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### List of acronyms

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<td>A&amp;EP</td>
<td>Victorian Aids and Equipment Program</td>
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<td>ATSI</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island</td>
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<td>CAAS</td>
<td>Continence Aids Assistance Scheme</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Community Service Organisation</td>
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<td>PA</td>
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1. Introduction

Placing Victoria’s children first is a whole-of-government approach that recognises the importance of early childhood experiences in laying the foundation for later development and life achievement. This approach is supported by a substantive body of research that highlights the critical importance of early intervention for children with a disability or developmental delay and their families. Underpinned by the principles of human rights (equity, self-determination and choice, diversity and non-discrimination, and citizenship), the focus is on enabling people with a disability to live and participate in the life of their community with the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities as all other citizens of Victoria.

This whole-of-government approach is further reflected in the Victorian Government’s Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development (2008), which envisions that ‘every young Victorian thrives, learns and develops, to enjoy a productive, rewarding and fulfilling life, while contributing to their local and global communities’. This highlights the importance of Victoria’s children’s services in meeting the needs of our families and children.

Early Childhood Intervention Services

Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) provide a strategic opportunity to facilitate earlier identification of a disability or developmental delay; strengthen supports for families; and provide quality support and intervention to ensure all Victorian children enjoy the best start in life. In order to achieve this, all parents need access to coordinated and universal services; this requirement being an integral part of a broader plan to improve outcomes for children in Victoria.

The overall aim of ECIS is to provide families and carers with the knowledge, skills and support to meet the needs of their child and optimise their child’s development and ability to participate in family and community life. All service provision is based on a family-centred approach, recognising the importance of working in partnership with the family. ECIS work collaboratively with universal and primary services to facilitate early identification, referral and secondary consultation, and to support participation in a broad range of family, community and professional services and access to resources for all children and families.

ECIS Flexible Support Packages (ECIS FSP) were first rolled out in 2005–06 to complement the existing Department of Human Services (DHS) Disability Services Division FSP and related ECIS and other early childhood services. They are targeted towards children with a disability or developmental delay who demonstrate complex needs, are aged between birth to six years and not attending school. The ECIS FSP are delivered through Community Service Organisations (CSOs).

Early Childhood Intervention Services: Flexible Support Packages Guidelines gives information to service providers about:

- the application process and the timelines
- links to support materials and templates
- key contact numbers and websites.
2. Flexible support packages

Program overview

ECIS FSP are part of a planned and holistic service response that focuses on providing additional support to family and carers, the wider ECIS service system and community (including universal services) in meeting the needs of children with a disability or developmental delay. ECIS FSP are provided using a family-centred approach that recognises that families have the skills, strengths and abilities to identify their children’s needs and which work towards bringing positive change that builds and strengthens family independence.

ECIS FSP are goal oriented and focus on achieving specific outcomes for the child and family. The allocation and delivery of a package are based on the Family Service and Support Plan (FSSP) and the Expenditure Plan. Both plans consider the individual needs of the child and family and are developed in collaboration between the family and their Family Service Coordinator (FSC). The needs and circumstances of each child and family will be different; therefore the funding contribution provided through ECIS FSP will be different from one family to another.

Note: ECIS FSP funding is short term and targeted in nature and, as such, should not be considered as an ongoing source of funding for long-term service involvement.

ECIS FSP principles

ECIS FSP are specifically designed to provide time-limited support to address a specific need(s) that cannot otherwise be provided through ECIS. They are designed to:

- strengthen the capacities of families to promote optimal development of their children
- support the needs of children with a disability or developmental delay
- ease some of the additional pressures on parents.

ECIS FSP deliver supports and services that are:

- planned, organised, and coordinated as part of the child’s current program and family supports
- developmentally appropriate for the child
- time limited and targeted to address a specific need(s) and monitored through the FSSP.

ECIS FSP objectives

The aims of the ECIS FSP are to:

- provide additional support to children with complex needs who may also be receiving other forms of ECIS
- provide short-term assistance to children and families who may be experiencing difficulties due to crisis
- provide a tailored and flexible service response, which evolves alongside the changing needs of children with complex support needs and their families
- assist in the provision of timely and targeted support to children and their families as documented in their goal-oriented FSSP, which identifies strengths, support needs, agreed priorities, and relative duration and intensity of support required
- assist in areas of child development and facilitate successful transition through developmental milestones
- encourage service provision flexibility through a mix of individually tailored supports.
ECIS FSP Eligibility Statement
ECIS FSP are designed to assist children with complex support needs, including autism, social, behavioural emotional and physical issues (this does not include high medical needs), additional to those already delivered by the ECIS service system.
In order to be eligible for ECIS FSP, the child must be eligible to receive ECIS and meet all of the following criteria:
• be aged between birth to six years and not attending school
• have a disability or developmental delay
• be assessed as requiring a range and level of coordinated supports not usually available through universal services.

ECIS FSP Priority Statement
Factors to be considered in determining priority of access to ECIS FSP include:
• children in or entering out-of-home care
• the level of complexity relating to the child and family’s support needs, including autism, social, behavioural and emotional needs (excluding high medical needs)
• critical transition points, or at a critical developmental stage
• safety issues (in relation to the child’s behaviour) affecting the capacity of parents and associated professionals (e.g. kindergarten teachers, child care) to continue to care for the child and to ensure the safety of the child and those around them
• families with complex needs and/or demonstrating significant levels of anxiety/stress/health-related issues that impact directly on their ability to care for their child, or who are at risk of family break-down
• families with limited support networks, who are socially isolated or who are experiencing difficulty in accessing services and community facilities
• levels of support/funding currently provided by other programs or services
• families of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island (ATSI) origin.

Note: Urgency of need is decided at the Regional Advisory Panel (RAP) as part of the allocation process.
3. Application process

Stage 1 – Receiving and completing applications

Application process

Three documents are required to support an application for ECIS FSP:

1. **ECIS FSP Application Form** – provides essential family demographic information as well as additional information about the family and child which may not be included in the Family Services and Support Plan. (The application form is available from the [ECIS FSP Website](#). Please refer to appendix 2 for full address details of this and all other web addresses.)

2. **Family Services Support Plan (FSSP)** – documents specific goals and outcomes identified by the family that require additional supports/resources through ECIS FSP, which cannot otherwise be provided by ECIS, the family or universal services.

3. **Expenditure Plan** – provides a budget breakdown of how the requested funds will be spent.

Family Service Coordinator’s role and responsibilities

There may be a number of service providers, such as Maternal and Child Health, kindergartens, Family Support Providers and ECIS, involved in providing support to children and families. Where the family is linked in with an ECIS service provider, it is expected that they assume the role and responsibilities of Family Service Coordinator (FSC) in the first instance. The FSC should be the primary contact for the family, and produce a single FSSP as part of a collaborative process. Where the family is on the ECIS waiting list, an ECIS Intake Team Leader will complete/oversee the completion of all ECIS FSP application documents. In the delivery of ECIS FSP, the FSC is responsible for:

- completing of the application form, the FSSP and the Expenditure Plan in collaboration with the family, clarifying application information when required, and informing the FSP Coordinator of any change in family circumstances prior to Regional Advisory Panel (RAP) meeting
- working in collaboration with the family to purchase services and sending off invoices for payment
- monitoring and review of ECIS FSP funding as part of the FSSP
- requesting a RAP decision appeal or filing a complaint
- providing any additional information.

**Note:** In the event that an ECIS FSP application is completed by a person other than an assigned FSC, that person will assume the role and responsibilities of the FSC as detailed above.

FSP Coordinator’s role and responsibilities

In the delivery of ECIS FSP, the FSP Coordinator is responsible for:

- receiving and reviewing all applications, providing written correspondence to the FSC and family upon receipt of the ECIS FSP application, clarifying application information, and providing additional service–system information when requested
- coordinating of Regional Advisory Panel (RAP) meetings; and writing correspondence to the FSC and family of panel outcome within designated timelines
- organising and ensuring the appeals process is implemented; liaising with Program and Service Advisor (PASA) in organising and providing additional information for complaints process
- financial administration, data collection and storage of funding information used to support each child and family through ECIS FSP
- coordinating the purchase of items/services with the Family Service Coordinator (or designated person who will arrange purchase of approved services)
- collating and reporting IRIS data as per program requirement timelines
• proper information storage of RAP meeting minutes, application and additional client information in line with DEECD privacy policy.

ECIS FSP Planning Outcomes Framework

The Planning Outcomes Framework maps the key stages of ECIS service involvement and identifies the key participants involved (see figure 1). It specifically identifies ECIS FSP as a source of additional support that complements the capacity and strengths of the family, ECIS services and the wider community (including universal services) in caring for children with complex support needs. The funding made available through ECIS FSP will then be best placed to minimise the potential for service dependence and assist in achieving the agreed goals and outcomes identified in the FSSP.

Figure 1: Early Childhood Intervention Services – Flexible Support Packages Planning Outcomes Framework

Family Services and Support Plan

The Family Services and Support Plan (FSSP) is an integral component of ECIS involvement. It documents and guides the early childhood intervention process for individual children and families and, as such, should already be completed prior to ECIS FSP application. For the purposes of applying for ECIS FSP, the FSSP attached must:

• document the specific goals and outcomes requiring additional supports/resources through ECIS FSP that cannot otherwise be provided by ECIS, the family or universal services
• describe how ECIS FSP will assist in achieving the agreed goals and outcomes outlined in the FSSP.
**Note:** The following points should be considered as prompts to assist the FSC in providing a clear and concise FSSP:

- the family’s concerns and priorities relating to the child’s complex support needs
- the role and capacity of the family members in addressing the needs in the FSSP
- the role and capacity of community services currently accessed by the child and family in addressing the child’s complex support needs
- the role and capacity of ECIS in meeting the needs of the child and family
- other funding avenues and family contributions pursued prior to commencing the ECIS FSP application process
- the child’s present levels of development
- specific services, programs and activities necessary to meet the individual needs of the child and family
- the environments in which the services will be provided (services should be provided in the natural settings identified by the family)
- the name of the primary service provider who will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the FSSP
- steps to support transition to other services
- financial strategies whereby allocation of ECIS FSP funding assists in working towards maximising the family’s level of independence in meeting the responsibilities of providing support to their child
- timelines for the monitoring and review of the FSSP

**Expenditure plan**

The ECIS FSP Coordinator is responsible for the administration of funding to purchase supports and services on behalf of children and families as identified in the Family Services Support Plan. To ensure the provision of funding is effectively planned and linked to specific objectives, the Family Service Coordinator (in collaboration with the family where appropriate) must complete an Expenditure Plan for each child and family. It will:

- provide an itemised breakdown of the services/goods required, including costs, dates and times the requested service is to be accessed
- include the total amount of funding requested in the application.

Every attempt should be made to ensure that the Expenditure Form is an exact and clearly itemised amount of the goods/services to be purchased. ECIS FSP will assume no responsibility in covering the cost of items or services not approved for purchase by the RAP.

**Note:** The Application Form and Expenditure Plan should include the specific goals and outcomes requiring additional supports/resources through ECIS FSP, which cannot otherwise be provided by ECIS, the family or universal services. These documents should clearly describe how ECIS FSP funding provision will assist in achieving the agreed goals and outcomes outlined in the FSSP (to be attached). It is at the discretion of the FSP Coordinator to request further information from the FSC (or other person completing the application) should it be assessed that information essential to the decision-making process is absent.

**Stage 2 – Allocation of ECIS FSP**

**Regional Advisory Panel**

The Regional Advisory Panel (RAP) convenes monthly to assess all applications and appeals received during the previous month against the ECIS FSP eligibility and priority of access criteria as detailed above. RAP membership should consist of:

- one SCS Intake Team Leader or delegate
- two CSO ECIS representatives (including the regional ECIS FSP Coordinator)
• one DEECD Program and Service Advisor (PASA) or Regional Program Manager
• one parent representative (wherever possible).

RAP process
Given the significant responsibility and difficulty imposed on panel members in reaching decisions that are consistent and impartial, it is of paramount importance that panel processes and the responsibilities of those involved are clearly defined. RAP decisions made during a meeting have direct financial implications for families. These decisions may be later called into question or indeed reviewed (as would be the case in an appeal or complaint). Reaching formal agreement with panel members on decision-making protocols is a good way in ensuring all applications receive the same level of consideration.

It is the responsibility of each regional RAP to develop a Terms of Reference (TOR) to:
• cover the aims and objectives of the panel
• determine the roles and responsibilities of the chairperson and panel members
• document the recording and archival process relating to minutes
• formalise decision-making processes in line with the ECIS FSP guidelines.

While it is up to each DEECD region to settle on their own format and process for documenting minutes, it is expected that their focus is on the information considered.

RAP notification timelines and decision-making processes

Notification timelines
It is expected that a decision regarding ECIS FSP allocation will be reached during the RAP meeting in which it is heard. A formal letter of confirmation of outcome will be sent by the FSP Coordinator to the family and the relevant Family Service Coordinator within seven working days.

Decision-making process
Members of the RAP are to review each application for funding according to the eligibility and priority statements and the Planning Outcomes Framework outlined above.

The following points are provided as prompts that RAP members can use when reviewing applications which require further consideration:
• evidence of a planned and coordinated use of funds in meeting the stated needs
• the individual circumstances of the child and family
• the relevance/role of a FSP in achieving the agreed outcomes within the FSSP
• enhancing the opportunity for the child and family to participate in the life of the community
• enhancing the opportunities for the child to develop, strengthen or maintain positive social relationships
• maximising the value of the funds requested by considering the effectiveness of funds previously used for a similar or related purpose
• the effective use of existing informal supports and the development of informal supports over time
• the use of universal supports in providing continuity of care, and other funding options and designated service providers accessed prior to ECIS FSP
• minimising duplication of services and the possibility of ECIS FSP service dependence.

Where it is decided that additional information is required for the RAP to reach a decision, the exact nature of the additional information required is to be recorded in the minutes and provided to the FSC for follow up. Following receipt of the additional information, a decision can then be made by the ECIS FSP Coordinator where appropriate (except in more complex cases that may require an additional panel meeting for consideration).

Grievance procedures
General principles:
• FSP service providers and regional DEECD offices must have policies to inform children and families of their right to complain, and procedures to resolve any complaints received, in a format which they can understand and which is easily accessible.
• Children and families receiving ECIS FSP are entitled to have complaints investigated objectively, fairly, promptly and without fear of retribution.

• Complaints may also inform access and service delivery practices, with a view to improving the support.

• While it is preferred that the family liaise with their FSC in lodging an appeal or complaint, family members can lodge an appeal or complaint directly to the FSP Coordinator.

**Appeals process**

Any expression of dissatisfaction in the decision about eligibility for support or level/type of support provided through ECIS FSP should be referred to the appeals process in the first instance. Appeals will be conducted only on the basis of new or additional relevant information that may not have been available at the time of application, or where circumstances have changed. Members of the same Regional Advisory Panel (RAP) that made the initial assessment usually assess appeal requests.

It is the responsibility of the FSC (or family) to inform the FSP Coordinator of a request to appeal against a RAP decision if evidence that wasn’t initially considered by the RAP (or that demonstrates a sudden change in circumstances) can be provided. The FSP Coordinator will send out a letter within **five working days** to the FSC and/or family confirming that an appeal has been lodged, receipt of the additional information and the date the appeal will be heard. The FSC and/or family are to provide all additional information to the FSP Coordinator before the next RAP meeting. The FSP Coordinator will assume responsibility for storing this information in line with DEECD privacy principles. Upon the review of a decision by the RAP, the FSP Coordinator is to notify the FSC and family as per the notification timelines and responsibilities as listed.

**Complaints process**

In circumstances where the appeals process fails to resolve a grievance relating to eligibility for support or level/type of support provided, a complaint can be lodged through the FSP Coordinator. The FSP Coordinator will then inform the regional PASA responsible for FSP who will liaise with the Manager, Children and Youth Services (CYS). The FSP Coordinator will inform the FSC and family by letter of the date when the complaint will be considered. The FSC and family will then work together in collecting all relevant support letters and information stating the case for complaint. This information is then to be passed onto the regional PASA. The FSP Coordinator will also provide the relevant minutes documenting the decision-making process, as well as any additional information that explains the panel’s position. This information will also be passed onto the regional PASA.

All information relating to the complaint will then be forwarded to the Assistant Regional Director, CYS who will ensure that the decision-making process is reviewed by a senior DEECD staff member who is independent of all previous considerations of an application or appeal. Once a decision is reached, the PASA will notify the FSP Coordinator who will in turn notify the FSC and family as per the notification timelines and responsibilities as listed.

Care should be taken to ensure that the following tasks are completed on making a decision regarding a complaint:

• The FSP Coordinator and Family Service Coordinator will implement actions decided upon and meet notification deadlines within the timelines specified above.

• Documents relating to the complaints process are stored by the FSP Coordinator in line with DEECD privacy principles.

While it is preferred that all complaints are made in writing, this complaints process can also respond to non-written complaints.

Where an applicant or family is dissatisfied with any other aspect of the operation of ECIS FSP they may make a complaint to the funded agency, which will provide them with a copy of the complaints process for their agency.

All complaints are to be responded to in accordance with the principles outlined in the Guide to complaint handling for Victorian Public Sector Agencies issued by Ombudsman Victoria and available at [Ombudsman Victoria](http://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au).

**Purchasing supports using ECIS FSP**

Once funding has been approved by the RAP, the FSP Coordinator will send out the Service Authorisation and Conditions of Payment documentation to the person nominated in the
application form. Purchase will then be arranged by the nominated person and/or family, with the invoice directed to the FSP Coordinator for payment. The FSC and family members are responsible for monitoring and reviewing the service/item purchased.

**Note:** Equipment items not available through A&EP and purchased using ECIS FSP become the property of the child and family upon receipt of the requested item(s). The parents/carer needs to be aware that they will be required to cover all costs related to maintenance/repair/replacement of the item.

**Requesting further ECIS FSP funding**

RAP members are to consider all subsequent applications for funding against the goals outlined in the FSSP, the priority criteria, supports already purchased by ECIS FSP, and the capacity of the family and other funding programs to meet the financial responsibilities of caring for the child. Follow-up applications will be considered against the priority criteria and all other applications.

**Stage 3 – ECIS FSP protocols**

**Transition process between regions**

Where a child and family relocate to another region within Victoria, both regional FSP service providers and ECIS support services should work together to ensure that ongoing support requirements are maintained. In planning a transfer or relocation, service providers should consider the following:

- ensure continuity of care wherever possible
- minimise duplication in processes such as assessment (with relevant permission sought in line with information privacy policy)
- provide as much notice as possible to the new service provider of an impending transition

Convene a transition planning meeting between the child and family, the current service provider(s) and proposed service provider(s). At this meeting, transition arrangements and continuation of support arrangements are discussed and formulated into a transition plan. This plan will outline the process for transition, including responsibilities, timeframes, associated budgetary decisions and the proposal for continuation of support. This process will form part of the FSSP.

**Cross-regional provision protocol**

Where a child and family reside in one region, but the services required exist in another, the FSP agency in the region of the address of the child and family are responsible for adjudicating over the application and administering ECIS FSP funding. Service providers from both regions are encouraged to liaise and work together as necessary, so as to ensure that ongoing support requirements for the child and family are maintained.

**Closure**

ECIS FSP service involvement ceases when the support or services purchased through ECIS FSP have been provided or when the stated objectives of funding in relation to the FSSP have been reached. Access to ECIS FSP funding will also cease at or around the time the child commences school or enters Disability Services:

- All packages should commence within 6 months of approval unless otherwise negotiated.
- All packages should be completed within 12 months of approval unless otherwise negotiated.

**Note:** All case closures must be recorded on the DEECD Integrated Reporting Information System (IRIS).
4. Further information

ECIS flexible support administrative breakdown

The intensity, frequency, and combination of service responses funded through ECIS FSP to address the individual needs of the child and family will vary according to the FSSP goals, the region’s allocated budget amount and priority criteria. Therefore, not all families will receive the same amount of ECIS FSP funding. As such, the 2009–10 average unit price of $5,618 is an indicative amount only. The average unit price is indexed annually in accordance with the DEECD Price Index policy for CSOs, currently at 3.14 per cent.

The total annual ECIS FSP funding budget provided to agencies is to be broken down as per the following:

- 12.5 per cent of the total ECIS FSP funding budget provided to each agency is available for administrative costs
- the remaining 87.5 per cent is available for package allocation
- in cases where the RAP determine that a child and family clearly demonstrate the need for service coordination or case management over and above that already provided through early intervention services, a maximum of up to 20 per cent (to be subtracted from 87.5 per cent of the average unit price) is available to purchase case management support.

Case management provision

Case management provision should only be considered where additional assistance is required in accessing/coordinating service delivery and it must be identified and detailed in the FSSP (in collaboration with the family). Case management provision is then to be discussed and determined at the RAP meeting. In most instances, families applying for ECIS FSP will already have a Family Service Coordinator and therefore won’t require additional case management support.

Suggested budget management strategies

Agencies are expected to have in place budget management mechanisms allowing for year-round funding access. Peak demand times during the year and the agency’s total allocated ECIS FSP budget need to be considered when determining budget management strategies.

Goods and services purchased using ECIS FSP

While the goods and services purchased through ECIS FSP are not prescribed, the following points apply to the use of ECIS FSP in contributing towards aids and equipment, electronic communication devices, continence aids, behaviour management, respite, childcare, inclusion and support and therapy.

ECIS flexible support and prescribed aids and equipment

When using ECIS FSP towards the purchase of aids and equipment through the Victorian Aids & Equipment Program (A&EP), it is the responsibility of ECIS FSP service providers to ensure that the equipment has been prescribed by a suitably qualified health professional. The A&EP provides funding for equipment specified within the A&EP Guidelines in the list of ‘Aids Available’ (see DHS Aids & Equipment Program Website). The A&EP coordinators are able to provide advice and support to service providers when considering the purchase of any of the aids or equipment on the list. Children who are eligible for an ECIS FSP may also be eligible to receive equipment through the A&EP. Whenever possible, the A&EP is the first avenue of equipment supply. The A&EP Guidelines provide details about eligibility, subsidy levels and the application process. In addition to providing the subsidy, the A&EP will assume the responsibilities outlined in the A&EP Guidelines.

When the purchase of prescribed equipment is recommended within the FSSP (as a part of the ECIS FSP application), as a priority for a child with a disability or developmental delay, ECIS FSP funding can be used in either or both of these cases:
• when the prescribed equipment is not on the A&EP Aids Available List
• when the subsidy provided through the A&EP does not cover the total cost of the prescribed equipment.

The responsibilities of the ECIS FSP service provider and the A&EP issuing centre are described below for each of the above situations.

1. The equipment is not on the A&EP Aids Available List

When an ECIS FSP service provider purchases equipment that is not included on the A&EP Aids Available List, the A&EP will not arrange the purchase or take on ownership and repair of the equipment. The ECIS FSP service provider will need to inform the family that they will be the owners of the equipment and, as such, will be responsible for its maintenance, repair and replacement as required.

2. The A&EP subsidy does not cover the total cost of the equipment

In this situation, an A&EP application will be submitted to the local A&EP service provider as per the standard process. The A&EP service provider will review the application and advise the child’s parents / caregiver and the ECIS FSP service provider:
• if the application has been approved:
• the estimated waiting time (if any) until the subsidy funding can be provided
• details of the gap between the subsidy provided through the A&EP and the total cost of the item.

The ECIS FSP service provider is then responsible for determining if funding will be made available to cover this gap, and advising both the client’s family and the A&EP service provider of this decision. Where the ECIS FSP service provider funds the gap, the supplier of the equipment will invoice them separately for their funding contribution. The A&EP retains ownership of reusable equipment when the A&EP has contributed more than half of the total cost of the item. The A&EP is then responsible for repairs to the item and can reissue the item to another family should it no longer be required.

Note: Where ECIS FSP contributes more than half the funding for an item of equipment, or, purchases it outright (only to be considered by the RAP in exceptional circumstances where the necessity for urgent purchase can be clearly established), transfer of ownership to the A&EP is strongly encouraged. Transfer not only allows for equipment of reusable quality to be returned to A&EP and eventually reassigned, it also ensures that all necessary maintenance, repairs and replacement will be carried out through the A&EP. In cases where transfer of ownership to A&EP does not take place, the item becomes the property of the family/carer upon receipt of the item, who will then be required to cover all costs related to maintenance/repair/replacement of the item.

Electronic communication devices

Where an electronic communication device has been identified as a priority need, the FSC must demonstrate that an application has been lodged with the A&EP/Electronic Communication Devices Scheme (A&EP ECDS) prior to applying for ECIS FSP. The A&EP ECDS subsidises the purchases of electronic communication devices for people with complex communication needs. Eligibility for access to this program is outlined in the A&EP Guidelines. Families with children from birth to school entry are eligible to access this scheme through the A&EP Program.

Continence aids

Note: Where the family has determined continence as a priority need, the FSC must demonstrate that an application has been lodged with A&EP prior to applying for ECIS FSP.

ECIS FSP can be used to partially or fully meet the gap cost remaining after A&EP contribution for continence. However, it is also possible for ECIS FSP to be used to fully purchase continence aids should no funding contribution be made by the A&EP.

Prior to the purchase of continence aids for anyone aged over four years, a continence assessment by a qualified continence specialist is to be undertaken. The continence assessment outlines the nature of any intervention, the details of recommended continence aids and a date for review.
CAAS is an Australian Government program that assists eligible people who have permanent and severe incontinence to meet some of the costs of continence products. CAAS clients receive a subsidy of up to $479.40 per year on continence products ordered through Intouch (the commercial arm of the Spinal Injuries Association Incorporated). Further information can be sourced from The Continence Aids Assistance Scheme Website.

**Behaviour intervention**

When considering the use of ECIS FSP for the purchase of behaviour intervention, the following must be considered:

- a behaviour management specialist (such as ECIS or other specialist) has been consulted in the development of any behaviour intervention plan
- any previous behaviour intervention plans and the outcomes of those interventions
- reactive short-term strategies for de-escalating the child’s behaviour problems are complemented by proactive long-term strategies, which relate to skill development
- the behaviour intervention strategies are only a part of a holistic plan that recognises the context within which the behaviour occurs.

**Respite and child care**

ECIS FSP are designed to provide short-term assistance to complement a multidisciplinary service response that meets the needs of children and families as documented in their FSSP. Prior to applying to ECIS FSP for funding for respite / child care, all families must demonstrate:

- what alternate respite / care funding options have been explored prior to accessing ECIS FSP
- what alternate financial strategies/funding options have been pursued to assist the parents cover the cost of respite / child care prior to accessing ECIS FSP
- what financial strategies/supports are in place to assist the parents cover the longer-term costs of respite/child care once the requested ECIS FSP funding amount has been exhausted.

ECIS FSP can be used to contribute towards the purchase of respite for the child, which may include in-home or facility-based options (for example, childcare, occasional care, family day care). When considering access to respite services for the child, it should be done within the goals of the FSSP. Prior to applying to ECIS FSP for contribution in the purchase of child care, all families must first have already applied for the child care benefit and child care tax rebate. Information relating to both the benefit and tax rebate is available at Family Assistance Office Website.

Note: It is a minimum requirement that all child care centres must be licensed under the Victorian State Government’s Children Services Regulations 2009 in order to be eligible for ECIS FSP funding. A list of these services can be found at the Children’s Services Register Website.

**Playgroups and kindergarten services**

ECIS FSP funds can be used to:

- support participation in playgroups and three-year-old activity/preschool programs
- contribute towards term fees for four-year-old kindergarten programs.

Access to the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy for four-year-old kindergarten should be explored prior to applying for ECIS FSP. Where a child requires assistance accessing a funded three or four-year-old kindergarten program due to a severe disability, support should be sought from the Kindergarten Inclusion and Support Service Program. Further information can be sourced from the ECIS Kindergarten Inclusion Support Service Website.
Therapy

ECIS FSP are designed to provide short-term assistance to complement a multidisciplinary service response that meets the needs of children and families as documented in their FSSP. Prior to applying to ECIS FSP for funding for therapy/Allied Health, all families must demonstrate:

- costs of therapy once the requested ECIS FSP funding amount has been exhausted. what alternate therapy funding options have been explored prior to accessing ECIS FSP
- what alternate financial strategies/funding options have been pursued to assist the parents cover the cost of therapy prior to accessing ECIS FSP
- what financial strategies/supports are in place to assist the parents cover the longer term.

All families applying for therapy must also provide evidence or demonstrate that they are either unable to access, or have used up, funding provided through the Helping Children with Autism Package; Enhanced Primary Care Plan; and the Mental Health Care Plan.

Further information is available from the following websites:

- Autism Victoria
- Department of Health and Aging
- Enhanced Primary Care Plan
- Families Housing Community Services & Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA)
- Mental Health Care Plan

Transition supports

It is not the responsibility of ECIS FSP to provide resources to support transition planning to school or disability services unless there are exceptional circumstances where case management is required due to the child and family relocating to an area and unable to access ECIS.
5. ECIS FSP service agency information

Service provider monitoring
Community Service Organisations (CSOs) will be required to enter into a Service Agreement with DEECD. Three-year service agreement contracts exist between DEECD and each of its funded CSOs. Service agreements outline the services provided by the CSO, the agreed funding level, performance measures and targets, service standards, guidelines and data collection requirements. CSOs delivering ECIS FSP are required to provide DEECD with data collected on a quarterly basis using IRIS for performance and other data reporting requirements.

Performance measures and targets specified within the Service Agreement are monitored annually by DEECD, usually through regional offices. DEECD will work with CSOs to develop performance monitoring in the areas of financial viability, governance and service quality. The frequency of formal liaison meetings will be determined in consultation with CSOs. A DEECD Program and Service Advisor (PASA) in each region will be nominated to act as the initial point of contact for each CSO.

To assist CSOs in the delivery of the service, DEECD will undertake to provide:
- an ongoing commitment to the development of collaborative relationships
- formal support via regular meetings with the service provider
- regular updates on relevant policy directions and initiatives
- consultancy where appropriate; and,
- formal and informal contact as required.

Performance measures and data collection rules
Each CSO must deliver services based on the following performance measures. The ‘child’ is defined as the ‘client’. Data collection is reported quarterly, using IRIS and exported to DEECD central office.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance measures</th>
<th>Reporting frequency</th>
<th>Data collection method</th>
<th>Reporting due date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of clients</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
<td>IRIS</td>
<td>By the 15th day of the following month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of funding applications assessed within four weeks of receipt of applications (target = 80 per cent)</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
<td>IRIS</td>
<td>By the 15th day of the following month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of clients sampled who are satisfied with the service provided (target = 85 per cent)</td>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>Manual (CSOs to provide results to regional PASAs)</td>
<td>15th August of each year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Documentation ownership and publication
All documents relating to ECIS FSP remain the property of DEECD. They are not to be digitally stored, altered or made accessible to the public via third party websites. ECIS FSP Provider Agencies are permitted to provide a link to the ECIS FSP website in order to facilitate access to the required documentation. Any document updates taking place throughout the year will be brought to the attention of all ECIS FSP PASAs, ECIS FSP Coordinators and peak body groups with updates made available promptly via the ECIS FSP Website.
Quality standards
Services must be provided in accordance with the Specialist Children’s Services Program Standards (March 1998); and the Early Childhood Intervention Services Vision and Key Priorities (August 2003). These documents can be accessed through the Early Childhood Intervention Services Publications Website.

DEECD privacy standards
There are a number of Acts that regulate the handling and management of information. These are the Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic) (IPA) and the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic) (HRA) and the Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth) (PA).
Under the Health Records Act 2001 (HRA), the definition of health information includes disability information. Therefore, clients’ personal and health information relating to a person’s disability may be governed by the HRA, the IPA, the PA and the Disability Act 2006.
The confidentiality and privacy of individual information is essential to both individuals and service providers. Privacy and confidentiality enable individuals to trust service providers when discussing sensitive and personal matters, thereby facilitating appropriate service provision and support.
Further details on the privacy and confidentiality standards expected of ECIS FSP providers can be found by following the DEECD Privacy Statement Web Link or by visiting Ombudsman Victoria.

Insurance
DEECD is responsible for and funds insurance coverage for certain DEECD-funded CSOs and/or kindergartens. For further information of this insurance please refer to the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority – Public Health Program: Insurance Guide for Community Service Organisations Program 2009–2010 or visit the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority Website.

Guidelines review
These ECIS FSP Guidelines will be reviewed annually to allow for changes in unit price indexation, as well as any programmatic or operational requirements.
# Appendix 1: ECIS FSP provider contact details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>ECIS FSP service provider</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barwon South Western Region</td>
<td>Gateways&lt;br&gt;10–12 Albert Street, Geelong 3218&lt;br&gt;Telephone: 5221 2984&lt;br&gt;Website: <a href="http://www.gateways.com.au/main.htm">http://www.gateways.com.au/main.htm</a>&lt;br&gt;Email: <a href="mailto:info@gateways.com.au">info@gateways.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barwon South Western Region</td>
<td>MPOWER&lt;br&gt;71 Koroit Street, Warrnambool 3280&lt;br&gt;Telephone: 5561 8111&lt;br&gt;Website: <a href="http://www.mpower.org.au/">http://www.mpower.org.au/</a>&lt;br&gt;Email: <a href="mailto:pryan@mpower.org.au">pryan@mpower.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Metropolitan Region</td>
<td>Eastern Specialist Services, Scope&lt;br&gt;669 Waverley Road, Glen Waverley&lt;br&gt;P.O. Box 208 VIC 3150&lt;br&gt;Telephone: 9561 1233&lt;br&gt;Email: <a href="mailto:flexiblesupport@scopevic.org.au">flexiblesupport@scopevic.org.au</a>&lt;br&gt;Website: <a href="http://www.scopevic.org.au/">http://www.scopevic.org.au/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gippsland Region</td>
<td>Gippsland Lakes Community Health&lt;br&gt;281–283 Main Street, Bairnsdale&lt;br&gt;Telephone: 51 520 052&lt;br&gt;Website: <a href="http://www.glch.org.au/">http://www.glch.org.au/</a>&lt;br&gt;Email: <a href="mailto:ShelleyW@glch.org.au">ShelleyW@glch.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grampians Region</td>
<td>Pinarc Support Services&lt;br&gt;P.O. Box 1841&lt;br&gt;Bakery Hill Business Centre 3354&lt;br&gt;Telephone: 5329 1300 or 5329 1318&lt;br&gt;Website: <a href="http://www.pinarc.org.au/">http://www.pinarc.org.au/</a>&lt;br&gt;Email: <a href="mailto:clewis@pinarc.org.au">clewis@pinarc.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hume Region</td>
<td>Community Interlink&lt;br&gt;102 Corio Street, Shepparton 3630&lt;br&gt;Telephone: 5823 6531&lt;br&gt;Website: <a href="http://www.gvhealth.org.au/">http://www.gvhealth.org.au/</a>&lt;br&gt;Email: <a href="mailto:keith.downing@gvhealth.org.au">keith.downing@gvhealth.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loddon Mallee Region</td>
<td>Noah's Ark Inc.&lt;br&gt;13 Maple Street, Golden Square, Bendigo 3555&lt;br&gt;Telephone: 5434 4505 or 5434 4500&lt;br&gt;Website: <a href="http://www.noahsarkinc.org.au/">http://www.noahsarkinc.org.au/</a>&lt;br&gt;Email: <a href="mailto:rebecca.kreuger@noahsarkinc.org.au">rebecca.kreuger@noahsarkinc.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Metropolitan Region and Western Metropolitan Region</td>
<td>Baptcare Family Services&lt;br&gt;25 Norwood Crescent, Moonee Ponds VIC 3039&lt;br&gt;Telephone: 9373 3800&lt;br&gt;Website: <a href="http://www.baptcare.org.au/">http://www.baptcare.org.au/</a>&lt;br&gt;Email: <a href="mailto:ncavalieros@baptcare.org.au">ncavalieros@baptcare.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Metropolitan Region</td>
<td>Yooralla – ECIS Extra&lt;br&gt;PO Box 8434, Heatherton 3202&lt;br&gt;Telephone: 9551 6804&lt;br&gt;Website: <a href="http://www.yooralla.com.au/">http://www.yooralla.com.au/</a>&lt;br&gt;Email: <a href="mailto:jbuick@yooralla.com.au">jbuick@yooralla.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
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</table>
### Appendix 2: Website address glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service/Program</th>
<th>Website Address</th>
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</table>