

# Preschool Field Officer Service Newsletter Term Two 2018

## AREA LEADER UPDATE

Hello Educators,

The middle of the year has arrived and referrals to the PSFO Service are continuing to come in at a constant pace. Historically the service would see an increase in referrals towards the end of term two and as a result a backlog would develop in to a waiting list during the middle of the year around July. This year has seen an unusual early peak in referrals to the service resulting in a waiting list at the end of April/start of May of 42 children.



To manage this efficiently and in a timely manner, we have been fortunate enough to get approval to increase PSFO hours on a short-term basis until the end of June to reduce the number of educators waiting for service. As a result, the PSFO team have been working extremely hard by increasing their caseloads and have been successful in reducing the waiting list to 25 within the last couple of weeks.

On top of this, the PSFO Team have commenced discussion about not only our short-term approaches to the waiting list but also our long-term approaches, including planning and how we can progress the delivery of the service to educators.

In addition to our busy visiting schedule we have also been delivering several professional development sessions through the Wyndham Child & Family Services Network training calendar. To date we have provided sessions on **Referral Pathways, Behaviour and Developmental Red Flags**. Keep a look out for another **Referral Pathways** session if you missed out on the first one as well as **Working with Children and ASD**.

You may also see me out visiting with the PSFO's. I am attempting to get out to services on a regular basis to support the team through our new Inclusive Practice Group Referral as well as complex cases.

This newsletter highlights the importance of play, how we observe play and what play can tell us about the child. There is also a reminder about the importance of referring children to Early Intervention prior to the 30<sup>th</sup> September to ensure they experience a smooth transition over to NDIS later in the year.

If you are taking a break during the upcoming school holidays, have a relaxing time and stay safe.

Narelle Keleher, PSFO Area Leader

## UNPACKING THE PRETEND 'PLAY' BOX .....

Everyday we have wonderful opportunity to witness a wide variety of children's play. We understand that pretend play allows us insight to children's development and learning....but what does the play actually mean? When we observe the child's pretend play and really 'unpack' what is happening, it can tell us a lot about the child's skills and ability to think...



The following is taken from Karen Stagnitti....

*"Pretend play is a thinking skill. To Pretend in play, children have to understand the meaning of what is happening.*

*In order to do this, there are 3 thinking abilities that are used very often in pretending.*

*These are:*

- Children use objects and pretend they are something else (EG: The box is a bed)*
- Children attribute properties to objects (EG: the tea is hot, or the teddy is sleeping, or the truck is fast), and*
- Children refer to invisible objects (EG: there is a door in a certain space, or there is a dog near the doll – but the dog is invisible)*

*Pretend play also involves playing with an object as if that object is alive (this is also called decentring). Example: to the child the teddy is a living, breathing being. The teddy can talk to them, and it listens, it has a life of its own.*

*In Australia, many boys don't play with dolls or teddies, but they will have something that is special to them such as a car that might be real to them and might have feelings, or a soft toy like a dog that is special to them. Playing an 'out of character' in role play such as; a child might pretend they are delivering the post, or selling food at a shop, or being a mother or being a policeman a Doctor and so on. To do this children are learning what a particular person says and does. Playing out a story that is logical and sequential.*

*From late 3 years and onwards, children also add problems to their stories so they are also learning about cause and effect. Example: if there is a problem (I can't find the keys to the car), then they need to solve it (eg: look everywhere for the keys, call a taxi, walk the doll to the shops instead of driving in the car or ask another doll to drive them)"*

Consider this information and reflect on the play occurring in your educational setting. What does it look like when you unpack the input to the play...

### How is the child actually playing?...

- ❖ Is the child giving their ideas, input and suggestions to the play?
- ❖ Is the child thinking and problem solving within the play scenario?
- ❖ Is the child adding props to the play?
- ❖ Is the child spending appropriate times at pretend play?
- ❖ Is the child using abstract thinking, 'object substitution' in their play eg: the box is a boat?
- ❖ Is the child role playing their own experiences?
- ❖ Is the child contributing a 'storyline'?



### Look a little closer at the play to consider...

- ❖ Is the child in the space – but not actually participating in the play?
- ❖ Is the child 'copying' peers rather than coming up with their own ideas and suggestions?
- ❖ Is the child 'manoeuvring' props – but not actually 'playing' with them?
- ❖ Is the child playing with the props in a 'functional' way – or is the child more investigating & exploring how the props work? EG: spinning the car wheels, pushing car backwards/forwards.
- ❖ Is the child able to follow the play, 3 -5 year old's pretend play is developing, themes can change quickly and be complex – does the child understand the concept of the play?



If the child is having difficulty with pretend play – this may be an indication of a developmental 'red flag'.

A red flag could suggest the child has delays with their development and thinking skills which could possibly impact on their learning.

*Observe closely to 'unpack the pretend play box'.*

## Early Childhood Intervention Service (ECIS)

Did you know you only have until the 30 September 2018 to refer any child to Early Childhood Intervention Service (ECIS)?



Any of your children who have at least two (significant) delays in their development should be on this list.

Children who are placed on the ECIS waitlist before this time, will be supported to transition to the Early Childhood Partner (NDIS) when this is commenced. The Brotherhood of St Laurence has been announced as the Early Childhood Partner for Wyndham.

ECIS Referral forms can be downloaded from here:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/needs/Pages/ecis.aspx>

Any Questions? Phone or email the PSFO team – see contact details on page 1

## Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD)



Education and Training

Ensure your families are speaking to the school about possible funding needs to support their child's learning and development.

This is the link for all the information you need:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/psdhandbook.aspx?Redirect=1>

For Catholic Education Commission of Victoria 2019 Students With Disabilities (SWD) Funding, please refer to the CECV website under *Publications*.

<http://www.cecv.catholic.edu.au/Publications>

## Wyndham Child & Family Services – Professional Development Calendar 2018



Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> July, 6.00-8.00pm – Practical Strategies for Teaching Children with ASD  
Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> July, 9.00-11.00am – Crucial Conversations with Families  
Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 6.00-8.00pm – Accessing Specialist Support in Early Childhood

For more information please contact Leonie O'Malley on 9742 8159 or email [Leonie.O'Malley@wyndham.vic.gov.au](mailto:Leonie.O'Malley@wyndham.vic.gov.au).

All sessions are to be booked via Eventbrite and you can visit their website and search for the session title –

[www.Eventbrite.com.au](http://www.Eventbrite.com.au)

Flyers with more information have been emailed recently but please contact Leonie if you have not seen them