

STaR Outreach Program (Inclusion Support in Early Childhood Centres)

The STaR Outreach Program has been developed to assist children with additional needs to develop important skills and to be more successfully included in mainstream early childhood settings. A trained special education teacher (STaR Early Intervention Support Teacher) visits the setting weekly over 10 weeks and works with early childhood staff to develop and implement an individual education plan for the child. Therefore, to participate in this program families must secure the permission of their child's childcare, preschool or family day care setting.

The aims of the Outreach Program are

- To assist children with additional needs to be successfully included in early childhood programs,
- To develop collaboratively an appropriate Individual Educational Program (IEP) for a younger child or an Individual School Preparation Plan (ISPP) for a child in the year before school entry,
- To assist early childhood staff to implement the objectives of the IEP/ISPP within the daily routines and activities of the early childhood centre,
- To assist early childhood staff to work more effectively with children with additional needs by providing on-site training in evidence-based strategies, and
- To provide children in their year before school with a functional, research-based preparation for school program.

Assessment

For a younger child, assessment of the child's functioning and inclusion within the early childhood setting covers all areas of development: fine motor, gross motor, self-help, cognitive, communication and social. Alternatively, if the child is in the year before school, the School Preparation Assessment will indicate the most critical areas of need for the child's successful entry to school.

Individual Program Development

The child's program is developed in collaboration with a staff member from the child's early childhood setting. It is based on the assessment of the child's individual needs and the circumstances of the centre. The priorities of the parents and centre staff and the objectives of other early intervention professionals working with the child are all considered. The program is discussed with the child's parents before implementation.

Program Implementation

The program objectives are implemented in the play activities and everyday routines of the centre. The STaR Early Intervention Support Teacher visits weekly for 8 weeks to assist and train staff to implement the program effectively and assess the child's development.

Monitoring and Assessment

The Early Intervention Support Teacher monitors implementation of the program by the centre staff. In collaboration with staff, all program objectives are assessed and updated at the end of the 10-week period to allow continuation of the child's program by the staff.