



Information for Carers

Individual Education Plans

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"The importance of providing children and young people with an effective education is universally recognised as crucial to enabling them to successfully transition to adulthood."

What is an Individual Education Plan?

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a document that describes strategies to address the particular educational needs of a child/young person. It includes school attendance, behaviour management and strategies to enhance their achievement. The IEP is developed by school staff (e.g. school counsellor or principal) in collaboration with the child/young person's support group which includes school staff, caregiver, social worker and other professionals involved in working with the child/young person.

IEPs will generally be negotiated within one month of a child/young person going into care or enrolling in a new school. It will be reviewed every year by the support group.

Please see *The Carers Role in the IEP Process* on page 2

Why Individual Education Plans for Children under Guardianship?

The background and experiences of children and young people who have been placed under Guardianship or Custody makes them particularly vulnerable to poor educational outcomes. Once in care children and young people may experience frequent placement changes necessitating changing schools. In addition, lack of coordination between schools, welfare agencies and caregivers, as well as lack of accountability, all have the effect of interfering with children/young people's learning and educational experience.

CREATE Foundation in their annual Education Report Cards argue for state and territory governments to work toward all children and young people in care having an IEP. In South Australia, this emphasis has been taken up in the *Layton Review* (Layton, 2003) and is listed as a specific output in the Government of South Australia's response to the Layton Review, *Keeping Them Safe*, namely to 'develop individual education plans for all children under the care or Guardianship of the Minister (Recommendation 146, CPR)' (Government of South Australia, 2004, p. 4).



Government of South Australia
Department for Families
and Communities
Keeping Them Safe

*Children, Youth and Family Services
Guardianship and Alternative Care Directorate
Partners in Care - Build, Support, Promote and Connect*

The Carers Role in the IEP Process

Carers play a crucial role in providing for the day-to-day care of children and young people in the alternative care system in South Australia. Carers are often the first point of contact for schools when issues are discussed and for the majority of day-to-day parenting needs. Carers are therefore important people in the process of developing IEPs for children in care.

Ideally, carers will be involved in:

- collaborating with the CYFS social worker to enrol a child/young person in school. The social worker will provide the school with a letter regarding the child being under Guardianship and a completed CYFS-DECS Information Sharing Sheet.

- being the first point of contact for the school for day-to-day parenting issues and needs (unless otherwise arranged with the CYFS social worker)

- providing information about the child/young person to the school so that the school is able to provide effective care and education for the child/young person. It is the responsibility of the CYFS social worker to provide to the school sensitive information about the circumstances of the child/young person. This should ideally be done in collaboration with the carer.

- attending the IEP meeting together with the CYFS social worker, DECS staff, the child/young person (where appropriate) or others

- assisting the child/young person with home work and other educational experiences that enhance their learning

- receiving a copy of the child/young person's completed IEP

- receiving a copy of the child/young person's school report.

Which Children should have an IEP?

A staged approach is currently being utilised to implement the IEPs. This involves developing IEPs for the following children and young people in care:

By the end of Term One, 2006: Children under Guardianship to 18 orders in public schools including those who already have other educational plans e.g. Student Development Plan (SDP), Negotiated Education Plan (NEP), etc.

By the end of 2006: Children under Guardianship or Custody 12 month orders in public schools.

To be determined: Other children and young people in care for longer than six months and those in private schools.



Carers play a crucial role in the lives of children and young people.

“Fletcher-Campbell (1998, p. 4) argues that ‘once adequate attention is given to education in the life of a young person, once there is planning and appropriate support, and once professionals and other adults working with the young person have a clear understanding of their role and responsibility, and have themselves been empowered to fulfil these, then there can be achievement in the normal range.’”

Factors that Help a Child's Educational

"The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (article 28) enshrines the entitlement of all children to an education."

- Stable and consistent care
- Early reading
- Regular school attendance
- Acknowledgement of young person's opinions and feelings in decision making
- Relationships with peers and adults
- Mentors
- Liaison between school, carers, case managers and service providers
- Positive attitudes towards education by carers - this includes the provision of educational support and an understanding of the importance of education for future life chances and choices
- Financial support for particular education programs eg. VET
- High expectations from educators
- The avoidance of stereotyping
- Greater understanding from teachers about the issues facing children and young people in care
- Greater understanding concerning confidentiality



An IEP is a written plan that details the roles, responsibilities and strategy for assisting a child or young person achieve to their highest educational potential.

Factors that Hinder a Child's Educational Achievement

- Being out of school for prolonged periods
- Sustaining negative relationships due to lack of community
- High suspension and exclusion rates
- Mistrust of adults
- Bullying
- Poor sharing of information between DECS and CYFS
- Self esteem issues for the child or young person
- Lack of clear roles and responsibilities of educators, CYFS personnel and carers
- Special education issues not identified or addressed
- Many unplanned moves and changes of carers
- Low expectations by educators and carers that can result in underachievement

Who do I contact if the child in my care doesn't have an Individual Education Plan?

If the child/young person in your care doesn't have an IEP, you can contact:

- your child/young person's CYFS social worker
- the school principal or counsellor at the school your child/young person attends
- your carer support worker.

Who do I contact if I want more information about Individual Education Plans?

More detailed information about Individual Education Plans can be provided by:

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