



## EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION AWARENESS WEEK

13 – 21 August 2011



# Fact Sheet

### **What is Early Childhood Intervention?**

Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) encompasses a range of services for very young children with developmental delays and disabilities and their families. These services aim to enhance the child's personal development, strengthen the family's competencies and support the social inclusion of all family members in the community.

In Victoria, Early Childhood Intervention services are funded primarily through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). The services are provided by specialist agencies who employ Early Childhood Intervention professionals to provide special education, therapy, service planning and coordination.

### **Why is early childhood intervention important?**

Recent research shows that positive and rich experiences during early childhood can have beneficial effects on brain development, helping children to acquire language, to develop problem-solving skills, to form healthy relationships with peers and adults and to acquire different abilities that will be of importance throughout life (Park & Peterson, 2003).

For children with developmental delays and disabilities, the importance of capitalising on these important early years is particularly crucial. Timely access to Early Childhood Intervention services can enhance child development, minimise potential delays, remediate existing problems and prevent further deterioration (Shonkoff & Meisels, 1990).

Access to support from Early Childhood Intervention professionals is also crucial for the wellbeing of families. Families need support to manage the care-giving and emotional demands of caring for a child with developmental delays and disabilities. Early Childhood Intervention professionals can help parents build positive relationships with their children and develop the skills to meet their child's developmental needs. They also provide emotional support, information and advice, assistance to identify and address needs, service co-ordination and advocacy.

Access to quality, inclusive early childhood education and care is another important factor in ensuring children with developmental delays and disabilities are provided with opportunities to achieve early childhood outcomes. With adequate support, community settings such as kindergarten and childcare can not only ensure children with developmental delays and disability have access to inclusive education and care, but can develop their programs to ensure all children are actively engaged and achieve educational outcomes. Staff in children's services rely on visiting Early Childhood Intervention professionals to provide information about individual children and to provide professional support and mentoring.

# ECI Awareness Week – 13 – 21 August 2011

## ECI Awareness Week Events

To celebrate ECI Awareness Week, ECIA is hosting a national tour featuring Associate Professor Mary Louise Hemmeter, a highly influential leader in the development of early intervention and early childhood services in the USA and internationally. A/Prof Hemmeter will be facilitating a series of workshops that describe a systematic approach developed in the USA to enhance the opportunities and experiences available to all children including those with social and emotional / behavioural difficulties as outlined below. Research evidence has shown that social-emotional skills and behaviours prior to school entry are the most reliable predictors of later school success.

**The Teaching Pyramid** is a comprehensive model designed to promote social emotional development and prevent challenging behavior in young children. It reflects a public health model of promotion, prevention and intervention. The Teaching Pyramid provides early childhood educators with universal strategies for supporting social emotional development and preventing challenging behavior in all children, secondary strategies for providing targeted social emotional supports for children who are at risk, and tertiary supports for children whose behaviors are persistent and ongoing. Universal strategies focus on building relationships with children, creating a positive climate in the classroom, implementing a consistent and predictable schedule, structuring routines so children know what to do and what is expected of them, designing and implementing developmentally appropriate activities, and using other developmentally appropriate guidance strategies such as giving clear directions, providing positive feedback, and redirection. At the secondary level, the focus is on systematically and intentionally teaching social skills and emotional competencies. Guidance is provided on what skills should be taught, procedures for teaching those skills, and strategies for ensuring children have adequate opportunities to practice the skills in a variety of contexts. At the tertiary level, a process is used in which a team conducts a functional assessment and develops and implements a behavior support plan for an individual child. The focus of the plan is on strategies to prevent challenging behaviors from occurring, supporting children's use of new social behaviors that replace the challenging behaviors, and changing how adults respond to the new skills and challenging behaviors.

## The schedule for the 2011 National Tour is as follows:

Date	City	Format
8 August	Hobart	1 day workshop
10 – 12 August	Melbourne	2 x 1.5 day workshops
15 August	Adelaide	1 day workshop
17 & 18 August	Perth	2 x 1 day workshops
20 August	Brisbane	1 day workshop
22 August	Canberra	1 day workshop

### Who can I contact for further information?

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