

AUTISM NEXUS

Offering a range of
Early intervention options to children
with autism



This program is funded by FaHCSIA's
Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) Package

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General Information

The Australian Government has provided \$190 million towards the *Helping Children With Autism* (HCWA) Package from 2008 to 2012. The Early Intervention component is aimed at supporting children with autism and their families.

The early intervention component is intended for children aged 0-6 years who have been diagnosed in Australia with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), including children in rural and remote areas and children from Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Children attending their first year of school who are aged under 6 years **old can still access FaHCSIA's HCWA early intervention funding package.**

For information on acceptable diagnosis of an ASD under the package and eligibility, information can be accessed from http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/disabilities/services-help_child_autism.htm)

Autism Nexus Consortium Members

St Anthony's Family Care is the lead Agency for the multidisciplinary Autism Nexus Consortium. Other Consortium members include APEX Psychology and Heather Craven – Speech Pathologist.

St Anthony's Family Care is located at 9 Alexandra Ave.

Croydon, NSW 2132

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www.safc.org.au

Autism Nexus Early Intervention services under the HCWA package can be accessed by contacting:

Myrna Dominguez

Early Intervention Options Coordinator

Phone: 9747 5782

Email: myrna.dominguez@safc.org.au

ST ANTHONY'S FAMILY CARE

St Anthony's Family Care has been providing a range of services to families for over 80 years. It is a community based, not for profit organisation.

St Anthony's cherishes:

- **Being responsive to families' needs**
- Respecting the dignity of children, families and staff
- Being compassionate
- Treating all with equity
- Acting with integrity
- Being accountable

St Anthony's Family Care, based at Croydon provides a number of Early Intervention Options for children with additional needs. Services specific to young children with autism are outlined on the following pages.

In addition, families who access any of St Anthony's programs are also able to receive support from the Family Support Service at no charge. The Family Support Service can assist families with a range of issues including family coping difficulties, financial hardship, referral to suitable agencies and services for specific needs, assistance to access government funds and services, respite and advocacy as required.

St Anthony's Early Intervention Team.

☞ Myrna Dominguez— Early Intervention Coordinator ☞

Myrna has worked within children's services since the early 1990's and has qualifications in nursing, an Associate Diploma in Social Science (Child Studies), Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education and a Master's degree in Special Education (Early Childhood Intervention). She is currently undergoing further research studies in the area of Autism Spectrum Disorder (social / emotional competency) in early childhood settings.

Myrna has completed training in Positive Behaviour Support (PBS), an Introduction to DIR Floortime © and an Introduction to Early Start Denver Model. Her greatest passion is teaching social / emotional skills to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and advocating in the area of ASD.

Myrna also facilitates the Social Skills Program, and works with individual children and their families in the Local Area Supported Integration Program and Positive Behaviour Support Program.

☞ Ljiljana Subotic—Peers & Play Teacher ☞

Ljiljana has coordinated the Peers and Play Program at St Anthony's for several years. She holds a Bachelor of Arts (Education), Postgraduate Diploma in Special Education and Master in Special Education.

Ljiljana has many years of experience in working with children with developmental disabilities including autism. She has worked with children with autism ranging from ages 2-6 in both special and inclusive settings. Ljiljana is interested in the areas of educational and behavioral programming for young children with ASD. Ljiljana specializes in working with children on autism spectrum who are experiencing behavioral challenges. She has attended numerous training and workshops in her field of special education.

Ljiljana is trained in Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) and works with individual children and their families in the Positive Behaviour Support Program and Local Area Supported Integration Program

☞ Diana Labes—Discover & Learn Teacher ☞

Diana has 5 years experience working with children with special needs, particularly Learning Disabilities and Autism. She has a Bachelor in Special Education and has worked in special schools in Romania, the USA and the UK.

Over the years Diana has continuously improved her skills and abilities, actively **participating in various professional development courses. Diana's responsibilities** as a class teacher included among others: liaising with parents and agencies, creating and implementing individual education plans, developing lesson plans and working in partnership with teaching assistants and additional staff to create a fun and safe learning environment. Diana has a great passion and understanding of the children on the Autistic spectrum and she is **very committed in providing quality teaching, tailored to every child's needs and abilities.**

☞ Kimberely Short—Occupational Therapist ☞

Kimberley Short completed a Bachelor of Applied Science in Occupational Therapy with Honours at The University of Sydney in 2008. She began working at **St Anthony's Family Care in January 2009 as an Occupational Therapist in the Discover and Learn Program** and is a part of the Early Intervention team providing Occupational Therapy intervention and facilitating Social Skills groups.

Kimberley has completed a number of training courses specific to Autism Spectrum Disorders, including Introduction to DIR Floortime, Early Years Denver Model, ABA Principles, Transition to School, and workshops in play and learning, sensory processing, and communication. Kimberley has a strong interest in working with children and in the disability sector. She is enthusiastic towards her work and committed to ongoing development of her skills.

Jacqueline Haidar—Occupational Therapist

Jacqueline graduated from the University of Western Sydney in November 2006 with a Bachelor of Applied Science (Occupational Therapy). During her final year of study she began working with children with autism and researching a range of interventions used in early intervention. She completed a qualitative research project looking in to use of a sensory integrative approach in early intervention with preschool children with autism, developed checklists for identifying sensory processing difficulties in preschool children with autism and studied the use of many behavioural approaches to teaching new skill to children with autism.

Since graduating and commencing work in early intervention and autism, Jacqueline has become an accredited occupational therapist and continued to develop her knowledge and skills in the field. She has attended workshops and completed additional training in the use of a Therapressure and Oral Tactile Technique (Wilbarger Protocol), M.O.R.E (an oral motor approach to treatment for children with sensory processing and developmental dysfunction), and the use of applied behaviour analysis in modifying behaviours and teaching new skills. Jacqueline continues to study the areas of feeding difficulties and restrictive eating behaviours in children with autism and the use of developmental and relationship based models of practice used in the treatment of autism.

Catherine Turland—Speech Pathologist

Catherine studied a Bachelor of Speech Pathology at La Trobe University in Melbourne. She has previously worked in a Special School in Victoria with children aged 5 – 18 years with Autism and other disabilities. She has experience providing articulation therapy, stuttering intervention, receptive and expressive language therapy, using PECS, Makaton signing, other Augmentative and Alternative Communications, and social skills training,.

ST ANTHONY'S DISCOVER & LEARN PROGRAM

The Discover & Learn program within the Early Learning Centre caters for nine children per day with additional needs, primarily autism. Children aged 2 to 6 years may participate in the program.

The program supports children to work towards goals as identified in their Individual Education Plan (IEP), which is developed in collaboration with families. The program is staffed by a full time Special Education teacher, Occupational Therapist, and trained child care staff that have extensive training in the areas of disability, challenging behaviours, and working with children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The program operates on a child to staff ratio of 3:1 for the duration of the service hours.

The proximity of the Discover & Learn Program to the mainstream rooms allows for numerous integration situations to be developed and for children and staff to move from one environment to the other without leaving the premises. For children who are preparing for school, the program offers transition to school service.

The Discover & Learn Program incorporates a range of interventions including behavioural, sensory, and development and learning therapy interventions.

All children must commence in the Discover & Learn Prep Program to determine their suitability for the extended day program.

Please note, there is no automatic progression from the Discover & Learn program to the Peers & Play program. The Peers and Play program has a separate eligibility criteria.

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Discover & Learn Prep Program

A 10 week program designed to introduce children to the program and establish their suitability for the full program. The program involves observations and assessments (informal and formal) and a written report **outlining the child's performance.**

Children attend the program two consecutive days per week for a period of 10 weeks. Each daily session is 9.00am to 12.00pm.

Families may be able to access other subsidies to assist with the daily rates.

- Fee: \$50 per day
- Other subsidies may be available to the family to assist with payment of fees.
- All absences must be paid for by the parent

Discover & Learn Program

Children who complete the Discover & Learn Prep Program may be offered a place in the Discover & Learn Program, based on their suitability. Children participating in the program have the opportunity to attend 2 to 5 days per week.

- Fee: \$82 per day
- Service operates between 7.30 am 6.00 pm
- Other subsidies may be available to the family to assist with payment of fees.
- All absences must be paid for by the parent

ST ANTHONY'S PEERS & PLAY PROGRAM

This program is provided within St Anthony's Early Learning Centre and enables children to play & learn alongside peers, in a mainstream setting, whilst receiving the required support. The program is provided by a special educator who has been trained to assess and program for children with additional needs in inclusive settings.

The Individual Education Plans, developed in collaboration with the family are implemented in the daily routines and activities of the centre. The centre staff are supported by the special educator, and all permanent staff are well trained and experienced in working with children with an autism spectrum disorder in inclusive settings.

The Program is available for children aged 0 to 6 years and operates Monday to Friday 7.30am to 6.00pm.

Cost

- Fee: \$82.00 per day
- Service operates between 7.30 am 6.00 pm
- Other subsidies may be available to the family to assist with payment of fees
- All absences must be paid for by the parent

ST ANTHONY'S

LOCAL AREA SUPPORTED INTEGRATION PROGRAM

The Local Area Supported Integration (LASI) program offers the opportunity for children to participate in a mainstream child care centre and receive the required support to benefit from the experience.

For families who are interested in accessing their local centre, an appropriate service will be sought and the child / family will be supported through the enrolment process. To ensure that both the centre and the staff directly involved in working with the child are well supported, training will be offered covering a range of disability issues.

Alternatively, the program can be accessed by staff and families where a child with autism currently attends an inclusive child care centre. Staff will be given support and training in identifying appropriate activities for the child, to address issues with challenging behaviours, and to facilitate inclusion.

An Individual Education Plan will be developed for the child, and staff will be trained in how to implement the plan and identify suitable activities to be included in the program. Centre staff will be trained and supported to include children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. **Support from St Anthony's will initially be intensive and would reduce** over a period of time as the child settles into the routine and the staff become confident and skilled in the necessary techniques.

Cost

- \$180 per half day (or part thereof) including assessment, sourcing suitable centre, onsite training / support and administration.

ST ANTHONY'S OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM

This service provides an individual occupational therapy program to children aged 0 to 7 years. The program can be delivered either onsite at **Croydon** or in a child's school or home as appropriate.

All clients undergo an initial assessment that comprises of the use of standardised assessment tools, clinical observations and parent/teacher report. Together with families, occupational therapists use information gathered to identify areas of concern and develop an individual treatment plan. Treatment plans are delivered via fortnightly individual treatment sessions over a 10-session period. On the completion of the sessions the child's progress will be reviewed and need for additional occupational therapy intervention will be determined.

The occupational therapy program addresses all areas of a child's development including fine and gross motor development, sensory processing, self-care and adaptive skills, cognitive development, social and emotional development, play skills, school performance skills, challenging behaviour and behaviour management, and other areas identified by the family.

The occupational therapists are experienced in delivering a range of treatment and intervention models and select a treatment approach based on the individual needs of children and their families.

Cost

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| • Initial assessment and report | \$185.00 |
| • Therapy —centre based | \$90.00 |
| • school / preschool visit | \$110.00 |
| • Case meeting (offsite) | \$110.00 |

Note: *Therapy sessions are 45 minutes consultation and 15 minutes feedback and documentation.*

ST ANTHONY'S SPEECH THERAPY PROGRAM

This service provides an individualised program either onsite at our Early Intervention premises located in Croydon, , in home or the community.

The therapist conducts initial assessments to determine the child's current expressive and receptive communication abilities, and develops individual programs focusing on established goals as identified and agreed upon by family members.

Individual programs can include introducing children to visual strategies and cued instructions, manual signing, PECS, and social stories. **The therapist focuses on developing the child's skills in maximising communication through a range of applicable methods in an effort to improve the child's ability to express their needs and wants and increase opportunities for socialisation.**

Cost

- Short assessment \$171.00
up to 1 hour duration & intervention planning.
- Long assessment \$226.00
1 – 1.5 hours duration & intervention planning.

Centre Based Therapy

- 45 minutes \$99.00
- 1 hour \$126.00

Offsite Therapy—20 minute radius

- 45 minutes \$105.00
- 1 hour (20 minute radius) \$138.00

ST ANTHONY'S SOCIAL SKILLS PROGRAM

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder have deficits in the area of social and play skills and this is detrimental as it affects overall developmental growth and opportunities for learning new skills. Teaching children with autism the basic skill to participate in play is crucial as play provides a vehicle for these children to explore, learn and practice social interactions in their environment.

This program is a supported play- based social skilling model that utilizes evidenced-based research for supporting the social and emotional development of children with autism. It provides opportunities for child and adult social exchanges to take place. The teaching of social and play skills **through this program will focus on the child's current level of development** including their strengths, needs, interests, learning styles, and preferences. Routine daily life skills activities (hand washing, eating, and toileting) will also be taught. Adults will provide varying levels of structured teaching instruction using environmental arrangements, use of equipment / toys, facilitating and scaffolding play opportunities, helping children successfully enter established games by role modeling, and utilizing effective functional communication through use of verbal, gestures and pictorial tools.

The aim of the program is for children to learn appropriate social skills, generate alternative behaviors for peer conflict through positive behavior support and practice positive interactions with others in a meaningful way. A maximum of 6 children can participate in the program and the program operates on a staff to child ratio of 2 to 1.

Staff: 1 Early Childhood Teacher (Postgraduate in Special Education), 1 Occupational Therapist and 1 Child Care Worker (specializing in providing care to children with autism).

Duration: 2 hours session, 6 weeks duration

Cost: \$550

ST ANTHONY'S POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT PROGRAM

This individualized program uses an empirically validated, functional - based approach to address challenging behaviours of children with autism spectrum disorder. Challenging behaviours for young children with autism can be reduced when provided with an alternative means for functional communication or an alternative response that serves the same function. In addition to teaching new communication and social skills, the behaviour support program will also include changes in social and ecological conditions that will support meaningful outcomes for children.

The results obtained from a functional assessment will be used to develop a behaviour support plan to prevent challenging behaviours from occurring, teaching the child new skills and including strategies to make sure that challenging behaviour is no longer effective for the child. The formulation of this plan will be done in collaboration with the family, affiliated professionals and implemented at home and at the service.

The behaviour support plan will include:

- hypothesis about the target behaviour
- a positively stated goal
- strategies for teaching appropriate behaviour
- changes that will be made in the environment to reduce or eliminate problem behaviour
- strategies to replace problem behaviour with appropriate behaviour that serves the same function for the child
- supports for the child to use appropriate behaviour
- strategies for dealing with problem behaviour
- crisis intervention procedures
- procedures for monitoring progress

Cost: \$1000 for 8 sessions, including 4 home visits and 4 centre-based.

Staff: Special Education Teacher (Master of Special Education training)

HEATHER CRAVEN – SPEECH PATHOLOGIST

Heather Craven has over 29 years of experience as a paediatric speech pathologist across a variety of settings and agencies. Heather has worked in multidisciplinary teams and in a range of early childhood settings with both professional and non professional staff. She is highly experienced in introducing children to visual strategies and cued instructions, manual signing, PECS, and social stories. Heather has been facilitating Hanen Training since 2002 and is accredited to provide training to both parents and staff and has experience in working with culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

Cost

- Short assessment \$171.00
up to 1 hour duration & intervention planning.
- Long assessment \$226.00
1 – 1.5 hours duration & intervention planning.

Centre Based Therapy

- 45 minutes \$99.00
- 1 hour \$126.00

Offsite Therapy—20 minute radius

- 45 minutes \$105.00
- 1 hour (20 minute radius) \$138.00

Hanen – More Than Words Program

- \$1650 per family
- 8 week course consisting of 8 group sessions and 4 individual sessions.
- Maximum of 6 families participating.

Dr Janina Szyndler is the Principal Clinical and Developmental Psychologist at Apex. She has over 20 years experience of working with children and their families across a range of settings from multidisciplinary teams to private practice. Janina has always had a strong interest in Autism Spectrum Disorders. Her main skills are in assessment and helping **parents to learn strategies to manage their children's behaviour more effectively**. Janina can also offer counselling or individual therapy to **parents who are struggling to cope with their child's diagnosis or who are suffering from depression or anxiety (referral under a GP Mental Health Care Plan)**.

Cost:

- Initial consultation \$187.00
1 hour session with parents/carers to discuss concerns about child's behaviour and development.
- Development Assessment for program planning \$545.00
Adaptive behaviour assessment , 1 hour consultation to discuss assessment outcomes & make recommendations for the parents/carers regarding intervention. Copies of the report.
- Ongoing Psychology Consultations \$176.00
One hour consultation with child and/or family/carers.

COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS

Autism Nexus acknowledges that receiving feedback is important for the provision of quality services to children and their families, their advocates and other stakeholders.

To ensure that these services meet the needs of children and their families under FaHCSIA's **Helping Children With Autism (HCWA) Early Intervention Package**, each service provider complies with the Australian Standards for Complaints Handling (ISO 10002). In addition, each service provider has its own policies and procedures in place for the management of complaints both internally and by referral to external services.

FURTHER ASSISTANCE

For more information on Helping Children With Autism (HCWA) initiative, the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) can be contacted on 1800 289 177 or by email asd@fahcsia.gov.au.



St Anthony's Family Care



APEX Psychology
Dr Janina Szyndler