



Family Life

Early Childhood Development Worker

Position Description

September 2010

Hours: Part Time (22.5 hours per week) Contract position
Remuneration: \$50,000 + Super + Salary Packaging (first \$16K tax free)
Location: Sandringham base with flexibility to be based at other Family Life service centres or other alliance partner agencies
Flexible working conditions and career development

Vision

Capable communities, strong families, thriving children

Mission

To create caring, capable communities by :

- **supporting and strengthening the most vulnerable families, children and young people**
- **innovating and advocating for social inclusion**
- **growing community connections and contributions for the benefit of all**

Preamble

Family Life is a community service organisation, offering a range of counselling, support, dispute resolution and community building services. Family Life's programs are acknowledged at all government levels for their innovation and whole of community approach. Priority is given to vulnerable families, children and young people. Since its foundation in 1970 volunteers have played a crucial role in the organisation.

Early childhood safety, stability and development are the foundations for learning, behaviour and health through school years and into adult life. Children who have negative experiences in their first three years of life can have long-lasting effects on brain development and are more likely to experience behavioural and learning problems, substance abuse, involvement in crime, poor physical health and practice poor parenting. Positive nurturing and experiences, including participation in early years' services, enhance physical, emotional, social and intellectual wellbeing.

Research indicates that active participation in early childhood programs enables vulnerable children to experience positive learning and development opportunities, lessening or eliminating the effects of disadvantage. Research also illustrates that the impact of quality kindergarten is more profound for children experiencing disadvantage, and that vulnerable children benefit from two years of quality kindergarten.

The Early Childhood Development project is a new initiative to improve and strengthen the integration, linkages and partnerships between early years' service providers and Child FIRST/Family Services to maximise vulnerable children and families' opportunities in accessing and remaining engaged with universal and secondary early years' services. The primary target group for intervention is vulnerable families with children (0-5 years) who are:-

- likely to experience greater challenges as the child's development has been affected by the experience of risk factors and/or cumulative harm; and/or
- at risk of concerns escalating and becoming involved with Child Protection if problems are not addressed.

The Early Childhood Development Worker is based at Family Life Sandringham, however from time to time the incumbent may be requested to work from, or be based at, other Family Life service centres or other alliance partner agencies.

Key Relationships

- Family Life
- Inner Middle Integrated Family Service Alliance (IMIFS)
- Alliance Early Childhood Reference Group
- DHS
- DEECD

Key Objectives

1. Systemic improvement for vulnerable children (0-5 years) through developing and enhancing partnerships between Child FIRST/Family Services and universal and secondary early years' services.
2. Service enhancements for vulnerable children (0-5 years) through developing and facilitating targeted capacity building activities to enhance family services and early years' practitioner skills in assessing, planning and responding to vulnerable early childhood developmental needs.

Accountability

The Early Childhood Development Worker is accountable to the CEO through the allocated line manager.

Performance Review

All staff are required to participate in an annual Performance Appraisal and development of an Annual Learning Plan.

Key Responsibilities

Systemic Improvement

- Under the direction of the Senior Early Childhood Development Coordinator, undertaking scoping to identify and prioritise local barriers and challenges for vulnerable families and children in accessing, and engaging with, early years' services.
- Under the direction of the Senior Early Childhood Development Coordinator, developing strategic responses to address the identified barriers and challenges for vulnerable children and families in accessing, engaging and remaining engaged with early years' services.
- Providing targeted professional education sessions to early years' services on the specific needs and experience of vulnerable children and families, and subsequent challenges faced by them in accessing, engaging and remaining involved with early years' services.

- Advocating for, and supporting the development of, strategies between early years' services and family services in supporting the initial and ongoing engagement and participation in early years services by these families.
- Under the direction of the Senior Early Childhood Development Coordinator, strengthening referral pathways for early years' services in accessing Child FIRST/family services and child protection, where appropriate.
- Developing local agreements/protocols between universal and secondary early years' service providers and Child FIRST/Family Services.

Service Enhancement

- Providing targeted professional education sessions to Child FIRST/family services staff on assessing and planning appropriate local service responses to address early childhood developmental needs.
- Provision of specific case consultancy on early childhood development for Child FIRST/family services practitioners working with vulnerable children (0-5 years) and families.
- Provision of consultation to Child FIRST/Family Services practitioners to enhance and strengthen the development of Child and Family action plans to ensure appropriate responses to the developmental needs of vulnerable children are assessed and planned, including appropriate access to universal services is identified and enabled.
- Supporting Child FIRST/Family Services case managers to provide individualised, case specific advice to early years' services in supporting the continued engagements of vulnerable children and families.

Reporting

- Ensure all administrative and reporting requirements of the program are completed and submitted to the organisation within the appropriate timeframe.
- Assist in the collection, collation, monitoring and reporting of both quantitative and qualitative data relevant to the evaluation of the Inner Middle Early Childhood project.

Other

- Perform other duties consistent with the position as required by the Agency and consistent with meeting the contractual and compliance obligations of the Agency as these may vary over time.

Key Selection Criteria

Essential

Qualifications

- Tertiary qualification in Early Childhood Development, Infant Mental Health, Social Work, Psychology or equivalent.
- Must have current drivers license valid in Victoria.

Experience

- Relevant training and experience working with the early childhood services and vulnerable children/families.
- Demonstrated experience in undertaking program development and implementation in a complex service environment.
- Experience in providing consultation and advice to a range of professionals working within or alongside early childhood services.

- Experience in working with families in an educative manner.
- Experience with families with learning difficulties/high needs.
- Familiarity with risk indicators associated with vulnerable infants and families.
- Experience with program evaluation.

Skills

- Demonstrated ability to develop and maintain strong collaborative relationships and partnerships with key stakeholders, including child and family services alliances, local government, kindergartens, childcare centres etc.
- High level understanding of early childhood development and factors that can impede a child's development.
- Detailed understanding, and ability to communicate, the needs and challenges faced by vulnerable children and families, and the subsequent impact this has on accessing and engaging universal and secondary early years' services.
- Ability to provide high level advice on early childhood developmental needs within a family services context.
- High level communication skills.
- Ability to understand relevant risk and needs assessment frameworks and appropriate application of these.
- Ability to maintain clear and concise records.
- Ability to provide sound advice and recommendations on 1) strategies for early years' services in engaging vulnerable children and families, 2) interventions required by family services in addressing early childhood developmental needs, and consultation for the purposes of assessment and decision making in the best interests of the child/ren.
- Ability to work effectively both autonomously in relation to the project, and within a team environment.
- Computer skills (intermediate level, or above) in a Windows environment including word processing, data collection and entry, internet and email.

Knowledge

- Detailed knowledge, or ability to gain knowledge, of local early years' service responses and interventions that can positively impact on a child's development, and those that can assist in promoting change in behaviour to increase parenting capacity.
- Knowledge, or ability to gain knowledge, of legislative provisions relevant to the Family Services and early childhood sectors, including the Children, Youth & Families Act 2005.
- Detailed knowledge and understanding of families with complex needs and issues of risk and safety including CALD and indigenous families.

Attributes

- Employs an ethical and professional approach to practice.
- Commitment to child-focused and child-inclusive practice.
- Ability to articulate and reflect upon personal and professional values.

Desirable

- Fluency in a second language, other than English.

Additional Information

Any offer of employment is subject to a satisfactory Police Records Check and Working With Children Check.