education and learning are valued and achievements are recognised
- manage day-to-day liaison with schools, including problem-solving any barrier or issue affecting school attendance and engagement. This should include involving the LOOKOUT Centre Principal where appropriate.
- participate in the SSG/PSG and maintain proactive engagement with school contacts
- support the ENA by participating in the SSG/PSG and sharing personal and health information relevant to the ENA process, including working with the school and case manager to submit an application where a child or young person may be eligible for PSD funding
- participate in any suspension or expulsion conferences
- keep school assessments and reports stored to ensure easy transfer of information to the relevant CSO or ACCO if a child or young person changes placement
- provide assessments and school reports to the case manager for inclusion on CRIS
- promote continuity of education if a child or young person changes placement
- ensure carers are made aware of the school attending carer reimbursement policy for students up to 18 years old and other relevant supports for carers

Carers will:

- assist children to commence and continue with education programs
- support children to live in an environment in which education and learning are valued and achievements are recognised
- participate in the SSG/PSG and maintain proactive engagement with school contacts
- attend, contribute to and support case planning and care planning assessment, goals and strategies.

Schools will:

- participate, where possible, in case management and care team meetings
- provide advice to case managers and care teams regarding education engagement and learning strategies.
- include relevant cultural actions in the IEPs of Aboriginal students.



6 / TRANSITIONS

Children and young people in OOHC may change early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings and schools more frequently than other children and young people due to changes in their circumstances or living arrangements. Transitions can be challenging for many children and young people, particularly those who have experienced trauma or who may be in vulnerable circumstances.

There is much that carers, families, education and child protection and CSO/ACCO staff can do to collaboratively support children and young people in OOHC during transition periods. Children and young people should feel that school is a worthwhile place to be, where people care about them and where they are encouraged and likely to succeed.²¹

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES

Participation in high-quality ECEC services can make a significant difference to children's lives. Research tells us that vulnerable children stand to gain the most benefit from participating in these services yet many children in OOHC are not accessing early childhood services.

As a result, these children are at risk of starting school developmentally behind their peers, which evidence indicates can lead to poorer life outcomes. For more information on roles and responsibilities in supporting children in OOHC and their carers/families see the *Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care*.

²¹ Perry, B & Dockett, S (2006), *Our family is starting school: A handbook for parents and carers*, Pademelon Press, cited in *Transition: a Positive Start to School Resource Kit 2017*.

TRANSITION TO PRIMARY SCHOOL

A positive start to school, leading to greater and ongoing connection with school, has been identified as a factor in disrupting cycles of social and economic disadvantage, and in promoting resilience among children.²²

Before a child starts primary school, schools will meet or liaise with the child's ECEC service to ensure that the ECEC service completes a *Transition Learning and Development Statement* (TLDS) as outlined in *Transition: A Positive Start to School Resource Kit*. These statements help teachers to get to know the children entering their classes before they start, and to plan for each child's learning and development needs. For Aboriginal children transitioning to primary school, a local ACCO should be involved in developing the TLDS and it should be informed by the cultural plan.

TRANSITION TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

Moving from primary to secondary school is another key transition point for children and young people. Primary and secondary schools have a range of transition programs and strategies to support students in their new environment.²³ However, some children and young people struggle with this transition, which increases the possibility that they may become disengaged from school.

The timely and accurate transfer of student information is critical to the success of a transition. This requires that primary schools update student data and information and transfer this information to the secondary school once a Year 6 student has had a Year 7 placement offer confirmed. Ensuring the destination secondary school has a minimum set of information about a newly enrolled Year 7 student is possibly the most important component for a successful transition.

²² Commonwealth of Australia, 2009b; Smart, Sanson, Baxter, Edwards, & Hayes, (2008), cited in *Transition: a Positive Start to School Resource Kit (2017)*.

²³ See DET website for transition activity ideas: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/studentmanagement/transitions/Pages/induction.aspx.

In government schools, it is mandatory that schools transfer student information using CASES21. For more information on transfers see the [School Policy Advisory Guide](#) and the DET website [Student Data Transfer](#).

Schools may need to make adjustments for particular students, especially those in vulnerable circumstances, to transition from primary to secondary school. Schools need to develop a transition plan for all children and young people in OOHC that outlines the support that the student requires to make a successful transition, such as including additional days to visit the school and opportunities to build relationships with teachers.



TRANSITION BETWEEN SCHOOLS

Children and young people in OOHC can sometimes change schools at very short notice due to placement changes. This can occur at the beginning of the school year, but it is not uncommon for this transition to take place during the year. This can create anxiety and significantly affect the student's attendance at school.

Where a student enters OOHC or changes placement, the case manager, care manager, school, parent and carer must give high priority to the stability of the student's education and make every effort to support them to continue to attend their current school. Where this is not possible, the case manager, in consultation with the care manager, carer and parent, should consult the LOOKOUT Centres at the DET regional office or the Diocesan Catholic Education Office to identify the closest and most appropriate school.

For Aboriginal children and young people school transition planning should be informed by the cultural plan and the Koorie section of the IEP and, where possible, involve consultation with a local ACCO.

The information outlined on student data transfer between primary and secondary schools, and specific supports for students experiencing vulnerability, also applies to students transitioning between schools or from/to a FLO.



TRANSITIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND ADDITIONAL NEEDS

The principles and intentions that guide effective transition planning are shared for all children and young people, including those living with a disability. What may differ is the need for transitions to be clearly planned over a longer duration, and for schools to recognise the impact that such changes may have on the student, and on their parent/guardian/carer, siblings, peers and teachers.

For more information on transition planning and for a transition statement template see [*Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities*](#).

TRANSITION TO HIGHER EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Children and young people in OOHC face unique challenges when planning for post-school education, training and employment. School careers and transition staff need to be aware of the circumstances faced by students in OOHC regarding cessation of formal care at eighteen years (unless there is an agreement between the carer and young person to continue care until the end of formal schooling) and the impact this has on education, employment and career options in the immediate period. Young people in OOHC have limited personal and family networks. It is therefore crucial that schools, careers and transitions staff are aware of and explore additional support and education options for students.

Young people in OOHC are to have a 15+ Care and Transition plan that informs the planning for a successful transition to independence including further education, training and employment opportunities.

Aboriginal students in OOHC require tailored support due to the significant barriers they face in accessing career education and pathways to higher education, training and employment.

This support should be informed by an Aboriginal child or young person's cultural plan and the Koorie section of their IEP. Early school leavers and students with disabilities will also need additional support in their transition to higher education, training and employment.

It is important that all professionals and carers supporting children and young people in OOHC have high educational expectations of them and encourage and assist children and young people to maximise their potential. Leaving care and leaving school planning should be a shared conversation between the student, case manager, care manager, carer and school and can take place in SSG meetings and Care Team meetings.

RESPONSIBILITIES: TRANSITIONS

Schools will:

- meet or liaise with the child's ECEC service to ensure the transfer of relevant information, including the Transition Learning and Development Statement, before the child enters Foundation year
- transfer student information using CASES21 when a student transitions to or between government schools
- ensure that all relevant information about the student, including the IEP/PLP is provided by the primary school to the secondary school or to the new school, before the transition takes place
- contact any previous school of a new student to advise of the enrolment
- support transitions by:
 - » getting to know the student and their families/ carers during the preschool year, including reciprocal visits for ECEC educators and school teachers
 - » building relationships with students transitioning from primary to secondary school and to new schools, including school visits prior to transition
 - » making the transition process as predictable as possible, including having structure and routines and consistent relationships with educators and teachers.
- plan an SSG/PSG for each child before the commencement of the school year
- work with case managers to ensure the School Entrant Health Questionnaire (SEHQ) is offered to OOHC children transitioning to Foundation year
- have conversations with the student about their education, employment and career expectations and aspirations, including opportunities to attend outreach activities at TAFE and university and participate in work experience
- for Aboriginal students, schools should facilitate contact with appropriate supports in post-school settings. For further information see: [*Education resources to support Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC*](#) in Section 9.

Case managers will:

- work with relevant carers/families and early childhood professionals to complete sections 2 and 3 of the Transition Learning and Development Statement for every child entering primary school
- for a child in OOHC, who has not attended an ECEC service, contact the enrolling school as early as possible to work with the school and carer/family to develop a transition plan tailored to the needs of the child and establish what supports are required
- along with the care manager and the carer/family, meet with the early childhood service and school to ensure that the child's interests and concerns are reflected early in the transition process
- if known, provide a record of the schools or ECEC services that the child or young person has previously attended as well as any appropriate information to support the development of an effective educational program for the child or young person
- provide information regarding carer authorisations to enrolling school
- provide relevant information from the cultural plans, or related information, to schools
- work with the student, carer/parents and schools, particularly careers and transitions staff, to develop a high quality and meaningful care and transition plan to assist with post school education and employment.

SSS or Learning Diversity/Learning Adjustments will:

- transfer the Department Confidential Student file (for Government Schools) or relevant information (Catholic schools and independent schools) when a student in OOHC is transferring to a new school

7 / MONITORING STUDENT OUTCOMES

A key objective of the Partnering Agreement is to improve educational outcomes for children and young people in OOHC through collaboration to deliver the specific supports and services outlined. To do this, it is important to understand and monitor how children and young people in OOHC are progressing in their school attendance and academic achievement.

The establishment of the LOOKOUT Centres enables more effective monitoring and timely reporting of data relating to students in OOHC.

DHHS and DET compile together data to create a LOOKOUT Centre student roll, which is monitored and updated at regular intervals to ensure the most current dataset for students in OOHC.

DHHS, DET and government schools are required to update their records on a timely basis, and provide reports to the LOOKOUT Centre teams at nominated points across the year. Government, Catholic and independent schools must ensure that data relating to Partnering Agreement requirements, absences from school, suspensions and expulsions and academic achievement for children and young people in OOHC is collected and provided to DET.

To monitor compliance with the requirements of the Partnering Agreement and the impact of activity on education outcomes for all children and young people, DET will produce regular reports which will include:

- the numbers of children and young people in OOHC who are enrolled in education or training, their levels of attendance and whether they've been subject to suspensions or expulsions
- the numbers of children and young people in OOHC who have an SSG/PSG, IEP/PLP, Learning Mentor, ENA and, where appropriate, a cultural plan
- education achievements as measured by school reports, wellbeing measures, NAPLAN scores to the extent these are available
- disaggregated data for Aboriginal children and young people and for those with English as an Additional Language (EAL), where available.

RESPONSIBILITIES: MONITORING STUDENT OUTCOMES

Schools will:

- track and monitor the attendance and achievement of each child and young person in OOHC
- update CASES21 data (government schools) regularly to reflect changes to a child or young person's OOHC status
- provide data to LOOKOUT Centres through two collection points each year and as required (all school sectors). Data to be provided includes the key requirements of the Partnering Agreement for each student in OOHC (including having a Learning Mentor, SSG/PSG, IEP/PLP, ENA and cultural plan if appropriate and other information such as Aboriginal status)
- provide the carer and case manager with all relevant information for students including assessments, a copy of the school report and NAPLAN results.

DHHS and DET (including LOOKOUT Centres) will:

- DHHS will improve data collection on CRIS
- collect system-level data that allows for OOHC students to be distinguished from the general student cohort through the standard computerised administration system used in Victorian government schools (CASES21), and that consistently identifies Aboriginal students
- DET will maintain and monitor a 'student roll' of all children and young people in OOHC
- monitor the Partnering Agreement requirements for children and young people in OOHC via the two data collection points to schools each year and through ongoing support provided to schools by LOOKOUT Centres
- conduct regular reports, including an annual report, on compliance with the Partnering Agreement and on education outcomes for children and young people in OOHC, as outlined previously.

8 / IMPLEMENTING THE PARTNERING AGREEMENT

Improving educational outcomes for children and young people in OOHC requires a shared commitment. In addition to the dedicated focus on implementing the Partnering Agreement in the specific governance bodies mentioned below, it is critical to embed a focus on education for students in OOHC as part of business as usual.

DET and DHHS senior executives will provide an authorising environment and oversight for continued implementation of the Partnering Agreement.

LOOKOUT Centre Implementation Groups (LIGs) operate in each region across the state, bringing together all stakeholders including key representatives from DET and DHHS to oversee the implementation of the LOOKOUT Centres and develop solutions for improving student outcomes. For this reason, LIGs should be used to manage the ongoing implementation of the Partnering Agreement. Representatives from the Catholic Education Diocese, Independent Schools Victoria, CSOs and ACCOs should be invited to attend these groups to ensure coverage from all signatories.

LOOKOUT Centre teams will replace the former role of Partnering Agreement contact officer for each DET region.

LOOKOUT Centres will establish collaborative processes to support compliance with the requirements of the Partnering Agreement and provide advice about effective enrolment, engagement, cultural inclusion, educational achievement, case planning and school retention of children and young people in OOHC.



RESPONSIBILITIES: IMPLEMENTING THE PARTNERING AGREEMENT

DET and DHHS senior executives will:

- oversee and provide direction for the ongoing implementation of the Partnering Agreement across both government departments
- authorise timely data and information sharing to enable achievement of Partnering Agreement requirements.

LOOKOUT Implementation Groups will:

- oversee and provide guidance and support for ongoing implementation of the Partnering Agreement in their region/division
- promote the Partnering Agreement to all key regional stakeholders.

DET Regions (including LOOKOUT Centres):

- facilitate the continuous implementation and monitoring of the Partnering Agreement in the region and respond to implementation issues that arise
- establish collaborative processes between DHHS, DET, Catholic Education Dioceses, independent schools and ACAC providers to support compliance with the requirements of the Partnering Agreement
- provide direct support to schools and ensure that there is regional office/diocesan involvement in SSGs/PSGs when required in situations of complex need or where school exclusion is likely
- coordinate professional learning and training opportunities for schools and case managers related to the education and development of children and young people in OOHC

- promote partnerships between schools, case managers, care managers, support services, and ECEC services to improve educational outcomes for children and young people in OOHC
- provide progress reports to relevant LOOKOUT Centre governance bodies
- through the Koorie Cultural Advisor, advocate across each region for the educational and cultural needs of Aboriginal students in OOHC and provide specialist advice where required.

DHHS will:

- facilitate accurate and timely information sharing with DET on children and young people in OOHC as set out in the Partnering Agreement
- work with DET and LOOKOUT Centres through central and regional governance structures to support the implementation of the Partnering Agreement and improve educational engagement and outcomes for children and young people in OOHC
- support case managers and care managers to implement responsibilities as set out in the Partnering Agreement.

9 / RESOURCES AND LINKS

GENERAL EDUCATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, *Faith in Your Child's Future: Parent Handbook for Victorian Catholic Primary Schools*. Access at: www.cec.vic.catholic.edu.au/Parent-Handbook-Primary

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, *Embracing the Fullness of Life: Parent Handbook for Victorian Catholic Primary Schools*. Access at: www.cec.vic.catholic.edu.au/Parent-Handbook-Secondary

Department of Education and Training (2018), *Program for Students with Disabilities: Operational Guidelines for Schools*. Access at: www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/needs/psdguidelines.docx

Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (2017), *Guidelines to the Minimum Standards and Other Requirements for Registration of Schools Including those Offering Senior Secondary Courses*. Access at: www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/Documents/schoolguide.doc

SCHOOL ENROLMENT POLICIES

Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (2009), *Policy 2.4: Enrolment for Schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne*. Access at: <https://www.cem.edu.au/About-Us/Policies/Enrolment-for-Schools.aspx>

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Ballarat

Schools have their own enrolment policies. Further information is available at www.ceoballarat.catholic.edu.au

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Sale

Diocese of Sale, *Directory 2017*. Access at: www2.ceosale.catholic.edu.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=5289

Victorian government schools

Department of Education and Training, *School Policy Advisory Guide: Attendance*. Access at: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/pages/attendance.aspx

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT, PASTORAL CARE AND BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT POLICIES

Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne

Catholic Education Melbourne, *Procedures for Student Behaviour Management*. Access at: <https://www.cem.edu.au/About-Us/Policies/Pastoral-Care-of-Students/Procedures-for-Student-Behaviour-Management.aspx>

Catholic Education Office Melbourne (2009), *Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools Policy 2.26*, Melbourne, Victoria. Access at: <https://www.cem.edu.au/About-Us/Policies/Pastoral-Care-of-Students.aspx>

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Ballarat

Diocese of Ballarat (2010), *Pastoral Care Policy*. Access at: <http://www.ceoballarat.catholic.edu.au/media/uploads/webdocuments/PastoralCare.pdf>

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Sale

Diocese of Sale (2009), *Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools*. Access at: http://www2.ceosale.catholic.edu.au/uploadedFiles/06_Policies_And_Publications/files/Policies/CEOSale%20Pastoral%20Care%20Policy%202015.pdf

Victorian government schools

Department of Education and Training, *School Policy Advisory Guide: Student Engagement*. Access at: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/Pages/engagement.aspx

GENERAL RESOURCES

LOOKOUT Education Support Centres and information on OOHC support and educational resources see: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/Pages/oohc.aspx

Equity (Catch Up) funding: Secondary students who did not meet the national minimum standards in the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in Year 5 will each attract the catch up loading. This catch up loading is not affected by the school or student's level of disadvantage and is based only of the academic achievement of the student. This catch up loading will be allocated according to the number of enrolled students who have not met the agreed NAPLAN national minimum standard in Year 5. For more information see: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/management/finance/Pages/srpref012.aspx

Raising Expectations: This project aims to provide resources, support and access to higher education for children and young people in care, and care leavers. The Raising Expectations website includes links to Federation University and La Trobe University assistance and scholarships for students who have spent time in OOHC. See: www.cfecfw.asn.au/raisingexpectations

Education Guide for Carers of Children in Out of Home Care: This resource provides information to help carers to support the children and young people in their care to stay connected and engaged in education. See: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/Pages/oohcsupport.aspx

Office of the Child Safety Commissioner (2007), Victorian Government, Melbourne. **Calmer Classrooms: A Guide to Working with Traumatized Children.** Access at: www.education.qld.gov.au/schools/healthy/pdfs/calmer-classrooms-guide.pdf

Office of the Child Safety Commissioner (2007), Victorian Government. **Great Expectations: Supporting Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care to Achieve at School.** Access at: www.pcafamilies.org.au/uploaded-files/great-expectations%5B1%5D_1326688869.pdf

Australian Childhood Foundation (2010), **Making SPACE for Learning: Trauma Informed Practice in Schools.** Access at: [www.professionals.childhood.org.au/~media/Files/Fundraising files/Fundraising resource files/Making space for learning ACF.ashx](http://www.professionals.childhood.org.au/~media/Files/Fundraising%20files/Fundraising%20resource%20files/Making%20space%20for%20learning%20ACF.ashx)

For resources, strategies and supports for specific groups of students who have additional needs, or who may face particular barriers to engaging with school see: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/studentmanagement/Pages/specifcsupport.aspx

For resources available to support planning for a child and young person **leaving care** see: services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/leaving-care

Safe Schools and support for LGBTIQ students see: www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/safeschools.aspx

School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) is a whole-school framework, which provides school professionals with an approach to promote improved behaviour at their school. See: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/management/improvement/Pages/swpbs.aspx

Resources to support education transitions

Department of Education and Training (2017), *Transition: A Positive Start to School Resource Kit.* Access at: www.education.vic.gov.au/transitiontoschool

Kochanoff, A., Krakouer, J., Mitchell, P. & Trevitt, J. (2016), State of Victoria, Department of Education and Training, Melbourne. *Early years transitions: Supporting children and families at risk of experiencing vulnerability—Rapid literature review.* Access at: www.education.vic.gov.au/about/research/Pages/transitionresearch.aspx

Nolan, A., Kilderry, A., Beahan, J., Lanting, C. & Speldewinder, C. (2017), State of Victoria, Department of Education and Training, Melbourne. *Early years transitions: Supporting children and families at risk of experiencing vulnerability—Practice review*. Access at: www.education.vic.gov.au/about/research/Pages/transitionresearch.aspx

For specific advice, supports and resources for schools to support students in their transition see: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/studentmanagement/transitions/Pages/transitions.aspx and www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/studentmanagement/transitions/Pages/risk.aspx

CECV also has a useful resource on students with diverse needs. See: www.cecv.catholic.edu.au/getmedia/6190a38b-f536-4c30-9cc1-de95a8fc6668/Transition-students-diverse-needs.aspx?ext=.pdf

For advice to families and carers on supporting transitions for their child see: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/primary/Pages/starting.aspx (primary) and www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/secondary/Pages/starting.aspx (secondary)

The **Skills First Youth Access Initiative** aims to improve access to and engagement with vocational education and training opportunities for a high-risk group of young people including young people in OOHC. It helps young people impacted by child protection and youth justice orders by providing them with tuition fee waiver and a viable pathway to education and employment. See: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/Skills-First-Youth-Access-Initiative.aspx>

Education resources to support Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC

Early Years Koorie Literacy and Numeracy Program

This program provides funding to Victorian government schools to assist Aboriginal students in to Year 3 who are achieving below expected levels in literacy and/or numeracy. Schools use this funding to implement or strengthen practices which address the needs of Aboriginal students who require extra support with literacy and numeracy.

For more information see: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/literacynumeracy/Pages/koorielitnum.aspx

Extended Koorie Literacy and Numeracy Program (E-KLNP)

This program provides funding to Victorian government schools to support Koorie students in Years 4 and 5 (and in Year 6 from 2019) who were below national minimum standards in Year 3 Reading and Numeracy. For more information see: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/literacynumeracy/Pages/koorielitnum.aspx

Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016 - 2026 is a plan to ensure that all Koorie Victorians achieve their learning aspirations and realise the full benefits of the Education State. See: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/marrung.aspx>

Scholarships and Financial Assistance for Koorie students are offered specifically for Indigenous students across Australia. For more information see: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/resourcekit/Pages/scholarship.aspx

Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI)

is the peak Aboriginal education body in Victoria and provides advice on Koorie education issues, monitors education trends and advocates for the education needs of the Koorie community. The VAEAI website includes a page of resources for schools and families. See: www.vaeai.org.au/support/dsp-default.cfm?loadref=126

The cultural information portal deadlystory.com is a website to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the Victorian OOHC system connect with their Country, their Communities and their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and identity.

Career Education

Career Action Plans include a Koorie template and a young people with disabilities template, for years 7 - 12 and VET. Access at: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/carframe/Pages/cap.aspx

Employment Opportunities for Koorie Young People. Access at: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/resourcekit/Pages/employ.aspx

Guidelines for Implementing the Engaging Parents in Career Conversations (EPICC) Framework with Koorie Families—'parents' can mean carer or any interested and involved adult for students in OOHC. Access at: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/parentsframe/Pages/default.aspx

Transitioning to higher education, training and employment

All Victorian TAFE and dual sector institutes employ **Koorie Liaison Officers (KLOs)** who provide advice and support to Koorie learners (or prospective learners). This may include course information, pathways into employment or further education, study advice, advocacy or connecting students to the broader learning community. KLOs also work within their institute to ensure a better understanding of the needs of Koorie students and to encourage a culturally responsive learning environment.

Aboriginal students transitioning to University are principally supported by the **Toorong Marnong Accord**, for further information and to contact the Toorong Marnong project officer visit: www.toorongmarnong.com





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10 / CONTACTS

CHILD PROTECTION DIVISIONAL OFFICES

After Hours Child Protection Emergency Service
13 12 78

North Division Intake
1300 664 977

East Division Intake
1300 360 391

South Division Intake
1300 655 795

West Division Intake
1300 664 977

West Division Intake: Rural and Regional
1800 075 599

The [*DHHS contact page*](#) provides more information.

DET REGIONAL OFFICES

North-eastern Victoria region

General enquiries
1300 333 231

Benalla office
1300 333 231

Glen Waverley office
1300 333 231

North-western Victoria region

General enquiries
03 9488 9488

Bendigo office
03 5440 3111

Coburg office
03 9488 9488

Greensborough office
03 8468 9200

Mildura office
03 5051 1333

South-eastern Victoria region

General enquiries
03 8765 5600

Dandenong office
03 8765 5600

Moe office
03 5127 0400

South-western Victoria region

General enquiries
1300 333 232

Ballarat office
1300 333 232

Footscray office
1300 333 232

Geelong office
1300 333 232

Horsham office
1300 333 232

Keilor office
1300 333 232

Warrnambool office
1300 333 232

The [*DET contact*](#) page provides more information.

Government school contact details are available at www.education.vic.gov.au/findaservice

CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria

03 9267 0228

Catholic Education Melbourne

03 9267 0228

Catholic Education Office Ballarat

03 5337 7135

Catholic Education Office Sale

03 5622 6600

Catholic Education Office Sandhurst

03 5443 2377

Catholic school contact details are available at <https://www.cem.edu.au/SchoolSearch.aspx>

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Independent Schools Victoria

03 9825 7200

Independent school contact details are available at <https://www.is.vic.edu.au/who-we-are/member-school-details>

OTHER

Commission for Children and Young People

03 8601 5886

Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc

03 9481 0800

Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

03 9614 1577

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

03 9287 8800

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority

03 9032 1700

APPENDICES



APPENDIX 1 / SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES CHECKLIST

This checklist provides a quick reference for schools to ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities under the Partnering Agreement. Schools should begin using the checklist when a child or young person in OOHC is enrolled at a school or when the school is advised that one of their students has entered OOHC. The full text of the Partnering Agreement provides more detailed information about these responsibilities.

Upon enrolment or when child enters OOHC	Within the first week	Within the first term	Ongoing responsibilities
- Enrol child or young person without delay or seek endorsement of the DET Regional Director or Catholic Education Diocesan Director for any delay of more than one day. - Upon notification of OOHC status by DHHS, record OOHC status in the school's student information record keeping mechanism (under 'living arrangements' in CASES21 for government schools). - Liaise with the student's previous school or early childhood education service and SSS/Learning Diversity/ Learning Adjustments to ensure the transfer of relevant information including the IEP/PLP or Transition Learning and Development Statement (for children entering Foundation year at a government school), the SSS Department Confidential Student File/s if these exist and student information in CASES 21. - Inform the Designated Teacher. - Provide advice to the OOHC carer/Case Manager about their eligibility for support from the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund.	- Establish a SSG/PSG and hold the first meeting. - Ascertain the need for a current ENA and make a referral to SSS/Learning Diversity/Learning Adjustments if needed. - For an Aboriginal student, ensure that the KESO attends the first SSG. - Undertake secretariat and provide minutes of the SSG/PSG meeting to members. - Ask the SSG/PSG to identify the most appropriate person/people to monitor the child's attendance and progress (government schools).	- With input from the student, identify a teacher/staff member to act as their Learning Mentor. - Develop an IEP/PLP with input from the SSG/PSG and the child. - Review the IEP/PLP with input from the SSG/PSG and the child. - Review the need for a current ENA if this is not already in progress. - Ensure that referrals to school-based health and wellbeing services are prioritised. - Facilitate access to appropriate support services and programs, including cultural support services programs for Aboriginal students, to support the student's learning and wellbeing.	- Track and monitor the child's attendance and achievement. - Hold SSG/PSG meetings at least once each term and more frequently if there are attendance or behavioural issues. - Regularly review the IEP/PLP. Work with the case manager to participate in case planning meetings or processes. - Support the child to remain at the school or to maintain a connection if they have to change schools. - If the child changes school or is transitioning to secondary school or another education or training setting, provide all records and information to the new school/setting. - Inform the DET Regional Director or Diocesan Director of Catholic Education in advance in all cases when expulsion is being considered. - Track and ensure any school-aged child or young person that exits school, is connected to an education program. - Track the student's destination for six months following their exit from school (post compulsory school age). - Review ENA yearly at SSG.

APPENDIX 2 / CASE MANAGER RESPONSIBILITIES CHECKLIST

This checklist provides a quick reference for DHHS and contracted ACCOs delivering the ACAC program and CSO case managers to ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities under the Partnering Agreement. Case managers should commence using the checklist when a child and young person enters OOHC or enrolls in a new school. The full text of the Partnering Agreement provides more detailed information about these responsibilities.

Upon enrolment or when child enters OOHC	Within the first week	Within the first term	Ongoing responsibilities
- Assist administrative staff, where required, to provide notifications of new OOHC entrants on a weekly basis to the Principal in writing (copying the LOOKOUT Centre Principal). - Assist administrative staff, where required, to advise the Principal in writing (copying in the LOOKOUT Centre Principal), before or on enrolment or upon entering care, that the student has been placed in OOHC and of any change in the child or young person's legal status or care arrangements, including the Aboriginal status of the child or young person. - Advise the Principal in writing (copying the LOOKOUT Centre Principal) if the student returns home and is no longer in OOHC. - Provide information to the school on key roles and responsibilities of DHHS, the case manager, care provider and carer, including signatory rights. - Within DHHS CRIS or CRISP ensure that the relevant education screens are updated and accurate. - Work with relevant early childhood professionals and the carer, as appropriate, to ensure ECEC services complete a Transition Learning and Development Statement for every child entering Foundation year at a government school. - For a child in OOHC, who has not attended an ECEC service, contact the enrolling school as early as possible to work with the school and carer to develop a transition plan tailored to the needs of the child and establish what support is required	- Participate in the first meeting of the SSG/PSG. - Provide relevant assessments and information to contribute to the development of an IEP/PLP for the child and keep a copy on electronic file (CRIS/CRISP). - Advise the SSG of the most appropriate person or people to have access to online programs used by schools to communicate the child's progress and attendance (government schools only). - Work collaboratively with the school to develop appropriate strategies to support the child at school and maximise their attendance and engagement. - Where any permission to release information is required, complete relevant consent forms. - Invite the school to send a representative to care team meetings and ensure the school has the Care Manager's details. - Work with the carers to ensure that the child or young person has access to everything required to be able to participate in a timely manner including materials, textbooks, technology, transport to school, excursions and camps.	- Work collaboratively with the school to make referrals or applications to relevant services and supports for the child or young person. - For every Aboriginal child or young person, provide the SSG with a copy of the cultural plan with the child or young persons agreement.	- Attend at least one SSG/PSG meeting per term and more frequently to ensure ongoing engagement by the student. - When there are changes, ensure that the school is provided with relevant and up-to-date information about the child or young person's circumstances, care arrangements, legal status, case plan, placement details and key contacts. - Make every effort to support the child or young person to continue to attend their current school when making case management and placement decisions. - Maintain an ongoing partnership with the school and ensure that the case manager, parents and carers are known to the school and involved in decision-making. Invite schools to participate in case planning meetings or seek appropriate input into planning processes. - Discuss with carers the need to inform the school when the child will be absent and alert the school to any issues impacting on attendance or behaviour.

