

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLANS

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Abstract

The Hindmarsh Education Centre is located in Quamby Youth Detention Centre and provides a diverse range of educational and recreational programs for young people remanded and committed to custody in the ACT. Individual Learning Plans (ILP's) are developed for each resident to ensure that their academic, vocational, social and transitional needs are addressed through an integrated curriculum program. Within the education program residents are offered a range of options including vocational training in horticulture, furniture construction and automotive technology, information technology, art, music, cultural awareness, and recreation. Literacy and numeracy as well as social skills are integrated across the program. Residents receive explicit teaching in life skills such as social skills, management of personal finances, and health and wellbeing. Residents also undertake Student Pathways Planning to support their transition back into the community, further education and training, and help the resident plan for their future.

Individual student flexible learning programs are guided by Individual Learning Plans, Student Pathways Planning and resident case plans. These plans support students throughout their residency at Quamby with the goal of the plans to improve resident's educational, family and social outcomes. The implementation of ILP's and case plans requires a partnership between and collaborative practices with Hindmarsh Education Centre staff, case management staff and the Quamby operational team. These practices are designed to support successful transition of resident's back into the community and to reduce recidivism. Collaborative practice in the institution has also resulted in more opportunities for the residents to integrate into the community prior to release.

Quamby Youth Detention Centre

Quamby Youth Detention Centre, located in the ACT rural suburb of Symonston, is a low to medium security facility designed for housing young people on remand warrants or committal (custody) orders. Remand clients are typically remanded in custody for serious offences and/or if there is a likelihood of a young person failing to appear before the court if granted bail.

Originally, Quamby was used as a shelter for young people who had nowhere to reside or for young people who were placed on short term remand. During this time, young people who received a committal term from the courts were housed interstate at NSW training centres. Today, Quamby accommodates young male and female offenders aged 10 to 18 years inclusively who are on remand or serving a committal sentence. The ACT Government is currently reviewing the minimum age of legal responsibility and looking to changing it to 12 years as a result of the recent Human Rights Audit of the centre.

Quamby is part of the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support (The Office) within the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services. Staff at Quamby are comprised of an interdisciplinary team including officers from:

- The Office
- Department of Education and Training
- The Canberra Institute of Technology
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, and
- ACT Health.

Staff work in management, youth work, education, case management, psychology, health and administration

Through a climate of mutual respect, Quamby aims to provide opportunities for successful community integration for young people who have come into contact with the law by ensuring:

- A safe and secure environment
- Provision of individual goal oriented programs (educational, vocational and personal development)
- Professional relationships with all clients
- Acknowledgement and value of diversity and individuality.

Every Child Can Learn – Hindmarsh Education Centre

The Hindmarsh Education Centre (HEC) delivers integrated education and vocational programs to all residents and is managed by the ACT Department of Education and Training (DET). Residents have access to learning programs that are engaging and expose

residents to the learning process. HEC seeks to assist the development of residents in the following areas:

- Explicit teaching of skills in the areas of numeracy, literacy and social skills
- Facilitate reintegration into mainstream educational settings as well as alternative programs for education, training and work
- Provide skills and vocational experiences which will assist residents to access employment
- Facilitate pathways for residents through Individual Learning Plans (ILP), Student Pathways Planning (SPP) and case management
- Encourage residents to develop an enthusiasm for life long learning
- Assist residents to adapt to a variety of education opportunities in a variety of settings

HEC endeavours to deliver programs that maximise the educational potential of residents by providing:

- A safe climate for learning
- Integrated curriculum including negotiated curriculum
- Vocational skills
- Combining case management and learning opportunities through student pathways planning and individual learning plans

Over the last two years, the program at HEC has expanded to become broader and a more enriched program providing variety and challenge to the residents. Programs at HEC are delivered by a variety of people from a number of organisations to ensure rigour and diversity in the curriculum. Staff include:

- Teachers employed by DET (3) – 2 full-time plus an executive teacher who supervises and supports the program
- Youth workers employed by Quamby (OCYFS) (2)
- Trainers employed by the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) (2)
- A Music tutor employed by The Australian Children's Music Foundation (1) – on a voluntary basis
- External services i.e. Caloola to deliver the Business Certificate I

Integrated Curriculum

Programs delivered at HEC include integrated numeracy and literacy, information and communication technology, art, wood technology, horticulture, automotive technology, sport and recreation, music, and life skills programs. Underpinning all these programs is a strong focus on social skills and personal

development. Integrated throughout the whole curriculum is the explicit teaching of pro-social skills and appropriate behaviour.

In the 21st century we are often reminded of 'new times', 'new literacies', 'new technologies' and even 'new kids'. This raises many issues about how curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices have changed to effectively meet student needs. At HEC, integrated curriculum is used to ensure that skill development is comprehensive and transferable from one situation to another. Skills developed through an integrated approach are more easily transferable to the community and therefore more useful to the resident. Integrated curriculum also provides an avenue to encompass the new literacies and new technology skills residents will need to have when they re-enter the community.

Individual Learning Plans

All residents on committal have an Individual Learning Plan. An ILP is a working document, designed by teachers, which informs the planning, delivery and evaluation of individual educational programs for the resident. The ILP focuses on a number of key areas including academic, vocational, social, behavioral and transitional skills.

An ILP is also a teaching tool used to deliver a targeted educational program to achieve appropriate learning outcomes for residents and is developed through a collaborative planning process. An ILP:

- Identifies the resident's individual needs and priorities for learning
- Outlines both short and/or long term educational goals for a resident and the actions, strategies, modifications and adaptations that will be taken to achieve them
- Is a flexible living document that is reviewed and modified over time
- Assigns responsibility and accountability for implementing and evaluating the plan
- Provides an ongoing record to ensure continuity of learning

The ILP is developed by an interdisciplinary team of people who know and have involvement with the resident and who can contribute to discussion about the resident's educational needs. At Quamby this team is made up of the resident, teachers, youth workers, case management, operational staff and CAMHS. Involvement of the resident in the planning process ensures that their education is relevant to their life outside the centre. The planning process takes into account not only their needs while in custody but also the transitional needs to enable them to be successful in the community.

The ILP document is the vehicle to allow a resident to steer education in the direction that is most relevant and beneficial to them through integrated curriculum designed by the resident. ILP's become significant to the resident as the resident contributes to and has ownership of the plan. It also provides structure to education to ensure outcomes are achieved and is a guiding document for staff in the program planning process. The ILP is an acknowledged centre wide document that can assist with transition of the resident back into education, training and the community. The ILP also gives focus and direction to other professionals in the centre and provides direction for a centre wide approach with the resident. ILP's list agreed realistic goals that the whole center can assist the resident to work towards and achieve. All goals are small, achievable and realistic ensuring resident are able to achieve and have positive experiences. The ILP is an advocacy tool for consideration of residents leave.

Residents on committal are able to apply for educational leave once they have received a specified number of remissions. Remissions are days earned off their committal sentence for appropriate behaviour and is specific to the resident and the length of their committal sentence. Leave must be specific to the resident's ILP and could include a visit to a local attraction to complete an assignment or can be used to complete specialised courses, work experience or education programs in the community.

Residents are encouraged to behave appropriately so that they are able to obtain leave and start the transition process back into the community. Debriefing with the resident occurs after they return from leave to enable the resident to reflect on the experience. During the reflection process, areas of need in relation to social skills are identified and addressed either while the resident is in education or through the case management process. Leave is an important aspect of the residents overall program as it provides an opportunity to learn, develop and practice skills necessary for successful integration in the community.

Collaborative Practice

The development of collaborative practice is being initiated across Quamby and underpins work with the residents. Collaborative practice is achieved through an interdisciplinary team approach where all members contribute to planning for the residents from professional expertise, skills and experience. The team shares information and works interdependently where leadership is determined and dependant on the task. For this approach to remain successful trust, tolerance and a willingness to share responsibility is required.

Collaborative processes result in positive outcomes for residents including:

- More flexible and relevant learning programs
- Relevant and achievable goals in the ILP, SPP and case plan
- Improve existing service to residents, and identify and address service gaps, through improved communication, about resident's needs and goals
- Improve cross centre support for the resident to achieve their goals
- Team approach to engaging external services
- More responsive and creative ways to deliver services

Residents are aware of the collaboration taking place in the centre and are now more engaged in education and training programs. This approach limits inconsistencies in managing the residents.

Student Pathways Planning

Student Pathways Planning is another tool to help guide resident's planning for the future and sits along side their ILP. SPP supports all students in years 9 to 12 in ACT Government Secondary Schools to explore their unique set of needs and capabilities through identifying their personal strengths, interests and goals. This exploration supports their planning of potential pathways back into the community including education, training and work. Residents document these explorations in their Student Pathways Plan. This information can then be used to inform discussions with parents/carers, education staff/case management or employers/community members and decisions about their future options.

SPP is grounded in a number of concepts that support residents in their transition process. These concepts include:

- Residents will learn about themselves and be supported to develop confidence in their varying abilities through coherent and explicit outcomes in curriculum
- Residents will learn to value the benefits of lifelong learning
- Residents will be taught how to reflect on their learning experiences
- Education staff will be supported to work together in teaching and learning teams to acknowledge and balance current pedagogies with emerging communication environments to meet the needs of residents

Conclusion

Research from Australia and overseas demonstrates the benefits of assisting residents to plan for and make transitions in a constantly

changing and increasingly complex world. Resident need skills to navigate the range of options available, make sound decisions, think strategically and manage change.

References

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