

# Preschool Field Officer Service Newsletter Term Two 2020

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## AREA LEADER UPDATE

Hello Wyndham Educators

What a start to the year, devastating bushfires ravaging our beautiful country, and now working our way through such uncertain and unpredictable times of a world health pandemic. COVID-19 has changed the way we think, live and work.

There has been lots of changes in the workplace, and especially in our Early Learning services, some services finishing early term 1 to follow social distancing suggestions, others remaining open however enrolment numbers of children have greatly reduced due to many people in our community sadly losing their jobs. Our children are exposed to worries that we could never have imagined and different ways of learning to support them in their preschool year.

There is a lot of information about COVID-19 and remote learning for children, and the Early Childhood sector is a resilient group, but there will be the ongoing challenge for us all to support families and children through this space. Particularly for families of children with disability, additional needs, or vulnerable families. A few questions have come to mind...

What resources do families have to support their children? What if there is no iPad in the home? No internet?

All families are different, children's carers and parents engage and interact differently with their children, what impacts will this have on children?

How do we support the most vulnerable families in our communities? The families where there may be addiction, abuse, or neglect? How will these children be supported for remote learning?

Our 'vulnerable' children are encouraged to attend kindergarten and school, but I wonder about the enormity of vulnerability for families to get their children to their service without resources such as school buses running; motivation of other friends and when getting to kindergarten is 'hard enough' in the best of times.

*"At any one time, at least 50,000 Australian kids are completely detached from formal education. Now that NSW and Victorian schools have moved to at-home learning, that number is expected to skyrocket. While schools are technically open to vulnerable kids, many 'just will not go', he says. 'The longer this goes on, the greater the detachment.' (Jim Watterson from the University of Melbourne's Graduate School of Education.)*

(Source: "The kids who will never return to school after COVID-19" - By Jordan Baker  
April 12, 2020; The Sydney Morning Herald)

How will these thoughts impact on our Early childhood years?

Let's work together to celebrate achievements in this strange work environment, be kind to yourselves and seek supports when you need, the PSFO team are continuing to work in a modified way to support our Educators in the community to achieve amazing things!

PSFO Area Leader



# Toolkit of ideas to support parents during COVID-19 Social Distancing

As we continue to wake up daily to these unprecedented times of consistent change, there are many emotions fluctuating within us, however what is happening for children who are also in social isolation at home? What are they hearing, watching, feeling?

Families may identify they have observed more challenging behaviours being displayed or identify things like sensory seeking or sensory aversions evident.

As Early Childhood Professionals in the face of it all, how can we capacity build and assist parents/guardians with some positive tools of encouragement or support?

## Sensory breaks

A sensory break allows for a movement or “brain break”, whether for a child or adult, and assists us to calm down and regulate or reset our emotions. It is important to incorporate these regularly into a child’s day.



### Activities:

- Wall push ups
- TheraBand exercises
- Tricycle/Bicycles
  - Massage
- Jumping on the trampoline
- Fidget Toys – squeeze ball/Thera putty, fidget spinner
  - Bubble wrap popping (parcel/post wrapping)
- Writing activities – chalk drawing, crayons, stamps, rice
  - Sweeping
  - Raking
- Assist to carry wet washing

## Sensory play experiences using recycled materials

### VISUAL:

- Scarves
- Balloons
- Bubbles
- Ribbons (attached to rods or door architraves to wave or hang down)



### ORAL:

- Chew Toys
- Blowing through straws
- Different items to chew, eg crackers, carrots, chewing gum (supervised)

### TOUCH:

- Shaving cream
  - Slime
- Sensory boxes - with dough, slime, sand (to walk through)
- Also consider texture boxes for feet

### MOVEMENT:

- Water bottle (half-filled for children to sit on)
  - Gym ball to bounce on
- Trampoline, crash mat, bean bags
  - Swings

### SOUND:

- Shakers with rice – use empty water bottles
  - Pots and pans
  - Musical instruments – bells, music
  - Cellophane
- iPad/iPod with music and headphones (when noise becomes too much at home) – this could also have stories on it

## Daily Schedules

- Assist children during transitions and support children to feel calmer and understand what is occurring next
- Create a routine and allow for sensory breaks, calm/quiet times, learning, mealtimes, bedtimes
- Give choices - "Do you want to eat first or paint first?"
- Use a photo or object as an alternative



### Consider:

Boardmaker online - free trial to make your own visual schedules

<https://goboardmaker.com/blogs/support-articles/how-do-i-signup-for-a-free-30-day-trial-of-boardmaker-online>

## Create a Quiet/ Calm space

This is a safe or calm place for children to go when they need help to calm down and self-regulate their emotions.

### Ideas to consider:

- An empty cardboard box – a sheet draped over it
- Teepee or tent
- Include a beanbag, or cushions, with fidget toys
- Fairy lights, noise reducing headphones, a favoured toy
- Ideally it should be away from distractions (noisy or high traffic areas) – consider setting up this area in the corner of a room, their bedroom
- Retreating to a calm space is great when children are feeling anxious, frustrated, angry or overwhelmed
- Signs of this could include – screaming, crying, kicking, hitting self or others
- You could suggest reading a favourite book to them or blowing bubbles as a way of inviting them there
- DO NOT DO THIS WHEN THEY ARE HAVING A MELTDOWN – acknowledge the feeling first!



## Screen Time

Be aware of time spent on devices and consider:

- Use of a timer, this will take the onus off you
- Turn off at least an hour before bedtime
- Safety online – what are children looking at? Is it age appropriate? Placing restrictions on via settings
- Remember screen time also includes TV, Xbox, etc



## Families with English as an Additional Language

- Don't assume families have the capacity to take in the changing information and understand it
- Provide translated information where possible
- Consider visual prompts or cues to support understanding, eg hand-washing, application of hand sanitiser before entering kinder/childcare
- Remember UTOPIA (Refugee & Asylum Seeker Health) – 5 Alexandra Avenue, Hoppers Crossing Tel 8001 3049

## Helping children with ASD cope during COVID - 19

1. Create a new schedule - get the kids up, breakfast and dressed and start the day. Explain that you are going to get up as usual but will be working from home.
2. Show no fear
3. Fun over Fear
4. Get involved in their therapy, if Professionals involved are using video
5. Limit the news - consider TV, how long has it been on and discussing death, statistics etc, social media
6. Put in perspective
7. Stay social & stimulating

*Further to this, consider Social Stories to explain different expectations or routines*

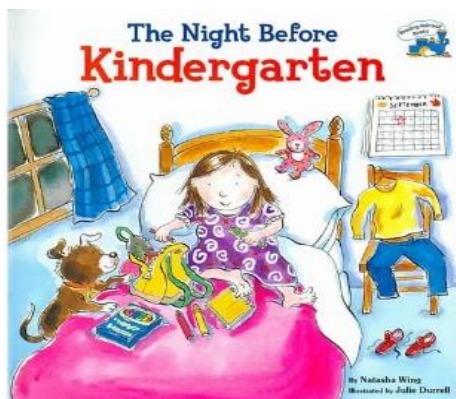
**Temple Grandin** <https://parade.com/1019088/debrawallace/temple-grandin-tips-children-with-autism-coronavirus-quarantine/>

<https://autism.sesamestreet.org/coping-with-covid/>

**Carol Gray** - [https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pandemics-and-the-Coronavirus.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1hM\\_AgRYCGqnyMLOUF9ua\\_V\\_SOOPg0oDnxuGDqBbFNrzOpLI1hFiWp1Jk](https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pandemics-and-the-Coronavirus.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1hM_AgRYCGqnyMLOUF9ua_V_SOOPg0oDnxuGDqBbFNrzOpLI1hFiWp1Jk)

### Children who are non-verbal:

- Be very vigilant in observing their behaviour, parents know their child best and will be aware of their stress or withdrawal
- Continue to provide as much reassurance as you can
- Sit face to face – observe where eyes are moving, or child may be pointing or playing with
- Wait to see – actions, e.g banging blocks together and imitate
- Sensory experiences – provide lots of opportunities - dough, water play, sand
- Games of interest

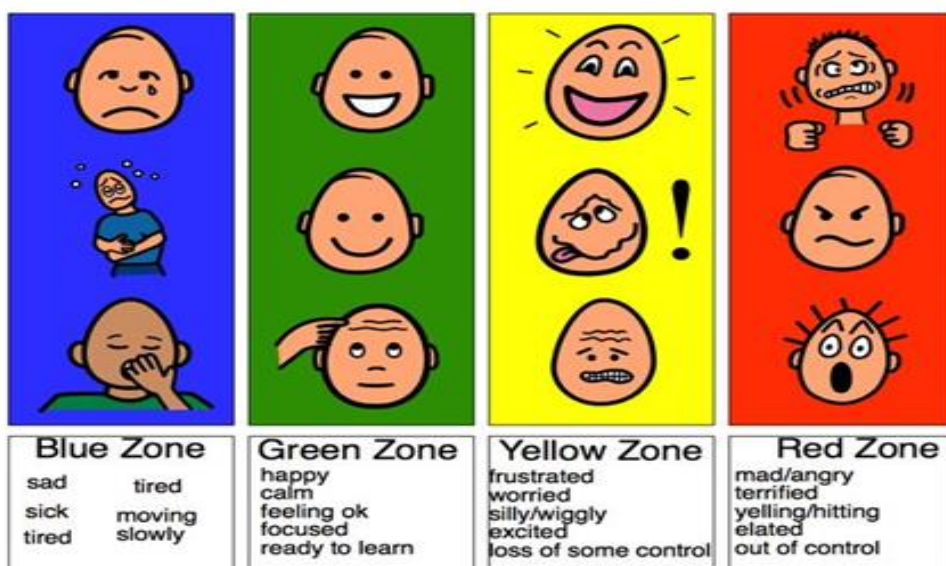


### Returning to kindergarten/childcare:

- Consider a calendar countdown crossing off each day until they return
- Discuss Educators / friends names and returning to play with their friends
- Get them back into a sleep routine
- Read books about starting Kindergarten once again
- If you had a social story when they commenced - consider reading this



# The Zones of Regulation



## Regulation of Emotions:

- Observe what are they doing BEFORE the behaviour they are displaying (this is the Trigger) – **YELLOW ZONE**
- We cannot work with an agitated child/person when they are angry - **RED ZONE**
- Acknowledge their feelings shown
- Wait until the child is off the roller coaster - don't ask the what did you do? and why? at this point
- If child is safe, allow them to calm down and then discuss
- Read the situation - do they need you to be close or to back away and have space (this will be obvious from the behaviour they are displaying)
- When calm, validate their feelings "I can see you were feeling angry... - **GREEN ZONE**
- What can we do to help them get the same sensory input - **STOP and SWAP** the behaviour for something more positive e.g jumping up and down consistently – do they need movement?

***Be aware of our own emotions as anxiety feeds on anxiety***

***"Kids who are anxious/sad/mad (the BIG Feelings) are on an emotional roller coaster, it is our job to stay calm and stay off the ride (it is THEIR ride, don't jump on the ride with them)"***

***(Jessica Cleary – Psychologist & Director of Hopscotch & Harmony)***

<https://lemonlimeadventures.com/sensory-break-ideas-for-kids/>

<https://healthyfamilies.beyondblue.org.au/age-6-12/mental-health-conditions-in-children/anxiety/strategies-to-support-anxious-children>

<https://adayinourshoes.com/free-printable-visual-schedules-for-home-and-daily-routines/>

<https://parade.com/1019088/debrawallace/temple-grandin-tips-children-with-autism-coronavirus-quarantine/>

[https://fosteringconnections.com.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Staying%20at%20Home%20Tookit%20for%20Foster%20Carers\\_compressed%20%282%29.pdf?utm\\_source=Centre+for+Excellence+-+COVID-19&utm\\_campaign=f0f795a3a1-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_12\\_18\\_04\\_00\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_d2e84bde6c-f0f795a3a1-299864869&mc\\_cid=f0f795a3a1&mc\\_eid=c557dca443](https://fosteringconnections.com.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Staying%20at%20Home%20Tookit%20for%20Foster%20Carers_compressed%20%282%29.pdf?utm_source=Centre+for+Excellence+-+COVID-19&utm_campaign=f0f795a3a1-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_12_18_04_00_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d2e84bde6c-f0f795a3a1-299864869&mc_cid=f0f795a3a1&mc_eid=c557dca443)

# UNDERSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EARLY INTERVENTION (ECEI) IN WYNDHAM

- ❖ ECEI in Wyndham is run by The Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL)
- ❖ ECEI is a service to help families access information and supports if they have concerns about their child's development
- ❖ An ECEI application form can be submitted by a parent, educator or health professional for any child 0-6 years who is showing delay in their development (a diagnosis is not required)
- ❖ Once an ECEI application is received a BSL coordinator will contact the family for more information. A meeting will be held to meet the child and one of two pathways will be offered:

Short Term Supports /  
Community Support

OR

Request to Access  
NDIS \*

\*If the Application is deemed as 'ACCESS MET', an NDIS Access Request will be submitted (an Access Request is an application for NDIS funding). If this is approved by the NDIA, a planning meeting will then occur to create an NDIS plan for the child

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- 1. If a child is *receiving funding* from NDIS /BSL can the early childhood educator still access the Wyndham PSFO Service?**  
**No**, if the family would like support for their child's educator(s) this needs to be added into the child's NDIS Plan
- 2. If a child is on the waiting list for BSL / NDIS can the early childhood educator still access the Wyndham PSFO Service?**  
**Yes**, the PSFO Service can assist early childhood educators if a child is on an ECEI/ NDIS waitlist
- 3. If a BSL Coordinator meets with the family, does that mean the child will receive NDIS funding?**  
**No**, the BSL Coordinator will meet with the family to find out more information and to advise on the best pathway for that child. An *NDIS Planning meeting* indicates funding will soon be received
- 4. Can an NDIS package help families cover the cost of an Autism assessment?**  
**No**, the health system is responsible for ASD assessments. There are public and private options available for Wyndham residents

ECEI INFO AND REFERRAL FORMS:

<https://ndis.bsl.org.au/early-childhood-early-intervention/referral-form/>

### CONTACT DETAILS FOR WYNDHAM ECEI at BSL

Level 1, 236 Hoppers Lane, Werribee

Phone 1300 275 323

Email [ECEI.access@bsl.org.au](mailto:ECEI.access@bsl.org.au) – write Western Melbourne Enquiry in the subject line for a quicker response

If you want to contact BSL on behalf of a family, please obtain written permission from the parent and email it through with your enquiry