The Department has a number of initiatives to support children’s services meet the requirements of the Act and Regulations.

Small capital grants and resource kits are available to assist services, predominantly in the newly regulated sectors of family day care (FDC) and outside school hours care (OSHC), to comply with the legislation.

Existing staff in FDC and OSHC services who need to meet minimum training and qualification requirements are being assisted through scholarships and incentives. In addition, fully funded professional development is available for eligible experienced staff members and family day carers working in licensed children’s services, in lieu of meeting the minimum training requirements.

Professional development will soon be delivered across Victoria on the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework. As well, the Bastow Institute will offer programs in 2010 which will support the development of effective leadership in the education and early childhood workforce.

Victoria is working collaboratively with the Commonwealth Government, the National Childcare Accreditation Council and other jurisdictions to ensure a smooth transition to the National Quality Framework by 1 January 2012. During the transition phase, all children’s services will continue to be regulated by the Victorian Children’s Services Act 1996 and the Children’s Services Regulations 2009.

Minor capital grants

On 25 March 2010, the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development announced the availability of minor capital grants and resource kits totalling $1.9 million to assist outside school hours care, family day care, and occasional care services to meet the new regulatory requirements. The grants will provide resources and equipment to support services to meet regulatory requirements including the delivery of quality educational or recreational programs.

Applications close on 28 April 2010.

Scholarships for existing staff members in OSHC and FDC services

Scholarships are available to support staff members currently employed in licensed outside school hours care and family day care services to attain an approved qualification.

Applications are invited from staff who do not hold a relevant qualification and who are enrolled in or undertaking an approved diploma or prerequisite certificate level training in 2010 with a TAFE/Registered Training Organisation (RTO). Scholarships are available for:

- staff members currently employed in a family day care service in Victoria and who are responsible for providing training and advice to family day carers
- staff members currently employed in outside school hours care services in Victoria.
Successful applicants will receive scholarships of up to $3,000 for diploma level training and up to $2000 for certificate level training to assist with study related costs.

Applications for scholarships close on Wednesday 28 April 2010.

Minimum training requirements
Under the Children’s Services Regulations 2009, new minimum training requirements apply to staff members (regulation 60) and family day carers (regulation 62) in all licensed children’s services.

Professional development in lieu of minimum training for experienced staff and carers
Staff members and family day carers with substantial and current experience in children’s services may be eligible to complete an approved professional development course in lieu of meeting the minimum training requirements.

Assessment of eligibility
Staff members and family day carers wishing to complete professional development in lieu of minimum training must undergo a formal assessment of eligibility. These assessments are free of charge. Applications can be made to Early Childhood Australia (Victoria).

Options for professional development
Staff members and family day carers must complete an approved professional development course by 1 January 2012. Eligible individuals can select a number of options for completing professional development, including a fully funded 10 hour course delivered by Gowrie Victoria.

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
The Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development released the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework for all professionals who work with children aged from birth to eight years on 27 November 2009.

The Framework identifies five early years learning and development outcomes for all children and practice principles to guide early childhood professionals in their work with children and families. It complements existing learning resources for early childhood professionals, such as the Early Years Learning Framework developed collaboratively by Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments.

The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework provides the basis for all licensed services to deliver educational or recreational programs that:
- are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child
- are designed to take into account the individual differences of those children
- enhance each child’s development.


Professional development to support the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
The Department is offering professional development program on the Victorian Framework:
- Module 1. Leading the Way: Reflecting on the Framework
- Module 2. Working Together: Collaborative Practice Principles
- Module 3. Decision Making: Effective Practice Principles
- Module 4. Documenting and Assessing: Engaging with the Outcomes

Each module will be three hours long and will be held at flexible times in both metropolitan and regional locations across Victoria. Funding is being provided to assist licensed children’s services meet the costs of releasing staff to attend the professional development.

More details on where and when modules will be offered are available at www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eylyd/profdevel.htm where there is also a link to online registration for the professional development program.

New supports available for the early childhood workforce
On 27 November 2009, the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development released Victoria’s early childhood workforce strategy, Improving Victoria’s Early Childhood Workforce: Working to give Victorian children the best start in life. The strategy describes the Victorian Government’s vision for the early childhood workforce: a highly skilled, professional early childhood workforce that supports the health, learning and development of all Victorian children.

Applications are now open for the following schemes, the first actions from the strategy:

Early Childhood Qualifications Fund
The new Early Childhood Qualifications Fund will support early childhood educators working directly with children to upgrade or attain an early childhood qualification. The amount and type of support available will depend on the qualification undertaken, and will vary according to the expected duration of the course and the number of practicum or study days required. Applications for the first round of funding close on 18 June 2010. More information is available at www.education.vic.gov.au/careers/earlychildhood.

Employment Incentives for Early Childhood Educators
Employment Incentives for Early Childhood Educators provide a financial incentive to early childhood educators to take up employment in hard-to-staff locations/positions. Eligible services are able to apply to have an incentive made available for vacant positions. The focus of the scheme is support for early childhood teachers, however, limited support for Diploma-qualified educators is also available. More information is available at www.education.vic.gov.au/careers/earlychildhood.

Guidelines and application forms for grants and scholarships, and a fact sheet and more information on professional development in lieu of minimum training are available at www.education.vic.gov.au/licenseschilddservices.

For further information contact csrr@edumail.vic.gov.au or telephone the information officer in the Regulations Implementation Branch on (03) 9651 3342.
The Bastow Institute


For more information about the strategy or the initiatives above, contact early.years.workforce@edumail.vic.gov.au or telephone 1300 651 662.

National Quality Framework
On 7 December 2009, the Council of Australian Governments agreed to a new National Quality Framework for early childhood education and care and school age care. The new framework will be implemented progressively from 1 July 2010. This jointly-governed, unified national framework will apply to long day care, family day care, outside school hours care and preschools from 1 January 2012.

Under the new National Quality Framework, all Australian governments have agreed to:

- streamlined regulatory arrangements
- a new National Quality Standard
- improved staff to child ratios
- a more qualified early childhood workforce
- a transparent ratings system which gives families information about the quality of their child’s early childhood service
- a new national body to guide the implementation and management of the Framework.

Detailed information about the National Quality Framework, including a fact sheet providing further information for Victorian services is available at www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning.

New resources
The Department continues to develop resources for the sector and these are available at www.education.vic.gov.au/licensedchildservices.

Extensive Questions and Answers about staffing, health and welfare, and licensing and records are available for every service type. Other recently completed resources include the Family Day Care Victoria Child Safety Guidelines, and the Family Day Care Victoria Home Safety Checklist.

Soon to be released resources include:
- Family day carers guide
- Delivering a program in a family day care service
- Delivering a program in a limited hours service
- Children’s services in Victoria – information for parents and guardians

Health, safety and welfare of children
The Children’s Services Regulations 2009 have a range of requirements for protecting the health and welfare of children. These include:

- attending to the personal hygiene needs of children (regulation 78)
- observing cleanliness where food and beverages are stored, handled and prepared (regulation 80(b))
- protecting all food and beverages intended for consumption from contamination (regulation 80(c))
- ensuring that the children have a smoke free environment (regulation 82).

Contamination and the spreading of germs can be substantially avoided by applying good hygiene practices such as hand washing.

Staying Healthy in Child Care provides simple and effective methods for minimising the spread of infections for many common childhood diseases encountered in child care settings and the home.

This publication aims to assist anyone caring for children, in family day care or centre based services, in controlling the spread of childhood infections.

It is available www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/ch43syn.htm or a printed version may be obtained by contacting health@nationalmailing.com.au or telephoning (02) 6269 1080.

Posters on hand washing and changing nappies without spreading germs are also available.

Publishing enforcement action
The amended Children’s Services Act 1996 allows the Secretary to publish information about all licensed children’s services on the Department’s website (section 53B).

Information about statutory actions imposed on licensed children’s service will be published on the website and will remain for up to two years, depending on the type of statutory action imposed.

Lunch break exemption
The Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development has granted a general exemption to assist in the provision of children’s services during lunch breaks. The exemption allows an unqualified staff member to replace a qualified staff member during their lunch break providing the qualified staff member remains on the premises. The exemption notice, which applies to all licensed children’s services and expires on 24 May 2010, is published in Government Gazette number G41 of 2009 at www.gazette.vic.gov.au.

Further advice will be provided to services shortly.
Advisory Visits during the provisional licence period

In the lead-up to full licensing, Children’s Services Advisers from the Department’s regional offices are making advisory visits to provisionally licensed services.

The purpose of a provisional licence advisory visit is to support the capacity of OSHC and FDC services to comply with the Children’s Services Act 1996 and the Children’s Services Regulations 2009. These visits present an opportunity for an exchange of information with the service about the legislative environment, the role of the Children’s Services Adviser and the requirements for obtaining a full licence.

During the advisory visit the Children’s Services Adviser will observe the program, assess the premises and the records of the service, and make notes for discussion with the staff/family day carers and/or the licensee or representative. The Children’s Services Adviser will provide advice about what will be required prior to obtaining a full licence.

Progressing from provisional licence to full licence

OSHC and FDC services operating under a provisional licence will start to become fully licensed in the second half of 2010 and will then need to meet all the requirements of the Children’s Services Act 1996 and the Children’s Services Regulations 2009.

It is strongly recommended that family day care services apply for a full licence and that outside school hours care services apply for an approval of premises and a full licence at least 3 months prior to the expiry of their provisional licence. All application forms are available at www.education.vic.gov.au/licensedchildservices.

Services anticipating difficulty in meeting any requirement of the Act or Regulations should contact a Children’s Services Adviser in the relevant regional office of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development as soon as possible to discuss a strategy for meeting the requirements in the future.

Licensing guides and licence forms for family day care and outside school hours care services are available at www.education.vic.gov.au/licensedchildservices.

Community Child Care – Resource and Development Unit

Professional Support Coordinator for Victoria

Community Child Care – Resource and Development Unit has been contracted as the Professional Support Coordinator for Victoria by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. This initiative is funded by the Australian Government and is responsible for planning and delivering professional support to services approved for Child Care Benefit.

As the Professional Support Coordinator, Community Child Care offers training, support, referrals and advice on all areas of operating children’s services including:

- Quality Assurance
- Specialist Equipment
- Bicultural Support
- Inclusion
- Administration
- Governance and Management
- Policy Development
- Programming
- Staffing
- Promotion
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Financial Management
- Leadership

Community Child Care also publishes quarterly publications for the following sectors:

- centre based care (long day care and occasional care)
- outside school hours care
- home based care (family day care and in-home care).

Services can contact Community Child Care toll free on 1800 177 017 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday for information, advice, support and referral to training, networking opportunities, specialist and generalist equipment and resources.

Resources and information for children’s services are also available at www.cccvic.org.au.

Contact information

Services are reminded to keep their emergency contacts up to date and to advise the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development if their emergency contact details change. Correct details are vitally important during the bushfire season and other critical events. Services should also check their details in the children’s services register which is available at www.education.vic.gov.au/licensedchildservices and advise their regional office if any change is required. Contact details for regional offices may be found at the same website.