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| Supported Playgroups |
| Policy and Funding Guidelines |
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| Supported PlaygroupsPolicy and Funding Guidelines |
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# Introduction

The Supported Playgroups Policy and Funding Guidelines support the delivery and administration of Supported Playgroups funded by the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the Department). They outline the Department’s expectations of service providers funded to deliver Supported Playgroups. The Guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Service Agreement between the organisation and the Department. The Department reserves the right to amend these Guidelines with reasonable notice of any changes.

These Guidelines provide:

* service specifications and outcomes to be achieved
* a performance and accountability framework
* other information relevant to the delivery of Supported Playgroups.

## Evidence base for Supported Playgroups

The importance of providing high quality care and stimulation to children from birth is well recognised and there is strong evidence that children’s developmental trajectories, including their emotional wellbeing, their social skills and executive functioning and, how well they achieve educationally, are strongly influenced by their early years of life. Research shows that during early childhood, the foundations of social, emotional, mental and physical health and wellbeing are established with executive functioning and self-regulation largely developed before the age of five.

For the majority of children, a home environment that is safe, stable and nurturing sets them on a good developmental pathway. However, families experiencing disadvantage may face challenges providing such an environment. Children living in families experiencing disadvantage are also less likely to participate in early childhood education and care services.

The Victorian Government is committed to all children reaching their potential by supporting parents to provide safe, stable and stimulating early home learning environments.

Research has demonstrated that participation in a Supported Playgroup run by a skilled and qualified facilitator and with evidence-based practice embedded, has a positive impact on parent/child interactions and on children’s cognitive and social development. The findings of the Early Home Learning Study (2009-2012), and the *smalltalk* program developed as part of this study, demonstrated that it is possible to enhance the role of parents and improve the quality and frequency of the parent-child interactions that are known to improve children’s cognitive development and wellbeing.

Supported Playgroups also provide opportunities for parents to learn about local services and to meet other parents for support and friendship. Reducing social isolation and increasing the connection between families in their local community also has positive benefits for parent’s mental health and wellbeing.

## *smalltalk*

Facilitators of Supported Playgroups funded by the Department are required to deliver *smalltalk* in playgroups and in In-Home Support to all participating families.

*smalltalk* introduces parents to a small number of parenting essentials that, based on evidence, lead to optimal child outcomes. *smalltalk* help parents to become aware of the importance of the everyday interactions they have with their child.

*smalltalk* promotes parents:

* interacting with children in a ***warm and gentle manner***
* ***tuning i***n to children by giving the them full attention frequently and promptly
* ***attending*** to whatever children show an interest in
* ***listening and talking*** to children more frequently
* using ***teachable moments*** when they arise
* ***sharing reading***.

Parents are also encouraged to create routines for their children, read to them from birth and support their play. Parents are encouraged to look after their own health and wellbeing by developing positive social support networks and seeking professional help if they are stressed or feel they are not coping.

## Service delivery context

Supported Playgroups are located within a service system that supports the wellbeing and development of children by supporting parents to develop their parenting skills and confidence. This section provides a brief overview of the service system.

### Local Government

Local government makes a significant contribution to early years services and infrastructure. This includes the joint role played by local councils and the Victorian Government in funding the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Service. Municipal Early Years Plans (MEYPs) are also developed by all local councils and provide a framework for the delivery of services for children and families within a local government area. Many local governments also support their local community playgroups in a variety of ways, including the provision of information, resources and access to facilities.

### Early years services

Early years services for children and families include programs supporting children’s health, development and learning, including early childhood education and care services, kindergarten and the MCH Service.

The MCH Service is provided through a partnership between the Victorian Government and local government. It is a free service available to all families with children from birth to 3.5 years. The MCH Service offers support, education and advice in more than 827,000 consultations with families every year.

Children attend kindergarten in the year before they start primary school. The Victorian Government contributes funding to support children to attend a kindergarten program delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher. Over the next three years this will be expanded to provide two years of kindergarten for children prior to commencing primary school.

A Kindergarten Fee Subsidy enables eligible children to attend a funded kindergarten program for 15 hours free of charge. Eligibility criteria is available in the [Kindergarten Funding Guide](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.asp): <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.asp>

Early Start Kindergarten is a Victorian Government-funded grant that provides free access to kindergarten for three-year-old children who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or known to Child Protection or who have been referred by Child Protection to Child FIRST. The Department of Education and Training staff in regional offices can assist families with any queries about kindergarten including Early Start Kindergarten.

There are also a range of more intensive early year’s services including the Enhanced MCH Service, Early Parenting Centres, Early Childhood Intervention Services and Kindergarten Inclusion Support.

### Community playgroups

Community playgroups provide opportunities for preschool age children and parents to meet informally for play activities, mutual support and friendship and to share information about local services. Community playgroups are led and organised by parents.

Playgroup Victoria is funded by the Commonwealth Government to promote and support community playgroups throughout Victoria, including providing training and resources to playgroups. For more information, see [Playgroup Victoria](http://www.playgroup.org.au): <www.playgroup.org.au>

### Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) is for professionals working with children from birth to eight years to advance their children’s learning and development. The VEYLDF also promotes a common language to support communication about children’s learning and development with families and across the service system.

The VEYLDF has five Learning and Development Outcomes for children. These are:

* Children have a strong sense of identity
* Children are connected and contribute to the world
* Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
* Children are confident and involved learners
* Children are effective communicators.

The VEYLDF has eight Practice Principles. These are:

* Reflective Practice
* Partnerships with families
* High expectations for every child
* Respectful relationships and responsive engagement
* Equity and diversity
* Assessment for learning and development
* Integrated teaching and learning approaches
* Partnerships with professionals

Resources have been developed to support implementation of the VEYLDF in early childhood settings, available from the [Department of Education and Training](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/edcare/Pages/profresource.aspx): <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/edcare/Pages/profresource.aspx>

### Parenting support

Parenting support for families with children aged from birth to 18 years seek to improve outcomes for children and young people by supporting parents to develop their skills and confidence. Parenting support is provided by a range of services including those outlined below:

* **Parentline** is a statewide telephone counselling service providing information, advice, referral and counselling for parents and carers of children from birth to 18 years.
* **Regional Parenting Services** operate across the state and provide parenting information, education, and individual and group-based parenting support to families who may be experiencing parenting challenges.
* **Early Parenting Centres** provide services and support to assist parents experiencing acute early parenting difficulties to care for their children by increasing parents’ knowledge, skills and confidence through the provision of consultation, counselling, skill development and education services.
* **Strengthening Parent Support Program** assists parents who have a child with a disability or developmental delay to connect with other families and their local community.
* **Child FIRST** is the entry point into family services. Child FIRST teams are located across Victoria and are delivered by community service organisations. Child FIRST and family services aim to promote the safety, stability and development of vulnerable children, young people and their families, from birth to 17 years of age, by providing case work service and linking families with relevant support services. Anyone with a concern for a child's or family's wellbeing including families with an unborn child, can make a referral to Child FIRST.
* **The Orange Door** is a Support and Safety Hub developed in partnership across government and community sector organisations. The Orange Door integrates the Child FIRST service to connect families wanting support and families experiencing family violence with the services they need. By the end of 2021, The Orange Door will be operating across all 17 Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Areas.

# Service specifications

## Outcomes

Supported Playgroups funded by the Department aim to achieve the following outcomes:

* children have improved wellbeing and development through improved parent-child interactions in the early home learning environment
* parents develop their parenting skills and confidence to support their children’s wellbeing and development.
* families are supported to use other community services and supports including early childhood education and care services, more intensive or specialist services and, to move to a community playgroup when appropriate.

## Funding

Funding is allocated across the state based on independent measures of disadvantage. These are the number of Health Care Card Holders in each local government area and, the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) with more disadvantaged areas of the state receiving higher levels of funding. This is based on evidence that children experiencing disadvantage are at greater risk of behavioural and emotional problems in early primary school which also negatively impacts their academic achievement.

The funding for Supported Playgroups is based on a professional model of service delivery in accordance with these Guidelines.

Service providers are required to employ qualified and skilled Supported Playgroup facilitators. The role of the facilitator is to deliver Supported Playgroups and In-Home Support (see **In-Home Support**) and provide *smalltalk* to all participating families.

**Eighty per cent (80%) of the funding for Supported Playgroups is for the salary and salary-related costs (Long Service Leave/WorkCover/Sick Leave) of employing a qualified facilitator.** The balance of the funding (20%) is for administration and operation of the program.

The performance of all service providers funded by the Department through Service Agreements is reviewed quarterly and at the end of the financial year. At the end of each financial year, a full acquittal of funding is required.

As is the case for all service providers receiving funding through Service Agreements, if targets are not met, the Department and the service provider will work together to identify the causes and implement remedial action. Failure to meet targets, despite remedial efforts, may lead to a reduction or cessation of funding in accordance with the terms of the Service Agreement.

In situations where facilitator positions have not been filled and the service has not been delivered for all or part of the year, unexpended funding will be recouped and returned to the Department within 90 days of the new financial year unless otherwise agreed.

## Location of Supported Playgroups

Supported Playgroups must be located in suburbs within a local government area with high numbers of families experiencing disadvantage and, be easily accessible to them. Planning the location of Supported Playgroups should occur in collaboration with the Department.

Consideration should also be given to locating Supported Playgroups in primary schools where this increases families’ access and supports the transition of children to school. The Department of Education and Training regional offices can assist with these arrangements.

Service providers are required to record details on the electronic information management system of all Supported Playgroups (including the suburb and SEIFA of the suburb) and details of each facilitator at the beginning of each term.

## Target group

Supported Playgroups are a targeted service. They are provided to families experiencing disadvantage to improve the learning, development, and wellbeing outcomes of children from birth until they start primary school.

Improvements in child outcomes are the result of improvements in the quality of parent-child interactions and the home learning environment that occur as a result of parents participating in a Supported Playgroup.

To be enrolled in a Supported Playgroup, families must meet at least one of the following eligibility criteria:

* a family member in the household holds a Health Care Card or equivalent (see **Appendix 1** for full list)
* families in which a family member identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
* families looking after children in kinship care arrangements (out of home care)
* families referred from Child FIRST/Child Protection.
* families referred from or participating in Enhanced MCH Services.

The Department has also agreed that on case-by-case basis and in consultation with the Department, flexible application of the eligibility criteria can apply in small rural communities, provided that access is prioritised for families who meet the eligibility criteria and there are limited alternate services available.

## In-Home Support

In-Home Support is a very important element of the program. It involves a facilitator visiting a family at their home and providing individual coaching to them on using the *smalltalk* strategies with their child/children. Visits are usually fortnightly for approximately one and a half (1.5) hours. During these home-based sessions, parents have the opportunity to practice the *smalltalk* strategies supported by a facilitator. Parents participating in In-Home Support may or may not also be attending a Supported Playgroup and In-Home Support may be used to engage eligible families who are initially reluctant to attend a Supported Playgroup.

The primary target group for In-Home Support is families who are eligible to attend Supported Playgroups (see **Target Group**) and have at least one of the following characteristics:

* parent aged 25 years or less
* mother has not completed high school
* single parent family
* ten or less children’s books in the home
* referred to a Supported Playgroup but unable to attend for either personal or social reasons.

If there are not enough families with one of the above characteristics In-Home Support, may be offered to other families who are either attending or eligible to be enrolled in a Supported Playgroup.

## Group size

Supported Playgroups operate on the basis that up to ten families are enrolled in each Supported Playgroup each term. This is to ensure that all families receive the individual attention of the facilitator.

Enrolling more than ten families in a Supported Playgroup is likely to have a negative impact on the quality and intensity of the support that families receive and the outcomes that can be achieved for each family. It could also significantly increase the time that would need to be allocated to follow up with families who cease attending a Supported Playgroup, which is also a requirement of the program.

If the demand for Supported Playgroups exceeds available places, consideration may need to be given to operating a waiting list and/or referring families to other supports in the interim such as a community playgroup or family support services.

The requirement to develop Family Transition/Family Connection Plans will increase the likelihood that families connect and participate in other relevant services in a timelier manner, thereby increasing the number of families who can access Supported Playgroups over a year.

## Duration of participation in a Supported Playgroup

**Families may be re-enrolled in a Supported Playgroup for a number of terms if this is beneficial for the family.**

## Qualified and skilled facilitators

Supported Playgroup facilitators are required to hold a relevant qualification. A list of relevant qualifications and a sample Position Description are at Appendix 2A and Appendix 2B.

Facilitators must also have the skills to successfully achieve the following:

* establish professional relationships and networks with referral organisations
* actively outreach and engage families in Supported Playgroups and In-home Support
* plan, deliver and evaluate Supported Playgroup sessions including implementing smalltalk and providing learning opportunities that are consistent with the VEYLDF
* deliver In-Home Support to eligible families
* follow up families who stop attending Supported Playgroups to address any barriers to participation and encourage attendance
* develop Family Transition/Family Connection Plans with families to refer and connect them to more intensive specialist service or community supports such as community playgroups when they cease attending a Supporting Playgroup.

Establishing referral processes and enrolling families in Supported Playgroup is part of the professional practice role of the facilitator and not an administrative or coordination function. Active involvement by the facilitator in all aspects of families’ participation in Supported Playgroups, including assisting them to complete enrolment forms and supporting their attendance, increases families’ engagement with the facilitator and increases the likelihood that families will attend regularly and actively participate.

Successful completion of training in *smalltalk* is required for all facilitators. Facilitators are also required to participate in post-training practice coaching run by the Parenting Research Centre (PRC) and their identified Community of Practice jointly run by Playgroup Victoria and the PRC.

It is also a requirement of funding and good practice that facilitators are provided with regular professional supervision from a suitably qualified and experienced supervisor. This is to ensure appropriate accountability and to provide professional support and professional development to the facilitator.

## Evidence-based service delivery

Supported Playgroups are required to deliver *smalltalk*, which is an evidence-based program focused on improving the quality of everyday interactions between parents and children to promote children’s learning and improve the quality of the early home learning environment.

As described above, service delivery is also based on Practice Principles and Learning and Development Outcomes of the VEYLDF, including the importance of supporting children’s and families’ transitions into early childhood settings and school.

## Enrolment

Service providers funded to deliver Supported Playgroups must establish clear referral pathways for families to Supported Playgroups. Establishing a referral pathway from the MCH and/or Enhanced MCH Service to Supported Playgroups is critical to identifying families in the target group.

A Family Record must be completed at a family’s initial enrolment and when families are re-enrolled in a Supported Playgroup each term. The purpose of the Family Record is to collect information about the family to support their participation in the Supported Playgroup and for service accountability and performance monitoring.

The Family Record also records whether families have had a /Family Connection Plan developed, the status of each child at the beginning and end of each term in relation to their MCH Key Ages and Stages Consultations and whether (if eligible) they are enrolled in kindergarten or Early Start Kindergarten. The Family Record should be updated if the facilitator undertakes a MARAM Assessment with a family member or engages in information sharing under the Child Information or Family Violence Information Sharing schemes.

Facilitators use their professional judgment to determine how long a family should continue to attend a Supported Playgroup after their first term (see **Family Connection Plan**). If facilitators consider that a family would benefit from continuing to attend a Supported Playgroup, they may re-enrol the family in each subsequent term.

## Parent questionnaire

The Parent Questionnaire includes empirically validated questions and is used to assess the impact that participation in a Supported Playgroup and/or in In-Home Support has on parents’ skills and confidence.

One aspect of the facilitator’s role is to assist parents to complete the Parent Questionnaire when they enrol and when they cease attending a Supported Playgroup. For families who attend a Supported Playgroup for more than one term, the parent completes the questionnaire when they start their first Supported Playgroup and at the end of the last term they attend.

Completion of the Parent Questionnaire is extremely important to continue to demonstrate the effectiveness of the program. Analysis of this data will also contribute to a deeper understanding of the characteristics of an effective program and provide valuable data in relation to the impact of attendance on families. These questions are examples of how data can be used to improve service quality and effectiveness.

## Family Connection Plan

Family connections planning involves referring or linking families to other services and supports that can assist them. Facilitators can record this in the Family Connection Plan template and should provide a copy to the family. Referral and linking of families to services and supports should occur throughout their participation in Supported Playgroups commencing when they enrol.

Family Connection planning is particularly important for families experiencing issues such as mental health, housing instability or financial issues. A Family Connection Plan should always be completed when a MARAM Assessment is undertaken.

The Family Connection Plan is a ‘living document’ developed and refined with the active involvement of the family. The Family Connection Plan is finalised when a family ceases attending a Supported Playgroup and/or In-Home Support.

Examples of referrals/connections included in a Family Connection Plan include:

* assisting a family to place their child on a central enrolment list to attend kindergarten the following year
* assisting a family to access the Early Start Kindergarten program
* referring a family to the Orange Door or a Family Violence Service
* assisting a family to access parenting support, relationship counselling, alcohol and drug service or a specialist children’s service.

# Performance and Accountability Framework

Service providers that receive funding from the Department to deliver Supported Playgroups and In-Home Support (IHS) are required to:

* deliver Supported Playgroups and IHS in accordance with the service specifications in these Guidelines
* meet the performance targets specified in these Guidelines
* provide the information/data specified in the Guidelines to the Department.

## Performance targets

The following performance targets apply to each full-time equivalent (FTE) Supported Playgroup facilitator employed by a service provider to deliver Supported Playgroups.

Quantitative targets

| Performance Indicator | Target for each FTE | Source of information |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Number of Supported Playgroups in operation at any point in time | 5 Supported Playgroups each term per FTE  | Electronic information management system  |
| Number of Supported Playgroups each calendar year | 20 Supported Playgroups each calendar year per FTE  | Electronic information management system |
| Number of families enrolled in Supported Playgroups each calendar year\* | 160 families enrolled each calendar year per FTE\*\* | Electronic information management system  |
| Number of families receiving In-Home Support at any point in time | 6 families each term per FTE | Electronic information management system  |
| Number of families receiving In-Home Support each calendar year | 24 families each calendar year per FTE | Electronic information management system  |

\*Families who attend more than one term are re-enrolled and counted each term they attend.

\*\*Based on a minimum of 8 and up to 10 families (see **Group size**).

Quality measures

| Measure  | Target  | Source of information |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Per cent of families with a Family Connection Plan at the end of each term | 85% | Electronic information management system  |
| Per cent of children eligible for kindergarten enrolled in kindergarten at the end of each term  | 100% | Electronic information management system  |
| Per cent of families up to date with MCH Key Ages and Stages consultations at the end of each term  | 100% | Electronic information management system  |
| Per cent of children eligible for Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) enrolled in ESK at the end of each term  | 100% | Electronic information management system  |
| Per cent of parents who improve on all scores on the Parent Questionnaire at the end of each term | 80% | Electronic information management system  |
| Per cent of families satisfied with the service at the end of each term  | 85% | Service providers to use their own process  |

## Data collection and reporting

Service providers are responsible for collecting information about the operation of Supported Playgroups. Some of this information is retained by the service provider and some is entered into the electronic information management system.

The collection of information has a number of purposes. Firstly, the collection of information assists facilitators to provide a service to families. Secondly, aggregating de-identified data at the service provider level enables service provider managers and the Department to monitor performance against quantitative targets and quality measures. Finally, de-identified data aggregated at the statewide level enables statewide performance to be monitored and the impact and effectiveness of the program to be further examined.

Information was previously collected and stored on paper forms. Some of the information may still be required to be collected on paper forms in the first instance and then entered into the electronic information management system. Some of the information will not be entered into the electronic information system, as the purpose of the information is to assist in service delivery. This includes Referral Forms and the Family Connection Plan.

The Department will provide data to service providers on the overall statewide performance and impact of Supported Playgroups.

At the end of each financial year, the Department will request the submission of a Financial Acquittal and will discuss with each service provider their expenditure on Supported Playgroups for the financial year. The Department will recoup any accumulated underspend as part of the acquittal process.

For access to the electronic information management system and the protocol for collecting and storing information, contact the Department’s Supported Playgroups team: supported.playgroups@dhhs.vic.gov.au

# Support for service providers

In addition to the support provided by the Department, the Department has contracted Playgroup Victoria and the Parenting Research Centre to support service providers in their delivery of Supported Playgroups.

## Playgroup Victoria

Playgroup Victoria convenes an annual playgroup conference. Playgroup Victoria also convenes Supported Playgroups Communities of Practice for Supported Playgroups facilitators, with the support of the Parenting Research Centre.

Communities of Practice are a professional development and professional support opportunity for facilitators of Supported Playgroups. Communities of Practice are delivered by experienced staff and structured to enable facilitators to share practice challenges, successes and case studies with their colleagues in a professionally supportive environment. Themes including implications for practice identified at each Community of Practice are recorded and distributed to the facilitators who attended and their managers.

Communities of Practice support facilitators to build their skills and confidence and share their skills and knowledge with others. They also provide the opportunity for facilitators to develop professional networks for support and learning and the time and space to reflect on their practice.

Allocating specific time for attendance at Communities of Practice also acknowledges the professional status of Supported Playgroup facilitators and recognition of their contribution.

## Parenting Research Centre

The Parenting Research Centre (PRC) undertakes research, evaluation, training and the development of parenting information and resources.

The PRC provides training to Supported Playgroup facilitators in the delivery of *smalltalk* and implementation support, including practice coaching to maintain program fidelity.

As a condition of funding, facilitators are required to participate in implementation support, which includes:

* training
* practice coaching
* participation in Supported Playgroups Communities of Practice.

## Training

Training in evidence-based strategies (*smalltalk*) is provided to all facilitators to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to implement evidence-based strategies in Supported Playgroups and In-Home Support. The training includes both online and face-to-face training.

## Practice coaching

Practice coaching includes:

* a planning meeting with the service provider manager and the PRC Practice Coach to agree to the timing and approach
* Supported Playgroup and In-Home Support observation visit(s) as required
* regular phone contact with every facilitator.

Facilitators also have access to an online community of practice through the [*smalltalk* website](http://www.smalltalk.net.au): <www.smalltalk.net.au>

# Appendices

## Appendix 1 Eligibility criteria for enrolment in a Supported Playgroup funded by the Department

A family member in the household holds one of the following:

* a Commonwealth Health Care Card
* a Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card
* a Department of Veterans’ Affairs Gold Card or White Card
* Refugee visa (subclass 200)
* In-country Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 201)
* Global Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 202)
* Temporary Humanitarian Concern visa (subclass 786)
* Protection visa (subclass 866)
* Emergency Rescue visa (subclass 203)
* Woman at risk visa (subclass 204)
* Bridging visas, A-E.

In addition, the following families are also eligible:

* families in which a family member identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
* families who are looking after children in kinship care arrangements (out of home care)
* families referred from Child FIRST or Child Protection
* families referred from or receiving Enhanced Maternal and Child Health Services.

### Target group for In-Home Support

The target group for In-Home Support is families who are eligible to attend Supported Playgroups (see above) and have at least one of the following characteristics:

* parent aged 25 years or less
* mother has not completed high school
* single parent family
* ten or less books in the home.

The Department has also agreed that on case-by-case basis and in consultation with the Department, flexible application of the eligibility criteria can apply in small rural communities, provided that access is prioritised for families who meet the eligibility criteria and there are limited alternate services available.

## Appendix 2A Qualifications and competencies for Supported Playgroup facilitators

### Qualifications

The Guidelines require that all Supported Playgroup facilitators hold an appropriate qualification for the role. The following qualifications, listed by field of study, are appropriate qualifications at a minimum Diploma level.

**Qualifications**

| Early childhood/education  | Social work/community services | Health |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * Early Childhood
* Early Childhood Teaching
* Early Childhood Education
* Special Education
* Children's Services
* Early Childhood Education and Care
* Child Care
 | * Social Work
* Social Welfare
* Family Support
* Community Services
 | * MCH/Registered Nurse
* Child Psychology
 |

### Competencies

Supported Playgroup facilitators are required to have the following knowledge and skills.

**Knowledge** – demonstrated knowledge and/or understanding of:

* early childhood development and family support service systems
* early childhood learning and development stages
* Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework including the Practice Principles and Learning and Development Outcomes
* causes of economic and sociocultural disadvantage and its impact on families and children
* delivery of group-based and individual programs.

**Skills** – ability to:

* develop relationships with key local stakeholders and referral sources to develop referral pathways for families in the target group
* develop and implement strategies to engage families and support their attendance at Supported Playgroups
* communicate respectfully and effectively with families
* model and support quality parent child/interactions
* provide developmentally appropriate play experiences that promote learning
* effectively facilitate a Supported Playgroup
* effectively provide In-home Support
* respond in a timely and appropriate way to group dynamics and individual issues
* implement effective active listening skills and effective interpersonal communication skills
* implement motivational interviewing skills
* undertake connection planning with families to link them into relevant early years services community playgroups and other community services such as libraries.

### Other requirements

Other required skills are the ability to:

* maintain accurate records and information regarding Supported Playgroups as required by the employing organisation and funding body
* participate in professional development and take a proactive approach to continually improving skills and abilities
* possess a current Working with Children Check.

## Appendix 2B Sample position description

### Position title: Supported Playgroup facilitator

### Position summary:

The Victorian Government provides funding through the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to provide Supported Playgroups for families experiencing disadvantage.

Supported Playgroups provide opportunities for eligible families to develop parenting skills and confidence to support their children’s development. Supported Playgroups are for families with children aged birth up until they start primary school. In-Home Support is provided to families who meet additional criteria.

The responsibilities of this role include running Supported Playgroups (incorporating the *smalltalk* program) and providing In-Home Support.

Supported Playgroup facilitators are required to have completed, or be working towards completing, tertiary qualifications in early education and care services, social work or equivalent at Diploma level or above. Supported Playgroup facilitators are required to have the following:

**Knowledge** – demonstrated knowledge and/or understanding of:

* early childhood development and family support service systems
* early childhood learning and development stages
* Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework including the Practice Principles and Learning and Development Outcomes
* causes of economic and sociocultural disadvantage and its impact on families and children
* delivery of group-based and individual programs.

**Skills** – ability to:

* develop relationships with key local stakeholders and referral sources to develop referral pathways for families in the target group
* develop and implement strategies to engage families and support their attendance at Supported Playgroups
* communicate respectfully and effectively with families
* model and support quality parent child/interactions
* provide developmentally appropriate play experiences that promote learning
* effectively facilitate a Supported Playgroup
* effectively provide In-home Support
* respond in a timely and appropriate way to group dynamics and individual issues
* implement effective active listening skills and effective interpersonal communication skills
* implement motivational interviewing skills
* undertake connection planning with families to link them into relevant early years services community playgroups and other community services such as libraries.