**Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the Mansfield Autism Practitioner Service (MASS)**

Prepared for MASS by the Centre for Program Evaluation

# Executive Summary

19 August 2022

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**The Project**

Mansfield Autism Statewide Services (MASS) was a successful recipient of the Melbourne Disability Institute (MDI) Community Based Research Program Grants. The aim of these grants is to help community organisations conduct research or evaluation of programs that are making a difference in the lives of people with disability and their families/carers. MASS were partnered with the Centre for Program Evaluation (CPE) to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Mansfield Autism Practitioner (MAP) service. The MAP service provides home based practical support to families living with autism. The framework is a plan that will help MASS evaluate the service and understand how well it is working and what can be improved.

**What we did**

To prepare the framework, we completed the following activities:

* We talked to MASS to understand how the MAP service works and how it can support children with autism and their families.
* We looked for research about how to evaluate autism services and programs.
* We looked at how MASS was evaluating the MAP service.
* We suggested a plan for MASS to evaluate the MAP service, and talked to MASS and parents to see what they thought about it. The plan includes questions for children with autism and their families, and activities that MASS can do to better understand how well the MAP service is working for children and their families, and if there are aspects of the service that MASS can improve.

**What we found**

The Quality of Life of children and their families is important

We found that it is important to know if the MAP service is helping children and their families improve their quality of life. A better quality of life means that they are happy and satisfied with their lives, and they are able to participate in the community in the way they want to. We found several ways to measure quality of life that MASS can use. After discussion with MASS, we recommend they use the following tools: DISABKIDS and KIDSCREEN (10 questions). These tools are the most appropriate because they allow children to explain what their quality of life is. MASS can adapt these questions so children find it easier to answer them (for example, adding pictures). For families, we recommend the tool Family Quality of Life (FQoL).

Talking to children, families, and people in their communities

In addition to the activities that MASS is already doing to know if the MAP service is helpful, such as sending surveys to the families, we recommend that they also interview the families and people in their communities to better understand how the MAP service is supporting children with autism and their families.

**Next steps**

These are the activities that MASS can do next to continue the evaluation of the MAP service:

* Adapting the questions about quality of life so it is easier for children and their families to let them know what their quality of life is. This will help MASS understand if the MAP service is helping families improve their quality of life.
* Doing interviews with children, parents, and other people in their communities. This will help MASS understand how helpful the MAP service is, and if there is anything they could improve.