



Selena - EC Partner Video

Selena:

Hi. My name's Selena. I work for Barwon Child, Youth & Family, who is the ECEI partner in the community with NDIS. I've worked with this organisation for probably five years now and prior to that, I was an early childhood educator.

I have a real passion for working with families and young children. I think that every family brings their own unique story, and I really love the connection that we actually make with those families and the reassurance that we can kind of give them and guide them with to actually start to address some of their concerns about their children.

The partner puts together the information that they've collected from families and puts that forward to NDIS for them to make the final decision on eligibility and decisions around planning and funding. The ECEI partner will meet with families and get a feel for what their concerns are around their child's development. Sometimes this can be a really emotional situation in that this may be the first time that families have really put their concerns into words.

The ECEI approach is evidence based and it's best practice. It actually has the foundations of the early intervention approach. What this approach means is that we work with children under the age of seven, and they can enter the scheme under either a disability. Under the age of six, we work to support children with developmental delay.

The ECEI approach is devised so that we can provide timely support for children and family. The best way to do this is that we actually deliver this support for children and families in the community and it's really based on us ensuring that we view children and support them in their natural settings. Children under the age of seven might also enter the scheme if they have a diagnosis that is recognised by the NDIS.

The ECEI partner is an organisation that will work directly with children and families in the community. Partners will have a number of key skills. Usually those that are working with the partner will either have a background in early childhood education or they may well have an allied health background, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy. In addition to observing children in their natural settings, such as home, could be at a playgroup or at an early childhood centre, it's also important that at times we complete developmental screens.

This is not a formal assessment, but a screen will actually help to inform us as to where a child's particular skill level sits against their peers. When we talk about developmental delay, I suppose we're thinking about children that are not developing in a predictable way.

After these initial conversations, there'll be an opportunity to speak with the child's family around what the next logical steps might be in supporting their child. After a conversation with families, the ECEI practitioner may recommend a number of outcomes. Sometimes children just need exposure to their peers or access to other, perhaps, community groups to really start to move this development along. So sometimes the recommendation could be that simply a child attends kindergarten, a supported playgroup, or even gets community support, say, from a community health centre in speech therapy.

The partner might also work with community organisations to really lift the inclusiveness of the programs that they offer. This might be something like working with a group such as Auskick, a local dance group - you know, groups that basically have a lot to offer, but may need to just make some adjustments so that we know that all children can participate fully. A family might also be offered something which we refer to as short-term supports or short-term early intervention. What this might be is that the actual partner will provide the support directly to the family. So this might be that we actually link in with families on a fortnightly basis.

We will develop some goals around where the family would like to see the child heading. It might also be that we really help the family to understand their child's development so that we can be realistic about where they're sitting currently and where we're moving to next.

One of the goals might be that a family really wants to be able to actually just do their shopping in the community. So we would work with that family and try and identify what some of those difficulties have been, and to try and build on strategies so that the family can actually undertake those, you know, general day-to-day tasks and actually support the child through that.

These short-term supports typically last for anywhere between 3 to 12 months. Success in this area would mean that the targeted intervention has closed the skill gap that was evident for the child and, you know, hopefully it would also mean that they don't need any further ongoing developmental support. So this could be at home, in an early childhood setting or out participating in the community.

A child doesn't need a diagnosis to be part of the ECEI process. Basically, a child can come into the scheme with developmental delay if they're under the age of six and be found to be eligible for support. A child may be best supported with an NDIS plan. What will happen here is that the ECEI coordinator and the child's family will sit down and identify the goals that are wanting to be worked on for the next 12 months. Essentially, a plan will have funding built into it.

The ECEI coordinator will also continue to work with the family once the plan is established. They'll link the family in with providers in the community that will be able to deliver the therapy supports that are required.

It's hoped that for many children, by the end of the 12 months, that there may not even be a need for a plan to continue. It's great when we actually see children that have mastered the skills that they set out to achieve 12 months earlier, and that they've also closed some of that skill gap that they had with their peers.

I hope that this has given you a good overview of the ECEI approach, and there's heaps of information around what a partner in the community does on the intranet.