9. Children in vulnerable circumstances

Every child has the right to live a full and productive life in an environment that builds confidence, friendship, security and happiness, irrespective of their family circumstances and background.35

Some children may experience vulnerability due to circumstances outside their control. Vulnerability can come in many forms. Children may be protected by receiving support from child protection services and/or living in out of home care:

- All children and families rely on community support – relatives, friends, neighbours and informal networks. They also rely on services such as maternal and child health services, child care services, medical services, dental services and [early childhood settings and] school education services.36

For further advice on child protection issues, and information sharing responsibilities, visit www.cyf.vic.gov.au/every-child-every-chance

Children in out of home care (OoHC)

Children and young people in out of home care (OoHC) are a diverse group who have been removed from their family home (via a protective intervention process) after experiencing abuse or neglect. The Victorian Government, through the Department of Human Services (DHS), and community service organisations (CSOs), in partnership with the Government, are responsible for looking after these children and young people by providing a range of placement options that are:

- foster care: a foster carer who has been trained and approved to look after children (in the foster carer’s home)
- kinship care: a child is placed with a relative or family friend

• permanent care: a child is placed into the permanent care of an existing foster carer or kinship carer through the Children’s Court

• residential care: rostered workers employed by a CSO care for up to four young people in residential unit.

**Partnering Agreement**

In recognition of the importance of school participation and educational achievement in the lives of children and young people, and acknowledging that the background and circumstances of children and young people in care means that they require particular assistance to access educational opportunities, the DEECD and DHS have established the Partnering Agreement: School Attendance and Engagement of Children and Young People in OoHC. The aim of the Partnering Agreement is to ensure that both systems work together to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of children and young people placed in OoHC.

The Partnering Agreement sets out the roles and responsibilities of all those involved with the young person in care to ensure his/her educational development. A key process for which schools have accountability is the setting up of a SSG for every child/young person in care to identify and provide additional support for the young person to be successful at school.

The SSG consists of the parent, guardian or caregiver of the child, the DHS Protective Services case manager, a teacher or year level coordinator, the principal or nominee to act as chairperson, the school’s Student Welfare Coordinator and, where appropriate, the child or young person. An IEP should also be developed for each child or young person living in care who attends a school or education program. The IEP should be reviewed regularly to ensure its relevance for the child or young person.

**Transition to school – who should be informed?**

The DHS case manager (who has the legal responsibility for the child), the child’s CSO case manager, and the child’s carer should be informed of the transition-to-school process.

**Supporting the education of children in OoHC**

A range of strategies and best practice guidelines for supporting the education of children and young people in OoHC are outlined in the following documents:


For more information about supporting children in OoHC who attend catholic schools visit www.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au and for those who attend independent schools visit www.ais.vic.edu.au