

Program for Students with Disabilities Process for Integrated Outsourced Assessment Service

Background

In line with the *Framework for Student Support Services in Victorian Government Schools*, available at <http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/wellbeing/welfare/framework.htm>, partnerships between schools, school clusters and service providers are a means of providing optimum service delivery for students at risk.

To facilitate these goals, schools should aim to provide ongoing and coordinated management of a student who is at risk and the services the student is accessing.

As outlined in the *Framework for Student Support Services in Victorian Government Schools* (p.11), this continuity of care includes provision of case management and coordination, including liaison with other services that a student may be accessing.

The Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD)

The Program for Students with Disabilities supports the education of students with disabilities in Victorian Government Schools by providing schools with additional resources.

The Department provides an outsourced assessment service for applications on behalf of students in the categories of Intellectual Disability (ID) and Severe Language Disorder with Critical Educational Needs (SLD-CEN). This service is provided across the state by Lewis and Lewis Psychological Consultancy Service.

Role of the School

In line with the *Framework for Student Support Service in Victorian Government Schools* and the recommendations of the Suicide Prevention Task Force Report, appropriate measureable student welfare provision is required to be developed and monitored in schools. This provision should be outlined in the School Strategic Plan through the appropriate setting of goals, implementation strategies and achievement measures.

Schools will be responsible for the development of appropriate welfare structures to ensure the provision of a positive and supportive school environment and the delivery of coordinated and comprehensive services for students.

In relation to students who may be eligible for the PSD, it is the responsibility of the schools to identify these students (in consultation with Student Support Services Officers (SSSOs) and the family), establish a Student Support Group, complete the referral and application process and provide ongoing support to ensure the needs of the students are met, regardless of the outcome of the application to the PSD.

In order to ensure a coordinated approach to student welfare, the school should ensure the SSSO is aware of the referral and when the assessment is completed to enable the SSSO to provide ongoing support as required and to prevent duplication of work.

Role of the Student Support Services Officers (SSSOs)

In line with the *Memorandum of Understanding in the Framework*, the role of the SSSO includes:

1. The SSSO shall provide high quality advice and support to schools in the development of programs, procedures and policies, with a broad focus on the wellbeing of students, particularly those at risk.
2. The SSSO shall develop and implement a range of programs for students and the school community that aim to foster resiliency and respond to identified social, emotional and educational needs.
3. The SSSO shall provide professional development programs for schools with a focus on primary prevention strategies and skills in the identification, monitoring, management and referral of students at risk and the development of a positive and supportive environment.
4. The SSSO shall provide counselling and intensive support for students at risk and, where appropriate, their families.
5. The SSSO shall establish and maintain links with relevant community support agencies with a view to optimising services available for students at risk that focus on primary prevention, early intervention and continuity of care.
6. The SSSO shall provide advice to the Regional Director on issues pertinent to student welfare as appropriate.

Role of the Assessment Service

The contractor is required to work closely with the Department's Student Wellbeing Branch, regions and schools to manage and administer the assessment service for students in the Victorian Government School System who are likely to be eligible under the categories of ID and SLD-CEN for the PSD.

STAGE 1: Pre Referral

The school, in conjunction with the family and the SSSO, identify a concern about a student and discuss the need for referral

The SSSO may assist the school in identifying students who may be eligible for additional services under the PSD. With the school, they will be able to help determine whether a referral to the contractor is appropriate.

Information should be collected to substantiate the referral. This may include:

- Previous cognitive or language assessment results.
- Relevant background information (eg. medical reports, family history, hearing assessment).
- Details of interventions and adjustment that have been made which have been aimed at assisting the student's learning.

In the case of students with a suspected SLD-CEN, the information should describe the nature of the student's language difficulties.

The SSSO may assist the school in collecting relevant information to complete the referral process and provide information or reports if they have had prior involvement with the student.

The school contacts the contractor

The initial contact requesting a referral should be made by telephone by the principal (or designated nominee). Their discussion with the contractor will focus on the information/evidence which indicates the potential existence of an ID or an SLD-CEN.

The contractor will discuss the students difficulties with the Principal and determine if a referral is appropriate.

In the situation where the referral is not accepted by the contractor, feedback will be provided to the school regarding further actions they may take. The school and the SSSO will continue to provide ongoing support to the student as required.

This may include the establishment of an ongoing Student Support Group, development of an Individual Learning Plan and ongoing case management. This may also include further assessment, for example, where it is thought the student may have a learning difficulty.

If the discussion substantiates a referral, the contractor will accept the case and a referral pack will be sent to the school. This pack includes a Referral Form, Parent Consent Form and Screener/Vineland.

It is then the responsibility of the school to complete the referral pack. The SSSO may assist with completion of the referral and provide available information and evidence as requested by the contractor.

STAGE 2: Referral

Based on the referral information collected, the school, in conjunction with the family, and the SSSO where appropriate, decide whether to proceed with the referral.

If the school decides not to proceed with the referral (for example if screening tools clearly indicate the student does not have an ID or SLD-CEN), the school and the SSSO should continue to provide ongoing support as required. This may include the establishment of an ongoing Student Support Group, development of an Individual Learning Plan and ongoing case management.

If a decision is made to continue with the referral, the relevant documentation is forwarded to the contractor.

Contractor reviews the referral

The contractor will review the information contained in the referral pack to determine if further assessment is appropriate.

If the referral is not accepted, the contractor will provide feedback to the school about the reasons the referral was not accepted and appropriate actions the school may take. The school and the SSSO will continue to provide ongoing support as required. This may include the establishment of an ongoing Student Support Group, development of an Individual Learning Plan and ongoing case management.

If the initial discussion and screening indicates a further assessment is appropriate, and the Referral and Parent Consent Forms are completed, the contractor will accept the referral and the appropriate assessment will be arranged.

STAGE 3: Assessment

The assessment will usually occur shortly after the contractor receives the completed referral information from the school.

Based on the initial discussions and information obtained through the referral process, the contractor will compile an initial case history.

The contractor conducts formal testing/interviews with the student using standardised testing materials as specified in the *Program for Students with Disabilities Guidelines for Professionals* which are provided by the Student Wellbeing Branch. This assessment is usually carried out at the student's school.

Face to face feedback is provided to the school and the parent immediately after the assessment. At this time further information regarding the student's history may also be collected.

The contractor may consult with and seek further information from schools and/or SSSOs on borderline cases to ensure an accurate assessment has been completed before a student is screened out.

STAGE 4: Report

Written reports and feedback will be provided by the contractor following the assessment process. Three copies of the report will be provided – one for the school, one for the family and the other to be kept on file. These reports will be provided regardless of the outcome of the assessment.

The report will outline the findings of the assessment and make recommendations on whether an application for the PSD should proceed.

STAGE 5: Post Assessment

Application does not proceed

If the assessment results indicate that an application should not proceed, the report provided by the contractor will outline the results of the tests undertaken and provide educational and programming recommendations for the student.

The involvement of the contractor ceases at this point. The school and the SSSO will continue to provide ongoing support as required. This may include the establishment of an ongoing Student Support Group, development of an Individual Learning Plan and ongoing case management.

If the family, school, SSSO, or other relevant personnel require further information about the report or the assessment process, they may contact the contractor for additional feedback.

Application does proceed

If the assessment process has indicated that an application should proceed under the Program for Students with Disabilities two reports will be provided.

The first report will contain test results, information that provides a history of the student's problems and other evidence to support the Educational Needs Questionnaire, where available. This report *should be* included to support the application.

A second report will examine the results of the tests undertaken and provide educational and programming recommendations relating to the student. This report is not required to support the application.

School compiles and sends completed application

The school establishes a Student Support Group and completes the application as outlined in Section 3 of the *Program for Students with Disabilities Handbook 2008*.

A Student Support Group is central to making an application under the Program for Students with Disabilities. It is a cooperative partnership between the family, school representatives and professionals to ensure coordinated support for the student's educational needs. This is through the development of specific educational goals and a tailored educational program.

Application is processed

The application is processed by the Resources Coordination Group who will determine if the student is eligible for additional resources via the Program for Students with Disabilities.

Outcome of the application

The Principal will be notified of the outcome of the application. It is the Principal's responsibility to notify the family of the outcome of the application, eligibility, and level of support allocated to the school.

Regardless of the outcome of the application to the Program for Students with Disabilities, the Principal will reconvene the Student Support Group and an ongoing Student Support Group will be established.

The school and the SSSO will continue to provide ongoing support to the student as required. This may include the establishment of an ongoing Student Support Group, development of an Individual Learning Plan and ongoing case management.