

PROGRAM: Early Childhood Intervention Service – Townsville

DATE: Oct 2008

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

The **Early Childhood Intervention Service (ECIS)** is a new early intervention support service for families of children with a disability in Townsville. The Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland has been funded by Disability Services Queensland (DSQ) to provide this service.

The overall purpose of the Early Childhood Intervention Service is to provide support and early intervention services to families with children with a physical disability.

The ECIS will seek to enhance the capacity of families caring for a child with a disability to access flexible and responsive specialist services, to support them in raising their children within the family and community and to enable them to achieve their developmental, social and emotional potential.

OVERALL PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

Two of the key philosophies that guide the Early Childhood Intervention Service relate to the how the Early Intervention team will work with families and where this support will be provided. These philosophies could be summarised as follows:

Family Centred Practice – where the family takes a central role in the decision-making about the planning, delivery and evaluation of the services they and their child receive and the service takes account of the circumstances and experiences of the whole family unit.

Natural Environments – where the services and programs are brought into the child's natural environments (eg home, playgroup) instead of 'bringing the child into the program'. By doing this the child and family are more comfortable and the likelihood of a more positive outcome for the family is increased.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The Early Childhood Intervention Service offers a broad and flexible range of services and supports to children and families, including:

- Provision of information and education relating to supporting children with a physical disability
- Individual "one-on-one" support in the family home or in a community setting
- Counselling for families and children
- Assistance to access specialist services, funding and other means of support in the community
- Assisting children to access usual childhood services, facilities and activities (eg playgroups, kindergarten, social and recreation activities)

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be eligible to receive a service from the ECIS a child must:

- Be aged between 0-8 years of age (eligibility ceases on the child's 9th birthday)
- Have a physical disability, which may include cerebral palsy (*the child may also have a sensory, neurological or intellectual impairment or a global developmental disability in addition to a primary physical disability*)
- Be eligible to receive a DSQ funded service and submitted a DSQ Single Application for Support

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In addition to these basic eligibility criteria the child/family must also:

- Have high support needs (this may either be the support needs of the child or family)
- Live, or receive the ECIS service, in the Townsville local government area

The Early Intervention team will assist families to assess their eligibility for this service.

ACCESSING THE PROGRAM

Referrals to the Early Childhood Intervention Service may come from a variety of sources including DSQ, local service providers and families themselves. Once a referral is received by the CPLQ, the Early Intervention team will meet with the family to request information to determine eligibility, identify the most appropriate service(s) to address the child and family's identified needs and determine priority of access to the service.

If the service cannot provide services immediately the family may be placed on a waiting list in accordance with an established prioritisation process.

Once a child/family is placed onto the service the Early Intervention team will then work with the family to develop a Family Service Plan that identifies realistic goals and services, resources, strategies and actions for the child and their family. This plan will then be implemented, monitored and reviewed as services and supports are delivered to the family. This process will be co-ordinated by the Early Intervention Officer.

RESPONDING TO CHANGING NEEDS OF FAMILIES

It is recognised that children and families' needs change over time and therefore the Early Childhood Intervention Service needs to be responsive and flexible enough to also change. Depending on the individual needs and circumstances of the child and family, the services delivered by the ECIS may take one or more of the following forms:

- Initially intensive and reducing over time
- Short term
- Once-off
- Periodic
- Ongoing until the child's ninth birthday

The Early Childhood Intervention Service will not seek to be the primary or only service in the life of the family. In fact, one of the main aims of the program is to introduce the family to other supports and services in the community that they can then access independently. This means that families may move in and out of the ECIS over time as their needs change. Entry into the service does not guarantee that the family will continue to receive that level of service on an ongoing basis. Having this flexible approach will also ensure that more children and families can receive support from this new service over time.

CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the Early Childhood Intervention Service – Townsville please contact the North Queensland Early Intervention Team on (07) 4799 9600.