

Enhanced income management referral - policy

Department of Education and Training

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Read this document with the Enhanced income management referral - procedure.

1. Introduction

A quality education supports the development of the skills and capabilities that people need to contribute to the Northern Territory's economic and social future. Success in education can lead to improved self-esteem and personal empowerment, better health and wellbeing, enhanced employment opportunities, and more choices in life. A quality education is not possible without regular school attendance.

The *Education Act 2015* (the Act) states that a child becomes of compulsory school age on 1 January of the year in which, as on 30 June, they are 6 years of age. Compulsory school aged children must be enrolled in a Northern Territory (NT) Government school or a registered non-government school and attend the school each school day, or each part of a school day, on which the school is open for instruction. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age when the first of the following occurs:

- the child completes year 10 of secondary education and participates on a full-time basis in an eligible option
- the child completes year 10 of secondary education and is exempt from participating in an eligible option
- the child reaches 17 years of age.

The Department of Education and Training (department) is committed to raising school attendance and holding parents accountable. The department works with families to actively promote attendance and foster relationships with families, children and young people to ensure satisfactory enrolment and attendance. The Act authorises persons to conduct a variety of enforcement measures to assist in achieving this obligation.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the Enhanced income management referral policy is to:

- ensure referrals are conducted in accordance with the applicable legislation, including the Education Act 2015 and the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999* (Cth)
- provide clear guidance to staff, parents and students on the legislative basis, criteria, processes and requirements for referrals to eIM and monitoring and review requirements
- detail support provisions available to parents who may be subject to referrals to eIM.

3. Scope

The policy applies to all:

- parents of school-aged children and young people enrolled in Northern Territory schools, including distance education centres, eligible options and flexible education programs
- department staff, including school staff.

4. Policy

Referrals to Services Australia for compulsory income management under the child protection measure of enhanced income management (eIM) as legislated in section 123SCA of the Social Security (Administration)

Act 1999 (Cth) are a means for the department to assist in managing cases of non-compliance with the enrolment and attendance requirements of the Act.

The department is committed to protecting all children and young people and upholding the rights of every child. The NT commitment to child safety is underpinned by various policies and practices and all departmental staff play a role. The department's Enhanced income management policy and procedure are aimed at ensuring every child is supported to attend school and engage in education and learning.

As a re-engagement strategy, the department will use referrals to eIM to:

- Promote personal responsibility to ensure children attend school, responsible parenting and positive social norms with regards to participation in education.
- Strengthen families by ensuring that income support payments are spent on the essentials of life and in the interests of children, including attendance at school where finances may be evidenced as a contributing factor.
- Enhance financial literacy by helping people to budget and encourage their access to financial management support services, where this is evidenced to impact on attendance at school and engagement in education and learning.

The eIM program can help people budget their income support payments. Under the child protection measure of eIM, 70% of a person's fortnightly income support payment from Services Australia is income managed. It cannot be spent on excluded items, such as tobacco, alcohol, or gambling. Further, it cannot be used to withdraw cash or obtain cash like products. The period of eIM referral can be for 3, 6, 9 or 12 months, but may be revoked earlier.

Effective referrals to eIM are part of a wider, educative and supportive approach that provides individuals with the ability to plan, set limits and prioritise necessities, such as their children's school attendance.

4.1. Referral to enhanced income management

Section 123SCA of the Social Security (Administration) Act 1999 (Cth) provides that a person may be subject to referral for consideration under the child protection measure of eIM. Services Australia requires that:

- the customer be referred for welfare quarantining by an approved State or Territory Child Protection Authority
- the customer or their partner must be receiving an eligible welfare payment
- the customer is not already quarantined under a higher measure in hierarchy of enhanced income management measures.

4.2. Criteria for referral

Referrals to Services Australia for compulsory income management under the Child protection measure for enhanced income management (eIM) as legislated in section 123SCA of the Social Security (Administration) Act 1999 (Cth) are an additional means available to the department to assist in managing cases of non-compliance with the enrolment and attendance requirements of the Act.

School attendance officers, appointed under section 166A of the Act, may refer a parent to Services Australia under the child protection measure of eIM as a strategy to improve school attendance for those students with evidenced, sustained absenteeism from school.

This includes students in the following cohorts:

- Intensive support roll students: these are students who have recorded 20 or more consecutive days of unnotified or unacceptable absences.
- Zero attenders: these are students who are enrolled in a NT school but have an attendance rate of 0%.
- Students with evidenced chronic absenteeism: defined as an attendance rate of less than 20%.

Referrals to eIM are part of the broader continuum of supports that departmental staff provide to chronically disengaged students, as outlined in the cohorts above. For detailed stakeholder roles, responsibilities, and processes, refer to the Attendance procedure and Intensive support roll guideline.

For a detailed breakdown of the evidence required to refer a parent to eIM for the cohorts above, refer to the Enhanced income management referrals procedure.

4.3. Monitoring and review

The department will monitor the attendance of those students whose families have been referred to eIM. The data collected will inform decisions around revoking referrals to eIM.

4.4. Review or appeal of a decision

The parent has 20 days, from the date of notification of their placement under the child protection measure of eIM, to lodge a request for review to the Director of Student Attendance and Engagement. The director will review the case and endeavour to finalise the review within 30 days from the time it was lodged.

The department must give written notice of the decision of the decision to the applicant.

Director Student Attendance and Engagement
Telephone: 0455 658 5121
Support hotline: 1800 206 317 (free to call)
Email: se.doe@education.nt.gov.au

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1. Principals

Principals must:

- implement whole-school strategies to address low attendance or non-attendance, and support reintegration for students following extended absences, such as modified timetables or flexible education programs
- work collaboratively with school attendance officers and student engagement advisors to support students return to the classroom.

5.2. Teachers

Teachers must:

- implement a range of strategies and approaches to support student engagement and re-engagement, including building positive, welcoming classrooms by modelling expected

behaviours, strengthening relationships with students and families, and maintaining consistent communication that promotes attendance and active participation

- track and record attendance and work collaboratively with school-based and corporate attendance and engagement staff to address attendance concerns in a timely manner.

5.3. Assistant Directors Student Attendance and Engagement

Assistant Directors Student Attendance and Engagement will:

- provide operational guidance and advice to school attendance officers on eIM referrals
- approve parents of zero attenders and chronically disengaged students to be referred for eIM and triage them to the appropriate school attendance officer for eIM assessment
- triage cases of eIM referral to an appropriate student engagement advisor for intensive case management and coordination, if required.

5.4. School attendance officers

School attendance officers will:

- ensure that a person satisfies all statutory requirements for referral to eIM as set out in section 4.1 utilising the Services Australia online portal, Business Hub
- refer parents of students on the intensive support roll to eIM in line with the Enhanced income management procedure
- seek approval from their assistant director to refer the parent or carer of a zero attender or chronically disengaged student for eIM in line with the Enhanced income management procedure
- lodge any requests to recommend an extension or revoke a referral for Services Australia eIM through Business hub
- monitor attendance and enrolment data of students to assess the impact of eIM.

5.5. Student engagement advisors

Student engagement advisors are responsible for complex case management and the coordination of services to parents and school aged students who have been identified as being disengaged from schooling, with the aim of re-engagement into education, training, or an eligible option. Their role works primarily with students who are at risk of disengaging, as well as those students who are on the intensive support roll.

Student engagement advisors will:

- work with parents and students to develop a student attendance plan that outlines clear milestones to reengage with education
- outline in the student's student attendance plan the other supports that will be put in place alongside eIM to ensure regular school attendance, where applicable
- conduct regular reviews of the student's progress against the milestones and timeframes set out in the student attendance plan
- complete and record engagement and compliance activities in the department's Student Enrolment, Attendance and Truancy (SEAT) database.

5.6. Engagement Programs, Policy and Performance

Deliver training and professional development to school attendance officers and student engagement advisors, including:

- Authorised persons training, including legislative functions under the Act
- provide policy and procedure advice for referrals to eIM in line with the department policy instruments
- provide professional practice guidance and advice around cultural responsiveness and safety through the Aboriginal Professional Practice Advisors.

6. Definitions

Table 1 - Definitions of key terms

Term	Definition
Authorised persons	A police officer, school attendance officer, or other person authorised by the Chief Executive to enforce enrolment, attendance and participation requirements set out in section 167 of the Act.
Child	A person under the age of 18 years as defined at section 5 of the Act.
Chronic absenteeism	Signifies that a student has an attendance rate that is less than 20%.
Compulsory school age	Six years of age on or before the 30 June of the school year. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age when the first of the following occurs: • they have completed year 10 and are participating in an eligible option • they have completed year 10 and are exempt from participating in an eligible option they have reached 17 years of age.
Compulsory school attendance	A student of compulsory school age must attend school each school day, or each part of a school day, on which instruction is provided for the student.
Compulsory school enrolment	Signifies that a child who is of compulsory school age whose usual place of residence is in the Northern Territory must be enrolled in a Government school or a non-Government school registered under Part 7 of the Act, or has been approved by the CE to receive home education under section 46 of the Act.
Enhanced income management	A regime under which a portion of an individual's income support payments from the Department of Social Services, through Services Australia, are transferred to an enhanced income management account. Money in that bank account is spent using a SmartCard, and cannot be used to purchase prescribed products, such as alcohol, tobacco, gambling products, pornographic material or withdraw or access cash-like products.
Parent	A child's father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for that child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander customary law or tradition. The definition of a parent does not include a person standing in place of the parent on a temporary basis.

Term	Definition
Parental responsibility	Signifies that the person: • has daily control and care of the child • is entitled to exercise all the powers and rights in relation to, and has full responsibility for all aspect of, the long-term care and development of the child • has daily care and control of the child, and the entitlement and responsibilities mentioned above • a person who has been given the above responsibilities under the law of another jurisdiction.
Regular attendance	Signifies that a student has an attendance rate of 60% or higher.
School attendance officer	A person appointed under section 166A of the Act with the following functions: • to monitor and enforce compliance with provisions of the Act relating to school attendance • to provide information and advice on matters relating to school attendance • to conduct community education and awareness programs relating to school attendance • to perform any other function conferred on a school attendance officer under the Act.

7. Related legislation, policy and resources

7.1. Legislation

Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/CARE-AND-PROTECTION-OF-CHILDREN-ACT-2007>

Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007 - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/DOMESTIC-AND-FAMILY-VIOLENCE-ACT-2007>

Education Act 2015 - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/EDUCATION-ACT-2015>

Education Regulations 2015 - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/EDUCATION-REGULATIONS-2015>

Information Act 2002 - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/INFORMATION-ACT-2002>

Public Sector Employment Management Act 1993 - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/PUBLIC-SECTOR-EMPLOYMENT-AND-MANAGEMENT-ACT-1993>

Social Security (Administration) Act 1999 (Cth) - <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A00580/latest/text>

7.2. Policy

Attendance procedures - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment#attendance>

Attendance recording and reporting procedures - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment>

Distance education enrolment procedures - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment/enrolment>

Enhanced income management referrals procedure - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/policies/8346>

Enrolment and attendance birth to year 12 policy - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment>

Enrolment and attendance enforcement procedures - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment/enrolment>

Enrolment procedures - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment/enrolment>

Enrolment in special schools and special centres - guidelines - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment/enrolment>

Exemptions from attendance procedures - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment>

Intensive support roll guideline - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment#intensive>

Prosecution procedures - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/policies/5194>

7.3. Resources

Cultural responsiveness framework - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/supporting-staff/workforce-support/cultural-responsiveness-framework>

Education engagement plan – template - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/supporting-staff/student-inclusion-and-engagement/student-attendance-and-engagement-programs-and-0#resources27241>

Acronyms	Full form
eIM	Enhanced income management
NT	Northern Territory
SEA	Student Engagement Advisor
SEAT	Student Engagement, Attendance and Truancy

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