

# CaFSA

Child and Family  
Supports Alliance NSW



## **Principles for Developing a NSW Foundational Supports System for Children with Developmental Differences, Delays, or Disability and their Families**

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# Introduction to CaFSA NSW

The **Child and Family Supports Alliance (CaFSA)**, is a collaborative body of leaders from NSW's mainstream and specialist community-based and not-for-profit sectors, including national parenting support initiatives. CaFSA was established to advocate for, design, and implement foundational supports systems tailored for children with developmental differences, delays, or disability and their families.

On May 23, 2024, seventeen leaders met at a roundtable to discuss guiding principles for foundational supports in NSW and nationally, informed by recommendations from the NDIS Review. Attendees represented various community-based not-for-profit stakeholders including early childhood education and care providers, early childhood intervention organisations, peer-led groups, researchers, and mainstream child and family service providers. Collectively, our trusted and established organisations work with over 182,000 children and families, including children with disability and many of our organisations have a broader reach through consultancy and support work. Collectively our organisations have operated for an average of 40 years.

## Purpose of the Roundtable and this Discussion Paper

The roundtable aimed to identify principles and priority areas essential for developing an effective foundational supports system that acknowledges the existing system of community-based organisations, including peer-led and national parenting support services. This gathering marked the initial phase of a broader engagement strategy that will leverage the expertise of various community-based organisations who are experienced and trusted in their local and online communities. The foundational supports system and broader ecosystem for children with developmental differences in NSW must be robust, inclusive, and adaptable. It must be based on the nationally recognised [Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention Guidelines \(2016\)](#) which will be updated in 2024.

**CaFSA recognises the need to collaborate in developing a supportive framework for foundational supports that benefits children and their families across NSW. This discussion paper is intended to present initial ideas regarding the design process and design of foundational supports. We look forward to feedback, collaboration and engagement with other valued stakeholders including sector colleagues, government, and families.**



**The Alliance is hosting the National Child and Family Foundational Supports Co-Design Forum in Canberra in August 2024.**

# Key Principles for Foundational Supports Design

CaFSA recommends a system-wide approach to Foundational Supports for young children and their families that incorporates the following key principles:

## **1. Utilisation of Existing NSW and National Services:**

Recognise and leverage the current deep experience and collaboration within the current service system to prevent duplication and fragmentation.

## **2. Seamless Integration:**

Ensure that foundational supports are seamlessly integrated into child and family services delivered by government and non-government organisations to avoid silos of support.

## **3. Timely Early Intervention and Early Childhood Intervention:**

Ensure best-practice, early intervention and early childhood intervention strategies and services are prioritised. Focus on the critical first 2,000 days of a child's life to enhance developmental outcomes by building the capacity of families to support their children.

## **4. Ease of Navigation and Accessibility:**

Implement a local community-based navigator role that builds on the organisations, services and resources that already exist and which are not seen to be part of a disability sector. This should be co-designed with CaFSA and other stakeholders to meet the unique needs of children and their families. This role will facilitate entry points and connections in trusted, place-based community-based settings, simplifying the navigation process for families, and making sure it avoids a replication of the existing NDIS systems that have been designed for adults.

## **5. Peer and Parent-Led Initiatives:**

Increase support for peer work and parent-led organisations, recognising the value of lived experience and direct family involvement in service design and delivery.

## **6. Equitable Service Model:**

Prioritise a mix of funding approaches which align to a range of program types. This will provide greater continuity of support for the community by promoting collaborative approaches which also can be evaluated against outcomes nationally. The model must be underpinned by a workforce with competencies in early childhood development, family-centred practice and ensure equitable access and integrated services across the educational, health, and social sectors.

## Opportunities and Recommendations

The roundtable highlighted several opportunities including the need for collaboration to hear diverse views, and addressing the complexity and inequities of the service system. To address these, CaFSA recommends the following:

### **• Broad Stakeholder Engagement and Co-design:**

Continuously engage with the broad range of stakeholders, including CaFSA, in the co-design process to ensure that services meet the diverse needs of children and families.

### **• Flexible and Inclusive Services:**

Design services that are family-friendly, not time-limited, have broad eligibility criteria, and are easy to access, ensuring they are informed by the unique needs of diverse groups including First Nations people, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, socio-economically disadvantaged, regional, rural and remote communities, and LGBTQI+ people

### **• Resource Allocation:**

Secure adequate funding and resources to support specialised foundational supports to ensure timely access and continuity of service to children and their families. Continuity of funding will help ensure that service providers are well-equipped and trained to flexibly meet local conditions.

THIS PAPER HAS BEEN DEVELOPED BY THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF THE

## Child and Family Supports Alliance NSW



IN COLLABORATION WITH THE

## Early Childhood Intervention Best Practice Network

