



Supporting students in out-of-home care (OOHC) guidelines

*Guide for the Education Support Funding Program including the Education
Support Plan for the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC)*

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Introduction

Research shows that children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) experience a higher level of disadvantage and adverse educational outcomes such as lower attainment and fewer years of schooling when compared to their peers. Students in OOHC are also less likely than their peers to remain in education or training after 16 years of age. Factors that adversely impact on these children and young people include experiences of abuse and neglect, trauma, disrupted attachments, education disruption, removal from family and placement changes.

Given such evidence, it is clear that children and young people in OOHC require additional assistance and individualised support. The Education Support Funding Program (ESFP) has been developed to specifically assist eligible students in OOHC to reach their full academic, social and emotional potential. Improving the educational and employment outcomes will ultimately result in a successful transition to independence after leaving OOHC.

The implementation guidelines are a resource that reflects the commitment to out-of-home care students as outlined in the *Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services - Education Outcomes July 2016- June 2019* and in the *Service Agreement between the Department of Education and Training and the Queensland Catholic Education Commission – May 2017 - June 2019*.

Assistance available to Students in OOHC under the Educational Support Funding Program (ESFP)

Categories of the Educational Support Funding Program (ESFP) assistance

The ESFP provides two categories of assistance:

1. ***DCCSDS Child Related Costs: Education Support.***

This is when DCCSDS provides funding through the education related support through the [Child Related Costs - education support](#) budget. This may include school camp, uniform costs and tutoring. This funding is not paid to schools and can only be accessed through the CSO or CSSC representative.

2. ***School-Based Support Services and Programs funding (ESP Funding)***

This is funding provided to QCEC via DET from DCCSDS under the MOU (Educational Outcomes). The funding is allocated to eligible students (as per the Eligibility Criteria outlined in Section 3) who have an approved Educational Support Plan (ESP) in place.

The ***ESP Funding*** is used to enhance education support to students in OOHC. DET allocates ESFP funds to DET regions, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) and to Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) based on the number of students identified annually who are eligible.

These funds are paid on a per student capita basis to the Catholic School Authorities, who in turn forward funding to the relevant Catholic schools to support eligible students in OOHC.

As part of the process, it should be considered whether the student, in consultation with the CSO or CSSC representative, can apply for either or both of the ESFP categories as funding under the ESFP is used to maximise participation and engagement in the student's educational program.

Activities funded from the ***ESP Funding*** are considered to be an enhancement and not a replacement of existing resourcing entitlements that can be obtained through internal school programs and resources.

Contingency Funding

QCEC reserves a portion of the ***ESP Funding*** to use for emergent and/or unanticipated needs for intensive short-term support.

Examples of what qualifies as an unanticipated need includes:

- assisting a student with transition into new school;
- graduated entry back into a Catholic school following a crisis and/or placement breakdown;
- recurrent disciplinary absences;
- chronic and or acute mental health needs;
- flexible learning arrangements; or
- if a student is assessed by the Principal as posing a risk to the safety of other students and/ or staff.

NOTE: Catholic schools submit an application directly to QCEC for Contingency funding approval. Approved Contingency funding is paid to the relevant Catholic School Authority for distribution to the relevant Catholic school.

Eligibility for ESFP assistance through an Education Support Plan (ESP)

A student in OOHC is eligible for additional support through the ESFP when he or she meets the eligibility criteria for an ESP (see Section 4 - Eligibility for an Education Support Plan (ESP)).

It is acknowledged that not all students who have an ESP developed will need to access the financial support through the ESFP as the school may be able to cater to the students' needs within school facilities and budget. Assistance under the ESFP must be linked to goals identified through the Education Support Planning (ESP) process and should be based upon an assessment of the student's educational needs and participation in educational activities.

In addition to assistance provided through the ESFP, Catholic schools should also continue to utilise other available resources to support the academic, social and emotional needs of students in OOHC including, but not limited to, learning and disability support and access to guidance officers etc.

Administering ESFP funds

QCEC and Catholic School Authorities are responsible for administering ESFP funds.

Funding through the ESFP may be used to implement Catholic School Authorities school based strategies aimed at closing the educational gap between students in OOHC and other students. Activities that may be funded from the ESFP includes, but are not limited to:

- individual case management;
- tutoring;
- teacher support for specific programs;
- peer tutoring;
- ESL support;
- enrichment programs; and
- curriculum-specific material resources.

All ESFP funding is to be utilised for the purpose for which the funds have been approved.

Variations must be approved in writing by the QCEC Executive Director or nominee.

It is expected that QCEC and Catholic School Authorities will expend all ESFP funds within the financial year in which they are allocated.

Education Support Plans (ESP)

An Education Support Plan (ESP) **must** be developed for each student in OOHC who meets the mandatory criteria outlined below. The ESP identifies the student's educational goals and the strategies and resources needed to assist the student to achieve these goals.

A Catholic School principal or nominee is responsible for the development and review of the plan. At a minimum, the ESP **must** be reviewed annually. However, it can be reviewed more frequently particularly if the student's circumstances change significantly. Refer to Attachment 1 for examples.

Eligibility for an Education Support Plan (ESP)

Eligible students (updated as at April 2017)

An eligible student who meets the following criteria will have an ESP and can access support through the ESFP:

The student must be:

- a) residing in out-of-home care in Queensland and subject to an interim or finalised Child Protection Order (CPO) made under the *Child Protection Act 1999* (Qld) granting custody or guardianship of the child to the Chief Executive of DCCSDS. This includes:
 - a. an interim or finalised short term custody or guardianship order to the Chief Executive; or
 - b. long term guardianship order to the Chief Executive.

Or:

- b) subject to an order of a court of another Australian state or territory that is equivalent to a finalised Child Protection Order (CPO) made under the *Child Protection Act 1999* (Qld) granting custody or guardianship to the Chief Executive and the child is:
 - a. residing in out-of-home care in Queensland (and the casework is being undertaken by DCCSDS)
 - b. not accessing equivalent funding interstate.

And:

- c) The child is enrolled in a Queensland educational facility and is in Prep to Year 12 and has not turned 18 years of age.

The 'eligible students' criteria should always be read in conjunction with the 'ineligible students' section (below).

Ineligible students

A student will **not** be eligible for an ESP when the student:

- is subject to a finalised Child Protection Order (CPO) but no longer resides in OOHC – for example, the child has returned home as part of a planned reunification process and the CPO has not yet been varied or revoked
- is being cared for under a private care arrangement between family members that does not involve DCCSDS
- is subject to an order made by the Family Court of Australia
- is involved with DCCSDS under an Intervention with Parental Agreement (IPA) case, care agreement, a temporary custody order, temporary assessment order or court assessment order
- is subject to any of the following child protection orders -
 - an order granted by a court in another Australian state or another country which has not been transferred to DCCSDS
 - an interim CPO or interstate order – except in the circumstances noted above
 - a protective supervision or directive CPO
 - an order granting custody or long term guardianship to a suitable person who is a member of the child's family, or
 - a CPO granting long term guardianship to another suitable person, other than a member of the child's family who has been nominated by DCCSDS
- has turned 18 years of age – young people who are turning 18 years of age should consult with their Child Safety Officer (CSO) about development of a Transition from Care (TFC) plan.

Commencing Education Support Planning

An ESP must be commenced when the DCCSDS notifies the principal **in writing** that a student meets the mandatory eligibility criteria. The principal is notified either:

- before or at the time of enrolment at a Catholic School; or
- if the student is already enrolled at the school, within one month of the student being subject to a CPO.

The principal is able to contact the local Child Safety Service Centre (CSSC) to determine whether the student is eligible for an ESP when he or she becomes aware, or reasonably believes, a student is living in an approved OOHC placement and is subject to a relevant CPO but has not been notified of this by DCCSDS. This is to ensure that an eligible OOHC student is never disadvantaged.

Developing the Education Support Plan

Principal's responsibilities

The principal or nominee is responsible for ensuring:

- an ESP is developed within **one month** of notification that a student is eligible
- the student (if appropriate) is engaged in the process of developing and reviewing their ESP and understands the advantages of setting educational goals and identifying resources that might be needed for achieving them.

Where a student chooses not to attend or cannot attend an ESP meeting for any reason, their views and educational goals should be ascertained and recorded during the development and review of the ESP.

Who is involved in Education Support Plan

Key individuals to be involved in the development of the ESP include:

- school representatives such as the principal, deputy/assistant principal and class teacher
- the CSO or CSSC representative
- the carer/s¹.

Other stakeholders who could also be involved in the development of the student's ESP include, but are not limited to:

- a support person for the student – this should be someone the student trusts
- an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander worker or community member, where appropriate
- school support staff, where appropriate (e.g. guidance officer, advisory visiting teacher, , EAL/D specialist teacher)
- representatives from other agencies who are working with the student and may influence the educational program (e.g. health and mental health professionals, accommodation providers).
- representatives from a community foster care agency that the student has support through. A list of these non-government organisations are found at: <https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety/foster-kinship-care/contacts/community-foster-care-agency-contacts>

It is important to identify a person who the student trusts to support them. Carers as well as non-government foster care agencies (NGO's) are particularly important in supporting the ESP process and are able to advocate for the student in an ESP meeting.

¹ A carer/s can include approved foster or kinship carers or care staff from licensed residential care, therapeutic residential care or transitional care services.

What is recorded in the Education Support Plan (ESP)

The ESP should identify:

- academic, social, behavioural, emotional and wellbeing goals for the student
- strategies for achieving the goals, taking into account required and available resources
- which stakeholders are responsible for implementing the strategies or providing identified resources or support services
- timelines for implementing the plan and monitoring strategies
- review dates, including an annual review.

Reviewing the Education Support Plan (ESP)

At a minimum, the ESP **must** be reviewed **annually**. However, the ESP can also be reviewed at any time when there is a significant change to the student's circumstances. Refer to **Attachment 1** for examples.

The principal should consider whether a review of the ESP is required when a student in OOHC is, but not limited to:

- placed on a discipline improvement plan
- suspended, particularly for more than 10 school days in one calendar year or proposed for exclusion
- has three or more absences in the course of one term that may indicate the student requires assistance
- moved into a new placement
- assessed by the principal as posing a risk to the safety of other students and/ or staff.

Any of the stakeholders, including the student, may request a review of the ESP to address any issues, concerns or change in circumstances.

Recording Information

Catholic School Authorities are required to record a student's eligibility for an ESP and the status of the ESP which are recorded as: not yet commenced; under development, or completed.

NOTE: The information above will be sent by QCEC to the Department of Education and Training (DET) Central Office for corporate reporting purposes and determining the ESFP grant allocation to Catholic School Authorities at the end of August each year.

A copy of the ESP is provided to the student, the carer and the CSO or CSSC representative as soon as possible after the meeting. The CSO or CSSC representative is responsible for updating ICMS with the ESP information.

Concluding Education Support Plan

DCCSDS is responsible for notifying the Principal of any change in the student's circumstances that may preclude the student from eligibility for an ESP and access to the ESFP. Once notified, the Principal or nominee should update a Catholic School Authority record to indicate the student is no longer eligible for an ESP.

The Principal should contact the local CSSC to clarify a student's eligibility if they reasonably believe the student is no longer residing in an approved OOHC placement or is no longer subject to a relevant CPO and the Principal has not yet been notified of this by the DCCSDS.

Other Assistance Available

School Transport Assistance Scheme (NSSTAS)

The Principal can liaise with Translink to identify the best school transport arrangements to ensure easy access to the nominated school. Eligibility can be based on either distance the student lives from their school or financial disadvantage. More information can be found at: <https://www.schooltransport.com.au/>

Textbook and Resource Allowance (TRA) - DET assistance

DET provides financial assistance to parents and carers of secondary school age students towards the cost of textbooks and learning resources. For further information see [Textbook and Resource Allowance - Policy and Procedures: Non-State Schools](#).

Carers Allowance - DCCSDS assistance for carer/s

When a young person is in OOHC, their carer or residential care service provider will receive regular financial support from DCCSDS to meet the student's daily care needs. Information on allowances and payments to carers can be located in the [Foster and kinship carer handbook - Revised edition 2016](#) on the DCCSDS website.

In addition, further financial assistance may be provided by DCCSDS when a student has high or complex needs. (See DCCSDS policies in relation to [Complex Support Needs Allowance](#) and [High Support Needs Allowance](#))

Other agencies

Assistance may also be sourced from other government departments, such as [Queensland Health](#), [Disability Services](#), [Department of Housing](#), and non-government service providers, such as [youth](#) or [counselling services](#).

Roles and Responsibilities

QCEC will:

- ensure Catholic schools take responsibility for driving better educational outcomes for students in OOHC
- administer ESFP funds to support students with an ESP and ensure all funds are expended in accordance with the Implementation Guidelines
- nominate a QCEC ESFP Contact Officer to support the implementation of the ESFP
- ensure records are maintained to show appropriate expenditure of ESFP funding
- report on ESFP expenditure, at the end of each financial year, and at other times as required
- consider best practice strategies, programs and initiatives that will have a positive impact on the achievement of educational outcomes for students in OOHC and continue to close the gap between students in OOHC and other students
- collect and disseminate information across the Catholic sector about best practice strategies, programs and initiatives that have demonstrated positive impacts on educational outcomes for students in OOHC, including relevant case examples demonstrating outcomes achieved.

Catholic School Authorities and Catholic schools will:

- drive better educational outcomes for students in OOHC
- monitor schools records that record a student's eligibility for an ESP and the status of the ESP
- encourage whole of school planning and the sharing of insights and information about effective practices, initiatives and programs
- record a student's eligibility for an ESP and the status of the ESP, i.e. not yet commenced, under development, or completed
- ensure ESPs are developed and reviewed within the timelines specified in Section 4
- contact the relevant Child Safety Officer and consider whether a review of the ESP is required when a student in OOHC:
 - is placed on a discipline improvement plan
 - is suspended for more than 10 school days in one calendar year or proposed for exclusion
 - has three or more unexplained absences in one Term
 - is assessed by the principal as posing a risk to the safety of other students and/ or staff
- ensure ESFP funds are spent in accordance with ESFP funding guidelines
- ensure appropriate records are maintained in relation to ESFP expenditure including amounts expended to support individual students
- comply with any QCEC financial acquittal process for the ESFP
- review relevant information to monitor the educational outcomes for students in OOHC
- consider best practice strategies, programs and initiatives that will have a positive impact on the achievement of educational outcomes for students in OOHC and continue to close the gap between students in OOHC and other students.
- ensure careful consideration is given to the impact of suspensions and exclusions on students in OOHC – early intervention and case management strategies should be given priority and suspensions and exclusions should be used as a last resort.

Case Studies for individuals and groups

Ben's story

Careful consideration needs to be given to how the student's private information and individual situation is discussed, both within the ESP and by stakeholders with other school staff. It needs to be done in a way that upholds the privacy of the student, yet allows for the provision of appropriate services and support to the student.

Ben, now a Year 12 graduate enrolled at a new school while in OOHC. Ben met with the principal, deputy principal, year level coordinator and school guidance officer to discuss his ESP. Ben stressed at the meeting he did not want 'special treatment' due to being in OOHC nor did he want other staff or students to know about his personal situation. The principal assured Ben of his privacy however, teachers and students were told he was in OOHC. Some teachers treated Ben differently to other students, which made Ben feel singled out and different to the other students. Ben preferred dealing with teachers who treated him the same as his peers. The ESP did assist Ben but his schooling experience was negatively impacted. This situation could have been avoided if it had been explained that Ben's situation may not be able to be kept confidential in all aspects but only relevant people would know and he would be advised when it was to occur.

The following case studies show how an ESP can be developed and implemented to assist students in OOHC who may have academic, social, behavioural, emotional, and wellbeing issues, as well as how the ESP enhances and changes their educational outcomes for the better.

Mary's story

Mary, in Year 3, requires close supervision due to a medical condition. Because of her condition, she experiences learning difficulties. The ESP encompassed strategies and resources to provide Mary with additional teacher aide support so that she could be closely monitored during lunch periods. This enabled her to stay with her peers. Teacher aide time was also provided to support Mary in the classroom. As a result, Mary's confidence and social interaction has improved and she has made great progress with her reading and mathematics.

Rory's story

Rory, a Year 10 student, has a history of aggressive behaviour due to trauma events and this has influenced his ability to remain in stable placements. He has been unable to attend a regular school for some time. His ESP was used to provide Rory with teacher aide time to support his participation in an alternative educational program delivered at another educational facility. After several years in the program, Rory has shown a marked improvement in his academic achievement and wants to return to school. He is also working on managing his own behaviour due to the early intervention strategies detailed in the ESP.

Whole of school approach

To support a number of students in care, an Catholic School pooled some of the ESP funding received to employ additional guidance counselling. The counsellor worked individually with the students in care to address their individual needs and provide them with emotional and psychological support. As a result of the program, the students became more engaged with learning programs and demonstrated improved social skills.

Attachment 1 - Significant changes in circumstances

Changing schools

Changing to a new school requires a new ESP **within one month** to ensure the current circumstances are considered and to enable successful transition into a Catholic school community. Appropriate year level and any additional educational programs need to be considered on an individual basis.

Risk of suspension or exclusion

If a student is at increased risk of school disciplinary absences (SDA's) or exclusion, stakeholders are required to implement early intervention strategies and manage potential challenges to reduce the risk of suspension, exclusion or other interruptions to the student's schooling.

Suspension or exclusion

If a student in OOHC experiences a form of suspension or exclusion, the principal should consider whether an immediate review of the ESP is required to address issues.

Achievement of goals

When a student in OOHC has achieved the goals agreed in the ESP, stakeholders should review the goals and develop new strategies to support emerging issues and/or new goals.

Additional support required to achieve goals

If the student in OOHC is experiencing difficulties in achieving the goals outlined in the ESP through the current strategies, stakeholders should review the ESP to tailor it to more specifically meet the student's needs.

Unexplained absence from school

Where the OOHC student has been absent from school without explanation, a review may be required to identify appropriate early intervention strategies to re-engage the student.

Transition to senior schooling

A student entering the senior phase of schooling requires the development of a Senior Education and Training Plan (refer to [SETP website](#)). Additionally, the principal can also consider school-based apprenticeships and traineeships (refer to [school based apprenticeships and traineeships website](#)) to engage and encourage the student to remain in education and best support employment opportunities.

Change to OOHC placement

Changes in the student's OOHC placement may impact on their schooling. The ESP may need to be reviewed with new and, if necessary, specific strategies to deal with the changed circumstances.

Attachment 2 – Checklist on how to develop and implement an Education Support Plan

- Involve the student in the development of their ESP
- Check if the student had an ESP at their previous school or education facility – if so, get a copy
- Begin informal discussions about the educational needs of the student and the services available in or through an Catholic School, other government departments and the community
- Plan the ESP meeting in consultation with the Child Safety Officer (CSO) or other professional from the relevant Child Safety Service Centre (CSSC) and other key stakeholders
- Book in a time and venue – usually at an Catholic School / education facility
- Consider and arrange the attendees – from school, home, DCCSDS and other key stakeholders
- Consider what educational needs have already been identified
- Discuss what may be realistic goals for this student
- Set to improve literacy, numeracy and any other critical area/s for intervention
- Set the agreed educational goals – for participation, wellbeing and academic achievement
- Consider goals for assisting with behavioural and/or trauma issues that may impact on learning
- Negotiate the strategies for home/school/community and other key stakeholders
- Allocate the responsible person for each strategy
- Consider the available resources to support each strategy
- Decide what additional resources are required to meet the goals
- Prioritise the resources that will be requested from *School-Based Support Services and Programs* ESFP funds and negotiate with CSO in DCCSDS for funds requested from *Education Support - Child Related Costs* where appropriate
- Document the ESP
- Arrange for all signatures on the ESP
- File a fully signed completed copy of the ESP
- Ensure instructions are followed to reflect the correct ESP status on any record keeping
- Provide copies of the ESP to all stakeholders (including the student) and notify them of the final funding decisions.
- File any funding approval details/documents as additional attachments to the students current ESP.

Attachment 3 - Key to Abbreviations/common acronyms

CAO	Court Assessment Order
CE	Chief Executive of Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (DCCSDS).
CPO	Interim or finalised child protection order (CPO) made under the <i>Child Protection Act 1999</i> (Qld)
CSO	Child Safety Officer in DCCSDS.
CSSC	Child Safety Service Centre in DCCSDS.
DCCSDS	Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
DET	Department of Education and Training
ESFP	The Education Support Funding Program (ESFP) is a joint initiative between DET and DCCSDS to assist students in OOHC to improve their educational outcomes
ESP	An Education Support Plan (ESP) is developed by the Principal or nominee to support the educational support needs of an eligible student in out-of-home care (OOHC)
GO	Guidance Officers
GOIB	Guidance Officer Intensive Behaviour
IPA	Parental Agreement Case
ISQ	Independent Schools Queensland
LTG-CE	Long Term Guardianship orders to the Chief Executive
LTG –Other	Other – Carer/Suitable Person
OOHC	Out-of-home care is when a child has been placed under a CPO and DCCSDS has approved placement with: foster or kinship care placements; licensed residential care and therapeutic residential care placements; approved transitional care arrangements; or funded supported independent living arrangements
OT	Occupational Therapy
QCEC	Queensland Catholic Education Commission
SETP (or SET Plan)	Senior Education and Training Plan is developed in Year 10
STC-CE	Short term custody orders to the Chief Executive. DCCSDS holds Custody with biological parent retaining Guardianship for the student-in-care
SWD	Student with Disability
TAO	Temporary Assessment Order
TFC or TFC Plan	Transition from care planning is the process that supports a young person's transition from out-of-home care into independence, in order to maximise their life opportunities and choices and begins when the young person turns 15 years.