MyTime Coordinator Manual

SUPPORTED BY:
Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Parenting Research Centre
raising children well

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Questions, suggestions or concerns should be directed to the MyTime team at the Parenting Research Centre.

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For more information and support, please visit the MyTime website

www.mytime.net.au

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Section 1 – About MyTime

What is MyTime?

MyTime is a national program of facilitated peer support groups for parents and family carers of children with a disability, developmental delay or chronic medical condition. Peer support groups provide an opportunity for people in similar circumstances to meet, socialise, share experiences, support each other and connect with local services. There are over 200 MyTime groups nationally, attended by approximately 3000 parents and carers.

The program was established in 2007 and is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services. The Parenting Research Centre (PRC) developed the program and manages it across Australia. The PRC delivers implementation support to a network of regional partner agencies that deliver other services in parenting, disability, family support or raising children with additional needs. These partner agencies coordinate local providers to deliver the MyTime groups. Coordinators, employed by the partner agencies, have responsibility for the agencies' MyTime groups and are the primary contact point between the PRC and MyTime facilitators.

Why MyTime peer support?

People with a disability and their families are among the most disadvantaged in Australia. Mothers, fathers and other family carers of children with complex needs experience intense pressure trying to meet the demands, and social isolation affects them disproportionally. Social integration and the quality and extent of social networks affect health via many pathways. As a result, quality of life, life satisfaction, and mental and physical wellbeing are all at risk in these families.

Parents who have chronically ill children, or who have had dealings with social or health services, say there are a number of things that would make their lives easier. These include:

- feeling normal and understood
- information and advice
- a sense of control
- social support
- links to resources and effective help
- an outlet for expressing distress, doubts and weaknesses without being judged.

Interaction with people in similar circumstances can reduce feelings of stigma and isolation. Peers can provide knowledge and experience, and emotional, social and practical help to each other. However, simply providing opportunities to interact with others may not ensure high-quality support, particularly as parents find it hard to justify looking after themselves among competing priorities. Formal support groups are one way of increasing available social support.

Facilitated peer support provides all the benefits of peer support, but with the addition of a facilitator. A skilled facilitator ensures groups run smoothly, that they accommodate a variety of experiences and communication styles, accommodate members at different stages of adjustment to a diagnosis, and adapt to new members joining the group. Facilitated peer support also ensures groups have access to the best possible evidence-based resources.

Participation in a peer support group allows caregivers to interact with others who share similar challenges, and can help meet the needs listed above.

Who can come to MyTime

Parents and family carers

MyTime is for parents and family carers of children under 18 years of age who need a higher level of care than other children. These parents and carers can register for MyTime if they are eligible to receive the Carer Allowance for their child under 18. Parents and carers who have a child still undergoing diagnosis can also register. Parents and carers who have applied for the Carer Allowance, and have been denied it on the basis of the level of care required, cannot register to attend MyTime. Parents and carers who have been denied the Carer Allowance on the basis of something other than the diagnosis may register for MyTime.

Members' preschool-age children

MyTime members can bring any of their preschool-age children to MyTime sessions, including siblings of their child(ren) with special needs. If any children are present at a session, at least one play helper also attends, but MyTime does not run as a playgroup or provide a childcare service. MyTime participants and their children are accommodated on the same premises, and parents and carers remain responsible for their children at all times.

At times, some MyTime groups may run without play helpers, particularly if the group meets on the weekend or after hours. Coordinators should discuss this with PRC.

Older children

MyTime sessions are set up to cater for young children and may not have the space or equipment to adequately engage older children. Also, older children are more likely to be able to understand what takes place in the group, potentially restricting members' open sharing and discussion. Groups accept members' school-age children at the discretion of the facilitator and the coordinator. This may depend on factors such as venue, number of play helpers, and the child's needs. If a member requests that a school-age child attend a group, and that is not possible, the facilitator should clearly explain the reasons for that decision to the member. Facilitators must also let their coordinator know of the request and the reason for the decision.

Guests

Generally, if someone is not eligible to join MyTime but wants to attend, they are free to attend as a guest. Attendance of guests, such as babysitters and grandparents, is also at the discretion of the facilitator and coordinator, and the decision-making process should be fair and equitable. Facilitators will not exclude any guest without first discussing the issue with their coordinator. Where a decision is made to not permit a guest to attend, the facilitator or coordinator must give a clear and reasonable explanation of the reasons for that decision to the member involved. Members take priority over guest if groups approach maximum capacity.

What about groups for specific people?

Rather than having dedicated groups for specific people (for example, parents and carers of teens or children with autism) groups are open to all eligible parents and carers, regardless of what sort of special needs their child has. There are some MyTime groups for specific types of carers, such as Melbourne Men's, located in areas well covered by existing groups. In areas where a targeted group exists, people from that target population are still welcome to join the other MyTime group: for example, a dad from Melbourne could choose to join either Melbourne Men's or Melbourne MyTime.

MyTime program aims

People with a disability and their families are among the most disadvantaged in Australia. Mothers, fathers and other family carers of children with complex needs experience intense pressure trying to meet the demands, and social isolation affects them disproportionally. As a result, quality of life, life satisfaction, and mental and physical wellbeing are all at risk in these families.

Social integration and the quality and extent of social networks affect health via many pathways. Formal support groups are one way of increasing available social support.

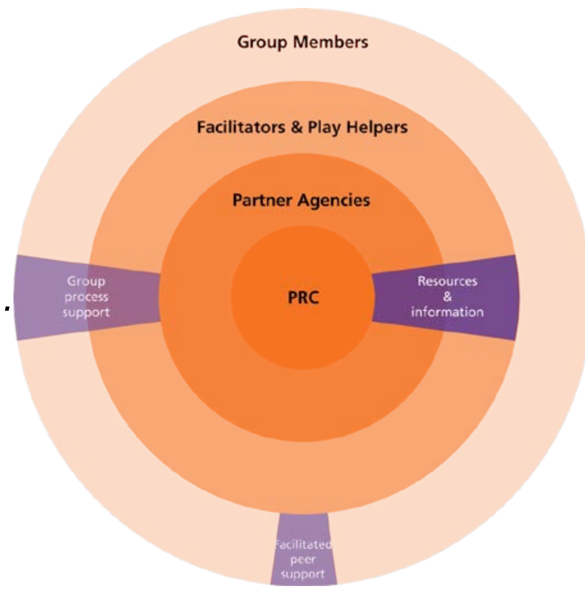
The aims of the MyTime program are that parents or carers participating in the facilitated peer support groups:

1. Develop supportive relationships with other parents and carers
2. Form stronger links with the broader community, including service agencies and other appropriate networks
3. Gain an increased knowledge of, and confidence in, caring for children with a disability or chronic medical condition
4. Feel supported in their caring role.

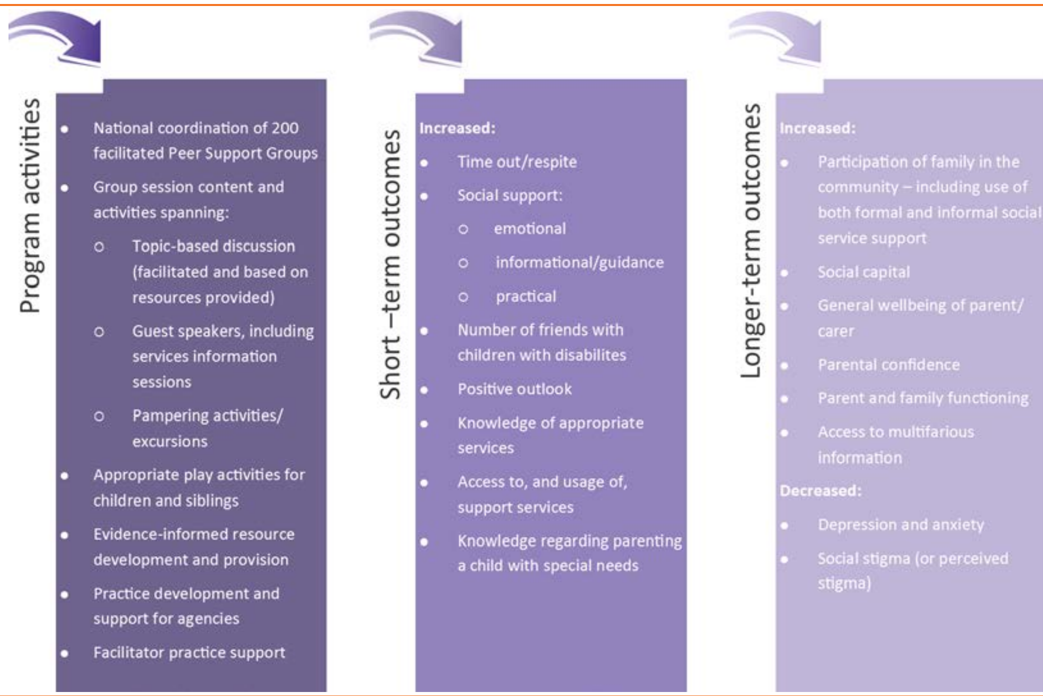
See section 2 for more detail.

MyTime program logic

The MyTime logic model illustrates how PRC, as the national coordinator, directly and indirectly supports state-wide partner agencies, as well as individual facilitators and play helpers.



The program logic presented in diagram 2 shows the key elements of MyTime's support, as well as the program inputs and outcomes.


Program activities
National coordination of 200 facilitated Peer Support Groups
Group session content and activities spanning:
Topic-based discussion (facilitated and based on resources provided)
Guest speakers, including services information sessions
Pampering activities/ excursions
Appropriate play activities for children and siblings
Evidence-informed resource development and provision
Practice development and support for agencies
Facilitator practice support
Short –term outcomes
Increased:
Time out/respite
Social support:
emotional
informational/guidance
practical
Number of friends with children with disabilites
Positive outlook
Knowledge of appropriate services
Access to, and usage of, support services
Knowledge regarding parenting a child with special needs
Longer-term outcomes
Increased:
Participation of family in the community – including use of both formal and informal social service support
Social capital
General wellbeing of parent/ carer
Parental confidence
Parent and family functioning
Access to multifarious information
Decreased:
Depression and anxiety
Social stigma (or perceived stigma)

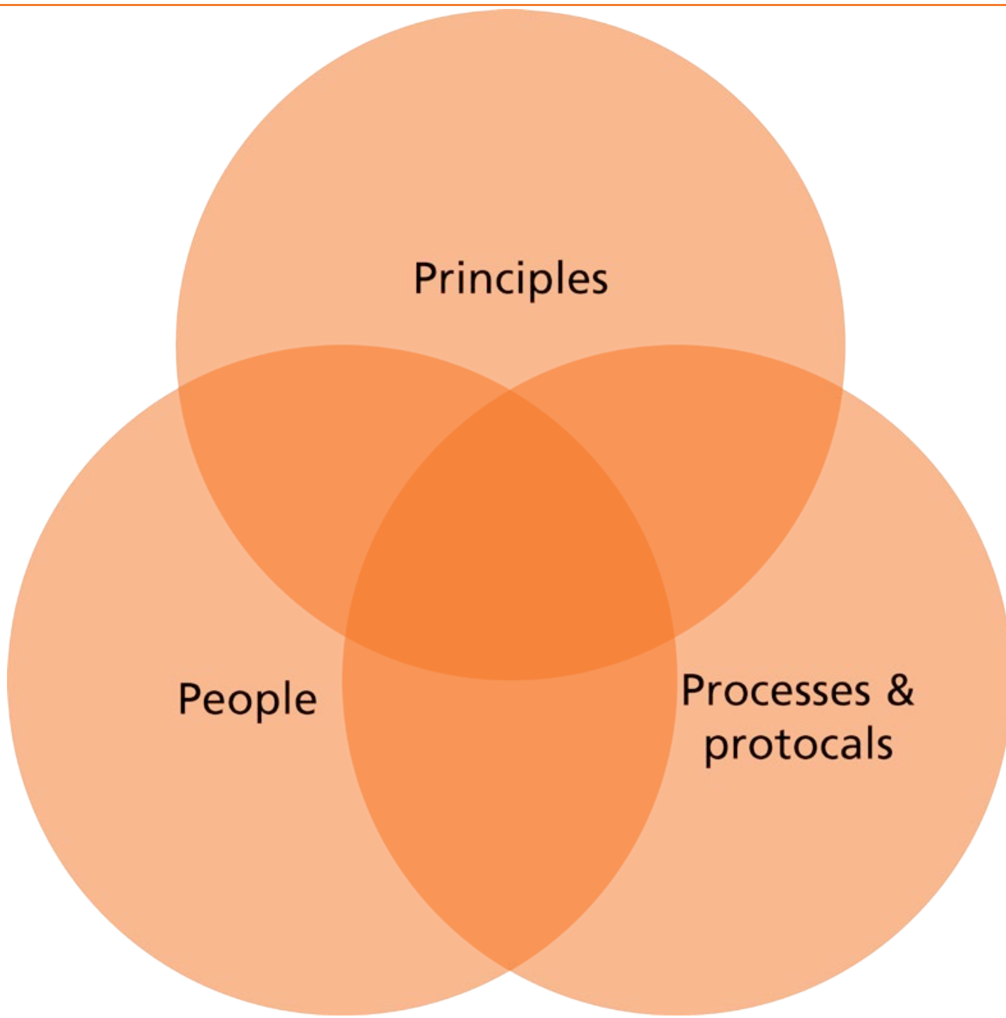
Who does what in MyTime?

Coordinator	• Is responsible for managing overall group delivery • Suggests group locations to PRC. Selects group venue • Manages and supports facilitators and play helpers • Reports against delivery requirements
Facilitator	• Recruits and engages members • Manages the group administration • Organises guest speakers
Parenting Research Centre	• Liaises with program funders • Manages program-wide systems and products • Supports groups by providing resources and information • Supports the practice and development of facilitators • Carries out evaluation and research on the program
Play helper	• Runs activities and games with children attending • Engages preschool-age children

The Coordinator is responsible for monitoring the delivery of the program and working with facilitators to ensure they are adhering to the MyTime program logic.

Section 2 – The MyTime framework – Principles

The MyTime framework consists of three core elements: Principles, People and Processes. The section below details each element and how they intersect to fulfil the MyTime program.



Principles

To achieve the four MyTime program aims (see **section 1**), program partners should address the underlying principles.

Principles supporting aim 1: Develop supportive relationships with other parents and carers

- Groups are helping not harming: Groups create a safe and supportive environment and provide constructive advice.
- Group collaboration: Develop activities in collaboration/partnership with members.
- Relationships in the groups are primarily with peers rather than professionals: The facilitator and play helper support groups to become self-directing.
- Groups run smoothly and everyone feels involved: Facilitators monitor and support groups to set and pursue their own agendas, while always remaining present and available to the group.
- Mutual support and respect amongst members: A welcoming and open invitation to all eligible parents and carers.

Principles supporting aim 2: Form stronger links with the broader community, including service agencies and other appropriate networks

- Strong local connections: Facilitators have strong local connections.
- Collaboration: The collaborative MyTime network of local delivery, cross-agency connections via partner agencies, and national support of the partner agency structure.
- Build capacity at a member and community level: MyTime support is designed to increase social connectedness for members – linking community members with each other and also with other local services and supports.

Principles supporting aim 3: Increase members' knowledge of, and confidence in, caring for children with a disability or chronic medical condition

- Access to evidence-based material: Facilitators use reliable, high-quality materials, provided by the PRC.
- Support for evidence-based practice: Partner agencies and facilitators support continuous MyTime program evaluation.
- Support for working with local services: Partner agencies have strong links with services in their areas. Partner agency coordinators are encouraged to share their insights with facilitators and colleagues in other partner agencies.

- Develop skills, knowledge and practice of the agencies: The support of evidence-informed practice in agencies will ensure that facilitators and attending members benefit from well-established, best-practice facilitation.

Principles supporting aim 4: Ensure members feel supported in their carer role

- Develop social networks: Peers develop good connections with people in similar situations.
- Build local capacity: Partner agencies provide supporting information to members as needed, and connect members with other local services and supports.

Section 3: The MyTime Framework – People

Parenting Research Centre

The Parenting Research Centre seeks better outcomes for children by increasing effectiveness and innovation in the way families are supported in their parenting.

Our focus is on delivering tailored, outcomes-focused solutions based on the best available evidence. We do this by working collaboratively with our clients: governments and community organisations in the fields of health, education, welfare, disability, child protection and family support.

The Parenting Research Centre is a leading intermediary organisation that brings scientific rigour to the practical task of improving the quality and effectiveness of services and supports provided to children and families. We are an independent, nonprofit organisation supported by government funding and fee for service.

The PRC, contracted by the Department of Social Services (DSS), is the national coordinator for MyTime, and it works with partner agencies to:

- enhance local capacity of the groups
- ensure local groups are well-resourced, and
- ensure ongoing sustainability of groups.

The PRC's priority is to achieve a full complement of well-attended groups, and that the groups delivered meet the four program aims. The PRC works with partner agencies to monitor group performance and to ensure all groups perform to their best potential.

PRC Responsibilities include:

- Developing the MyTime program model, guided by feedback and suggestions from partner agencies, DSS, and external evaluators
- Providing practice support for facilitators and play helpers to ensure compliance with the MyTime model, and to encourage support among program staff
- Program-specific training and orientation
- Providing practice support for partner agencies to help them support facilitators and play helpers

- Providing opportunities for partner agency coordinators, facilitators, and play helpers to share expertise and experience
- Providing national promotion and media, and support local promotion via partner agencies
- Sourcing and generating high-quality, evidence-based materials for members, facilitators, and play helpers
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the MyTime program.

Partner agency (or Coalition Lead Agency)

A partner agency is the principal agency contracted by the PRC to establish and maintain MyTime groups. The partner agency will also manage, support and monitor the provision of the MyTime groups within its area. While partner agencies may choose to subcontract to external agencies to deliver one or more of their groups, the partner agency is responsible for ensuring that subcontractors are suitable, and that the groups are delivered in line with the aims and principles of the MyTime program.

The partner agency is responsible for determining local need for MyTime groups, and uses its professional links to promote regional recruitment of members and group sustainability.

This is best achieved in consultation with PRC.

The partner agency also ensures these groups are appropriately located to assist participation of eligible parents and carers in the program.

The partner agency sets up and coordinates group delivery, as well as recruiting and employing a skilled and experienced person as the partner agency coordinator. The partner agency acts as the primary liaison between the PRC and the partner agency's groups.

Partner Agency Responsibilities include:

Attendance and session delivery

- Ensuring each MyTime group session is resourced by:

- a paid facilitator who is registered with the program prior to engagement in their first paid session
- a paid or voluntary play helper for all groups with below school-aged children who is registered with the program prior to engagement in their first paid session

- Supporting facilitators and play helpers
- Supporting facilitators to recruit and register members
- Ensuring facilitators are aware of both their responsibilities and their boundaries in MyTime groups
- Being aware of the topics covered in groups and the activities that take place
- Ensuring minimum group attendance targets
- Collecting program data and providing to the PRC as agreed
- Ensuring groups meet session hour delivery and attendance targets

Sub-contracting arrangements Partner agencies should carefully consider sub-contracting arrangements before proceeding, ensuring contracted deliverables with PRC continue to be met. It is the Partner Agency's responsibility to ensure formal sub-contracting arrangements have been put in place.

Coordinator responsibility includes:

- Communicating program responsibilities to any subcontracted agencies and ensuring groups run in accordance with the aims and principles of the MyTime program
- Ensuring group data is received and entered on time
- Ensuring participation in PRC internal process, including continuous quality improvement activities
- Administering session payments to any subcontracted partner agencies
- Funding groups as needed, provided KPIs are met (that is, number of groups, minimum attendance per group, number of hours per quarter, number of members per partner agency)

Administrative

- Keeping the partner agency website up to date with relevant MyTime information and group details
- Ensuring venues are safe and appropriate. This includes completing a venue risk assessment (see glossary for definition and guidelines on conducting an assessment) and ensuring appropriate insurance coverage
- Assisting in, either, making the venue safe or finding an alternative venue (if a venue is considered unsafe for use by the PRC or the partner agency)
- Ensuring compliance with WorkSafe practices, including emergency management processes
- Providing a contact person within the organisation during business hours for public inquiries

Coordinators are encouraged to review the full Services Agreement document to clearly understand the program deliverables.

Partner agency coordinators

Each partner agency employs a coordinator to work collaboratively with the PRC and the partner agency/ies to develop, promote and sustain the program. The partner agency coordinator is the primary liaison person between the groups, facilitators and the PRC.

Coordinators must have appropriate qualifications, according to the agency's hiring standards, and will be provided with a role description outlining duties and expectations. Experience in disability and family support work is desirable.

Coordinator Responsibilities include:

Establishing and maintaining strong collaborative links between all program partners, including:

- Ensuring group facilitators are engaged and aware of their responsibility to keep all MyTime members and participants informed of activities, special events and/or changes to session operations (especially session times and venue)
- Contributing to the development and implementation of the MyTime state/territory plan to ensure a good geographical spread of groups, their

location in areas where similar services do not already exist, and enhanced Indigenous and CALD program accessibility

- Taking reasonable steps to ensure MyTime groups are run to required standards and according to the aims and principles of the MyTime program
- Documenting and distributing processes and procedures, and ensuring they are understood by relevant parties
- Working with the PRC and coordinators to ensure continuous improvement of the MyTime program
- Communicating any changes to all partner agency stakeholders
- Maintaining sound administrative practices and ensuring all data regarding the program is correctly recorded and stored in accordance with National Privacy Principles (Privacy Act 1988)
- Ensuring all reports, invoices and requests for data are met on time and are satisfactory
- Taking responsibility for the monitoring and distribution of MyTime program funds to groups and provider agencies.

Maintaining the sustainable development of the MyTime groups within the partner agency by:

- Ensuring the facilitators and play helpers have appropriate qualifications, according to the partner agency's hiring standards
- Ensuring the facilitators and play helpers understand the MyTime aims and principles
- Ensuring the facilitators and play helpers have completed a Working with Children Check (WWCC) and have obtained a current WWCC clearance for the state/territory in which the MyTime group is taking place
- Ensuring facilitators have completed the MyTime facilitator orientation training before working at their first MyTime session (this includes awareness of the MyTime resources, program orientation, and that this information is recorded and reported to the PRC)
- Ensuring MyTime venues are risk assessed and adhere to program standards and OHS requirements
- Supporting facilitators and play helpers to access and understand program resources and information (including how resources and information can be

used meaningfully within a peer support context and how to promote MyTime to the wider community)

- Supporting facilitators to develop and implement locally-relevant strategies to encourage MyTime member recruitment, registration and session participation. *Coordinators should be aware of all pending media activity in relation to their groups, and consult with PRC prior to publication*
- Assisting facilitators to increase attendance through awareness campaigns and activities
- Helping facilitators and play helpers to develop strategies to create and maintain healthy group dynamics (including, addressing and resolving conflict, and raising issues with partner agency senior management, or the PRC, where necessary)
- Supporting and promoting (to facilitators and MyTime members) the importance of MyTime program evaluation, and other research and data-collecting strategies, to inform the ongoing development of the program
- Ensuring that facilitators and play helpers inform MyTime members and participants that, while the play helpers engage children in activities during MyTime sessions, parents and carers are responsible for the care of their children at all times.
- Monitoring session content and reporting on the status of groups, including:
    - session delivery – including hours, session content, membership, attendance, CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples numbers
    - facilitators (when they join) – for specific details refer to the Partners area of the MyTime website
    - play helpers (on request) – for specific details refer to the Partners area of the MyTime website session content to the PRC
- Taking all reasonable steps to ensure the partner agency's MyTime promotional material is appropriately branded (refer to branding guidelines for details found the in the Partners area of the MyTime website)
- Providing the contact details of a person to contact during business hours when they are not available
- Attending PRC state and national Forums.

The coordinator is expected to be available to PRC between 8.30am and 5.30pm weekdays other than public holidays, or an alternative contact point must be established. This includes telephone and email contact where a response is expected within 2 business days.

Facilitators

A group facilitator is recruited and employed by the partner agency to manage, guide and support group processes. Facilitators also provide resources and information on local services and support. The MyTime program is intended to foster peer support and facilitators should, as much as is practicable, allow members to determine the content of individual sessions and discussion topics.

Facilitators are paid employees (volunteers are not permitted) and must have appropriate qualifications, according to the agency's hiring standards. Facilitators must complete PRC orientation and be registered with MyTime prior to the first session.

Facilitator Responsibilities include:

- Ensuring groups are open, inclusive, flexible, and culturally appropriate
- Assisting new members, making them feel welcome and helping them to complete a registration form
- Ensuring session content is relevant to group needs and interests, and to make appropriate use of MyTime resources
- Managing group dynamics and resolving conflict
- Assisting the partner agency coordinator to ensure the venue is safe and appropriate
- Keeping records of attendance and reporting the data to the coordinator
- Assisting with satisfaction surveys and evaluations
- Complying with partner agency training and upskilling requirements, and attending events paid for by the PRC
- Making use of orientation materials and information
- Ensuring parents remain responsible for children at all times during the MyTime session

- Building the knowledge and skills of the group by connecting with the local community and other support services within the area
- Promoting groups and attracting new members
- Maintaining the group as a welcoming and inviting space for new members and ensuring it is open to all eligible parents regardless of their child's diagnosis
- Managing and supporting group processes and providing resources for the group, without being overly directive
- Having clear rules and practices to promote safety and wellbeing of members
- Allowing members to support each other rather than providing personal support and/or quasi case-management
- Where the facilitator has another role in the agency – or has previously been a member of the group – understanding their specific MyTime facilitator role and the importance of maintaining boundaries
- Knowing how to access and using good evidence-based materials on issues of interest to members
- Distributing and promoting the use of MyTime materials and resources, as suggested and supplied by the PRC, to all participants.
- Ensure sessions meet session content, delivery and data recording requirements (see **Section 4. Group Sessions** for more information).
- Plan sessions in accordance with the MyTime model and the interests and wishes of the group members.

Play helpers

A play helper is recruited for any MyTime group – on a paid or voluntary basis – to ensure a safe children's activity environment, provide age-appropriate activities for children, and to work with the facilitator.

Play helpers must have appropriate qualifications, according to the agency's hiring standards, and will be provided with a role description outlining duties and expectations. Partner agencies will provide orientation and ongoing training at their own discretion.

Play Helper Responsibilities include:

- Advance planning of engaging and developmentally-appropriate activities and routines to keep children occupied during group time
- Checking the venue and following basic safety processes to ensure the safety of children in the group
- Communicating with parents in the group about the specific needs of their children so, as much as possible, their needs can be met
- Assisting the facilitator to set up and clean up.

Members

Members are parents and carers who are eligible for the Carer Allowance.

Members must complete a registration form by at least their third MyTime session.

Section 4: The MyTime Framework - Processes and protocols

Establishing a group

MyTime partner agencies are contracted to deliver a specified number of groups. Funding is based on that number of groups and is available for up to 64 hours per group per annum (or 16 hrs per quarter).

MyTime groups are established in specific suburbs based on consideration of local need and existing similar services. This supports the MyTime outcome of members' receiving social support beyond the group. Group names must be the name of the suburb, and for the case of groups that target specific members, an identifier may be added (eg. MyTime East Melbourne, or MyTime East Melbourne Men's).

Where there appears to be a need for a group in a new location, partner agencies may consider starting a group in that area if they are not already delivering their full complement of contracted groups. They may also consider closing or moving another group that has low attendance. Coordinators are encouraged to review locations of groups delivered by other Partner Agencies in their consideration of potential new group locations

PRC requires consultation with the MyTime Program Manager prior to the establishment of any new groups. At times, this process may be reviewed to support the overall management of the program. Partner agencies will be informed of any changes to current processes.

Groups may alternate between venues within a suburb when that suits members' needs, or change venues within the suburb if required.

A group cannot be 'split' across two or more geographic areas in order to meet need in those areas or enable a partner agency to deliver more groups than their contracted number. The allocation of 64 hours of group delivery time may not be used to deliver more than one group.

Targeted groups

At times Coordinators may identify a need for a targeted MyTime group. This may be for reasons including language, culture, Indigenous status / Aboriginality or sexuality.

Where a need has been identified, coordinators are required to present a brief proposal to PRC outlining: the need, reasons why the need cannot be met via mainstream MyTime groups, engagement strategy and the capacity of the partner agency to deliver this within their existing allocation of MyTime groups.

PRC will work with the Partner Agency in response to the identified need.

Promotions and engagement

The MyTime program is promoted, and awareness built, on a national level through the activities of the PRC. On a regional level, the PRC supports partner agencies to engage with potential members, and to promote the program. The PRC and partner agencies are working collaboratively, at all times, to refine strategies on both national and regional levels.

All MyTime partners are expected to build relationships with potential sources of referrals to groups. Facilitators and providers should develop relationships with local professionals who work with potential MyTime members (such as child care centers, allied health professionals, early childhood intervention services, and medical practitioners). Partner agencies should support facilitators and providers to build these relationships, as well as engaging with other partner agencies, and state-based disability support agencies.

Social media

No MyTime partner (facilitator, coordinator, play helper or provider) can start, run, or be a member of a private or closed social media group for their group's members. This includes Facebook, Instagram, Google Hangouts or Communities, YouTube channel, or any other group that hides content or membership from other users. This policy has been put in place to ensure:

- facilitators have a clear role within groups, that sits external to that of group members
- MyTime and all partners are protected against the perception of exclusion, bullying, or inappropriate conduct.

A group may want to start to communicate on social media, for example setting up a Facebook page, or group. The facilitator as part of this discussion, can talk about how to make sure nobody feels excluded. The facilitator is only to be a member of the group if it is an open forum. Facilitators need to consider:

- Are all of your members on the same social media platform?
- Are all members happy to be in a public group?
- How and when will new members be added?
- How and when will former members be removed?
- How will any potential issues or conflict be managed?

Where facilitators have identified an interest in using social media as a networking tool, this must be considered carefully by Coordinators. Social media platforms using personal accounts such as Facebook, are strongly discouraged. However there may be professional networking tools which could be explored such as LinkedIn groups, or Yammer. These must be carefully implemented, managed and have strict protocols to guide their usage.

All partner organisations must also be aware of their organisational policies about social media usage.

Member registration

Registration is a requirement of the MyTime program and participants who meet the eligibility criteria are encouraged to register as soon as they join a group. The number of registered members, along with how often they attend groups, is used to assess the success of groups (for example, fluctuating group numbers might indicate other issues or needs). Importantly, the PRC uses registered attendance numbers to report to DSS (the MyTime funding body).

The aim is to have all eligible participants register, however if any parents and carers show initial reluctance to provide information, it is possible to allow them to attend a couple of sessions before they register.

Parents and carers who do not register may continue to attend MyTime sessions as guests, but it must be with the general consent of the group, facilitator, partner agency, and the PRC; and only if group average attendance is below the relevant maximum. Parents and carers who do not register have no automatic right of attendance at MyTime. When group attendance is used to measure group viability, it is only the registered attendees who contribute to the overall attendance figures.

People who are not eligible for MyTime groups (for example, visitors) can still attend without being registered, but unregistered participants cannot be counted towards attendance targets. For example, grandparents – who are not in full care of the children but would like to be involved – cannot be included when reporting numbers.

If members have already provided the necessary registration information, and this information is recorded elsewhere (for example, if a partner agency has its own form that captures the same information), they do not need to fill out a second registration form. However, it is up to the partner agency coordinator to record the details into the member information section of the MyTime database.

Group sessions

Attendance

Each MyTime group comprises the minimum of 4, and up to 12, registered participants, and all registered participants have a child under the age of 18 and meet the eligibility criteria for the Carer Allowance.

Registered members should be given priority over visitors if groups reach maximum capacity.

Session requirements

Each funded MyTime group over a financial year will:

- Provide up to 64 hours of funded session time (depending on its start date), pro-rata by quarter (16 hours per quarter). This includes any time dedicated to establishing the group if it replaces an existing group.
- Distribute sessions across the financial year to coincide with a state's/territory's school terms, unless the PRC agrees otherwise. The default service model is 16 hours of session time per quarter.

Provide a minimum of 2 and no more than 4 hours in a single-funded session, unless otherwise agreed to by the PRC.

Session content

Group sessions must align with the MyTime logic model, in order to meet MyTime outcomes for parents (including social support, knowledge of services and parenting knowledge). As a guide, over the course of a term groups should aim to include roughly equal coverage of:

- structured topics (supported by evidence-based resources); guest speakers; information about available services
- general discussion ('coffee and chat')
- pampering activities

Groups may also organise occasional special events such as evening outings or Christmas parties.

What's recorded for reporting?

Key information is recorded for any session delivered under MyTime. This includes:

- registered attendees
- number of guests
- number of children, and
- content/activity relating to that session.
- Length of session

Group performance

The PRC's priority is to have a full complement of well-attended groups. The PRC will work with partner agencies to monitor the performance and outcomes of groups to ensure all groups perform to their best potential. The PRC uses a 'performance watch' system to identify groups in need of assistance.

Groups may move to performance watch if any of the following occurs:

- participant registration remains below the expected level
- participant feedback surveys show unsatisfactory trends.

The partner agency coordinator, in consultation with the PRC, determines the performance watch period with a typical duration of one term. During this time, the partner agency develops and implements strategies to assist groups to improve their performance.

If monitoring shows a group to be unsustainable, the PRC, in consultation with the partner agency, may close the group and reallocate the resources elsewhere.

Performance monitoring process

Both the PRC and its partner agencies will maintain ongoing performance monitoring through a range of methods, including:

- Regular discussion and meetings between PRC and MyTime coordinators (including monthly coordinator teleconferences).
- Review of quarterly data reports and six-monthly status reports.
- Monitoring the timeliness and content of data reporting, session details and invoicing.
- Consideration of coordinator responsiveness and collaboration. The MyTime performance monitoring approach assumes that most issues will be resolved without the need to take formal action.

To this end the PRC will promptly and respectfully identify any emerging performance issues and inform partner agencies of those as early as possible.

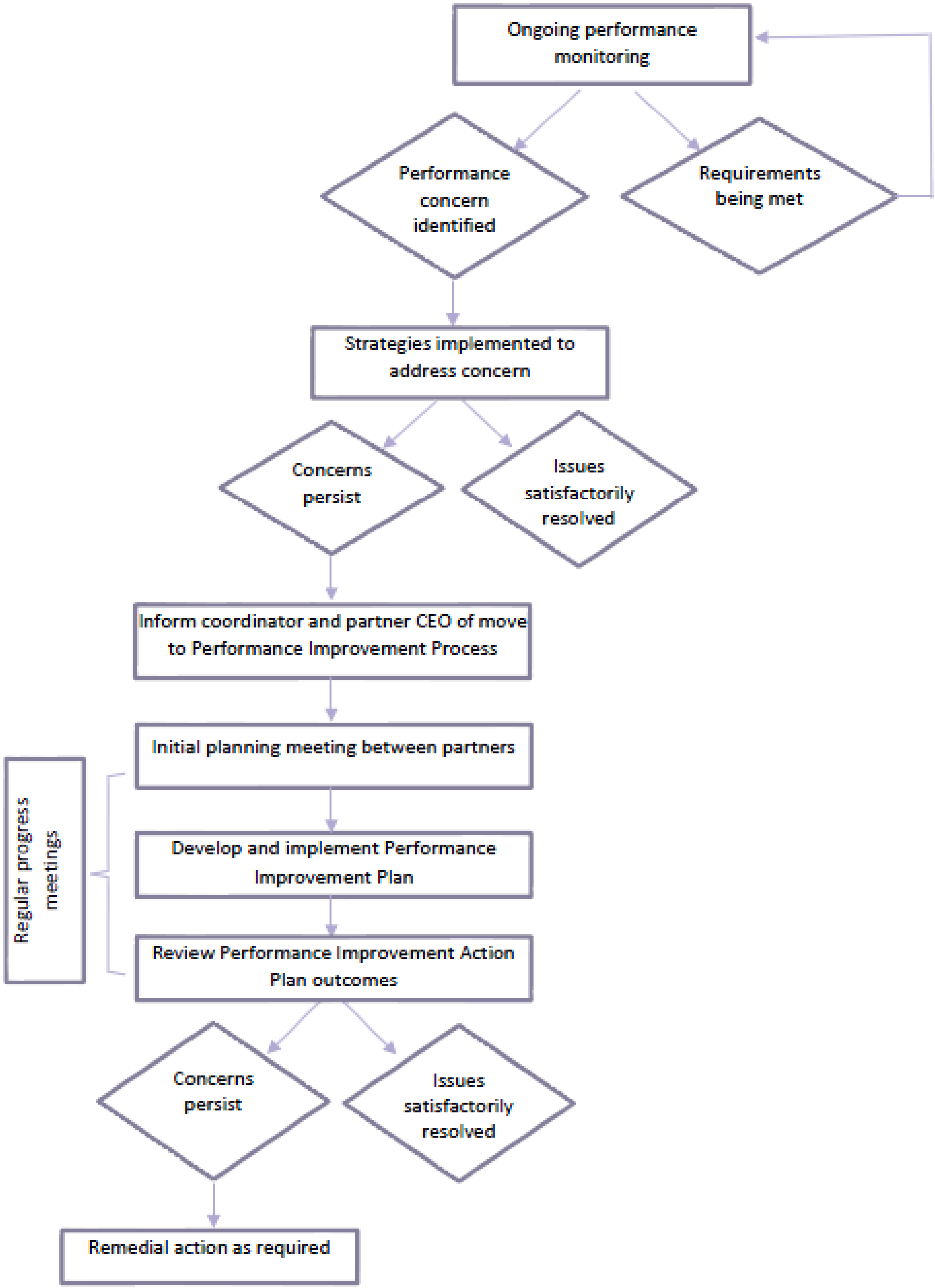
Where a performance concern is identified:

- the PRC will contact the MyTime coordinator about the concern within 2 weeks of the issue being identified
- this contact will take the form of both a telephone conversation and an email
- the PRC and the partner agency will seek to better understand the issue and to identify any factors that may be affecting performance
- the partner agency will develop strategies to address the concerns, in consultation with the PRC, and track the outcome of those strategies.

When the issue is groups not meeting the minimum attendance levels, the PRC will inform the coalition partner within 4 weeks of the quarterly data reports. These

groups will be flagged as being under ‘performance watch’ and reviewed at the end of the following quarter.

MyTime Performance Monitoring Process



Performance improvement process

In some cases, a more formal approach to addressing performance concerns may be required. This includes situations where:

- a performance concern has not been resolved through the above monitoring process
- insufficient progress has been made in groups that were placed under performance watch
- there is a continuing lack of engagement by a partner, or evidence of effort to address the issue
- there is an absence of reporting by a partner that would enable the PRC to determine performance.

In these instances, a Performance Improvement Process will be initiated, involving the following steps:

Step 1: the MyTime coordinator and the partner agency's CEO will be informed that the Performance Improvement Process is being initiated and the reason for that decision.

Step 2: a meeting will be held with the agency's CEO or nominated senior management representative to plan next steps.

Step 3: the development of a Performance Improvement Plan (see Attachment 1) to address specific concerns, generally within 2 weeks of the initial meeting at Step 2

Step 4: regular meetings between the PRC and the partner agency to discuss progress against the Plan (minimum monthly, with possibility for review).

Step 5: review of the outcomes of the Plan.

The Performance Improvement Plan will be developed in consultation with the PRC, and will include:

- description of the issue to be addressed
- aims and agreed actions to achieve those aims
- measures of success

- agreed timeframes.

It is expected that implementing a Performance Improvement Plan will resolve the performance concern. If that does not happen, the PRC and coalition partner will discuss what further actions or supports might address the issue. This would vary according to each situation, but examples include changing the number of contracted groups or a partnership between two coalition agencies. Consideration of a breach of Agreement would be an action of last resort.

Performance requirement	Review cycle
The minimum attendance per group will be 4 registered members.	Quarterly
Providers will report quarterly attendance data by the due date.	Quarterly
Providers will report session content to the PRC.	Quarterly
Providers will submit six-monthly status reports by the submission date.	Six-monthly
Providers will submit quarterly invoices by the submission date.	Quarterly
Providers' Representatives will be available to the PRC during working hours.	Continuous
Providers will submit quarterly enquiry logs by the submission date.	Quarterly

Recruitment

Member recruitment

Partner agencies promote the MyTime program regionally (that is, within their state) and potential members directly approach agencies for information and assistance. The coordinator assists the potential member to find their closest group.

Participants do not register themselves online. Participants become members when attending their first group session and registering with the facilitator once they have engaged with the group.

While group viability is primarily the responsibility of the coordinator, recruitment is a joint responsibility, with the group's facilitator and coordinator collaborating in order to meet identified needs.

It is important for the coordinator to establish a mechanism to obtain member and attendance data from group facilitators. This information must be stored, according to privacy laws, in a secure locked cabinet.

Facilitator/ play helper recruitment

Both facilitators and play helpers are recruited according to the partner agency's standard approach to hiring. Facilitators are paid positions, and the agency is responsible for ensuring the facilitator is appropriately qualified according to the agency's needs. Play helpers are engaged and recruited in a similar manner, and may be volunteer or paid positions.

Working with Children checks and National Police Checks must be undertaken as directed by your state/territory legislation.

Staff Training and supervision

Partner agency coordinators collaborate with the PRC to provide facilitators and play helpers with the necessary training and supervision required to fulfil their MyTime roles. The need for further support for each role is determined by regular and ongoing discussions between the coordinator, facilitator and play helper. Coordinators should take a structured approach to this supervision, ensuring an adequate coordinator-to-practitioner exchange is maintained.

All staff must be adequately oriented to the MyTime program using the resources provided by MyTime.

Section 5: Practice Support

Knowledge translation: what it means for MyTime

Knowledge translation means putting into practice what is known to help, so that facilitators and members benefit. This means, members and facilitators make use of reliable and evidence-based information, and can do this in a way that suits their context.

MyTime knowledge translation activities include the PRC developing evidence-based resources for groups, and co-developing appropriate resources to help build the knowledge and skills of parents and carers.

The PRC continues to develop practice support materials and delivery modes to support facilitators.

Implementation support, what does it look like?

Implementation science is a developing area of knowledge that brings rigour and accountability to the task of meeting program aims. Implementation is connected with the PRC's role of practice support and the PRC supports and collaborates with partner agencies on best-practice implementation of the MyTime program. This means assisting agencies and their facilitators in their approach to meeting the aims associated with MyTime.

Program orientation

Coordinators are expected to provide thorough orientation to all new MyTime facilitators. This applies to both directly employed facilitators, and those subcontracted to another organisation.If you're a new facilitator, there is a lot of information to take in.

See Section 7 for more details including a checklist of things to cover in your orientation.

Coordinator Orientation

All new MyTime Coordinators are expected to participate in an orientation process with the PRC. Included in this orientation will be:

Arranged/gathered the following with PRC	
☐	Meet with MyTime Manager
☐	Scheduled monthly teleconference calls
☐	Ordering of materials via Prompt
☐	Who is on MyTime team
☐	Know how/who to contact at PRC
☐	Contact details of other coordinators
☐	Communication expectations
Seen and been orientated to	
☐	MyTime Website
☐	Partners Area
☐	Database
Read and seen the following	
☐	Contract between PRC and agency
☐	Reporting deadlines
☐	Understanding of agencies responsibilities
Other	
☐	Evaluation orientation
☐	Been in contact with all facilitators

Resources

MyTime resources are located in the Partners Area of the MyTime website. Coordinators should familiarise themselves with the Partners Area and encourage facilitators to find relevant information here.

It is important that all coordinators and facilitators have signed up to the e-news through the Partners Area. PRC provide a range of practice support resources, operational news and updates using this mechanism.

It is the responsibility of Coordinators to ensure the MyTime database is up to date and facilitator contact details are accurate. For guidance or assistance in how to proceed with this, please contact the PRC MyTime team.

Professional development

At various times PRC will provide opportunities for both Coordinators and Facilitators to participate in professional development activities. Coordinators are expected to encourage their facilitators to participate in these opportunities and provide feedback to PRC when requested.

Section 6: Funding and Reporting requirements

The number of MyTime groups managed by a partner agency is agreed to within the contract with the PRC.

From time to time, there may be a need to amend this contract, should PRC identify the need for a reduction or increase in group numbers. PRC will instigate a discussion with the partner agency should this be required.

A replacement group cannot be funded for MyTime sessions while the group it is replacing is still receiving program funds.

Payment

There are two types of payments:

- a group session per-hour payment, and
- a partner agency coordination payment.

Group sessions are paid on an hourly basis, and partner agency coordination payments are calculated on the basis of the number of groups within the partner agency.

The PRC takes all reasonable steps to ensure both group session payments and partner agency coordination payments are paid to the partner agency as far in advance as possible (once a proper tax invoice has been received from the agency).

The tax invoice for advanced quarters cannot be paid without correctly completed reports from the previous quarter (as detailed in the **Reporting arrangements section of this document**).

During a given quarter, each group is eligible to access up to a maximum of 16 hours of session payments.

Invoicing:

The funding for the year is paid in four quarterly instalments upon receipt of an invoice:

- Invoices are due at the start of the quarter and should outline the partner agency coordination component and the group service delivery component.

- PRC will reconcile the previous quarter invoice with the reports for the quarter, and any adjustments will be applied to the next quarter invoice.

PRC will provide all due dates at the commencement of the financial year. The calendar in the Partners Section of the MyTime website is also used to list relevant submission dates. If a partner agency is unable to meet the timelines outlined, they must discuss this with PRC.

Terms versus quarters

PRC acknowledges that at times, the school terms do not coincide with the reporting quarters. It is important that Coordinators notify PRC at the start of the calendar year and provide a breakdown of the expected distribution of hours.

Supplementary funding for MyTime: Equal Remuneration Order for Social and Community Services workers

The PRC may receive supplementary funds from DSS to cover the Commonwealth's share of any pay increases resulting from the 22 June 2012 Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) for Social and Community Services (SACS) workers.

The total supplement amount has been determined by DSS, and is calculated using the number of groups partner agencies are contracted to provide as a proportion of the total number of funded groups.

Each financial year, the PRC issues a letter of offer to the partner agency and, in order to accept this offer, the CEO must countersign and return the letter to the PRC with a tax invoice for the amount listed.

Practice support funding

At times, additional funding may be made available to partner agency staff to attend PRC-led activities, such as annual Forums. PRC will provide as much notice as possible for such an event and will specify the funding available and outline any funding constraints.

Supplementary funding for practice support and professional development is negotiated between the PRC and the partner agency when funding is available.

Fees Payable to partner agencies

The Fees payable by PRC for the provision of the Services are outlined in Schedule 1 of the Services Agreement. As of October 2016 fees are as follows:

- Group sessions will be paid on an hourly basis with a one hour payment being equivalent to $165.00 (excl. GST).
- An hourly rate per session time must be passed on to any agency or other provider engaged by Provider to perform any part of the Services. Provider must pay such agencies or providers at the following rates:
- $330.00 (excl. GST) for a two hour session;
- $495.00 (excl. GST) for a three hour session and
- $660.00 (excl. GST) for a four hour session.
- The Provider will also receive a coalition coordination payment of $809.50 (excl. GST) per group per quarter.
- The maximum funded hours for each group for each quarter will be 16 hours.

The above fees are subject to change. All changes will be communicated to partner agencies in writing.

Reporting arrangements

Coordinators must develop pathways for MyTime group facilitators to provide member registration and attendance data prior to reporting deadlines.

Session reports

Facilitators report on each group session and provide coordinators with attendee data (that is, number of registered attendees, number of guests, number of children, length of session), session content and session information. It is the responsibility of the Coordinator to ensure this is entered into the MyTime database by the due date.

Quarterly data and six-monthly status reports

Each partner agency is required to submit quarterly data (through the data-reporting system), and a six-monthly status report.

Quarterly data

All group data, including attendance data, must be entered approximately three weeks after the quarter finished. Due dates are communicated at the start of each financial year and are scheduled on the calendar found on the Partners Area of the MyTime website.

The PRC reconciles the data once all partner agency data is received.

Six-monthly status report

Each partner agency must also submit to the PRC six-monthly status reports capturing aspects of delivery outside the above data. The PRC will provide a status report template, which must include at least one story from each group.

Enquiry Log

Following the end of each quarter, each partner agency must submit a completed enquiry log for that quarter. PRC will notify the partner agency of the final dates for submission of this data for each quarter. The enquiry log includes Date, Group, Eligible, Outcome and Notes

PRC monitor the submission of these reports and expect to receive data in full and by the due date. Performance Monitoring may be triggered if Partner Agencies are not compliant with this performance indicator.

Section 7: Facilitator Orientation

Coordinators are responsible for ensuring their facilitators have adequate orientation to the MyTime program and receive regular supervision.

We recommend monthly discussions with facilitators to provide time to raise and address any concerns that may arise.

Facilitators are required to read through the Facilitator Manual prior to facilitating their first group. We encourage coordinators to work through this with facilitators and use the Checklist below to ensure you have provided orientation on key areas. It may also be worth revisiting this on a regular basis with facilitators.

In addition to the Facilitator Manual, there are Facilitator Orientation programs available in the partners area of the MyTime website. These are designed to complement the information in the manual, and is a good start to a new facilitator's orientation.

Facilitator Orientation Checklist:

Check that you've covered everything with your facilitator by using the checklist below.

- I have registered as a facilitator.
- I have read the Facilitator Manual and I have clarified any questions with my coordinator.
- I have explored the Partners Area of the MyTime website (https://mytime-partners.squarespace.com).
- I know where to find these resources in the Partners Area:
    - Member Registration Forms
    - Registration – Commonly asked questions
    - Attendance Record
    - Child Information Sheets
    - Quarterly Session Record
    - Topic Sheets
- I have registered in the Partners Area to receive the *Partner Updates* newsletters.
- I have created a group pack to bring to each session.

- I have familiarised myself with the group venue. I know what equipment I need for each session and how to set up the room.
- I have an arrangement to check in regularly with my coordinator
- I have a system for safely storing and providing group information to my coordinator.
- I have made sure the information about my group on the MyTime website is current.
- I have met the play helpers I will be working with.
- I have planned my first session.

Section 8: Communication

MyTime Coordinators are the primary contact point for PRC. PRC will communicate using a variety of methods and expect prompt responses from Coordinators.

Partner agency coordinator

The partner agency coordinator is the primary point of contact between the PRC and facilitators, and all relevant information is communicated through the coordinator. The coordinator responds to, and passes on, information as necessary.

Coordinators should also establish and maintain good working relationships with other MyTime coordinators. The PRC facilitated monthly telephone calls between state-based coordinators is designed to assist in building and maintaining these relationships.

Facilitators

Facilitators should contact their coordinator directly if they have any questions, concerns or information to share more broadly. However, facilitators can also contact the PRC if they think it's appropriate.

In certain situations, PRC may contact facilitators directly, but will always include Coordinators in this communication. Examples of this include the practice support news and the MyTime Evaluation.

The PRC

The PRC generally communicates with facilitators and play helpers through the partner agency coordinators.

Communicating with the PRC

In addition to reporting requirements, partner agencies **must** provide the PRC with any information affecting its ability to meet MyTime program obligations and any information relating to media and media releases.

Changes of CEO or senior management at the partner agency should be communicated to PRC as soon as possible.

Taking Leave?
If you plan on taking leave, you must inform PRC prior to the commencement of this leave and provide the details of a person to contact during business hours.

Complaints

A complaint is defined as a contact made regarding a potentially correctable issue, as compared to negative comments or negative feedback, which are contacts made that cannot be acted upon. Coordinators are expected to report complaints to PRC in a timely manner.

PRC newsletter

The PRC sends out quarterly (that is, once a school term) newsletters to partners. Newsletters cover potential topics (for example, transition to school) and activities to run in groups, as well as relevant information to support that topic or activity. The newsletter is also a vehicle to send out relevant announcements.

Handling MyTime calls - Coalition designated contact

At times, there may be people other than the MyTime Coordinator who respond to queries from parents about the group. The following information is a useful summary to provide them so they are better resourced to respond:

Responding to MyTime calls

What you need to know

MyTime groups provide support for mothers, fathers, grandparents and anyone caring for a child with a disability or chronic medical condition. Groups provides a place to socialise, to discuss, to get information, and to support and be supported by other carers. It's a free program, which is funded by the Australian government.

Your organisation is a MyTime coalition. This means one or more of your colleagues is responsible for managing group locations, facilitators, and reporting information to the Parenting Research Centre, who are the national MyTime coordinators. There is at least one coalition in each state, and depending on where you are located there might be others in your state. The reason you have been given this information is because the Parenting Research Centre has recently made a rule that all coalitions need to provide a contact number that is generally attended during business hours. This makes sure calls get answered even if your organisation's Coalition Coordinator (the person managing MyTime) is out of the office, on leave or unexpectedly not available.

Group are facilitated, which means each group has a facilitator who helps the group by making suggestions, providing information, planning things like session days and times, and coordinating events like guest speakers or special outings. Groups also have a play helper, who can help run activities for children brought to the group by members.

MyTime is open to all parents and carers who are eligible for the Carers Allowance (Child). The (Child) part means the children they are caring for must be below 18. Even if your organisation is focused on a specific medical condition (eg. Leukemia or Autism), groups delivered by your coalition are open to people caring for children with any condition. MyTime groups aren't diagnosis specific – all groups are open to anyone eligible for the Carers Allowance (Child).

What kind of calls will I get?

Most of the time, the people calling about MyTime are either parents or carers, or service or healthcare workers (like doctors or social workers) working with parents or carers. You will get three questions a lot about MyTime. Below you will find these questions, with a short answer you can read out to people calling.

What is MyTime?

MyTime is a place where people raising children with special needs can meet and share experiences and perspectives. Each group has a facilitator who will help plan and coordinate the group, and a play helper who can run activities for children below school age. MyTime is open to anyone who cares ofr a child under the age of 18 years who is eligible for the Carers Allowance The groups are free, and give you a chance to get some support and advice from others who are in a similar situation, as well as taking a little time for yourself.

My child has a specific condition, is this group a 'condition' group?

MyTime groups are open to families who have a child with a disability, developmental delay or chronic medical condition. Some of the families in your peer support group may have children with the same disability or medical condition—but all of the families will share your experience of caring for a child with complex needs.

Can I bring children to the group?

You are welcome to bring children below school age, and each group has a play helper who can run activities with your children.

What happens in groups?

Every group has different activities, depending on what the members think is relevant. Sessions might include a special guest speaker, a chat over coffee about your week, an activity, or a special outing.

Any other questions?

Your organisation's MyTime Coordinator will give you some more information on how to let people know the details of the groups in your coalition. If you have any other questions, or if you have calls you're not sure how to answer, they are the best person to speak to.

Section 9: Marketing and promotions

The PRC is responsible for the national marketing and promotion of the MyTime program, and partner agencies are responsible for their own regional promotions.

Partner agency promotion is aimed at recruiting and establishing referral pathways to and from groups. The PRC provides tools – such as templates for tailored promotional materials support regional promotion.

Guidelines for marketing and promotion include:

- All new print promotions developed by partner agencies, coordinators, facilitators or groups should be approved by the PRC.
- Branding guidelines are adhered to if creating promotional materials, and the requirements for acknowledgement of funders is communicated to facilitators (refer to Acknowledgement guidelines in the Partners area of the MyTime website).
- The PRC approves any new use of the PRC logo, MyTime logo or name in any publications, promotional material or activities relating to the program.
- All media coverage (including advertising, stories, and mentions) must be managed by PRC.

MyTime recruitment relies heavily on building relationships with key organisations and professionals, in order to encourage recruitment. PRC does this on a national level, through partnerships with governmental agencies, media outlets, and national disability organisations. Partner agencies are expected to build relationships with other partner agencies both in their states and across Australia, as well as state-based disability support organisations. In addition, partner agencies support group facilitators to build relationships with local professionals (such as allied health workers, childcare centres, or medical practitioners), and encourage referrals.

Partner agencies wishing to run promotional campaigns should contact PRC to discuss how this can be managed effectively. This ensures partner agencies can make best use of the available resources, and that PRC does not run simultaneous campaigns. PRC can also support partner agencies by developing or adapting artwork for promotion, producing media releases and liasing with media, and sharing local campaigns through additional promotional channels.

Partner agencies should contact PRC regarding any potential media stories. It is important PRC are aware of potential media coverage, and can support partner agencies by supplying key messages, quotes, statistics, and images. While media coverage is effective in raising awareness of MyTime, there are significant risks to the group, facilitator, member, and MyTime overall, and so it is important these are considered and managed.

What is marketing and promotions for MyTime?

MyTime's marketing and promotion strategy has two main aims:

1. The creation of an awareness of MyTime at a national level – an aim supported by the PRC's coordinated activities.
2. The regional/state-based promotion of MyTime groups to increase and sustain membership – an aim supported by partner agencies' activities, with formal support and guidance from the PRC.

For more information on marketing and promotions, including use of logos and MyTime templates, refer to the Group support section in the Partners area of the MyTime website.

MyTime website

The MyTime website provides for members, partner agencies and practitioners the 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when' and 'why' of the MyTime program.

Members and future members can find practical information about the program, such as:

- What is MyTime and who is eligible
- Group and program information
- What parents and carers can expect from groups
- A list of MyTime state and territory groups with contact names and numbers

- An interactive map with national MyTime groups
- A list of frequently asked questions

The website includes a Partners area for partner agencies and practitioners. This area provides the necessary practice support resources and administrative documents to run MyTime groups. This includes:

- Promotion area
  All relevant information on promoting MyTime, including support, logos, and standard materials.
- Promotion tips
  A library of tips on promotion, including strategies for building relationships with referral pathways within your local community, encouraging media coverage, holding events, and creative promotion ideas.
- Logos & acknowledgements
  MyTime and related logos in a variety of formats and layouts, with information on how to talk about your group, acknowledgement requirements, and using the logos.
- Materials & templates
  Download or order existing MyTime promotional materials such as flyers and posters, and customizable template.
- Knowledge bank
  Support for your role in MyTime, including tipsheets, orientation, places to look for more information, and handouts for members.
- Practitioner support library
  Articles on handling group issues, how to approach topics, guidelines for activities, and checklists.
- Facilitator orientation
  An introduction to MyTime for new facilitators, and a good reference for facilitators wanting to brush up on the basics.19
- Helpful links
  Websites with further information for a variety of topics, including parenting, specific disabilities, working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, and playing or engaging children with complex needs
- Parent resources

Tip sheets written specifically for MyTime members, covering a number of topics. These tip sheets are designed to be printable, so you can hand them out in group sessions.

- Toolkit
  All administration documents, with guides for facilitators and members where relevant, outlining how to use the documents.
- Important dates calendar
  A calendar of reporting dates, upcoming events, and information.
- Suggestion box
  Let us know what you would find helpful on the website.
- Partner updates
  Our regular communication with all partners, providing information and support.
- The MyTime Guide
  Where you will find the latest version of this document, in digital and print-friendly versions.

Section 10: MyTime Continuous Improvement – Evaluation

Quality assurance

The partner agency participates, as required, in MyTime evaluation and any quality assurance activities relating to the running of groups.

The MyTime evaluation ensures continuous quality improvement (CQI) of the program. The PRC collaborates with partner agencies on the most effective and efficient method to carry out the evaluation with members. This ongoing aspect of CQI means members have the initial opportunity to reflect on their experience when first connecting with MyTime and, again, at later stages in the program.

Overview of the MyTime evaluation

While there have been previous evaluations of the MyTime program, this approach is different. This will not be a one-off piece of research. It is designed to explore how MyTime is going over the long term, and provide coordinators and the PRC with information to help make adjustments to the program.

Above all, we want this evaluation process to be useful, with findings that can help us all make decisions and improve our overall performance.

Principles of MyTime evaluation

- We will minimise the response burden on coordinators, facilitators and members – asking only what we need to know and using existing data wherever possible.
- The language used in surveys will be clear and accessible.
- There will be a range of options for gathering data, to suit facilitators' and members' differing needs.
- Findings will be reported back to coordinators, facilitators and members in a meaningful and engaging way. Coordinators, facilitators and members will have the opportunity to celebrate successes, and identify areas for further development.

Purpose of evaluating MyTime

- To find out the extent to which MyTime is achieving the intended outcomes for members.
- To understand the relationship between how MyTime is delivered and the outcomes for members.
- To be able to improve the program for members, making decisions based on reliable data.
- To meet the Department of Social Services' reporting requirements.
- To demonstrate to all of our stakeholders (including our funder), through the use of valid research methods, that MyTime improves carers' lives.

Evaluation methods and process

By evaluating the MyTime program, we want to answer the following questions:

1. What effect does MyTime have on its members? (Impact)
2. Is MyTime being implemented as intended? (Fidelity)

The four methods that we use to help us answer these questions are:

1. New Member Survey for new members, focusing on their wellbeing and how they're going.
   a. Facilitators will encourage all new members to complete the New Member Survey by the time that they are registered – that is, within 3 to 4 sessions of joining MyTime.
   b. Those same individuals will then be encouraged to complete the same survey six months later, so that changes can be tracked over time.
2. Check-in Survey for members, exploring their experience of a given MyTime session.
   a. All registered members, current and future, will be encouraged to complete the Fidelity Survey every six months.
   b. We will ask facilitators to conduct this process with their members within a specified four-week window.
3. Check-in survey for facilitators: a survey for facilitators exploring what's happening in the group, and their confidence in their

facilitation role. All facilitators will be encouraged to complete the Fidelity Survey every six months. Facilitators will be asked to complete the survey within a specified four-week window.

4. A survey or interview with coordinators, exploring their experience of the coordination of MyTime and the PRC's role.

Gathering data

The surveys are designed to be completed online. In exceptional circumstance paper versions of the survey can be provided, however the preference is to complete the surveys online.

- PRC will provide:a guide for facilitators on the evaluation, and the process of talking to members about it
- a brief overview of the evaluation for members
- consent forms
- reply paid envelopes for any per surveys and consent forms

Members and Facilitators who provide their email address when completing the survey will go into the draw to win one of 5 $50 gift cards each 6 months. Information about this process can be found on the MyTime website.

Further detail about the evaluation process can be obtained from the MyTime Program Manager, or from the MyTime website.

Glossary:

CALD: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

Carer Allowance: An income supplement for carers who provide additional daily care and attention for someone with a disability or medical condition, or who is frail aged.

Commonwealth funding: Any funding received by the PRC from DSS, or any other government agency, in accordance with the Funding Agreement between DSS and the PRC.

Coordinator (Partner agency coordinator): The person employed by the partner agency as the principal liaison within and across the partner agencies. The coordinator has responsibility for coordinating the services delivered by the partner agency's MyTime groups and maintaining strong collaborative links with the PRC. Coordinators are appropriately qualified and are the primary contact point between PRC and facilitators.

Department of Social Services (DSS): Has responsibility for families, housing and social services as well as aged care and disability services. (Formerly FaHCSIA - the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs)

Eligible members: Mothers, fathers and other family carers of children under the age of 18 who are eligible to receive the Carer Allowance can join MyTime. Eligibility basics):

- provide additional daily care for a dependent child aged under 18 years, with a disability or medical condition, who lives with you, or
- provide additional daily care for two dependent children with disabilities or medical conditions, who do not individually qualify for Carer Allowance, but together have a substantial caring responsibility and live with you, or
- provide additional daily care for a person aged 16 years or over who has a disability, medical condition, or who is frail aged, and
- care must be provided in either your home or the home of the person you are caring for.

Facilitator: The person employed by the partner agency to work with group members and manage group processes, helping them get to know each other and learn more about the services and supports in their area. The facilitator helps groups choose what topics they would like to discuss and might guide group activities and provide resources. Facilitators must have appropriate qualifications and must be paid (volunteers not permitted).

Members: Parents and carers eligible for the Carer Allowance - Child.

MyTime: Peer Support Groups for Parents and other Family Carers of Children with a Disability or Chronic Medical Condition Program.

MyTime aims: The objectives of the Program Agreement (See **Section 1**)

MyTime groups: Consist of 4-12 members, a facilitator to manage group processes and at least one play helper.

Orientation materials: MyTime facilitator orientation training.

Participants: See Members.

Partner agency: Is the principal agency contracted by the PRC to establish and maintain MyTime groups.

Partner agency coordinator: The person employed by the partner agency as the principal liaison within and across the partner agencies.

Play helpers: May be either paid or volunteer and are responsible for keeping children, including under school-aged siblings, busy and active in age-appropriate activities.

Reporting: Facilitators must report on each group session. This includes attendee data (for example, number registered attendees, number of guests, number of children and session content) for each session and then providing the coordinator with the session information.

Stakeholders: Any person (members or participants) or agencies involved in MyTime.

Subcontracted agencies: The partner agency may subcontract part of their obligations to other agencies to deliver the MyTime program.

Venue: The premises where the Services will be provided as agreed between the parties (ie, Partner agency, facilitator and any subcontracted provider).5

Venue risk assessment: A careful examination of any potential sources of harm/injury to people (parents/ carers, children, guests, facilitators, play helpers) in a venue. This identification is important to ensure a MyTime venue is adequate and safe for all staff and participants. If the PRC or the partner agency considers a venue unsafe for use, the partner agency assists in, either, making the venue safe or finding an alternative venue.

When thinking about the venue's risk assessment, remember:

- A **hazard** is anything that could cause harm, such as electrical cords, broken chairs, unhinged doors, unsecured floor coverings, broken steps, access for unwelcome visitors (pertinent to children), protection from traffic etc.
- The **risk** is the chance, high or low, that a person could be harmed/injured by the identified hazards, together with an indication of how serious harm/injury could be.

Working with children check: There is no single national framework setting out the requirements for obtaining Working With Children (WWC) checks. Each state and territory has their own procedures and it is necessary to fulfil the requirements in the jurisdiction(s) in which you are working.

Most states and territories have introduced, or are working towards, legislation regarding child-related employment pre-screening. The legislation identifies broad categories of child-related work where employers, employees and volunteers must fulfil screening requirements. There are important differences across jurisdictions regarding the type of screening programs that are in place, what records are checked, and who is required to undergo screening.

Attachments

1. Performance Improvement Plan

Coalition partner	
Coalition partner nominated senior representative/s	
Performance requirement/s being addressed	
Date of start of plan	

Aim	Actions	Timeframe	Measures of success