Homeless Children’s Brokerage Support Project

Brokerage Guidelines
Effective as of 1st July 2010

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.

The Homeless Children’s Brokerage support project provides $20,000 of brokerage funds per annum per region. Project funding will continue until 30 June 2013.

Brokerage funds are limited in each region. The following guidelines aim to assist Regional Children’s Resource Programs to target resources to children and manage funds consistently.

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.

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 dependent children of current clients of homelessness support services in Victoria. One application per year per child will be considered, however multiple applications will be accepted under exceptional circumstances.

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 State wide Wellbeing Pro formas may assist workers to develop case plans for children.

  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.).

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.

Where a referring service is located in one region and supporting a child in another region, the Regional Children’s Resource Program in the region where the referring service is located will hold responsibility for assessing and, if appropriate, paying the brokerage request. This will enable opportunities for Regional Children’s Resource Coordinators to build relationships with the homelessness and family violence support sector in their region.
Parameters for Brokerage Expenditure

The following service types can 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.

- Fee assistance
- Camps / excursions equipment and fees
- Tutoring
- Other educational support

**Childcare**
Brokerage funds can be accessed 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

**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

**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.

**Targets**
A minimum of 65 assistance periods will be required from each service provider per year. This allows for an average of $300 expenditure for each child.

**Accessing funds**
Application forms to be sent via email / Fax to: Enter Details

Example process –
A completed application form will be submitted by the referring agency.
Payments for services are subject to the approval of the application by the Regional Children’s Resource Program.

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.

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 should be sought from the Regional Children’s Resource Program prior to the agency meeting any costs.

The referring agency will provide the invoice and send with relevant information including the application form to: Enter Details

Use of brokerage funds
Brokerage funding can only be used for the purposes outlined in the Homeless Children’s Brokerage Support Project Guidelines. Funds are not to be expended for any other purposes other than client related expenditure and assistance. It cannot be used to fund staff related activities. Unexpended Brokerage funds must be carried over to the next financial year and continue to be available for client related items or returned to the Department for allocation where they will be redirected for use as intended.

If an agency believes there is a need for expenditure of unexpended brokerage funds outside these guidelines the request should be discussed with the nominated regional DHS PASA. No expenditure of these funds should occur until the request has been formally considered by the relevant regional DHS PASA.

Brokerage funds expended outside these guidelines and prior endorsement not sought from the relevant regional DHS PASA may incur removal of brokerage funding for the following financial year.
Data collection and progress reporting

All Regional Children’s Resource Programs will enter relevant data onto the SHIP to SHOR database.

Service providers will provide monthly reports on brokerage expenditure to their regional office.

Regional offices will then forward data reports to: Molly O’Shaunessy
Project Leader, Housing Support Services
Department of Human Services
Ph: 90960091
E: molly.oshaughnessy@dhs.vic.gov.au
mailto:naomi.mcanamara@dhs.vic.gov.au

All data will be treated confidentially and securely and will not contain easily identified information.