

Early Childhood Intervention Services

Flexible Support Packages

Questions and Answers

May 2007

What are Early Childhood Intervention Services?

Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) are services that are provided to children, who have a disability or developmental delay, prior to school entry, and their families. They include information and support, planning and service coordination, and individual and group therapy and education.

ECIS are funded by the Department of Human Services (DHS) and provided by over 60 ECIS agencies and eight DHS managed Specialist Children's Services teams.

What is an *ECIS Flexible Support Package*?

ECIS Flexible Support Packages provide additional funding to support children with a disability or developmental delay, prior to school entry, and their families.

ECIS Flexible Support Packages are to deliver supports and services that are:

- Planned, organised and coordinated as part of the child's current program and family supports;
- Developmentally appropriate for the child; and
- Monitored through the Family Service and Support Plan.

ECIS Flexible Support Packages are to provide time limited support to address a specific need not available from ECIS and are not intended to duplicate ECIS. A Family Service and Support Plan, based on the individual needs of the child and family, underpins the allocation and delivery of the *ECIS Flexible Support Packages*.

The new *ECIS Flexible Support Packages* have been developed to complement the existing Disability Services Division Flexible Support Packages and related ECIS and other Early Years Services.

Who is eligible to apply for an *ECIS Flexible Support Package*?

Children and families eligible for an *ECIS Flexible Support Package* include:

- Children with a disability or developmental delay, from birth to school entry, and their families who;
 - Have high and/or complex support needs, other than high medical needs, including autism, social, behavioural and emotional needs requiring case management; and
 - Have support needs additional to those currently available through a single service response; and
 - Require a range of co-ordinated services; and
 - Have limited support networks.

How do I apply for an *ECIS Flexible Support Package*?

To apply for an *ECIS Flexible Support Package* call the service provider (see attached service provider list) in the Department of Human Services region where you live.

The service provider can give you more information about *ECIS Flexible Support Packages* and provide you with an application form.

What supports or services can be funded through this initiative?

A range of flexible service responses including:

- additional therapy
- respite;
- access to transport;
- equipment;
- support for children to participate in playgroups or childcare;
- transition support (for example where a child is not attending ECIS and will commence school or with Disability Services); and
- supports for the family in relation to caring for their child with a disability (this could include support for siblings).

The *Packages* are to help families to better care for their child with a disability and ease some of the additional pressures on parents. Each child and family is different and therefore the supports provided through *ECIS Flexible Support Packages* will be different. *ECIS Flexible Support Packages* are goal oriented and aim to achieve specific outcomes for the child and family.

What processes are in place to ensure consistency for applications and the funding process?

DHS has met with Regions, service providers and peak organisations to develop a common application process to increase consistency across the State and reduce the burden on parents. The development of a standardised application form streamlines the information required.

All eight DHS Regions have a selection panel for the *ECIS Flexible Support Packages* that considers all applications and determines the allocation of packages. The Panels include representation from parents, *ECIS Flexible Support Packages* service providers, ECIS agencies, and the DHS Regional Specialist Children's Services Intake Team and Program and Service Adviser.

How frequently will the panel meet to assess applications?

Panels are required to meet at least monthly.

Where there are emergency or urgent circumstances that arise outside the regular meeting schedule, panels are to have an interim response process in place to enable applications to be assessed in a timely manner.

Who has priority of access for *ECIS Flexible Support Packages*?

To assist them in determining who should have priority for an *ECIS Flexible Support Package* application, the panel will also consider the following factors:

- children with complex needs and the family demonstrates significant levels of anxiety/stress and is at risk of breaking down;
- children who are at critical development milestones or key transition points; and
- where safety issues that affect the family's ability to care for and ensure the safety of the child and those around them.

Is there a limit to the number of *Packages* any one child may access?

The intent of the *Packages* is to provide additional support to one child per package over a financial year. The *Packages* are to enable flexible support that is responsive to individual need as outlined in the Family Service and Support Plan.

You can apply for further assistance or different supports if your circumstances change. Do all families receive the same level of resources through this program?

No, not all families will receive the same amount of resources. The *Packages* are to be flexible and responsive to the needs of children with a disability or developmental delay, and their families. The average price of \$5,145 is an indicative price. Some children and their families will receive more than the average unit price and some will receive less, depending on their needs.

What document/s should be attached to the application form?

When applying for an *ECIS Flexible Support Package* a current Family Service and Support Plan, should be attached to the application form.

How long will parents/families wait to hear about the outcome of an application?

In most instances families should be advised of the panel's decision within five working days. A formal letter confirming the outcome will be sent to the parent/family and a copy to the relevant service providers within five working days.

Where the panel seeks additional information prior to finalising a decision, then families should be advised. The panel should agree on the exact nature of the additional information that is being sought and on the proposal/timeframe for action at the meeting. When the additional information received and a decision about the application is finalised, the family should be advised within five working days.

What percentage of funds is available to support the administration of the program?

ECIS Flexible Support Packages may use:

- a **minimum** of 80% of the total *ECIS Flexible Support Package* for discretionary funding, of which a **maximum** of 12.5% is available for administrative costs; and
- a **maximum** of 20% of the total package for additional service coordination or case management.

The following provides an **example** of how the administrative costs could be applied when the average *ECIS Flexible Support Package* cost is \$5,145 :

Minimum discretionary funding (80% of \$5,145)	\$4116
Less Administration Fees (12.5% of \$4,116)	- \$514
Then the minimum discretionary funding available to purchase supports and services	\$3602
This then leaves 20% of \$5,145 for use as service coordination/case management	\$1029

In this example, discretionary funding of \$3,602 plus the administration fee of \$514 plus the allocation for service coordination of \$1,029 adds to the total average price of \$5,145.

This is one example only and packages will vary. It is anticipated that some packages will have an administration cost that is less than 12.5%. This would enable a larger proportion of the funds for use as discretionary funding.

In other instances, case management may not be required as part of a child's *ECIS Flexible Support Package*, leaving the maximum of 12.5% administration fee of \$643 that can then be utilised for agency on-costs and/or the administration costs of the discretionary funds. In this example, the value of discretionary funding is 87.5% or \$4,502.

If your application is successful, the *ECIS Flexible Support Package* service provider will give you information about the funding mix for your package. Applicants should also be aware that *Flexible Support Packages* are to be adjusted over time in response to the changing needs of the child and family.

Will the guidelines be reviewed?

Yes, the *ECIS Flexible Support Packages* guidelines will be reviewed at regular intervals in consultation with key stakeholders. The Office for Children is currently revising the December 2005 Guidelines.