

QUICK GUIDE

IHC Support Agency Key Responsibilities

The In Home Support Agency

The IHC Support Agency will act as a conduit between the family and IHC Service to advocate for the family and their needs, and provide an important 'gatekeeper' function, independent of the IHC Service.

The IHC Support Agency will work with the family to develop a Family Management Plan tailored to meet the family's unique needs, including the education and care needs of each of the children in the family requiring IHC.

IHC is delivered through a network of up to eight IHC Support Agencies servicing each state and territory.

A key role of the IHC Support Agencies is to ensure the integrity of the care type and assist the department in monitoring compliance.

The IHC Support Agencies will work closely with approved IHC Services and IHC Educators to support delivery of care in an equitable and structured manner. This networked broker model of service delivery, where IHC Support Agencies act as 'brokers' and advocate for families, will increase assurance for families in the service offering they receive, as well as national consistency in service delivery.

Service delivery is based on a Family Management Plan agreed between the IHC Support Agency and the family.

Services will engage qualified Educators to provide care in the family home and will monitor the day-to-day provision of care.

Roles of the IHC Support Agency

Primary Role

- Support families, and advocate for families
- Support department in allocating places
- Engage with providers and services
- Build community of practice for Educators

Establishment of Services and Place Allocation

- Allocation of places to services
- Recommending to the department an allocation of places to IHC Services
- Advising the department of any unmet demand for IHC and unutilised places
- Working towards an equitable distribution of places within their jurisdiction
- Manage the allocation and reduction of IHC Places to IHC Services on behalf of the Department
- When an Approved Provider applies directly to the department, make recommendations to the department on the allocation of IHC places to IHC Services

IHC Eligibility Criteria and Subsidy

- Building and managing relationships with existing and potential IHC Services
- Assisting new IHC Services to establish themselves
- Assess families' needs and their eligibility for IHC
- Ensuring families meet the IHC eligibility criteria on an ongoing basis
- Establishing referral pathways to Support Services, such as disability services

Change of Circumstances

- Re-assessment of family needs (including place allocation and priority) as a result of a change of family circumstances

Family Support

- Promoting IHC to families
- Developing and reviewing Family Management Plans
- Determining the most appropriate type of child care and support services for families
- Matching families to IHC Services with Educators that can meet families' needs
- Assist transition to other support services and/or other types for Approved Care, where appropriate

- Ensure pricing is transparent and appropriate
- Assess families' needs to determine their requirements for child care and other support services
- Act as an advocate for families and as a conduit between families and Services/Educators
- Review Family Management Plans on a quarterly basis, and where appropriate, transition families to other approved child care types and/or support services
- Monitor IHC service provision to ensure a focus on quality early childhood education and care
- Provide guidance material and resources for Educators
- Provide quarterly reports to the department on agreed indicators
- Promote IHC across their jurisdiction, to:
 - support market development by identifying potential new IHC Services
 - ensure families who cannot access other approved child care service types are aware IHC may be an option for them
 - establish networks with family support services including referral pathways.

Services Australia will assess families' eligibility for CCS or ACCS, except for ACCS (Child Wellbeing), where IHC Services will also have a role in assessing families' eligibility.

Support for Services

- Ensuring consistency in the interpretation of the program's eligibility criteria for IHC and matching eligible families with IHC services
- Working with services to ensure service delivery is of a high quality, and meets the needs of individual families
- Promoting IHC to approved child care providers within the state and territory that do not offer IHC
- IHC Support Agencies will monitor the fee charging practices of IHC Services to ensure integrity of the service type

Support for the Department

- Ensuring service delivery under the program is of high quality, meets the needs of the families and children, and aligns with the IHC National Guidelines
- Managing the allocation and reduction of IHC places on behalf of the department
- Providing recommendations to the department on the allocation of IHC places
- Reviewing Family Management Plans quarterly to ensure IHC is provided only to families that continue to meet the eligibility criteria for the service type
- Establishing referral pathways to and from the IHC program
- Raising known compliance issues with the department
 - A compliance issue raised by the family or the Educator, or a dispute between the family and the service, may trigger a review of the Family Management Plan
- Establishing a complaints handling mechanism
- Establishing a governance structure and declaring/managing any conflicts of interest that may arise.

Educator Support

- Providing guidance material such as resources for providing education and care in the family home and tips for working with families who have complex needs
- Establishing a community of practice amongst Educators to promote good practices in delivering IHC
- Acting as an independent party with whom the Educators can raise unresolved issues and discuss concerns relating to the safety of the physical environment in which they are working.

Compliance Monitoring

- Monitoring service provision to ensure focus on early childhood education and care
- Ensuring services' adherence to guidelines
- Notifying the department of known compliance issues

Quality of Care

- Working with services to ensure quality of care and national consistency in service delivery

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

See also the [In Home Care National Guidelines](#) and the National [In Home Care Handbook](#)