

Making a Start with the NDIS



ecia

Victorian Chapter

Developed for families in Victoria

A photograph of a woman and a young girl. The woman, on the left, has dark hair and wears black-rimmed glasses and a brown winter jacket with a fur-lined hood. She is smiling. The girl, on the right, is wearing a bright pink puffy winter jacket and a yellow knit hat with a small bow and cartoon animal faces. She is also smiling. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a patterned blanket or fabric.

Early Childhood
Intervention helped me
build Lee Ming's skills &
abilities, to participate in
and enjoy daily life.

Seeking help for your child

The early childhood years are important for children with disability and/or developmental delays, as they are for all children. Children's learning during this period shapes all their future development. The early years are also important for the whole family. Families learn how to support and nurture their child, how to meet their child's needs and how to adapt positively to challenges like disability and/or developmental delay.

Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) offers a range of supports and services to promote development, wellbeing and participation in the community for young children who have developmental delays or disability, as well as their families.

The role of ECI is to assist you to:

- Help your child develop skills and abilities to participate in and enjoy daily life.
- Understand the kinds of experiences which can assist your child's growth and development and what you can do to help.
- Enjoy life with your child and family.

The supports that are best for your child and family relate directly to your needs. They help you to create experiences and opportunities that are meaningful for you and your child. They work with existing strengths and interests. They aim to help you to be confident, aware and strong, building your role as your child's first teacher in life.

The supports that are best for your child become a natural part of what you do every day. Like every family, your daily routines are great assets. They are times for your child to practice skills, with your family's support. The goal is to feel part of what you would want to be doing anyway, not an add-on or a burden. ECI should fit with the rest of your daily life.

Children learn most in everyday situations with familiar people. ECI encourages and supports everyday learning, naturally building on opportunities for learning and development already being provided at home, and through services such as child care and kindergarten.

This booklet provides information for families who have very young children (0-8 years) who may have a disability and/or developmental delay. It aims to help you to understand what support is available through the National Disability Insurance Scheme for your child and family, and how to make informed choices that are right for you.

An ECI provider may be an agency or group of individual providers working together as a team, who are qualified to provide early support services to you and your child.

What is an Early Childhood Intervention Provider?

An ECI provider is an early childhood intervention agency or a group of individual professionals who are qualified in specialist areas such as education, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, psychology and speech pathology.

ECI providers work from a child and family centred approach. They build an equal partnership between parents and professionals. They help each family build on its strengths, and develop new skills that assist their child's development. They help to achieve the goals that are important to your child and family, that were identified during your NDIS planning.

What is a Keyworker?

Jenny is a qualified speech therapist. She is also a keyworker who works with William and his family regularly to help him develop his speech skills. Her team all have different qualifications which may include a psychologist, physiotherapist, occupational therapist and special educator. Jenny consults regularly with the whole team and their professional knowledge and skills are available to support William and his family. When William's parents have a concern that's outside Jenny's professional knowledge, Jenny arranges for the appropriate member of the team to see William.

This is the way keyworkers work with you to coordinate a 'team around your child'. They provide the best care while reducing the need for you to tell your story over and over. They build trust with you by listening to your concerns. They assist you to identify issues, and to create goals and the steps to achieve them for your child's learning and development. They help you and other members of your family to help your child.



Jenny is our first point of contact. She gives us support, resources and information we need to help William learn.

What is the National Disability Insurance Scheme?

The NDIS is a new way for children and their families to access supports and to link into their communities. It puts the goals of your child and family at the centre of supports. The NDIS provides you with choice over who delivers the services you want and what these could look like in order to achieve the outcomes you want for your child. The NDIS is a scheme for Australians 0-65, meaning that the confusing system of all different funding throughout a person's life will be streamlined into one system, ECI services will now be funded through the NDIS.

What happens to the services we receive now?

Supports for your child are currently funded through a number of different pathways. You may be familiar with the funding you receive through the Department of Education (ECIS), Helping Children with Autism (HCWA), Better Start or other. All of these different funding streams will all roll into one funding body- the NDIS.

Even though the funding changes and you have a lot more choice about what services could look like for your family, your ECI provider will still be there to continue working with you if this is what you want. Alternatively, you can be assisted to choose another ECI provider(s) to suit your needs.

When will the NDIS changes start?

The NDIS has commenced in the Barwon area of Victoria and will continue to roll out across Victoria and Australia until 2019. You can read more on the NDIS website.

If you are currently receiving ECI supports for your child you will be supported with the move over to the scheme by your current provider and the National Disability Insurance Scheme Agency (NDIA).

If you are not receiving support currently for your child you will hear all about the NDIS from your paediatrician and or other community links and how to access support for your child when it comes to your region.

I know what the NDIS is, now what?

When the NDIS commences in your area, you will work with the NDIA staff to develop an NDIS plan. The NDIS document will be full of the goals you have for your child and family that relate to your child's learning and development. You can take a support person to all of your meetings including the keyworker you already have or anyone else in your life to support you through the process.

How do I choose the right ECI Provider for my family?

Now that you have your child's NDIS Plan including ECI funding, you can meet with providers and make choices about which provider you will use.

Your NDIA contact (Regional Support Officer/Local Area Coordinator) will provide you with a list and discuss the available providers with you. If needed, they can assist you to make contact with the providers you are interested in. You may have already chosen the provider you wish to use or there may be someone you have worked with previously who you would like to continue supporting you and your child. Your NDIA contact will go over the NDIS documents (including a copy of the NDIS plan) that you can give to the ECI support you have chosen.

A list of registered providers is on the NDIS website with details of the supports they are registered to provide. This list is added to as new providers are registered. It is worthwhile reviewing the registration list periodically to check what new providers may be available.

When deciding if the ECI Provider is suitable for your child and your family, the following questions could be helpful to ask:

- ☐ What are your service's values and philosophies around supporting children with disability and developmental delays?
- ☐ How would the services offered support my child?
- ☐ How would your service work in partnership with our family?
- ☐ Can parents or other family members be involved with the services delivered?
- ☐ Are there any fees charged for your services? Are these clearly outlined in the Service Agreement together with our responsibility and the provider's responsibility? Please note: You should not be charged a fee for the cancellation of therapeutic supports however you **must** inform the service with enough notice whenever possible.
- ☐ How long will our family have to wait before accessing your services? How do you let us know that we are moving up your waitlist?
- ☐ What type of qualifications and experience do the staff have?
- ☐ How will you work with other members of the ECI team to assist in coordinating support for my child and our family when necessary?
- ☐ How does your service encourage positive behaviour in children?
- ☐ Do you have material about your service I could take home with me?

How can an ECI Provider help?

Once you have found a service provider(s) who have agreed to work with you, the first step will be to develop a Service Agreement together. This agreement covers the types of support to be provided, who will provide this support, how often and for how long. The purpose of the Service Agreement is to enable you to work together to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the NDIS plan.

You should expect an ECI Provider to cover the following as part of the conversation to build the Service Agreement:

Administrative support

- ☐ Assigning a keyworker to your family.
- ☐ Coordinating the services your family needs, including assistance to access other providers if required.
- ☐ Supporting your family with the transition to childcare, kindergarten and school.
- ☐ Ensuring the relevant documentation for the End of Funded Supports Plan Review will be submitted to your NDIA contact one month prior to the review date.
- ☐ Liaising with your NDIA contact should other needs arise (e.g. providing written evidence if Support Coordination is needed).

Family skills & support

- ☐ Assisting your family to adapt to the emotional and practical challenges involved with raising your child or assist your family to access emotional and practical support for the family.
- ☐ Providing support and education for you as parent or carer.

Building routines

- ☐ Identifying activities that build on your child's strengths and interests such as playgroups, toy libraries and recreational activities.
- ☐ Helping you to build the activities and strategies that will support your child's progress into the family's routine.
- ☐ Supporting your child in the natural environments where they spend their time (e.g. home, childcare, kindergarten and other community facilities such as parks, Children's Play Centres), to promote your child's participation and development.

Material support

- ☐ Ensuring the equipment required to increase participation is identified in the NDIS plan as reasonable and necessary, and the NDIA process for supply of this equipment is followed.

Building a great Service Agreement means I will know the types of supports which will be provided, who's going to provide them, how often and for how long. All these supports fit with what works for my family.

Am I on the Right Track?

How will you know if you're on the right track? Count how many of the following statements seem right to you:

Our keyworker and others working with our family...

- ☐ are knowledgeable about children's development, disability and family life with children a bit like mine.
- ☐ help us set goals we really care about and that are achievable.
- ☐ make sure we are part of a team, working together for the benefit of our child and family.
- ☐ share his/her knowledge/understanding/skills with me and the others in my family. They are upfront with us about different approaches to evidence based supports and we discuss any concerns.
- ☐ offer choices, respect our decisions and encourage us to stay with our choices long enough to try them out properly.
- ☐ make us feel comfortable, respected, and able to be frank and ask the questions we want.
- ☐ see my child as a child first. They always respect and think about my child's interests, preferences, reactions and opinions in whatever they are discussing with us.
- ☐ watch my child in various settings and situations to understand his/her likes and dislikes, interests, strengths and needs.
- ☐ teach us how to link therapy strategies into my child's routines at home, childcare or kindergarten.
- ☐ care about and remembers our family that we are a whole family unit.
- ☐ always give me enough time to answer the questions I have. They listen carefully to me and learn from me.
- ☐ link our family into other services where appropriate.
- ☐ Our sessions are enjoyable and productive.

If you can see your child is progressing towards the goals in your NDIS plan, if you feel like you are a key part of the team surrounding your child, and if the people who your child meets on a daily basis are supported to understand their needs and build a sense of inclusion, you are well on the way...

Who can I call if I want to talk more about this?

Early Childhood Intervention Australia Victorian Chapter ECIA (VC) is the peak body for early childhood intervention in Victoria. They can support you with questions you have about the NDIS, your ECI provider and pathways to accessing ECI.

Phone: 03 9018 5496 **Website:** www.eciavic.org.au

Association for Children with a Disability Whether you're a parent, carer, sibling, family member or a professional who works with children with a disability and families, ACD can assist you to make the most of available services and supports. ACD offer parent support and can assist in navigating the maze.

Phone: 03 9818 2000 or 1800 654 013 (*rural callers*) **Web:** www.acd.org.au

National Carer Counselling Program Provides free short-term counselling for parents and carers. Your GP or case manager can make a referral or you can contact the service yourself.

Phone 1800 242 636 **Web** www.carersvictoria.org.au



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