



Homeless Children's Brokerage Support Program Brokerage Guidelines

Introduction

The following guidelines are for use with the Homeless Children's Brokerage Support Project. Brokerage funds are managed by the Regional Children's Resource Programs in each DHS region across Victoria.

Brokerage funds are limited in each region. The following guidelines aim to assist Regional Children's Resource Programs to target resources to children (0-18yrs, within the family) and manage funds consistently. An application for brokerage does not guarantee the brokerage application will be successful. Brokerage applications are to be completed by referring workers, not parents or families.

Regional Children's Resource Program

Regional Children's Resource Programs aim to improve service delivery for children in the homelessness and family violence sector. Coordinators provide resources, training, information and secondary consultation to the homelessness and family violence service system in each region across Victoria. Program coordinators liaise with local government and community programs to improve sector responses and service delivery, and advocate on a broad level to raise awareness of the issues facing children and young people experiencing homelessness and/or family violence.

The Eastern Region Children's Resource Program, known as Resilient Kids, also provides some direct group work to mothers and infants, primary age children and adolescents within the SAAP (HSS) sector. Our services are at no cost to families and we provide group work through the term and some holiday activities in school holidays.

Objectives of the Homeless Children's Brokerage Support Project

The experience of homelessness can have a significant impact on a child's education; physical, emotional and mental health; and their sense of connectedness to their peers and the broader community. Children issues can be compounded by a lack of access to education, health, and support, social and recreational opportunities within the community.

The Homeless Children's Brokerage Support Project has been established to enhance opportunities for children experiencing homelessness to:

- Engage and maintain their education (including early education services such as childcare and kindergarten).
- Reduce social isolation by enhancing access to a range of support, social and recreational opportunities within their community.
- Provide social and emotional growth opportunities for children and provide opportunities to increase relational bonds between parents/carers and children.

The Homeless Children's Brokerage Support Project also aims to provide further encouragement to homelessness support providers to integrate child focused assessment and case planning into their work practice.



Eligibility for Brokerage

Funds will be available to accompanying, dependant children of current clients of homelessness/family violence funded support services in Victoria. While a child is eligible for total amount of \$300 per financial year, this may be taken in a lump sum or a number of applications.

Brokerage requests will be considered for children who:

- Have been assessed and have had a case plan developed by the referring support agency. Children's needs can be case planned individually or incorporated into the family's case plan. The Statewide Wellbeing Proformas may assist workers to develop case plans for children. (Please request these from Resilient Kids if required)
- Are clients of a Homelessness Support Service (was SAAP program) or a DV service *Copies of assessments and case plans are not required, however a summary of the case plan is required as part of the application process.*
- Have an identified need for brokerage as demonstrated by their case plan.
- Require support to engage and/or maintain their education, or require support to access social, recreational, health or support opportunities in their community.
- Cannot access any other financial support or can only access part of the funding required to meet their need (i.e. publically funded medical and support specialists, Schools Focused Youth Services, State Schools Relief, direct negotiations with schools and sporting clubs etc.).

Here are some places in the Eastern Region and across the state where you may be able to access some financial assistance before applying for the Children in Homelessness Brokerage program.

Monash Youth and Family Services	9518 3900	http://www.myfs.org.au/
St Vinnie's	1300 305 330	http://www.vinnies.org.au/home-vic
East Burwood Centre	9803 3400	
Doncare	9841 4215	http://www.doncare.org.au/
State School Relief (for free school uniforms accessed through the school)	9888 8722	http://www.ssrc.net.au/
School Focused Youth Service	See website	http://www.sfys.infoxchange.net.au/
Counting Kids – Odyssey House	9420 7600	http://www.odyssey.org.au/
Open Family	8698 6700	http://www.openfamily.com.au/



JET - Child Care fee support for approved study/training/job search	13 61 50	Through Family Assistance Office. http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Resources/Documents/FactSheets/Factsheet12.pdf
---	----------	--

In addition to these eligibility requirements, Regional Children's Resource Programs will consider:

- The length of time an activity can be funded for (i.e. sporting / recreation /tutoring) and the sustainability of the activity when brokerage funds are no longer available.

Referring agencies are expected to advocate for the child's unmet need by attempting to:

- Negotiate with the service provider (i.e. school, sporting club).
- Access any other financial support available to meet the child's needs.

Regional Children's Resource Program Coordinators will assist referring agencies with information on other options that may be available to meet the child's needs.

Parameters for Brokerage Expenditure

The following service types may be covered by the Homeless Children's Brokerage Support Project;

Education

Where either no funding or part funding can be provided by the school or other financial support i.e. Schools Youth Focused Services, State School Relief Fund.

Please ensure the family have accessed the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund that replaces the EMA, prior to applying for brokerage and mention this on the application.

- Camps / excursions/incursions, equipment and fees
- Tutoring
- Other educational support
- School expenses

Childcare

Brokerage funds can be accessed only to cover the gap that the Commonwealth Child Care Benefit does not cover, where Special Child Care Benefit or other financial support is not available.

- Family Day care
- Centre based care
- Respite
- Vacation care
- Before and after school care

Brokerage for any of the above is time limited and must be for a specific reason. Outstanding fees are not eligible for brokerage and reimbursement of fees paid prior to Brokerage Application is not possible.



Sport and recreation

Where either no funding or only part funding can be provided by sporting/recreational clubs or other financial support.

- Fees for participation in sporting and recreational programs
- Uniforms and equipment

Brokerage will be paid a term at a time as children change their preferences and families move. This allows access to funding for the same or different purpose later in the year.

Specialist support

Where free services are unavailable or where waiting times do not meet the needs of the child.

- Counselling: group sessions, psychologist etc.
- Specialist assessments e.g. physical, emotional and psychological.
- Specialist medical assessments e.g. Paediatrician, hearing and sight testing, dental etc.

Families should pursue Medicare options. Brokerage may be appropriate for one off sessions when other options have been explored.

Accessing funds

When an application is received, a Resilient Kids worker will contact the referring worker for further discussion. All applications will then be assessed after the closing date and referring workers notified of the application outcome, whether the application was successful or not.

Application Process

Please contact the Children's Resource Program to discuss the application and any other support that may be available for the child.

A completed application form will then be submitted by the worker of the referring agency.

Payments for services are subject to the approval of the application by the Regional Children's Resource Program. **Reimbursement of money paid prior to a successful application is not possible and it cannot be assumed an application has been successful prior to notification of success. Outstanding fees of any sort are not eligible for brokerage support.**

On approval, payments will be made directly to the service provider against an invoice (including GST information.) All invoices are required to have an ABN.

Please note that there may be a 3 week turn around for cheques to be processed.

In the event where this is not practical, the referring Agency may meet the immediate costs and will be reimbursed e.g. the purchase of items required for immediate use. In these instances approval **must** be sought from the Regional Children's Resource Program prior to the agency meeting any costs.

The referring agency will provide the invoice (invoice must show the child's name, ABN & details of purchase) and send with relevant information to Susie Richards

Susie Richards

T 8870 4042, M 0423 022 883, F 9879 5382, E susie.richards@wesley.org.au