



Parent Handbook

A Sincere Welcome to VIVA!

VIVA Therapeutic Services is a private company contracted by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Services to offer evidence-based services to preschool aged children who have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

VIVA operates throughout NB and offers services in French or English.



Website: www.vivanb.ca

October, 2022

Table of Contents



- Page 2: Our Values and Core Beliefs
- Page 3: Our Team
- Page 5: Our Services: Phase 1: Intake
- Page 6: Decision #1: Where will services be offered?
- Page 7: Decision #2: Type of program and intensity?
- Page 8: PLP, Phase 2: Ongoing Services
- Page 9: Phase 3: School Transition
- Page 10: Our Approach to Problematic Behaviours
- Page 11: Ethics and Professionalism
- Page 12: Materials
- Page 14: Cancelling a Session
- Page 15: Statutory Holidays and other Closures; Scheduling
- Page 16: Logging Attendance and Transfer of Responsibility
- Page 17: Overlaps and Custody Disagreements within the Family
- Page 18: Appendix A - Services in the Home
- Page 19: Appendix B - Services in an ELC
- Page 20: Appendix C - Services in an Agency
- Page 21: Appendix D- Health Guidelines



Our Values and Core Beliefs



Previous Program in NB

Focused on offering up to 20 hours per week to all children.

New Program in NB

More flexible approach

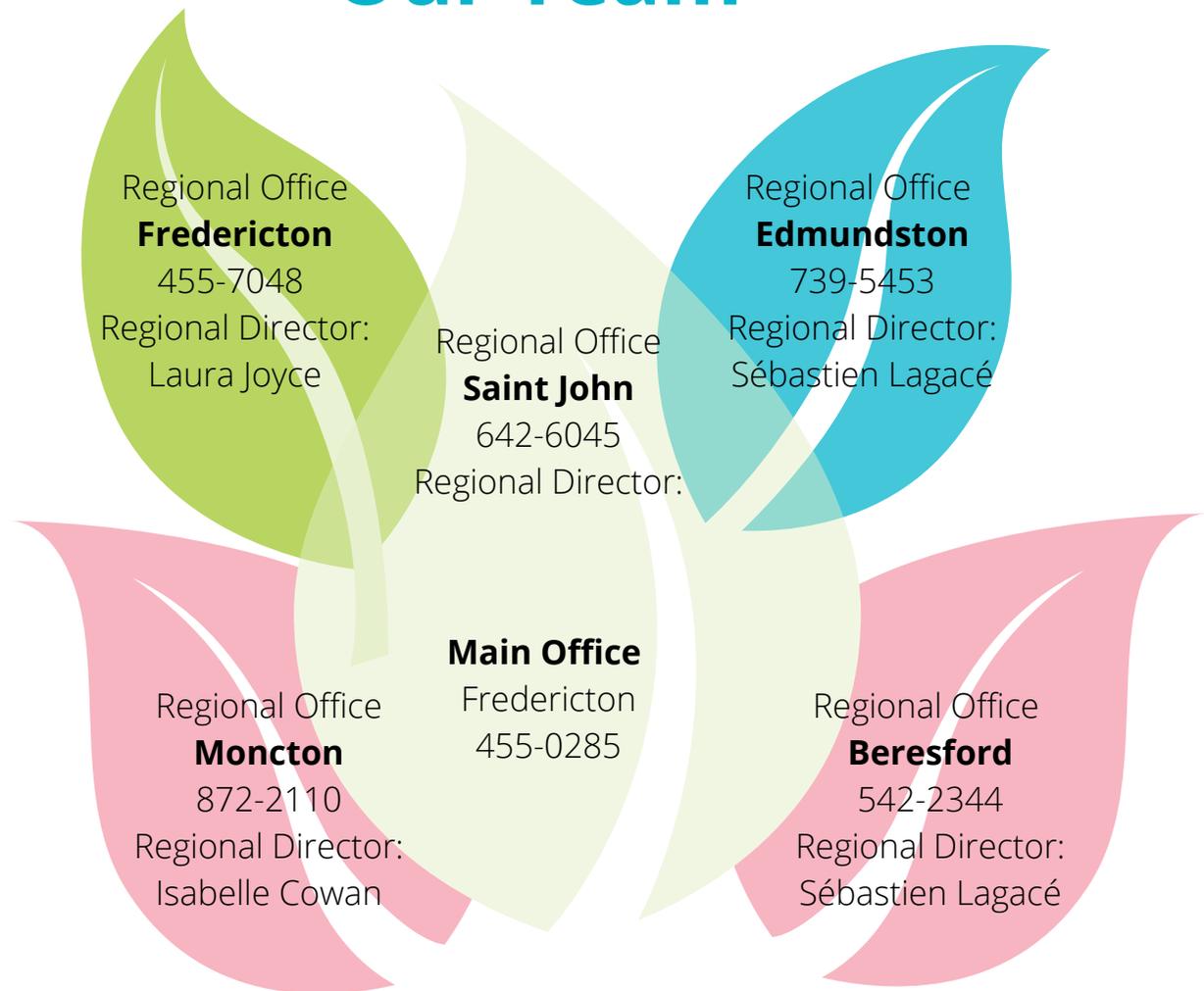
Offering the right number of hours for your child and family. The maximum number of hours is still 20.

The right number of hours is determined by assessing the family's needs, the child's goal and the child's tolerance and happiness

The focus of services is moving from quantity to quality

- Each child is unique and valuable.
- Families are an integral part of our team and guide services.
- Children should be heard, understood and free to express themselves.
- Children need to experience positive interactions. Doing the right thing may involve prioritizing joy and fun over rigid procedures.
- Communicating with respect, tact and showing a high level of compassion for clients.
- Children deserve to have fun while receiving services! We are dedicated to working with children from a place of joy!

Our Team



Our team includes professionals from many disciplines who work together to design quality programs for our clients. Our team includes:

- Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs)
- Speech-Language Pathologists

We also consult extensively with community partners such as Early Intervention Programs, Early Learning Centers and hospital based Speech-Language Pathologists, Audiologists, Psychologists and Occupational Therapists.

Our Team



Clinical Supervisor (CS):

- Oversees all activities including assessments, development of individualized programs, goal identification and parent training.
 - May work directly with the your child or work behind the scene with your Behaviour Consultant (BC).
 - May be more heavily involved with you and your child at certain moments: transition to a new location of services, transition to school or other.
-

Behaviour Consultant (BC):

- Works closely with the Clinical Supervisor (CS) to develop individualized programming.
 - Is your 'go-to' person should you have questions about strategies and goals or about your child's overall learning.
 - Supervises the Behaviour Interventionists (BI) who work directly with your child.
 - Works with you to identify goals and effective strategies to be used at home.
 - Prepares your child's schedule and will answer questions regarding intervention.
-

Lead Therapist (LT):

- Supports the Behaviour Interventionists (BI) who work with your child daily and supports caregivers in implementing goals.
 - Assists Behaviour Consultants (BC) to ensure that team members are running programs correctly, and provides on-the-job coaching.
 - Supports Behaviour Interventionists (BI) to make sure that sessions are fun and motivating for the child.
-

Behaviour Interventionist (BI):

- Works directly with your child if you have opted for comprehensive services. You may have more than one BI assigned to your child.
- Is responsible to implement the intervention plan designed by the CS, the BC and you, the parents.
- Is responsible to take data on your child's progress.

*Behaviour Interventionists receive a lot of training and support on how to keep interactions fun, joyful and motivating.

We believe that together with the child and his family, we can help the child excel in his life while respecting their uniqueness.



Our Services

Phase 1: Intake (the first 3 months)

The goal of the intake phase is to learn about your child and your family in order to develop a Personalized Learning Plan. Through questions and observations, we will learn about your child's strengths and needs. We truly believe that it is important for parents and caregivers to understand their child's unique profile and to have the opportunity to share their own values and needs. These important conversations will set the stage for the identification of goals and target skills that will be most impactful to your child and family.

The clinical team will interact directly with your child to conduct formal and informal assessments. As much as possible, assessments will be conducted in the context of play, ensuring that your child is engaged and motivated. Assessments may involve a video recording of your child playing with you or their toys.

Assessments may also involve presenting various toys and materials to your child to evaluate certain skills such as imitation, vocabulary etc. Results of these assessments will be shared with you and will help guide the identification of skills to be taught.

The primary goal of intake is to build rapport with your child, learn about their preferences and strengths and to work with you to identify their needs.

Key Decisions to Make During Intake

Where will services be offered?

- Home
- Early Learning Center (ELC)
- Agency (if available)

Type of program?

- Consultative
- Comprehensive

What intensity?

- Number of hours per week of service

Decision #1: Where will services be offered?



Home

- An adult needs to be present.
- The home is a productive learning environment.
- Employees will go in your home (up to 3 at a time)

**Your team will have further discussions regarding requirements for services in the home - See Appendix A*



Early Learning Center

- A team meeting involving VIVA, the ELC and parents will take place prior to service delivery.
- This meeting will result in a signed agreement outlining how we will all work together in the best interest of the child.

**See Appendix B for more details on collaboration between VIVA and ELCs.*



Agency

- Certain regions offer services in an agency.
- This location is available on a short term basis only, until a more natural setting can be found or until the child is ready to learn in a different setting.

**See Appendix C for details on services in an agency.*

Decision #2: Type of Program and Intensity?

Families can select between two service models:

Comprehensive

- Supports the child in developing skills in various domains such as cognition, communication, social, emotional, and adaptive functioning.
- Includes from 12 to 20 hours of one-on-one intervention per week.
- Can include parent training on strategies to use at home.
- Offered in all locations of services.
- Requires a high level of commitment and participation.

Consultative

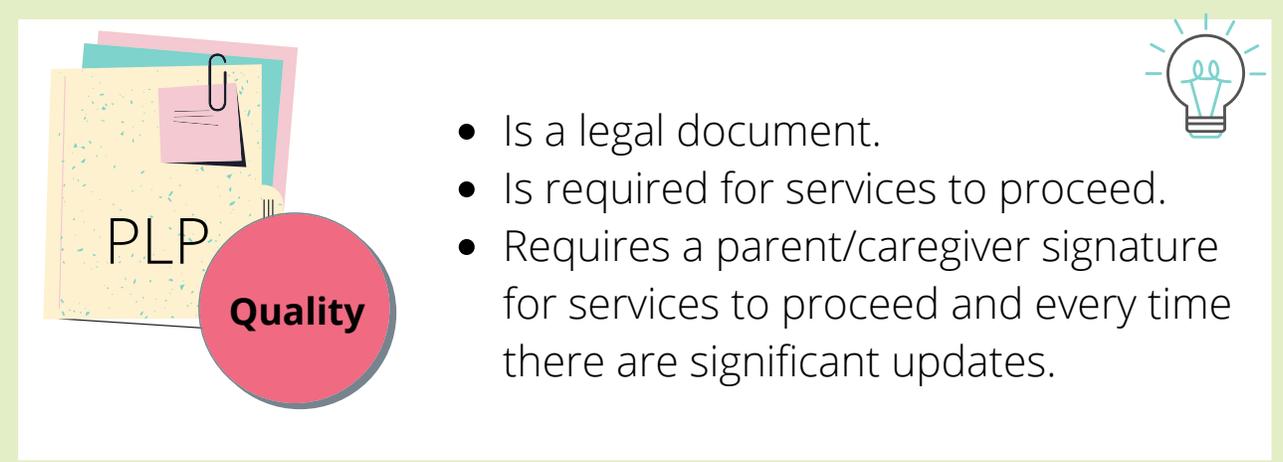
- Focuses on supporting families with 1-2 key goals; examples may include daily living activities, a communication goal or supporting your child in learning a new skill to reduce challenging behaviour; or consultative support in ELCs.
- Individuals supporting your child and family may include a LT, a BC or a CS.
- Offered in all locations of services.
- May be an interim service delivery (prior to receiving comprehensive services) or a long term option.



Ensuring that the child is happy, relaxed and engaged during sessions is the most important factor to consider when selecting or modifying the number of hours of service. Children learn best when they are relaxed, engaged and having fun!

Personalized Learning Plan (PLP)

At the end of the intake phase, a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) will be developed. This document includes information on your child's strengths and needs and explains the main focus of services and the specific goals for the child. This document is a living document that will be updated as your child learns. The PLP also includes information on the number of hours and location of services.



The illustration shows a stack of papers with a yellow one in front labeled 'PLP'. A pink circle with the word 'Quality' is overlaid on the bottom right of the papers. To the right of the papers is a lightbulb icon with rays emanating from it, symbolizing an idea or key point.

- Is a legal document.
- Is required for services to proceed.
- Requires a parent/caregiver signature for services to proceed and every time there are significant updates.

Phase 2: Ongoing Services

Location of intervention, intensity of intervention and service type can be modified anytime during services.

Moving a program from one setting to another (e.g., from home to ELC) **requires careful planning and advanced notice**. Should you wish to make any changes to your program, please engage your clinical team in discussions and planning.

Any modifications to the location of intervention, the intensity of intervention or the service type **requires a parent/caregiver signature**. Making yourself available to promptly sign documents is crucial.

Phase 3: School Transition



We fully recognize that transition to school is a stressful time for families and we value starting the process of school transitions early. School transition plans and activities typically begin one year prior to school entry during which time the clinical team will:

- Support you in registering your child for school in the Fall before the year the child is anticipated to start school.
- Perform reassessments and prepare information for school transition meetings, which typically take place in the months of February, March and April. Assessment results and goals, as well as the transition to school report, will be reviewed with you prior to being communicated to the school. You will be encouraged to add information to the report should you wish to convey additional information about your child.
- Share your child's personal learning plan (PLP), including goals and programs, with the school team during the transition meeting with the school.
- Facilitate observations by the school team of your child's sessions in the Spring should this be required.
- In the month of August prior to school entry, prepare a school transition schedule. Members of your team will be scheduled to assist your child, with support being faded over the month of September.
- Provide copies of your child's PLP, programs and other relevant documents to the school team.
- Your child's schedule may be reduced in the last week of August to provide time for the team to prepare for your child's school entry to ensure a smooth transition.



VIVA Therapeutic Services cannot make recommendations for Educational Assistant support. It is the responsibility of the school personnel to make such recommendations. VIVA's role is to offer detailed information on your child's strengths and challenges, safety preoccupations, and degree of independence and to share approaches that have been effective in the past.

Our Approach to Problematic Behaviours

A diagnosis of ASD encompasses varying degrees of social, communication and behavioural challenges. While children enrolled in our program share a diagnostic label, they are all different from one another and all require individualized programs. Many of the children with whom we work engage in challenging behaviours which may put their safety or the safety of others at risk and which may place serious restrictions on the family.

It can be quite complex to understand the reasons why a child engages in difficult behaviours. Often there is not one reason, but a multitude of factors involved. At VIVA, we like to work closely with parents and caregivers to better understand the “why” for their child and teach new skills that will help them communicate their wants and needs, tolerate less preferred situations, and cooperate in their learning and daily activities.

It is important to us that clients be treated with respect and compassion at all times. Ensuring that clients are happy, relaxed and engaged is a pre-requisite to learning.

Creating a Positive Work Environment

Our employees go into your homes and in ELCs to provide this valuable service. Our organization therefore counts on your collaboration to ensure that employee’s work conditions meet the New-Brunswick Employment Standards.

Employees are entitled to the following:

- Short breaks during which an adult will need to supervise your child.
- Work environment that is positive, supportive in which there is effective communication
- Work environment that is clean and safe

Your clinical team will involve you in conversations about ways to foster a positive work environment. We will also ask questions about what we can do to ensure that our team respects the work environment. It is through these conversations that we will be able to offer a service that will meet the needs of your family while respecting employment standards.

Ethics and Professionalism

The employees assigned to your child spend a lot of time with your family, and with time, you will develop positive relationships with them. To ensure that your child receives professional, high-quality services, it is very important that both employees and families respect certain boundaries.

Transportation

Employees are not permitted to transport any clients in their vehicle due to liability insurance. In addition, staff are not permitted to be transported by clients families.

Dress Code

Employees must dress in a comfortable but professional way. It is important for employees to be able to sit on the floor with kids and to move quickly. If a parent is concerned that their staff are dressing inappropriately, please contact your CS/BC.

Gifts

Both families and staff should not give or accept presents. Should you wish to express your gratitude, we recommend that you write a thank you note or an email to their supervisor highlighting why your wish to acknowledge them. These notes mean a lot to our employees and teams.

Professionalism

Employees are expected to maintain a high level of professionalism with clients and their families.

- They cannot disclose personal information to their client's families and must communicate with professionalism and respect.
- They cannot interact with families outside of work time. For example, they are not allowed to participate in birthday parties or other family events.
- They cannot discuss other clients with your family.

Families must also communicate with their staff in a professional and respectful manner and should focus on discussing matters related to the services being offered.

Social Networking

Social media is an important part of everyone's life. To maintain professional interactions, we do not allow families and employees to connect on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.). Should you wish to discuss a concern about your child's services, we ask that you contact your clinical team directly instead of posting on social media. Our team wants to work with you at finding solutions.

Cell Phone Use

Employees are not authorized to use their cell phones for personal reasons during a session with a client (ex: social media, texting). Cell phones may be used as a timer or for work purposes. Employees are not permitted to share their personal phone number with families.

Communication

We value clear, tactful, and respectful communication between all team members. At times, there may be difficult topics that need to be discussed between VIVA employees and parents. It is expected that all communication will be done in a considerate and professional manner. VIVA Therapeutic Services reserves the right to instantly interrupt services, including immediately leaving should individuals swear, scream, make threats or derogatory comments or should employees feel unsafe for any reason.

Materials

Having varied and fun material/toys during sessions is important to keep learning fun and motivating. VIVA's employees typically use toys that are available in the home and may also bring toys to use during sessions. It is important that children learn to play with their own toys to keep busy outside of programming time.

We will need your help identifying ways to enrich the learning environment in order to keep your child interested, engaged, and motivated.

Canceling a Session

Clients may need to cancel a session due to other commitments, illness, or vacation. We ask that families minimize cancellation when possible. We expect that families will commit to the plan that they selected, attending 90% of the scheduled appointments.

Client Who Needs to Cancel a Session

- ✓ Call the agency
- ✓ Call the childcare facility when applicable
- ✗ The family should not text or call the employees directly.

We also expect that our employees will minimize cancellations. If an employee must cancel a session, they must:

Employees Who Need to Cancel a Session

- ✓ Call the agency and Early Learning Center if applicable.
- ✓ The agency will notify the family of the cancellations
- ✗ Employees will not call or text the family directly.



Should you be unable to attend 90% of scheduled appointments for two consecutive months, your clinical team will work with you at identifying a level of intervention that is better suited to your reality.



If a family knows that they will be cancelling in the future (Ex: scheduled appointment or vacation), they should notify their supervisor as soon as possible.

If the centre is cancelling due to a staff vacation request or other, they will inform the family as soon as possible.

During extreme weather conditions ((e.g., snowstorms, ice storms, power failures, flooding, etc.), VIVA may close and sessions may be cancelled.

Unforeseen Cancellations

✓ VIVA will communicate cancellations by:
Recording a message before 7:00 am on the agency's main telephone line

✗ VIVA will not notify parents directly by phone or email.

Statutory Holidays and Other Closures

VIVA recognizes the following mandatory holidays and will not be open for services:

- New Year's Day
- Family Day
- Good Friday
- Victoria Day
- Canada Day
- New Brunswick Day
- Labour Day
- Thanksgiving
- Remembrance Day
- Christmas Day
- Boxing Day

Planned Closures:

- VIVA is closed for one week during the summer months, usually the week following the long weekend in August (New Brunswick Day).
- Typically, VIVA is closed between Christmas and New Years.
- VIVA recommends that families plan their vacations during these scheduled closures to allow for consistent and effective intervention.
- VIVA may cancel services to offer professional development opportunities, to train your team on specific programs for your child or for team meetings.

Scheduling

- Schedules for your child's program will be completed during the third week of the month. Each month, you will receive a calendar outlining all activities for the upcoming month.
- Please review the schedule and contact your CS or BC should a change be required.
- It is possible that your schedule may change. We will try our best to communicate changes proactively.
- Should you have questions about your schedule, please contact your BC or CS.

Logging Attendance

- All employees are required to document their arrival and departure times daily including the exact start time and end time of the sessions.
- Employees are asked to take 15 minutes at the beginning of their session and at the end of their session to do administrative tasks (data sheets, paperwork).
- Employees can take a short break.
- During the administrative time or breaks, parents/caregivers are responsible for the child.



Parents/caregivers will sign the attendance log daily, confirming that the employee was present and worked for the hours entered on the log. If the information on the attendance log is inaccurate, please contact your BC or CS.

Transfer of Responsibility

- When children receive services at an agency/centre, parents must sign a transfer of responsibility at drop-off and pick-up times.
- This is a requirement of the Department of Education and Early Childhood to ensure the safety of our clients and to clarify responsibility during transition times.
- When dropping off a child, the parent/adult is responsible for the child until the form is signed and the child has been transferred to the scheduled employee. At pick-up time, the employee is responsible for the child until the form has been signed once again.

Overlaps

- Another BI may join the regular BI during a scheduled session to meet your child and become familiar with their programming for possible coverage in the event that your regular BI is absent.
- Overlaps also help BIs connect with their colleagues, grow in their knowledge and skills and help with staff absence.
- Overlaps will be discussed with you in advance.

Custody Disagreements Within the Family

Some families may go through separation and divorce, while having a child enrolled in our program. Should this be the case, our employees will work collaboratively with both parents to ensure that services can be delivered as planned. Our role is to focus on meeting the goals outlined in the Personalized Learning Plan.

In the event of a custody dispute:

- we will communicate information equally to both parents unless there is a court order in place, informing us of the contrary.
- we will not provide recommendations or opinions on parental abilities or on the impact of a separation on the child. This is not within our scope of responsibilities and practice.

VIVA's focus is the child and meeting the goals outlined in the PLP

Appendix A - Services in the Home

The child's home is a very natural learning environment and is an optimal setting for some children and families. Delivering services in the child's home allows our teams to work closely with parents and ensure that newly learned skills are generalized in the child's natural environment.

For services to be offered in the home, the following needs to be observed:

- Individuals in the home must follow Public Safety guidelines in the event of contagious illness.
- An adult over the age of 18 is in the home during sessions.
- The environment is smoke-free.
- The environment meets minimum safety standards: running water and functioning bathrooms and is adequately heated.
- The environment is determined to be a productive learning environment and a priority for the parents and clinical team.
- The home environment can adjust to having up to three employees at a time during supervision visits.
- There is a location for employees to park their vehicles.

In addition, parents and/or caregivers may be required to do some of the following to ensure the well-being of agency personnel:

- Contain pets from areas where the staff will be in while they are in your home (e.g., entryway, bathroom, rooms used to deliver services).
- Prevent siblings or other individuals from interfering with the session unless their involvement is a part of the plan.
- Limit guests during the time our employees work with your child.
- Remove extra toys or household items from the learning environment and sweep and/or vacuum the floor of the learning environment.
- Refresh the bathroom daily.
- Coordinate with the clinical team to determine necessary environmental modifications to support the child's learning such as: identifying an area free of electronics, removing or adding necessary furniture and toys, or eliminating distractions, etc.

VIVA's' employees may ask parents to connect to the home Wi-Fi to retrieve files and documents. Parents can accept or decline this.

Please note that during intake, a safety risk assessment questionnaire will be used for all families as VIVA has a duty to ensure a safe work environment for their staff.

Appendix B - Services in an ELC

VIVA can offer services in an ELC. When choosing an ELC, it is important to confirm that the childcare facility has suitable space should your child require one-on-one teaching. It is also crucial to have a discussion with the ELC team on the need to work collaboratively with VIVA Therapeutic Services.

Should your child receive services in an ELC, they may:

- be included with peers at all time
- receive a combination of supported inclusion and separate instruction
- receive only separate instruction in a one-on-one space within the ELC

The ideal level of inclusion and of structured teaching will be determined in the PLP and agreed upon by the family, VIVA and the ELC.

- the child needs to be registered and the tuition paid by the family. The ELC needs to agree to have VIVA's employees on site and support the goals defined in the PLP.
- a collaborative agreement involving VIVA, the parents and the childcare facility operator will need to be developed and signed prior to beginning services.

Why a Collaborative Agreement?



- Share information on the child's program focus, goals and strategies that can help lead to the child being happy, relaxed and engaged while learning.
- Space required to meet the goals outlined in the PLP . Should the child require one-on-one space to meet his PLP goals, can the ELC accommodate this requirement?
- Roles and responsibilities of the clinical team members and of the childcare facility operator and educators.
- Details on the lines of communication between the ELC operator, educators, and agency personnel.
- Protocol for communication in the event of any cancellations: e.g. Behaviour Interventionist.
- Plan for the child should agency employees cancel on a certain day.

The goal of the collaborative agreement is to set the stage for all team members to work together in the best interest of the child.

Appendix C - Services in an Agency

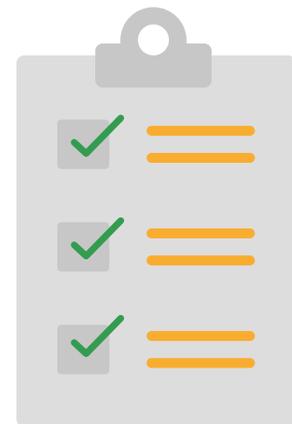
Some of our service locations offer agency-based services. If available in your region, this alternative can be used in special circumstances.

Your clinical team may recommend that your child receive services at the agency for a period, to achieve a specific goal. For example, a child who engages in aggressive behaviours may be seen at the agency until a plan can be developed and implemented.

Should this option be available in your area, your team will need to apply for a space for a maximum of three months. This will allow time to find a space in an alternate location.

Requirements:

- Snack
- Sunscreen (for locations with a playground)
- Indoor shoes
- Diapers and wipes (if applicable)
- Change of clothes
- Information on who can pick up the child
- Authorization to administer medication (if required)
- Emergency contact information



Appendix D: Health Guidelines

Parents are asked to cancel services if the child displays any of the following symptoms:

- Vomiting
- Fever
- Green discharge from sinus
- Diarrhea
- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) - the child must be receiving treatment for 48 hours and the eyes must be clear and free of discharge
- Impetigo - a bacterial skin infection - blistery rash that dries up to form a golden-colored crust - service resumes once child has been treated with antibiotic cream to the affected areas for a period of 24 hours
- Chicken Pox - all spots must be completely dried before services resume
- Strep Throat - the child must be on antibiotics for 48 hours before services resume



The above guidelines are provided by the New Brunswick government and are the standards that all childcare facilities are expected to follow.

If any of the above symptoms are apparent to the BI, the BI will contact their supervisor to determine if services should be canceled.

Administering medication

Parents will be responsible to administer all medications to children involved in a home based program.

If a child is to receive services in another location than the home, parents will have to complete a medication information sheet and medication authorization form. Medications will not be administered unless these forms are completed.

