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Children, Youth and Families Act 2005

STANDARDS FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

I, Gavin Jennings, Minister for Community Services, hereby issue the following Determination pursuant to Part 3.3 Division 4 of the **Children, Youth and Families Act 2005**.

In accordance with Section 58(4)(a) the performance standards for registered community service organisations come into effect 30 days after the date of publication.

Signed at Melbourne in the State of Victoria

Dated 23 April 2007

GAVIN JENNINGS MLC
Minister for Community Services

Introduction

The **Children, Youth and Families Act 2005** provides for the Minister for Community Services to determine performance (registration) standards to be met by registered community service organisations (CSOs) providing family and out of home care services. The registration standards have been developed with the aim of:

- ensuring consistency in quality for family and out-of-home care services
- setting an organisational framework to help support CSOs to provide quality services for children, youth and families
- defining the standards of care/support that children, youth and their families can expect
- providing guidance about best practice approaches to support services to achieve their organisational goals
- enabling services to monitor and review performance on an ongoing basis in a manner that can inform services improvement.

Application of the Standards

The standards apply to Community Service Organisations registered under Part 3.3 Division 4 of the **Children, Youth and Families Act 2005**.

Format of the standards

The eight registration standards apply equally to family services and out-of-home care services. Similarly, the majority of performance criteria apply to both family services and out-of-home care services. However, where performance criteria are service specific, this is stated.

Each standard has three gazetted components:

- a statement of rationale
- practice outcomes
- performance criteria.

Standard 1 – The CSO has the leadership and management capacity to provide clarity of direction, ensure accountability and support quality and responsive services for children, youth and their families.

Rationale

Effective leadership and management set the framework for service quality and provide the learning environment for continuous improvement.

SPECIAL

Practice outcomes

This standard is about ensuring:

- effective governance, management arrangements and business planning are in place to support the delivery of high quality and responsive services
- strategic directions are developed in partnership with staff, carers, children, youth, families, communities and other services
- Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities are respectfully engaged in the organisational planning processes to ensure culturally competent practice
- the financial sustainability of the CSO and the services provided
- information systems that support CSO decision-making, service monitoring and review, accountability requirements, and effective data use and security.

Performance criteria**1.1 Governance**

- a. The CSO has a governing body comprising members with appropriate skills and knowledge (not applicable to municipal councils).
- b. The CSO maintains effective governance policies that clearly document roles and responsibilities and delegations of authority for the governing body, management, staff, and carers and defines acceptable behaviours and practices.

1.2 Strategy and planning

- a. The CSO's governing body works in partnership with staff, carers, children, youth, families, and other services and communities to set strategic directions for the CSO.
- b. The CSO has business planning processes that are aligned with strategic directions and monitor organisational performance.
- c. The CSO utilises a risk management process to identify, mitigate and manage risks.

1.3 Financial viability

- a. The CSO manages financial resources in a responsible, accountable and prudent manner, which:
 - maintains financial and organisational viability
 - meets financial accountability and reporting requirements
 - promotes quality services, for children, youth and families.

1.4 Information systems

- a. The CSO effectively manages information and has information technology systems in place to enable secure data use and storage and to support the CSO's decision-making, service monitoring, and accountability requirements.

1.5 Contract management

- a. The CSO negotiates contracts in a responsible, accountable and prudent manner and meets contractual requirements.

Standard 2 *The CSO promotes a culture which values and respects children, youth and their families, carers, staff and volunteers.*

Rationale

An organisational culture which values and respects clients, carers, staff and volunteers focuses on promoting and confirming rights and responsibilities, cultural inclusiveness, and continuous improvement in meeting the needs of children, youth and families.

The focus is on developing cultural understanding, as the basis to provide culturally competent services and care.

Within this culture, staff and carers are supported to ensure the safety, stability and development of children and youth, and to strengthen family capability.

Practice outcomes

This standard is about:

- supporting the provision of culturally competent services which are responsive to the needs of children, youth and their families
- respecting the rights and responsibilities of children, youth and families, as well as carers, staff and volunteers
- effective feedback and complaint management systems
- information sharing, between staff, carers, members of the out-of-home care team and other services in the best interests of the child or youth, while supporting the right of children, youth and families to confidentiality and privacy.

Performance criteria**2.1 Culturally competent and inclusive services**

- a. The CSO provides culturally competent services, which respect the cultural identity of children, youth and families.
- b. The CSO maintains appropriate community linkages and works in partnership with a range of services, which are relevant to meeting the cultural needs of children, youth and their families.

2.2 Service responsiveness

- a. The CSO demonstrates a commitment to improving care and service delivery, through responding to staff, carer, child, youth and family feedback.

2.3 Complaints and allegations management

- a. The CSO demonstrates the use of a complaints management system that meets the needs, expectations and rights of complainants and informs policy and practice.
- b. The CSO ensures that allegations of misconduct and abuse are reported, investigated and the outcomes of any investigation are actioned.

2.4 Information sharing

- a. The CSO shares and manages information sensitively to support children and youth's best interests, whilst protecting the right of children, youth and families to privacy and confidentiality.

2.5 Information accessibility

- b. The CSO has policies and systems in place to allow children, youth and their family, including former clients, to appropriately access records regarding services provided to them.

2.6 Private space

- a. The CSO ensures that the living environment supports the privacy and confidentiality of children and youth in culturally, gender and age and stage appropriate ways (specific to out-of-home care).

Standard 3 Staff, carers and volunteers support positive outcomes for children, youth and their families.**Rationale**

The skills, cultural diversity, personal attributes and values of staff, carers and volunteers have a significant impact on outcomes for children, youth and families.

Effective human resource practices play an important role in terms of ensuring that the CSO recruits people who are able to provide quality services and a safe environment. The support that

staff, carers and volunteers then receive from the CSO and their managers, has a direct impact on their ability to fulfil their role and, therefore, the capacity to support safety, stability and development of children and youth and to strengthen family relationships.

Practice outcomes

This standard is about ensuring:

- staff, carers and volunteers have the appropriate skills, qualifications, training and competencies to fulfil their roles and respond to the individual needs and preferences of children, youth and families
- staff, carers and volunteers are culturally competent and demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of the needs of Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse children, youth and families
- staff, carers and volunteers have been assessed in line with departmental guidelines and have been deemed suitable to work with children and youth
- staff work in accordance with the CSO's mission and policies
- services are provided in a safe environment
- staff, carers and volunteers receive support and supervision in their roles, enabling children, youth and families' needs to be met
- a culture of continuous quality improvement, ongoing learning and innovation within and between the CSO and service networks is created.

Performance criteria

3.1 Staff/carer/volunteer competency

- a. The CSO ensures services are delivered by staff, carers and volunteers who have the qualifications, knowledge, values and personal skills, attributes and cultural competence, to meet the needs of children, youth and families.

3.2 Staffing and recruitment

- a. The CSO ensures that staffing/carer support levels are appropriate to meet the individual needs of children, youth and families.

3.3 Pre-employment and pre-placement checks

- a. The CSO applies effective pre-employment checks.
- b. The CSO has pre-placement assessment and approval processes in place to ensure carers have appropriate skills to meet the needs of children, youth and families (specific to out-of-home care).

3.4 Training and development

- a. The CSO has pre-service training/induction and ongoing development programs for staff, volunteers, carers and other members of the carer's household (as required) which covers:
 - the CSO's mission, vision and values and supports understanding of how these can be put into practice
 - strategies to support capacity building and greater responsiveness to client needs
 - cultural competency practice and related training to support the needs of Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse children, youth and families.

3.5 Supervision, performance monitoring and review

- a. The CSO ensures staff, carers and volunteers are appropriately supervised, and that issues identified via supervision are acted on to meet the ongoing safety and development needs of children and youth.
- b. The CSO has formal performance reviews and ongoing monitoring practices which confirm the appropriateness of staff and carers and identify the skill development that will contribute to the quality of services being provided.

3.6 Occupational Health and Safety

- a. The CSO provides a safe working environment for staff, carers and volunteers.

Standard 4 The CSO creates a welcoming, safe and accessible environment which promotes the inclusion of children, youth and families.

Rationale

A welcoming environment can support inclusiveness, encouraging both initial contact and longer-term participation in services that will support the safety, stability and development of children and youth, as well as the capability of families to provide effective care. Service flexibility of hours is a key factor in creating a welcoming environment, such as services being available at times which best suit children, youth and families. The CSO must also ensure that the environment is safe for children and youth.

Practice outcomes

This standard is about ensuring:

- flexible service delivery that caters for children, youth and their families
- the service environment is safe, responsive to each child, youth or family's cultural or Aboriginal background and encourages children, youth, families and carers to actively engage and seek support
- where services are undertaken they are accessible for children, youth and families, including those with a disability.

Performance criteria

4.1 Service environment

- a. The CSO provides for:
- a service environment which is safe and encourages children, youth, families and carers to make initial contact with the service and, if required, participate in the longer term
 - services to be accessible for children, youth, families and carers, including those with a disability.
- b. The CSO provides an environment that is responsive to children and youth's cultural or Aboriginal background, age and developmental stage.

Standard 5 The CSO promotes the safety, stability and development of children and youth.

Rationale

As parents, carers and families have a central role in supporting the best interests of children and youth, CSOs should work to continuously strengthen these relationships. Listening to the voice of children and youth and providing them with appropriate opportunities to participate in the issues that concern them is essential to meeting their changing needs.

The safety, stability and development of children and youth needs to be promoted and supported by family services and out-of-home care services if children and youth are to reach their full potential and participate effectively in society.

Family and out-of-home care services must look at the child and youth's safety, stability, and development through the lens of the child's age and stage of life, culture, gender and developmental needs.

Practice outcomes

This standard is about enabling children and youth to:

- experience safe, nurturing and supportive relationships with their parents, families, carers and other significant adults

- develop and maintain positive family attachments and cultural connections
- develop and maintain safe and positive attachments (including for Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse children and youth connections to their Aboriginal or culturally and linguistically diverse community and culture)
- reach their full potential and have their growth, developmental and health needs met
- develop culturally and age appropriate self-care skills
- maximise learning, education, training or employment opportunities and stable school experiences from infancy to adulthood
- connect to their social/peer group and with their community
- be safe, and effectively protected from harm to their learning, development, stability and culture
- participate in age and developmental and culturally appropriate ways
- have their needs addressed through child centred/family focused practice
- be provided with culturally appropriate options, where possible
- have stability of care if they are living in out-of-home care and continuity of relationships (including minimal placement change).

Performance criteria

5.1 Safe and nurturing environment

- a. The CSO supports parents and families to create and sustain a safe and nurturing home environment, which supports development and stability of children and youth.
- b. The CSO ensures children and youth in out-of-home care live in a safe, culturally appropriate and nurturing environment, free from physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect, which supports development and stability (specific to out-of-home care).
- c. The CSO ensures that children and youth receive personal items, household provisions and community resources that meet their needs (specific to out-of-home care).

5.2 Promoting development

Note: The following performance criteria reflect the development/well being needs of all children and youth. For family services, not all elements of the criterion will be relevant for all children, youth and families with which the CSO engages. Assessment of the child or youth's strengths, risks and needs in the context of their family will highlight key issues which need to be addressed for each child or youth. The focus will be primarily on enabling and supporting parents to meet their child or youth's safety, stability and development needs.

- a. The CSO promotes a child or youth's health (including medical, dental and mental health) needs being met.
- b. The CSO assists in a child or youth's emotional and behavioural development.
- c. The CSO promotes education and supports children and youth to achieve their educational potential and gain maximum life opportunities through active involvement with appropriate educational and/or training services.
- d. The CSO assists children and youth to develop, maintain and strengthen their family and social relationships.
- e. The CSO assists children and youth to develop and maintain their personal, gender, cultural and religious identity and sexual orientation.
- f. The CSO assists Aboriginal children and youth in their cultural development and maintains their connection to their Aboriginal culture and community.
- g. The CSO assists children and youth with cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds to develop and maintain their cultural identity and connection to community.

- h. The CSO assists children and youth to present well in accordance with their age, gender, developmental stage and culture.
- i. The CSO assists children and youth to develop independence, problem solving skills and self-care skills appropriate to their age, developmental stage and cultural circumstances.

5.3 Promoting stability, connectedness and resilience

- a. The CSO promotes children and youth's stability and their connectedness to their parents, family, carers, school, peer group, community and culture.

5.4 Inclusive practice in the best interests of the child and youth

- a. The CSO adopts a partnership approach when working with children, youth and their families which is responsive to children's age, gender, culture, communication needs and developmental stage, and works to understand their needs and views in the context of the family, community and culture.

Standard 6 The CSO strengthens the capability of parents, families and carers to provide effective care.

Rationale

Parents, families and carers, and those who share the parenting responsibility for children and youth in out-of-home care, have a central role in promoting a child or youth's safety, stability and development. The promotion of caring, consistent and positive parenting is central to creating safe and supportive environments for children and youth. Given this, family services and out-of-home care services seek to increase the confidence and capacity of parents and carers.

Out-of-home care services have a unique opportunity to engage and assist parents and families during the time their child or youth is in care. This is essential as the majority of children and youth in out-of-home care return at some point to the care of their parents.

Practice outcomes

This standard is about:

- strengthening the positive networks which surround children and youth
- supporting the capability of parents, families and carers to consistently and appropriately engage with their children and/or those they care for through the provision of advice, support, encouragement and positive role modelling
- building the confidence of parents, families and carers to bring up children in a way that promotes their best interests through ensuring safety, stability and healthy development
- supporting the capability of parents, families and carers to engage in the universal service network
- establishing and leading a child's or youth's out-of-home care care team
- ensuring carers in the out-of-home care system are supported to provide effective care.

Performance criteria

6.1 Building capability

- a. The CSO assists parents, families and carers to engage in continuous development of their understanding of normal child development and parenting/caring skills to increase their confidence and capability to meet the safety, stability and development needs of their child or youth.
- b. The CSO assists parents, families and carers to effectively manage transition of children and youth between service providers and sectors and from out-of-home care to the family home or independent living.
- c. The CSO establishes and leads a care team which is responsible for the planning and provision of care for each child and youth in a way that any good parent would naturally consider when caring for their own children (specific to out-of-home care).

6.2 Family connectedness

- a. The CSO assists parents, families and carers to engage with universal services and other secondary and specialist services to promote access to the full range of community supports required to enhance the safety, stability and development of their child or youth.
- b. The CSO provides parents and families with opportunities to have contact with their child or youth in a flexible manner, in the best interests of the child and youth.

Standard 7 The CSO provides responsive services to support the best interests of children and youth**Rationale**

Promoting the safety, stability and development of children and youth requires a process of continuous review, including ongoing assessment of the changing needs and views of children, youth and families through the lens of culture, age and developmental stage and consideration of the effectiveness, responsiveness and appropriateness of plans and actions. Assessment, planning and action should be collaborative, strength-focused, grounded in evidence based knowledge, aware of normal child development and sensitive to linguistic, cultural and religious diversity. A CSO should also ensure that out-of-home care placements are able to meet a child or youth's individual needs.

Practice outcomes

This standard is about:

- individualised and collaborative assessment, planning and action which:
 - is strength-based
 - responds to and reflects children, youth and families' changing needs
 - ensures cultural safety and is sensitive to cultural and religious diversity
 - protects and respects the cultural and spiritual identity of Aboriginal children and youth.
- building an increasing understanding of children, youth and families' needs
- focusing on promoting the safety of children and youth, as well as their long term development, to acknowledge that harm encompasses cumulative harm, as well as crises, or a single serious incident
- working collaboratively to ensure that planning and delivery of services reflect current evidence based best practice
- continually reviewing service provision to identify areas of possible improvement in systems, processes and practices
- providing appropriate levels of support and supervision to each child or youth in out-of-home care
- keeping a child or youth's family informed and involved.

Performance criteria**7.1 Children, youth and family involvement**

- a. The CSO ensures that children, youth and families are involved in assessment, planning, decision making processes and the actioning of plans in age appropriate, gender sensitive, developmentally and culturally appropriate ways.

7.2 Assessment

- a. The CSO ensures that assessment occurs on an ongoing basis to identify the risks and changing needs of the child, youth and their family.

7.3 Planning

- a. The CSO ensures that each child, youth and family has a child and family action plan which is reviewed on an ongoing basis to respond to the changing needs of the child, youth and family, and includes strategies to:

- address issues identified in assessment to support children and youth's safety, stability and development needs in the context of their family, culture and community
 - assist parents, carers and families to continuously improve their parenting/caring capability and more effectively meet children and youth's needs
 - assess that service outcomes are achieved (specific to family services).
- b. The CSO ensures that each child and youth has an up to date care and placement plan which is reviewed on an ongoing basis to respond to the changing needs of children, youth and families (specific to out-of-home care).
- c. The CSO contributes to the development of statutory case planning directions contained within the overall best interests plan for children or youth placed with their CSO (specific to out-of-home care).

7.4 Action

- a. The CSO ensures that relevant child, youth and family plans are implemented.

7.5 Responding to cultural diversity

- a. The CSO in its assessment, planning and actions ensures cultural safety and is respectful to the linguistic, cultural and religious diversity of children, youth and families, and uses interpreters where necessary in communication with the child, youth and their family.

7.6 Respecting Aboriginal children and youth's cultural identity

- a. The CSO in its assessment, planning and actions promotes cultural safety and respects the cultural and spiritual identity of Aboriginal children and youth in line with their cultural support plan.

7.7 Care and placement management

- a. The CSO ensures that children and youth are placed with carers who are best able to meet the child or youth's individual needs (specific to out-of-home care).
- b. The CSO ensures placements are provided to ensure stability of care and that where a placement change is required it is planned to support a smooth transition for the child or youth (specific to out-of-home care).
- c. For all children and youth whose custody and guardianship remains with their parents, the CSO ensures that child care agreements are negotiated in accordance with the **Children, Youth and Families Act 2005** (specific to out-of-home care).

7.8 Preparation for returning to home

- a. The CSO works with children and youth to assist and prepare them for returning home (specific to out-of-home care).

7.9 Preparation for leaving care

- a. The CSO works with youth to assist and prepare them for leaving care (specific to out-of-home care).

Standard 8 The CSO creates an integrated service response which supports the safety, stability and development of children and youth.

Rationale

Greater integration between a wide range of universal secondary, specialist and tertiary services, including Child Protection, as well as community groups, assists in meeting the safety, stability and development needs of children and youth and in improving service delivery.

For family services, this includes more visible intake and referral points and improved service capacity for vulnerable families through Child FIRST and Child and Family Alliances. Developing the trust of partners, appropriate information sharing, joint assessment, planning and service provision are all crucial components of collaboration.

Practice outcomes

This standard is about:

- greater integration between family services and out-of-home care services, cultural and Aboriginal specific services, Child Protection, universal and other secondary and specialist services to ensure:
 - an improved understanding of the needs of children, youth and families (including cultural and Aboriginal specific needs)
 - a shared and coordinated approach to addressing the range of needs of children, youth and families
 - better use of available resources including universal services
 - more appropriate responses to the complex and changing needs of children and youth.
- providing a visible and accessible point of referral and service access for children, youth, families, communities and service providers on a sub-regional/catchment basis
- Child FIRST acts as the entry point into integrated family services that assess risk and needs of the child, youth and family, and prioritise accepted referrals on the basis of need, then allocates to family services
- Child and Family Alliances which support Family Services to plan for better integrated service provision across service sectors
- greater capacity to work with resistant and hard to engage families.

Performance criteria**8.1 Collaboration**

- a. The CSO collaborates in relevant service networks to support better service integration, coordination and earlier intervention and prevention.

8.2 Timely support

- a. The CSO demonstrates responsiveness to referrals and requests for services.

8.3 Access

- a. The CSO uses active engagement strategies to establish contact with resistant and hard to engage children, youth and families and encourages the use of services before a crisis arises.
- b. The CSO provides a visible and accessible point of contact, referral and services for children, youth, families, communities, universal and other secondary/specialist services (specific to family services).

8.4 Prioritisation and demand management

- a. The CSO works collaboratively with Child FIRST, other family services, and in association with Child Protection to apply agreed arrangements to effectively manage demand (specific to family services).
- b. The CSO works collaboratively with placement and support services and Child Protection to apply agreed arrangements to manage demand for out-of-home care placements (specific to out-of-home care).
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