

# **Providing an Educational Needs Assessment for Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care May 2012**

## **Guide for Victorian Government Schools**



Department of Education and  
Early Childhood Development



## Who does this guide apply to?

Guidance for school leaders, teachers, Student Support Services, case managers and Student Support Groups about the process to request and conduct an educational needs assessment for a child or young person in out-of-home care enrolled at a Victorian government school.

This guidance aims to:

- outline the process and circumstances for government schools to access one of three educational needs assessments
- provide advice for Student Support Services or the nominated assessment service when undertaking an educational needs assessment.

## What is an educational needs assessment?

The [\*Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment: A Partnering Agreement between the Department of Human Services, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and Independent Schools Victoria \(the Partnering Agreement\)\*](#) commits all parties to improve the educational experience and outcomes of children and young people in out-of-home care in Victoria.

An educational needs assessment is a diagnostic and clinical assessment using identified tools to address a child or young person's particular and individual learning needs. This will provide advice to their Student Support Group and significantly inform their Individual Education Plan. It may also provide advice about further services or supports that may be required. The assessment will generate a report to address the learning and development needs of the child or young person.

## Why do children and young people in out-of-home care need an educational needs assessment?

There has been a substantial amount of research on the impact of abuse, trauma and disrupted attachment on brain development which can impact on school engagement and performance. Research indicates that children and young people in out-of-home care often have low levels of educational achievement and have much lower mean test scores for reading and numeracy than the general student population.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, children and young people who are in out-of-home care often need targeted support to improve their educational progress and achievement.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Educational Outcomes of Children and Young People on Guardianship and Custody Orders: A pilot study*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (June 2007), Canberra. Access at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/cws/eoocogoco/eoocogoco.pdf>



## Who is eligible?

The Partnering Agreement requires that an educational needs assessment is undertaken for every child or young person who has resided in out-of-home care for a period of three months or longer to identify their particular learning needs.

At times, a child or young person may refuse to participate in the educational needs assessment or their guardian or senior Child Protection staff member with case planning responsibilities may determine it is inappropriate for an assessment to be undertaken. This decision should be respected but reviewed on a periodic basis to determine if circumstances have changed.

There are three types of educational needs assessments for a child or young person in different living arrangements (see table below).

Student	Assessment Service
Any student in out-of-home care who is likely to be eligible for additional support from the Program for Students with Disabilities	<a href="#">Program for Students with Disabilities Assessment Service</a>
Any student residing in residential care ( <a href="#">what is residential care?</a> )	Residential Care Assessment Service
Any student in kinship or foster care ( <a href="#">what is kinship or foster care?</a> )	<a href="#">Student Support Services</a>

The Principal must identify any child or young person who has resided in out-of-home care for three months or longer and convene a Student Support Group meeting to begin the referral process for an educational needs assessment. See [School Responsibilities and Case Manager Responsibilities checklists](#) for more information on enrolling a child or young person in school.



## Referral process for a student enrolled at a Victorian government school

### Step 1: Convening the Student Support Group

Within the first week of the child or young person's enrolment at school, a Student Support Group meeting must be convened to gather a range of information about the child's needs and situation such as:

- the students' engagement and learning progress or difficulties, and relevant information which may help to clarify the students' learning or wellbeing needs;
- the student's most recent Individual Education Plan including any school-based strategies that have been implemented to address learning or wellbeing issues;
- identification of other services or supports that are involved with the student or previous referrals that have been made; and
- information about previous school/s that the student has attended.

### Step 2: The referral process

The Student Support Group should identify one of the following assessment categories:

#### 1. Program for Students with Disabilities Assessment Service (PSD)


A student may be eligible for additional support through the PSD. Referrals of students likely to be eligible for additional support under the categories of Intellectual Disability and Severe Language Disorder with Critical Educational Needs should be made by the school, by contacting the PSD Assessment Service, Lewis & Lewis Psychological Consultancy Service on 9380 5742.

Schools requiring assessments to support applications under other categories of the PSD, including Physical Disability, Visual Impairment, Severe Behaviour Disorder, Hearing Impairment and Autism Spectrum Disorder should contact Student Support Services or their regional disabilities coordinator for advice.

Guidelines detailing the roles and responsibilities in the PSD assessment process can be found on the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development website [here](#).

#### 2. Residential Care Assessment Service

A student living in residential care is eligible for an external educational needs assessment. In these circumstances, a referral form will be sent to the school from



the DEECD-appointed Assessment Service, Lewis & Lewis Psychological Consultancy Service.

Guidelines detailing the roles and responsibilities for the Residential Care Assessment Service assessment process will be made available on the Out-of-Home Care website soon.

### **3. Student Living in Kinship or Foster Care**

A student living in kinship or foster care will need to be referred to Student Support Services for an educational needs assessment using their existing referral process. Schools will be able to use the Student Online Case System (SOCS) when it becomes available.

Guidelines detailing the roles and responsibilities for the Student Living in Kinship or Foster Care assessment process can be found on the DEECD Ultraset site (DEECD employees only) [here](#).

## **Who provides consent?**


The school must obtain guardian consent for the educational needs assessment referral.

The school should consult with the case manager (Child Protection or Community Service Organisation) to confirm the legal status of the child or young people in out-of-home care to determine who is legally able to provide consent. The Department of Human Services is the guardian of children and young people on Guardianship Orders whilst the parent is guardian of those on Custody Orders. For more information on the types of court orders, please [click here](#).

## **What assessment tools are recommended?**

A wide range of assessments can be used including standardised psychometric assessments, behaviour checklists, and tests of an individual's receptive and expressive language and social competency. **See Box 1 and 2** for types of assessment tools.

Using their professional expertise and judgement the Student Support Services Officer or relevant assessment service will identify the appropriate types of assessment/s to provide useful information about the child or young person's educational needs, strengths and barriers to learning. It is important that the type of assessment/s used enable a report to be produced to inform the student's Individual Education Plan and enable support to be tailored.



Consideration will be given to the student's age, stage of development, cognitive abilities, previous history of assessment and any adjustments they may require to participate in an assessment.

**Box 1: Standard assessments can include, but are not limited to:**

Behavioural assessment tools

- Systemic Screening for Behaviour Disorders (SSBD)
- Student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS)
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
- Behaviour and Emotional Rating Scale (BERS)

Cognitive assessment tools

- Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices (SPM)
- Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test, Second Edition (KBIT-2)
- Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of Intelligence (WASI)
- Wechsler Nonverbal Scale of Ability (WNV)

Speech and language assessment tools:

- Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals, Fourth Edition, Screening Test (CELF-4 Screener)
- Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Fourth Edition (PPVT-4)

Educational achievement assessment tools:

- Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, Second Edition (KTEA-II)

Universal assessment tools:

- Brief Academic Competence Evaluation Scales System (BACESS)
- Academic Intervention Monitoring System (AIMS)



**Box 2: Comprehensive assessments can include, but are not limited to:**

Behavioural assessment tools:

- Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL)
- Adaptive Behaviour Assessment System, Second Edition (ABAS-II)
- Conners' Rating Scales-Revised (CRS-R)
- Beck Depression Inventory – Second Edition (BDI-II)

Cognitive assessment tools:

- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, Fourth Edition (WAIS-IV)
- Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence, Third Edition (WPPSI-III)
- Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales, Fifth Edition (SB5)
- Wechsler Intelligence Scale For Children, Fourth Edition (WISC-IV)

Speech and language assessment tools:

- Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals, Fourth Edition (CELF-4)
- Preschool Language Scale, Fourth Edition (PLS-4)
- Test of Early Language Development, Third Edition (TELD-3)
- Test of Language Development, Fourth Edition (TOLD-4)
- Test of Adolescence and Adult Language, Fourth Edition (TOAL-4)

Educational achievement assessment tools:


- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test, Second Edition (WAIT-II)

Universal assessment tools:

- Measures of Student Development (MSD)

## **What happens after the educational needs assessment is complete?**

Following the assessment, the Student Support Services Officer or relevant assessment service will provide an educational needs assessment report to the school. The school should discuss the outcomes of the educational needs assessment with the Student Support Group who will consider the recommendations and take appropriate action. Information about the outcomes of the educational needs



assessment will be discussed with the child/young person and their family, where appropriate.

The educational needs assessment report must provide a comprehensive description of the child or young person's learning needs, strengths, challenges and personal or circumstantial factors that may impact upon their learning and successful participation in education. It may include information provided by the school, the student, their teacher(s), family, case managers, other allied health or medical professionals, and other services or professionals involved with the child or young person.

The educational needs assessment report should be used as the basis for determining a student's particular learning and wellbeing needs and to support the school to develop or revise a student's Individual Education Plan.

The Student Support Group is responsible for the development of the Individual Education Plan. The purpose of an Individual Education Plan is to describe a set of strategies to address the particular educational needs of the child or young person and trigger access for further services.

The Student Support Group should regularly monitor the child or young person's progress against the Individual Education Plan, revisit goals and priorities and make the necessary adjustments to the plan and the implementation strategies based on the child or young person's achievement.

For more information on the development of an Individual Education Plan, please see [\*Developing an Individual Education Plan – Advice for Victorian Government Schools\*](#)

## Educational Needs Assessment process flow chart

