

Starting the conversation

with families about children with developmental concerns

All children have the right to access and participate in early childhood education and care (ECEC).

Use this information to support children with developmental concerns to fully participate in early childhood education.

Reflect on and familiarise yourself with any cultural protocols that may be in place in your community and within individual families. This will help inform the communication of sensitive information to families and carers.

How can I...



support a child with developmental concerns?



work with the child's family to best support them?



ensure the child is well supported in the ECEC service?



connect the family with services to support their child's development?



work as part of the team around the child?



monitor and adjust the supports for the child as needed?



How can I support a child with developmental concerns?

- Document observations with specific examples.
- Talk to other educators and your educational leader.
- Develop and implement child's individual learning plan.



How can I work with the child's family to best support them?

Arrange a time to meet with the family and ask questions like:

- Do you have any concerns about your child's development?
- What have you noticed at home? How do you support your child's participation in daily activities at home and in the community?
- Do you need help to access any additional community supports?
- Are you connected with a health professional? For example, child health or Aboriginal Medical Service, doctor or paediatrician? If so, have you discussed your concerns? Do you have any additional assessments, screening tools or reports about your child that you can share?
- Do you have any goals for your child you would like to share?



How can I ensure the child is well supported in the ECEC service?

- Follow your usual processes to gather more information; including any additional screening tools and assessments to understand the child's strengths, needs and interests.
- Talk to your educational leader and/or director about making contact with the Inclusion Agency to see what support may be available.
- Talk to the family about any relevant mainstream services in their area. For example, child health services, community health services or family support services.
- Talk to the family about any specific areas they would like to focus on, improve or change to support their child's development.
- Seek additional input from other adults or professionals in the child's life with the family's consent.
- Use the information gathered to support the development of an individual approach to learning for the child.
- Closely monitor and document the child's progress and make adjustments to their individual program as necessary.
- Create opportunities to regularly check in with the family to share strategies and celebrate progress.



How can I connect the family with services to support their child's development?

- Work with the family to connect them with relevant state, territory or local services that may meet their needs. For example, a general health check with a doctor, a hearing assessment or support from an Aboriginal Medical Service.
- Consider if the child would benefit from support through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) early childhood approach.
- Support the family to connect with their local early childhood partner if the child requires specialised support, such as that from an allied health professional.
- Provide the family with a copy of the NDIS 'Help for your child younger than 9' fact sheet. Make sure to include the early childhood partner's contact details.
- Talk to the family about what information the early childhood partner may need and encourage them to share any observations or assessments that may support their conversations.
- Provide the family with your observations, screening tools and assessments of the child, so the NDIS can understand the child's developmental concerns.
- Support the family to contact the NDIS on **1800 800 110** if there is no early childhood partner in their local area.



How can I work as part of the team around the child?

- Meet with the family, the inclusion professional and other professionals who form the team around the child.
- Embed strategies and goals the family are focusing on at home and in the service.
- Create a plan to keep communication open between team members. For example, a working together agreement.



How can I monitor and adjust the supports for the child as needed?

- Maintain regular communication with the team around the child.
- Participate in regular meetings to share successful strategies and common goals that could be incorporated into the child's individual learning plan or Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP).
- Support the child and family to work towards their goals, make progress and achieve outcomes.
- Use what you have learned through working with the team around the child to develop and implement an individualised approach to the child's learning, and to support transitions. For example, when the child is moving rooms or commencing pre-school or school.
- Help the family seek additional support in the future as the child's needs change.





Terminology and useful links

Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS)

An Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS) is a primary health care service providing culturally responsive health care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These may be community-controlled or a government run service.

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 is Australia's national disability policy framework. It is driving action at all levels of government to improve the lives of people with disability.

Developmental delay

When a child has developmental delay, it means they might not develop at the same pace as other children of the same age. This means they may need lots of extra help to do everyday things. They might need this help for a long time.

Developmental concerns

When a child has developmental concerns, they might not develop at the same pace as other children of the same age. But they might not need as much help as children with developmental delay.

Children younger than 6 with developmental concerns may be best supported by an early childhood partner through early supports or other services including connection to a range of mainstream and community supports.

Disability

A disability is a lifelong physical, sensory, cognitive or psychosocial impairment that affects an individual's ability to participate in everyday activities.

Disability Gateway

The Disability Gateway has information and services to help people with disability, their family, friends and carers, to find the support they need in Australia.

Early childhood partners

Early childhood partners are local organisations funded by the NDIS to deliver the early childhood approach. Early childhood partners have teams of professionals with experience and clinical expertise in working with young children with development delay or disability and their families. The term early childhood partner may refer to either the partner organisation or the staff working within the organisation.

Inclusion Agencies (IA)

Inclusion Agencies work with services to identify and address any barriers to inclusion.

Inclusion Professionals

Inclusion Agencies employ skilled Inclusion Professionals who provide tailored support to eligible Early Childhood Education Centres to address inclusion barriers and develop their inclusion capacity and capability.

Inclusion Support Program (ISP)

This program provides support for eligible mainstream Early Childhood Education Centres services to build their capacity and capability to include children with additional needs, alongside their typically developing peers, so all children have genuine opportunities to access, participate and achieve positive learning outcomes.

Key Worker

A key worker is one key professional who becomes the primary point of contact for the family and works with them very closely to develop a strong, positive, ongoing relationship. The role of the key worker is to work directly with a family to plan and deliver services that promote learning opportunities within everyday routines or activities. The key worker calls in other team members when required so that a family has access to the other practitioners in the early intervention 'team', as needed.

Mainstream supports

Mainstream supports are also known as other government services. They include goods, services, supports and assistance available to the Australian population, for example, health, mental health, early childhood development, school education, justice, housing, child protection and family support, and employment services.

Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP)

A Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP) is a self-guided inclusion assessment and planning tool for Early Childhood and Child Care services accessing the ISP. The SIP includes short and long-term strategies for improving and embedding inclusive practice for the inclusion of children with additional needs alongside their typically developing peers.

Team around the child

A team around the child is where the family and professionals work together as a collaborative and integrated team, communicating and sharing information, knowledge and skills, with one team member nominated as a key worker and main person working with the family.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

The NDIS is a national scheme that helps people with disability. This includes helping children with developmental delay, developmental concerns or disability through the early childhood approach.

The NDIS early childhood approach

The early childhood approach supports children younger than 6 with developmental delay and children younger than 9 with disability, and their families. Children younger than 6 who do not fully meet the definition of developmental delay and have developmental concerns will also be supported through the early childhood approach.

Working Together Agreement

A Working Together Agreement aims to assist families, early childhood education and care educators and early childhood partners to work collaboratively.