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Department of Human Services Standards Policy

January 2014

Published by the Office of the Deputy Secretary, Community and Executive Services
Victorian Government Department of Human Services
Melbourne Victoria Australia

January 2014

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Published on www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Authorised by the Victorian Government, 50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, Vic, 3000.

Department of Human Services Standards and independent reviews

The Victorian Government is committed to reducing red tape by July 2014. A key initiative of the Department of Human Services (the department) is the streamlining of the department's quality standards and independent review processes. The department has amalgamated its quality standards and independent review process for children, youth and family services, homelessness services and disability services.

Guiding principles

Standards and independent review processes help to ensure quality services that deliver positive outcomes for the Victorian community. The principles of the *Department of Human Services Standards* (the Standards) and independent review process are as follows:

- clients should be at the centre of service delivery with their rights promoted and upheld
- standard review processes play an important role in ensuring that the policies, processes and systems a service provider has in place consider and uphold client rights and needs
- standard review processes provide greater assurance to people accessing services and the community about the quality of the services they will receive
- the Standards reduce red tape for service providers and provide greater flexibility for the community sector to meet quality assurance requirements
- the Standards ensure continuous quality improvement and support the participation of clients in quality improvement.

Department of Human Services Standards

All service providers that are funded by the department to provide services to clients are required to meet the Standards. The Standards consist of the four service delivery standards as well as the governance and management standards of a service provider's chosen independent review body.

The independent review body's governance and management standards cover the following areas:

- governance
- leadership and management
- financial management¹
- human resources – including pre-employment checks, training and development, supervision and workforce
- continuous quality improvement and feedback processes
- information and knowledge management including confidentiality
- occupational health and safety
- partnerships/service coordination.

Service providers registered under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* and/or the *Disability Act 2006* are required to meet the Standards as a requirement of their registration.

The four service delivery standards and related criteria are outlined on the next page. More detailed information about the common indicators and the program specific indicators is available from the *Department of Human Services Standards evidence guide*, December 2011 which is available from the department's website at: <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/department-of-human-services-standards>.

¹ A financial audit of an organisation is not within the scope of a Standards review.

Standard		Criteria	
1	Empowerment People's rights are promoted and upheld.	1.1	People understand their rights and responsibilities.
		1.2	People exercise their rights and responsibilities.
2	Access and Engagement People's right to access transparent, equitable and integrated services is promoted and upheld.	2.1	Services have a clear and accessible point of contact.
		2.2	Services are delivered in a fair, equitable and transparent manner.
		2.3	People access services most appropriate to their needs through timely, responsive service integration and referral.
3	Wellbeing People's right to wellbeing and safety is promoted and upheld.	3.1	Services adopt a strengths-based and early intervention approach to service delivery that enhances people's wellbeing.
		3.2	People actively participate in an assessment of their strengths, risks, wants and needs.
		3.3	All people have a goal-oriented plan documented and implemented. This plan includes strategies to achieve stated goals.
		3.4	Each person's assessments and plans are regularly reviewed, evaluated and updated. Exit/transition planning occurs as appropriate.
		3.5	Services are provided in a safe environment for all people, free from abuse, neglect, violence and/or preventable injury.
4	Participation People's right to choice, decision making and to actively participate as a valued member of their chosen community is promoted and upheld.	4.1	People exercise choice and control in service delivery and life decisions.
		4.2	People actively participate in their community by identifying goals and pursuing opportunities including those related to health, education, training and employment.
		4.3	People maintain connections with family and friends, as appropriate.
		4.4	People maintain and strengthen connection to their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and community.
		4.5	People maintain and strengthen their cultural, spiritual, and language connections.
		4.6	People develop independent life skills.

Independent reviews and accreditation

Service providers in scope of the Standards are required to demonstrate their compliance with the Standards by achieving and maintaining accreditation/certification.

Accreditation and independent review processes help to ensure that service providers have acceptable levels of management, administration and service delivery in place and that there is a culture of continual improvement.

During the transition period only to the Standards, department funded service providers previously reviewed against the department's former program specific standards are not required to maintain their accreditation/certification against these former standards. Rather, service providers are required to be independently reviewed against the Standards within three years of their last on-site accreditation/certification or mid-cycle/surveillance audit. Once the first review has occurred against the Standards, service providers must maintain their accreditation.

Independent reviews are required against the Standards. Service providers are required to choose an independent review body from a range of department-endorsed independent review bodies. Service providers need to determine the due date for their independent review. The scheduling of reviews will be negotiated between the service provider and the independent review body, within registration and legislative requirements. Independent review bodies are required to inform the department that it has been engaged by the service provider and of the scheduled dates for the independent review.

Independent review bodies review and compile evidence that a service provider is meeting or not meeting the Standards. The review will include:

- reviews of the service provider's policies/documents/reports/service feedback
- site assessments
- client/staff/volunteer/carer file reviews
- client interviews/participation
- stakeholder feedback.

In the process of conducting a Department of Human Services review, independent review bodies are encouraged to recognise any recent accreditation and/or review process undertaken by the service provider as part of assessing compliance with the department's requirements.

To achieve and maintain accreditation a service provider needs to be assessed as meeting the Standards.

Where a service provider does not meet a standard there is a requirement to:

- (i) immediately resolve any non-compliance with standards that places a client at significant risk; or
- (ii) resolve any other non-compliances within six months.

As part of their accreditation service providers are encouraged by their independent review bodies to undertake continuous improvement processes and are required to participate in mid-cycle reviews/surveillance audits in order to maintain accreditation/certification.

A moderation panel, managed by the department, supports consistent assessment across all independent review bodies. The moderation panel includes representatives from all independent review bodies.

The department's Standards and Regulation Unit is provided with a full copy of the final review report/s by the independent review bodies and other review information, including notifying the department of significant risk issues identified during the independent review.

Independent review bodies are required to immediately notify the department if it suspects, has evidence of, or receives a complaint or allegation about any of the following:

- the health, safety, abuse or risk to a person who receives services from a service provider
- the governance, financial accountability or criminal activity of the service provider

- a service provider fails or may fail to meet basic client needs or puts a client at risk of significant harm
- a service provider is experiencing significant disruption and executive mismanagement
- the independent review body has serious concerns about the ongoing financial viability of the service provider
- a service provider engages in conduct which is fraudulent or potentially fraudulent or is engaged in other criminal activities.

Where the department requests additional information from an independent review body about a service provider's review, they will inform the service provider, unless there is a justifiable reason for not doing so, such as its potential to compromise collection of evidence in an investigation.

The department may publish information about the service provider's performance against the Standards.

Service providers that subcontract any services must have a contract with the subcontractor which includes a term that the subcontractor agrees to allow an independent review body to access its premises to conduct an independent review of subcontracted services provided by the service provider.

Scope for independent review

Service providers delivering services directly to individuals are required to undertake an independent review except where a decision is made by the department to exempt a service provider.

A list of the funded activities that are in scope for independent review is included at Appendix 1.

Funding thresholds

Department funded service providers

Department funded service providers receiving under \$20,000² in annual funding for in scope activities are in scope for independent review, except where a decision is made to exclude service providers from independent review and self-assessment process, based on defined criteria.

For department funded service providers receiving under \$100,000² in annual funding for in scope activities an independent review is required, except where a decision is made by the department that a self-assessment report and quality improvement plan should be undertaken instead of an independent review.

For department funded service providers receiving under \$200,000² in annual funding for in scope activities to provide advice, information, referral and/or services which provide goods, aids and equipment or other services which provide goods only, an independent review or self-assessment is not required.

Department funded service providers that have no direct relationship with clients and are funded to undertake, for example research, professional development, community development activities, policy advocacy and other peak body services **only** will not need to be accredited or reviewed in relation to the Standards.

Department funded service providers that receive non-recurrent funding will generally not be in scope of the Standards unless their funding becomes or, under advice from the relevant division, is likely to become recurrent.

Notwithstanding funding thresholds, service providers that are in scope of the Standards due to their client services, but also provide services that do not have direct contact with clients, in general will not need to have their non-direct client services reviewed as part of their accreditation. For example a peak body may provide client assistance services, but their primary service relates to policy advocacy. The peak body in this circumstance will be reviewed for its client assistance services, but in general will not need to undertake a review of its policy advocacy services. There may be some cases where a review of non-direct client services may be required due to the nature of the service provided or by preference of the service provider.

² The funding thresholds are indexed annually and for the 2013-14 financial year they are \$20,808, \$104,040 and \$208,080.

Diagram 1 at Appendix 2 provides detailed information regarding the scope of independent reviews and accreditation for department funded service providers under the Standards.

National Disability Insurance Agency

National Disability Insurance Agency service providers registered by the department under the Disability Act are generally required to undertake an independent review against the Standards regardless of the amount of funding they receive. In exceptional circumstances, an exemption may be considered where the service provider has shown a low level of funding and service delivery over a minimum 18 month period.

Further advice about whether a service provider needs to undertake an independent review can be provided by the department as required.

Self-assessment report and quality improvement plan

Where the department has exempted service providers from independent review they will be required to undertake a *self-assessment report and quality improvement plan* (self-assessment) against the Standards. The self-assessment must be provided to the department as follows:

- If exempt from independent review (see 'funding thresholds in section above) – every 18 months from the commencement of the service agreement, or, for registered providers (see 'Relationship to registration' section below) from the date of registration under the applicable Act.
- If exempt from independent review and self-assessment (see 'funding thresholds in section above), but registered under the applicable Act (see 'Relationship to registration' section below), every three years at renewal of registration.

The department has developed a *Department of Human Services Standards self-assessment report and quality improvement plan* for this purpose, which is available from the department's website.

Service providers are required to self-assess and rate against all of the Standards criteria in the self-assessment and the relevant service specific indicators.

The self-assessment must demonstrate the service provider's compliance with the Standards. A service provider, where exempt from an independent review, may only rate itself as partially compliant against the Standards at the time of submitting its self-assessment at 18 months. Where this occurs, the service provider must demonstrate full compliance with the Standards at the time it submits its self-assessment at the end of the service agreement or registration period.

Service agreement periods are typically over a standard three year period. Some service providers are issued with a service agreement following the commencement of the current agreement period. Where the department has exempted these service providers from independent review, the submission requirements for the self-assessment will be determined on a case by case basis.

Where the department deems a self-assessment to be insufficient (i.e. it does not demonstrate compliance with the Standards), it may require the service provider to undertake an independent review or advise the service provider that it is in breach of its service agreement.

Relationship to registration

The *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* and *Disability Act 2006* set out the requirements for the registration of community services that deliver community-based child and family services and/or out-of-home care services and of disability service providers, respectively.

The activities that require a service provider to be registered are detailed in the department's *Policy, Procedures and Forms for the Registration of Disability Service Providers and Community Services* and the *Policy, Procedures and Forms for the Registration of Disability Service Providers registered/registering with National Disability Insurance Agency*, which can be found on the department's website.

To be registered or to apply for renewal of registration, service providers need to demonstrate compliance with the gazetted Standards. A requirement to meet the governance and management standards of a department-endorsed independent review body has also been gazetted.

Relationship to the Service Agreement

The department's Service Agreement for 2012–2015 states that unless exempted by the department, funded service providers will undertake an independent review in relation to the Standards every three years, and obtain and maintain accreditation by an independent review body.

Failure to meet the independent review and accreditation requirements would be considered a repudiation of the service agreement. Service providers are expected to obtain and maintain any accreditation or registration required for the delivery of all or part of the services or as requested in writing by the department.

Further information and support

Contact

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Community and Executive Services
Department of Human Services
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Appendix 1

Funded activities in scope of independent reviews and accreditation under the Department of Human Services Standards

Note this list is subject to change.

Information regarding the Department of Human Services Standards (the Standards) is available from the Department of Human Services' website at: <<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/department-of-human-services-standards>>

Scope	List of activities
Activities in scope of independent review under the Standards (Direct client services)	<p>Children, Youth and Families</p> <p><i>Family and community services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support Service (ACSASS) (31263)³ • Aboriginal Family Services (31165)³ • Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Services - Family and Community Services (31260)³ • Cradle to Kinder (31264)³ • Early Parenting Centre Services (31256)³ • Early Parenting Centres – Parenting Assessment and Skill Development Services (31259)³ • Family Violence Support Services (31233) • Indigenous Family Violence (31244) • Integrated Family Services (31245)³ • Integrated Family Services - Indigenous (31246)³ • Men's Family Violence Services (31240) • Parent Advice and Education Services (31243) • Parenting Assessment and Skills Development Services (31255)³ • Stronger Families (31262)³ • Sexually Abusive Behaviour Treatment Services (31242)³ • Sexual Assault Support Services (31235) <p><i>Youth Justice</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACCO Services - Youth Justice (32136) • Adolescent Support (32130) • Finding Solutions (32129) • Health Services and Rehabilitation Programs (32303) • Youth Justice Support Services (32124) • Youth Justice Group Conferencing (32133) • Youth Outreach and Diversion Service (32137) • Youth Justice Community Support Service (32135) <p><i>Specialist Support and Placement Services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client Placement Support Services (31217)

³ Subject to registration under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*. For further information regarding registration, please refer to the department's *Policy, procedures and forms for the registration of disability service providers and community services*.

Scope	List of activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Support - Children in Residential Care (31219)³ • Forgotten Australians Support Services (31304) • Health and Education Assessments (31419) • Home Based Care - Adolescent Community Placement (31205)³ • Home Based Care - Permanent Care (31138) • Home Based Care - Kinship Care (31202)³ • Home Based Care - General (31214)³ • Home Based Care - Complex (31216)³ • Home Based Care - Intensive (31418)³ • Home Based Care - Therapeutic Foster Care (31413)³ • Intensive Treatment Services (31163)³ • Lead Tenant (31188)³ • Leaving Care Support Services (31414) • Placement Prevention Programs (31218)³ • Residential Care (31415)³ • Residential Care - Case Management (31416)³ • Secure Welfare Service (31208) <p>Housing and Community Building</p> <p><i>Housing Support and Homelessness Assistance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis Supported Accommodation (20081) • Homeless Persons Support Services (20083) • Homeless Services Support (20084) • Housing Information and Referral (94589) • Initial Assessment and Planning (20089) • National Partnership Agreement Housing Support (94642) • National Partnership Agreement Service System Enhancement (94643) • National Partnership Agreement Homelessness (NPAH) A Place to Call Home (94654) • NPAH Accommodation Options for Families (94652) • NPAH Adult Initiatives (94651) • NPAH Children's initiatives (94655) • NPAH Family Violence Stage 2 (94671) • NPAH Opening Doors (94672) • NPAH Families at Risk of Homelessness (94653) • NPAH Family Violence Initiatives (94657) • NPAH Supported Housing Program (91461) • NPAH Support to Maintain Tenancies (94656) • NPAH Youth Initiatives (94658) • Tenancy Administration Crisis (94587) • Tenancy Administration Transitional (94588) • Transitional Housing (94591)

Scope	List of activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition Support (20082) <p><i>Social Housing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Advocacy and Support – Establishment (91423) • Housing Advocacy and Support – Intervention (91424) • Housing Infrastructure - Community Support (91456) <p>Disability Services</p> <p><i>Self-Directed Support</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Futures for Young Adults (17201)⁴ • Individual Support Packages (including facilitation) (17081) <small>Error! Bookmark not defined.</small> <p><i>Client Services and Capacity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access (17044) <small>Error! Bookmark not defined.</small> • Behaviour Intervention Services (17026) <small>Error! Bookmark not defined.</small> • Case Management (17028) <small>Error! Bookmark not defined.</small> • Community Based Respite (17078) <small>Error! Bookmark not defined.</small> • Flexible Support Packages (17034) <small>Error! Bookmark not defined.</small> • Independent Living Training (17023) <small>Error! Bookmark not defined.</small> • Outreach Support (17008) <small>Error! Bookmark not defined.</small> • Planning (17252) <small>Error! Bookmark not defined.</small> • Recreation (17035) <small>Error! Bookmark not defined.</small> • Therapy (17042) <small>Error! Bookmark not defined.</small> <p><i>Accommodation support</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal Justice Services (17006) <small>Error! Bookmark not defined.</small> • Facility Based Respite (17019) <small>Error! Bookmark not defined.</small> • Residential Institutions (17017) <small>Error! Bookmark not defined.</small> • Supported Accommodation (17016) <small>Error! Bookmark not defined.</small> <p>Empowering communities</p> <p>Disability Advocacy Program (37041) (for services involving client contact/direct advocacy)</p>
<p>Activities in scope where funded service providers receive over \$200,000⁵ in total in-scope departmental funding</p> <p>(Advice, information, referral and/or services which provide goods, aids and equipment)</p>	<p>Children, Youth and Families</p> <p><i>Family and community services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's Information and Referral Exchange (31239) <p>Disability Services</p> <p><i>Client Services and Capacity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aids and Equipment (17025) • Information services (17033) <p>Housing and Community building</p> <p><i>Housing Support and Homelessness Assistance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone Information and Referral (20085)

⁴ Subject to registration under the *Disability Act 2006*. For further information regarding registration, please refer to the department's *Policy, procedures and forms for the registration of disability service providers and community services*.

⁵ The funding threshold is indexed annually and for the 2013-14 financial year it is \$208,080.

Scope	List of activities
	<p><i>Social Housing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Housing Advocacy Support-Secondary Advice (91425)<li>• Housing Advocacy Support – Legal Tenancy Advice (91426)<li>• Housing Advocacy Support – Phone Service (91427)

Appendix 2

Department of Human Services Standards scope of independent reviews for department funded service providers

Detailed information regarding the scope of accreditation and independent reviews for department funded service providers under the Department of Human Services Standards is contained in Diagram 1 below.

Diagram 1 – Matrix of Scope of independent reviews

		Nature of the service and relationship with the client group		
		CATEGORY 1 No direct client relationship (for example, research and policy, professional development, community development programs, expense payments)	CATEGORY 2 Advice, information, referral and/or services which provide goods, aids and equipment only	CATEGORY 3 Direct client service delivery
Annual funding (total in scope service activity funding cat 2 & 3)	<\$20,000 ⁶	Exempt (1)	Exempt (1)	Exempt (1)
	<\$100,000 ⁶	Exempt (1)	Exempt (2)	Included (3)
	\$100,000 - \$200,000 ⁶	Exempt (1)	Exempt (2)	Included (4)
	Over \$200,000 ⁶	Exempt (1)	Included (4)	Included (4)
Criteria for inclusion/exclusion <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The service provider is exempt from independent review and self-assessment except where a decision is made to include services based on the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the department and service provider has a significant duty of care including services being provided to statutory clients, (where the department has guardianship of a person through a statutory order) and/or the services being provided to clients that have limited capacity to self-advocate. the service provider is a sole service provider within a geographic area the service provider is registered under the <i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005</i> or <i>Disability Act 2006</i> and is required to undertake an independent review or self-assessment a performance issue is identified by desktop review or through other means by the region/division and it has been determined that a self-assessment or independent review is required. The service provider needs to undertake a self-assessment, but is exempt from independent review, except where there is a decision to include the service provider based on the criteria as outlined in point 1 above. Service providers that receive funding for direct client services and receive under \$100,000⁶ in annual funding for in scope activities are in scope, except if there is a decision between the service provider and the department that a self-assessment review process should be undertaken instead of an independent review. The inclusion criteria in point one will be considered in making this decision and whether the benefits of the review process outweigh the costs of the review. Note service providers that receive less than \$20,000⁶ for in scope activities are in general exempt. The service provider is in scope. In some specific circumstances the department may make a decision to exclude a service provider which only provides a medical or dental service to a client of the department and the service is accredited through a separate approved process. 				

⁶ The funding thresholds are indexed annually and for the 2013-14 financial year they are \$20,808, \$104,040 and \$208,080.