

Kindergarten Inclusion Support Information Handbook



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Overview

‘As children participate in everyday life, they develop interests and construct their own identities and understandings of the world.’

(Belonging, Being, Becoming 2009)

Lentara UnitingCare (Lentara) is a Uniting Church community service agency with more than 100 years of experience in providing a wide range of services to children, families and individuals primarily in the Northern and Western suburbs of Melbourne.

Lentara provides a diverse range of community services including Emergency Relief and Material Aid, Financial Counselling, No Interest Loans, Asylum Seeker Programs, Integrated Family Services, Community Development, the Sunshine Mission, a Communal Justice Project, the Brimbank Men’s Shed, the Devonshire House Tea Rooms, Orana Care Leaver services, Bargain Centres, Communities for Children and a range of Early Childhood Services.

The early years are when there is the most rapid progression of a child’s learning and development. Children learn as they play, explore, make friends and have fun.

We know that ‘...play shapes the architecture of the brain in unique ways; it links social, creative and cognitive skills’ (Bartlett 2010).

Lentara recognises that every child is an individual and will achieve learning outcomes in different ways, at different rates and at different times. Lentara acknowledges that children’s families are their first and most important educators.

Lentara’s Early Childhood Services support children and families to participate in work, study and connect to their local community. Lentara’s Early Childhood Services encompass a number of centres that include Kindergartens, and Long Day Care centres. The Early Childhood Services also encompass the Kindergarten Inclusion Support program for the Northern and Western regions of Melbourne and four Preschool Field Officers servicing the cities of Banyule, Nillumbik, Whittlesea, Melbourne and Maribyrnong.

Mission and Values

Lentara’s Mission is creating opportunities for children, families and individuals to flourish in a fair and generous community.

Lentara’s Values and guiding behaviours underpin how staff treat each other, service users and the communities that they serve.

Our Values

Respect

Respect incorporates effective communication, being valued, listened to and shown fairness. Respect builds over time as positive relationships form.

Integrity

Integrity is our ability to be non-judgemental in the way we deal with things and to communicate and deliver in a way that builds reliability and trustworthiness.

Collaboration

Collaboration is working together to provide an honest and open communication which encourages values and provides support for a united outcome.

Compassion

Compassion is being sensitive and tolerant of others situation while listening and supporting people in their journey.

Lentara staff:

- Affirm cultural diversity;
- Show compassion for the vulnerable;
- Encourage people to value and use their strengths;

- Advocate on behalf of those who are disadvantaged; and
- Challenge inequity and injustice and work for social change.

Lentara 's services are provided to all people irrespective of cultural background, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or disability.

Commitment to Partnerships

Lentara aims to work collaboratively with local communities, families and children to provide inclusive, accessible and flexible early childhood services.

Partnerships involve Educators, families and Additional Assistant Educators (AAEs) working together to explore the learning potential in every child and how best to support children with additional needs (Early Years Learning Framework 2009).

Code of Ethics

The Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics provides a framework for reflection about ethical responsibilities of early childhood professionals. This is to be used as a guide by all Lentara Early Childhood Educators to monitor and set the standard of their professional behaviour. A copy of the Code of Ethics can be accessed on the Early Childhood Australia website.

Privacy Statement

Lentara UnitingCare is committed to maintaining the privacy of all individuals according to our statutory requirements regarding how we collect, hold, use, disclose, correct, transfer and dispose of information. Principally, we manage your personal and sometimes sensitive information in accordance with the 13 Australian Privacy Principles identified in The Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012 (*Commonwealth*); *the Adoption Act 1984 (Vic)*; and *the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)*.

Additionally, as part of our government funding agreements, the following Acts may also apply as if Lentara UnitingCare was an organisation within the meaning of that Act: *Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)*; *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)*; *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Commonwealth)*; *Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)*; *Archives Act 1983 (Commonwealth)*. Visit www.lentarauc.org.au to view Lentara UnitingCare's Privacy Policy in full.

Regional Advisory Group

The role of the Regional Advisory Group is to determine the eligibility and the level of additional resources for each application, including appeals and late applications.

The Regional Advisory Group consists of a minimum of four and up to a maximum of nine regional representatives including the Regional Advisory Group Convener.

Applications are recommended for various levels of support, therefore the role of the Regional Advisory Group is to:

- Provide recommendations on applications requesting assistance to include a child with a disability or complex medical needs into the funded kindergarten program.
 - These applications are prioritised according to the KIS Guidelines;
 - within expected financial constraints;

- taking into account all applications in the region;
 - other services available; and
 - using flexible models of allocation to facilitate access;
- Provide advice on any additional requests contained within an application for support to funded kindergarten programs;
 - Provide advice on the need for specialist consultancy to support the inclusion of all children; and
 - Consider and provide recommendations on reviews, requests for variations and late applications within the region during the year.

The Regional Advisory Group Convener is employed by Lentara and is responsible for the establishment of the Regional Advisory Group, to organise the meetings throughout the year and to disseminate information to the relevant agencies and families.

Program Support Group

In consultation with the parent or guardian, the Early Childhood Educator is responsible for establishing the Program Support Group (PSG) prior to submitting a KIS application.

As stipulated in the DET KIS funding guidelines the PSG will meet each term to discuss, plan and review the child's attendance and participation in the program.

It is essential that these meetings are documented and filed in accordance with your usual practice.

Discussion should also include a contingency plan if the AAE is absent without a reliever.

The PSG consists of:

- Parent or guardian;
- Carer of the child (if applicable);
- Early Childhood Educator;
- Staff from an Early Childhood Intervention Service, where applicable; and
- Others as appropriate, for example Family Services Coordinator, PSFO, therapist or medical practitioner.

The purpose of these meetings is to:

- Plan for any specific requirements for the funded child within the kindergarten program, and
- Monitor and evaluate the child's progress and set appropriate planning objectives in an individual educational program plan.
- Discuss a contingency plan if the AAE is absent from the program for one session

The PSG has an ongoing role in supporting the funded child's inclusion into the Kindergarten program throughout the whole Kindergarten year.

It is not a requirement that the AAE attend these meetings, however the AAE should be informed of the outcomes and objectives set at these meetings.

Please refer to Fact Sheet Two for further information.

Staffing Arrangements

Letter of Agreement

On receipt of KIS funding your service will receive a 'Letter of Agreement'. This will need to be signed and returned to the KIS Coordinator prior to commencement of funding. On signing this letter staff agree that they have read this handbook and will provide a safe work environment for the AAE ensuring compliance with Occupational Health and Safety requirements. Where the coordinator is not the educator with daily responsibility of the group, the educator must also sight and sign this agreement.

Staffing

Staff employed to work in the role of AAE will be employed directly through Lentara. Services will not be able to employ their own staff to be engaged as an AAE.

Lentara currently employs approximately 300 AAEs who work across both the South Western and North Western Victoria regions.

An AAE is required to hold a current Working with Children Check for Employment.

An AAE is not employed to specifically work one-on-one with the funded child. All Early Childhood Educators, including additional staff, will share the support and supervision of all children in the group.

The minimum time allocated for an AAE is two hours per session. If the AAE works for more than five hours they are entitled to a 30-minute break which will need to be negotiated with the KIS Coordinator and Early Childhood Educator.

The allocation of funded hours can only be used at the times agreed upon by the Early Childhood Educator, KIS Coordinator and the AAE. This cannot be altered without permission of the KIS Coordinator.

AAEs will provide the service with a Staff Information Record to keep on file in case of an emergency and a copy of their Working with Children Check (WWCC) for Employment to comply with current regulations. The Early Childhood Educator should check the WWCC on the Department of Justice website.

AAEs are allocated one hour per term to be used for sharing information about the needs of all children. This allocated time may be used in the form of:

- A staff meeting;
- A PSG meeting; and
- Discussion with the Early Childhood Educator in relation to observations and planning strategies for the children.

Please refer to Fact Sheet One for further information.

Orientation for Additional Assistant Educators

Prior to commencing a placement in the funded kindergarten program, AAEs are allocated two hours of orientation time.

Early Childhood Educators should use this time to familiarise the AAE with the running of the service; relevant procedures; the program and expectations of their role.

The AAE will be provided with an orientation checklist that is required to be signed and returned to the KIS office when orientation has occurred. This should be completed prior to commencement of each placement or where not possible within the first two weeks of the placement.

Supervision

AAE's are to be supervised by an Early Childhood Educator at all times and not left alone with children.

Meeting the individual needs of children including any toileting requirements is the responsibility of all educators and should not be the sole responsibility of the AAE.

Accountability

AAEs are employed by and accountable to Lentara. The AAE is appointed as a member of the funded kindergarten program team as a 'Visiting Early Intervention Support Worker'. All employment concerns or incidents must be raised with the KIS Coordinator immediately. The Early Childhood Educator will provide the AAE with day to day guidance to meet the needs of the service.

Observations

In many cases AAEs are happy to assist with taking observations however, it is not an expectation of their employment. Please keep in mind that AAEs may not have had experience in taking observations.

Training and Qualifications

AAEs are not required to have formal training in working with children with specific disabilities. Most do have experience with children with additional needs.

The guidance and expertise of Early Childhood Educators in the funded kindergarten program is required for AAEs to understand how best to work for the benefit of all children in the group.

If specialised training is required to support the inclusion of the funded child, training should be undertaken by all staff members working with the funded child. This **does not** become the sole responsibility of the AAE. Specialised training can be organised for staff working with the child. Please contact the KIS Coordinator if this is required.

Professional Development

AAEs are required to attend professional development training provided by Lentara once a term (usually held on the first day of school holidays).

Should any other staff member at the service be interested in attending any of these sessions please contact the KIS Coordinator. This would be subject to places being available and cost involved.

Chat and Chew Sessions (Supervision)

As a part of Lentara's supervision process, AAE's are required to attend one supervision session per year. These sessions form part of Lentara's Performance Development process and provide the KIS Coordinators an opportunity to touch base with staff, share information, provide support and advise of any organisational updates.

Each AAE will be allocated a specific date and time throughout the year. There is every chance that this session may clash with a session the AAE is rostered to work in your funded kindergarten program. If this is the case, please ensure there is a contingency plan to manage without the AAE

for the session. These sessions are scheduled for 2 hours, where possible AAE's will return to work or come to work prior to their supervision session.

KIS Staff Evaluation

During the year Lentara will ask for feedback from Early Childhood Educators regarding the AAE's work performance and the KIS program in general. Please be honest, specific and constructive with feedback. This will assist in continually adapting and improving the KIS program as well as supporting staff development.

This evaluation will be emailed to with a link to survey monkey.

Time sheets

AAE time sheets must be kept as an accurate record of days and times worked and include any leave. The Early Childhood Educator is required to sign the time sheet to confirm the hours worked by the AAE each fortnight.

AAEs must submit their time sheet to Lentara every fortnight for approval and processing. If required please provide the AAE access to the service's fax machine.

Sick leave – relievers

When an AAE is unable to attend a session the following process should take place:

- The AAE will contact the service as soon as practicable, as discussed in the AAE's orientation at the kindergarten.
- The AAE will attempt to find a reliever from Lentara to cover the session for which they will be absent; this should always be the first preference.
- In exceptional circumstances the kindergarten can arrange the use of their own reliever. The cost of which will be reimbursed at the KIS funded rate. Please contact the KIS Coordinator for further information.
- It is not always possible to find relief staff for the AAE. The Early Childhood Educator, through consultation with the PSG, should have a contingency plan if this situation occurs to ensure the inclusion of all children.

Short term absence of a child

Where an unexpected absence of the child occurs the AAE will continue to attend their normal session times.

Long term absence of a child

Where the child will be absent for a long period (e.g. two weeks or more) the KIS Coordinator must be notified by the Early Childhood Educator. The funding will be placed on hold after two weeks of absence and will begin again once the child resumes in the funded kindergarten program.

Medication

The AAEs are not responsible for administering or witnessing the administration of medication unless related to the KIS funded child and appropriate training has been provided.

Public holidays and closures

If the Service is closed during the term and the AAE is not required as there will be no staff in attendance, Lentara will pay normal hours for that day. This includes public holidays.

If there are no children attending but staff will be there, the AAE is expected to attend their normal hours and assist with any activities that are taking place on that day. This could include planning activities for the program, assisting with children during interviews and orientation etc.

Injuries at work (WorkSafe reports)

If an AAE sustains an injury while at work the AAE must:

- Record the incident in the Service Accident Book;
- Call the KIS Coordinator within 24 hours, who will then contact the Human Resources Department to report the incident and to discuss any further requirements; and
- Complete a Lentara Incident Report Form and forward to the KIS Coordinator, also within 24 hours.

Protective clothing

All Lentara staff are required to abide by the service's SunSmart Policy.

AAEs are expected to wear appropriate clothing and footwear in line with the service's dress code policy.

Mobile phones

It is not appropriate for an AAE to use a mobile phone during session.

Sometimes personal circumstances or emergency situations require the AAE to seek permission from the Early Childhood Educator to receive calls on the service phone.

Excursions

If an excursion is planned, the welfare of all children remains the responsibility of the Early Childhood Educator.

The AAE must be supervised by the Early Childhood Educator at all times during an excursion, as per normal practice.

Should an excursion be organised during the AAE's hours they are expected to attend the excursion. If the excursion is longer than their regular working hours, arrangements will need to be made for the AAE to adjust their hours so their total fortnightly hours remain the same. Due to other commitments the AAEs may not always be able to change their working hours and may only be able to attend their regular hours.

Extra hours cannot be claimed for AAEs to attend excursions.

Transportation of children

AAEs must never transport children to or from the funded kindergarten program, including from the car park or from one room to another in the building.

Grievances

Lentara is committed to resolving staff workplace grievances effectively, according to the process below.

If a grievance arises, discuss the issue directly with the AAE. If there is no resolution please contact the KIS Coordinator who will undertake to resolve or mediate with respect to the grievance.

- If the outcome of the grievance is unsatisfactory please submit your concerns in writing to Lentara's General Manager Children's Services.

- The General Manager Children's Services will alert the Chief Executive Officer of a grievance which has the attention of the KIS Coordinator and General Manager Children's Services.
- If the matter remains unresolved, the Chief Executive Officer will decide how to proceed.
- Resolution of grievance process will be within a reasonable time frame according to the complexity of issue raised in grievance.

All grievances will be treated with fairness, respect and dignity. All concerns will be treated with sensitivity and confidentially. A copy of the Lentara Grievance Policy is available from the KIS Coordinator.

Grievances alleging that the health, safety or wellbeing of a child is being compromised or that the law has been breached will be reported to the DET Quality Assessment and Regulations Division in the relevant region.

Incident reporting

Should there be a reportable incident at the service, the AAE can provide a statement of their account if they witnessed the incident but are not responsible for completing reports. This is responsibility of the Early Childhood Educator.

Resource & Liaison Officer

Lentara has a Resource & Liaison Officer employed to support the KIS program and AAEs in their work environment.

The Resource & Liaison Officer may call and/or visit the funded kindergarten program to provide information and support to the AAE working in your program. The Resource & Liaison Officer will always call to make arrangements prior to a visit.

If Early Childhood Educators feel the AAE working at their service would benefit from a visit, please contact the KIS Coordinator to discuss this.

Specialist Consultancy Support

As a funded service you are eligible to request support from an Early Childhood Specialist Consultant. The Specialist Consultant is employed by Lentara and is a new initiative of the DET to support educators in providing an inclusive program for all children.

Please refer to Fact Sheet Three for further information.



Contact Details

General Manager Children's Services 03 9351 3600

KIS Coordinators

North Western Victoria region 03 9351 3624

South Western Victoria region 03 9351 3623

Resource & Liaison Officer 03 9351 3662

Fax 03 9351 3651

Postal address Kindergarten Inclusion Support
Lentara UnitingCare
PO Box 3217
Broadmeadows VIC 3047

Fact Sheets

1. Role of the Additional Assistant Educator

DET Fact sheet

The Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) package program contributes to the provision of a quality kindergarten program in line with the National Quality Framework and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework.

The KIS Program focuses on enhancing a kindergarten's capacity to provide a program that is responsive to the individual abilities, interests and needs of children with a disability and ongoing high support needs in an inclusive kindergarten environment. Services meeting the eligibility criteria for this program are able to apply for minor building modifications, specialist training and consultancy, and additional staffing support.

What is an additional assistant educator?

The additional staffing support available through the KIS package program is the provision of an additional assistant educator.

An additional assistant educator funded from a KIS package works as a member of the team delivering a kindergarten program that is inclusive of all children in the group.

KIS funded additional assistant educators are not included in staff to child ratios in relation to regulatory requirements; they are in excess of the regulated minimum staff to child ratios.

This supports the early childhood to build the capacity of the team to respond to the needs of all children in the program.

What is the role of the additional assistant educator?

The additional assistant educator takes direction from the early childhood teacher. They are intended to support the needs of the whole group during the kindergarten year.

They share the everyday team responsibilities to ensure that all children can have the opportunity to engage with the range of learning and development experiences provided within the kindergarten program.

Responsibility for one-on-one support for any children in the program should be shared between all educators in the kindergarten team. An additional assistant educator should not work exclusively with the child identified in the KIS package application.

Supporting the additional assistant educator

It is important that all the educators in the kindergarten environment feel part of the team; this supports the wellbeing of the staff, the participation and engagement of children, and a team approach to inclusion (see *Fact sheet – A team approach to inclusion*).

Some strategies that may assist early childhood teachers to support that the additional assistant educator becomes an active member of the team include:

- providing an orientation for the additional assistant educator that includes:
 - introducing the physical layout of the kindergarten and any safety procedures
 - introducing them to other staff
 - discussion of the program and dynamics of the group
- discussing the roles and responsibilities of the additional assistant educator and other educators in the team, discussing how they will work as a team to support all children in the program

- ensuring that the additional assistant has the opportunity to contribute to discussions and be a part of ongoing communication about the program.

Benefits of this approach

All educators in the kindergarten environment contribute to the education of all children in the group.

Additional assistant educators feel valued and have a sense of belonging as a participating member of the kindergarten team.

The early childhood teacher has increased capacity to provide a flexible program that responds to the needs of each child in the group.

The kindergarten promotes understanding of and respect for diversity to children and families.

All children are supported to develop trusting relationships with all educators, as they are able to work closely with each of the educators throughout the day.

The relationships support children to develop a sense of belonging to the group and the broader community and feel that they are contributing to their world; becoming confident and involved learners with a strong sense of self.

Families feel confident that the whole team has the knowledge and understanding of every child's interests, strengths and abilities.

For more information on the KIS program visit

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/needs/pages/kinderinclusion.aspx>

* In the context of this fact sheet, family may refer to biological, adoptive or step parents, siblings, grandparents or other extended family members, foster carers or other legal guardians of the child with a disability or developmental delay.

2. Role of the Program Support Group

DET Fact sheet

The Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) Program contributes to the provision of a quality kindergarten program. The KIS Program focuses on enhancing a kindergarten's capacity to provide a program that is responsive to the individual abilities, interests and needs of children with a disability and ongoing high support needs in an inclusive kindergarten environment.

The Program Support Group (PSG) brings together key people to support the planning for inclusion of children with disabilities or developmental delays, or on-going high-support needs or complex medical needs, from the time of enrolment in a kindergarten program.

What is the role of the Program Support Group?

The work of the Program Support Group (PSG) is underpinned by the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework and demonstrates the implementation of the associated practice principles; in particular, family centred practice and professional partnerships.

The PSG has an ongoing role beginning before the child commences the kindergarten program until they have transitioned into school.

The PSG:

- meets at least once per term to support to the child's learning, development and wellbeing
- shares knowledge and understanding of the child's interests, abilities and support requirements
- shares expertise to inform the development of an inclusive program that is responsive to the child's learning and development needs
- identifies resources and staffing options to maximise opportunities existing within the kindergarten
- supports the development of an inclusive program that encourages the engagement of all children in a range of learning and development experiences and opportunities
- supports transition into the kindergarten program and into school
- coordinates services and supports for the child.

The agenda for the PSG meetings should be set around the outcomes of the review of the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Plan, celebrating the child's achievements, discussing identified areas for additional support and planning for the child's learning and development.

Membership of the PSG and their contributions

The early childhood teacher convenes the PSG and is the representative for the kindergarten program on the group. They organise meetings, and facilitate conversations to support planning for the child.

Family attends PSG meetings to share and contribute to the development of a program that responds to their child's interests, abilities and support needs.

Any other person who supports the child's learning, development and wellbeing may be invited to attend the PSG meetings as appropriate. These people may include early childhood intervention service professionals, relevant therapists or allied health professionals.

What are the benefits of the PSG?

A key benefit of the PSG is the opportunity to develop collaborative partnerships with families and other professionals involved in supporting the child. Achieving high quality outcomes for all children requires active engagement with others who play a role in advancing children's learning, development and wellbeing.

The PSG offers families an opportunity to share their knowledge and understanding of their child's interests, abilities and needs. This supports family-centred-practice and enables families to feel respected and empowered to advocate for their child's ongoing needs. As they develop a relationship with the educator and others involved with their child, they are able to contribute to planning an inclusive program.

Sharing information through regular meetings of the group means that planning reflects a common understanding of the child's ongoing learning, development and wellbeing needs.

The PSG can assist families to feel supported through the transition into kindergarten and into school, and feel confident that all relevant people understand their child's interests, abilities and support needs.

For more information on the KIS program visit

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/needs/pages/kinderinclusion.aspx>

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3. Specialist Consultancy Support

DET Fact sheet

The Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) Program contributes to the provision of a quality kindergarten program. The KIS Program focuses on enhancing a kindergarten's capacity to provide a program that is responsive to the individual abilities, interests and needs of children with a disability and ongoing high support needs in an inclusive kindergarten environment.

The range of support available through the KIS package program includes:

- Specialist training
- Specialist consultancy support
- Minor building modifications
- Additional staffing support

Kindergartens that have been allocated an additional assistant educator through this program are eligible to request specialist consultancy support to assist them to plan and implement an inclusive program for all children.

The focus of specialist consultancy support

Specialist Consultancy support focuses on:

- complementing early childhood educator knowledge and skills, while acknowledging their expertise in supporting children's learning and development
- supporting early childhood educators to build their capacity to develop and implement an inclusive program
- assisting early childhood educators to contribute to positive outcomes for all children, as defined in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)
- assisting early childhood educators to respond to each child's interests, abilities, and needs
- promoting collaboration between the family, other professionals and early childhood educators
- recognising that early childhood educators require varying levels of additional support
- implementing a team approach to support inclusion of all children.

Program and planning support available through Specialist Consultancy assistance

Support available from specialist consultants may assist early childhood teachers to enhance their knowledge, confidence, skills to:

- implement the previously identified adaptations to the program, activities, routines and environment
- plan a program that responds to newly identified learning and development needs of all children
- support all children to access and meaningfully participate in all aspects of the program
- implement a team approach to support inclusion of all children
- respectfully engage with families and respond to families concerns
- link with and collaborate with other professionals.

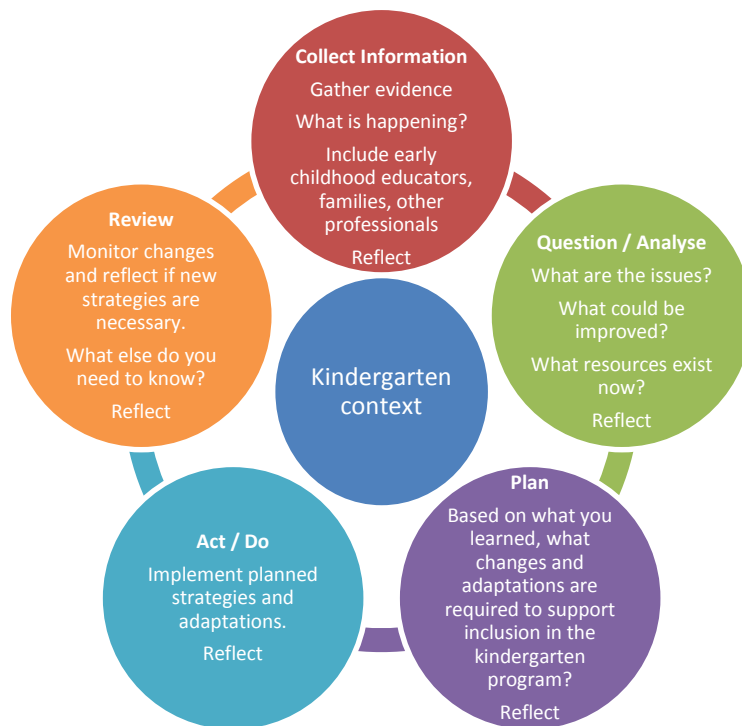
Identifying a need for support

Requests for support are:

- underpinned by reflective practice, a key practice principle of the VEYLDF
- informed by review of the outcomes of the Inclusion Support Plan that supported the request for an additional assistant educator
- informed by completion of the 'Reflective tool for early childhood teachers'.

The Inclusion Support Plan is a living document that is intended to be regularly reviewed throughout the kindergarten year.

This reflective process is illustrated in the diagram below.



The 'Reflective tool for early childhood teachers' assists educators to identify:

- the assistance required to enhance their capacity to provide a quality program that is responsive to the diverse needs of children participating in the program.
- if support from a specialist consultant would be appropriate.

Requesting specialist consultancy support

After the completion of the 'Reflective tool for early childhood teachers' a teacher may identify the need for support from a specialist consultant. In these instances, Section 2 of this tool should be completed and submitted to their KIS provider.

The KIS provider will then contact each applicant in response to this request for specialist consultancy.

The level and type of support offered will be informed by consultation and collaboration with the early childhood teacher and may include:

- provision of resources and information
- linkages to professional development opportunities (for example training, professional networks)
- one-to-one consultation and coaching sessions (onsite, telephone).

For more information on the KIS program visit

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/needs/pages/kinderinclusion.aspx>

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