

Welcome to VIVA Therapeutic Services!

Caregiver Guide



VIVA Therapeutic Services is a private company contracted by the Department of Education and Early Childhood (EECD) to offer evidence-based services to preschool aged children who have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder. VIVA operates throughout New Brunswick and offers services in French and English.



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* This is a section identified in the *Parent/Caregiver Consent to Initiate Services* form – Appendix F.

Who We Are

VIVA Therapeutic Services is the contracted service provider for the New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD), Preschool Autism Program. Our mandate is to provide a high quality, evidence-based services in English and French. All children in New Brunswick with a diagnosis of autism are eligible for our program until they enter school. At VIVA, our programs are based on behavioural and developmental approaches and are highly individualized. We are committed to equipping each child and their families with the necessary tools and services to promote development.

Limits of Confidentiality*

VIVA delivers services of the Preschool Autism Program on behalf of EECD; as such, EECD has access to your child’s information, and may review files for auditing and clinical monitoring purposes. In addition, communication may occur with EECD for the purpose of collaborative problem-solving, as needed. Otherwise, information contained within your child’s file cannot be released outside of VIVA Therapeutic Services without your written permission, except as required by law. Exceptions where information must be released include:

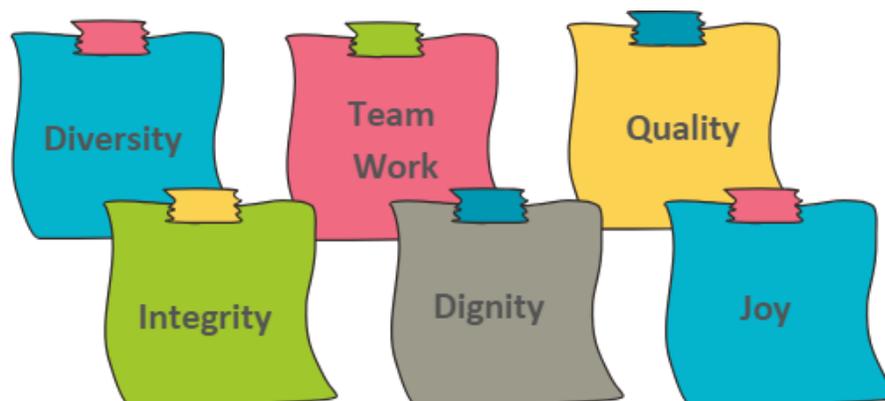
- Mandatory reporting of suspected or witnessed abuse or neglect, according to the law.
- Responding to court order or subpoena to give testimony and/or provide part or all of the clinical record.
- Complying with file audits or investigations by credentialing bodies.

Our Approach*

Our Core Beliefs

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

Our Values



Applied Behaviour Analysis*

We use the principles of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) to help children learn new skills and enhance their quality of life. Applied Behaviour Analysis is the science of behaviour. Behaviour is everything we do as humans, from eating, falling asleep, playing, communicating, and learning new things. We use a naturalistic and joyful approach to build on a child's current skills and celebrate their progress along the way. We use meaningful positive reinforcement to keep your child engaged and motivated to learn. The way that VIVA implements ABA aligns with our core beliefs and values, ensuring positive connections are built with the child, caregivers, and VIVA team members.

Benefits

The current understanding of the benefits of Applied Behaviour Analysis are based on a significant body of research. Some of these benefits are:

- Improvements in the areas of communication, social relationships, play, and self-care.
- Increased participation in family and community activities.
- Improvements in school readiness skills, including cooperation, and tolerance to change.

Individuals who receive intensive ABA services make improvements in more skill areas than individuals who participate in other (non-ABA) therapy models, or who engage in less intensive ABA services. Association for Science in Autism Treatment, (2024, January 26). *Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)*, <https://asatonline.org/for-parents/learn-more-about-specific-treatments/applied-behavior-analysis-aba/>

Possible Risks

As with any therapy, there are some inherent risks. Some of these risks are:

- Changes or disruptions in your daily life that can occur because of the time and commitment required for the therapy plan.
- An initial therapy plan may not be effective, and further assessment and changes to the therapy plan may be needed.
- Rates of progress cannot always be predicted. Some individuals progress and learn skills quickly, while other learners take longer to gain skills or have trouble retaining skills once learned.
- Initial increases in the duration, frequency, or intensity of behaviours as your child adjusts to new methods or procedures.

Our Approach to Challenging Behaviours*

While children enrolled in our program share a diagnostic label, they are all different from one another and all require an individualized approach. Some of the children with whom we work engage in behaviours which may put their safety, or the safety of others at risk. This can impact daily routines, interactions, and learning.

It can be quite complex to understand the reasons why a child engages in challenging behaviours. Often there is not one reason, but a multitude of factors involved. We work closely with parents and caregivers to better understand the "why" behind challenging behaviour and how to ensure their child is happy, relaxed and engaged. We can then teach new skills that will help them communicate their wants and needs, tolerate less preferred situations, and cooperate in their learning and daily activities.

Our Team*

Our team includes various professionals who work together to design quality programs for our learners. Aligned with our value of diversity, VIVA employees come with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and world views. All employees are trained to provide quality care for our learners and will be assigned to families based on availability and skill sets. Families are not able to choose an employee based on personal preference.

We collaborate with community partners such as Early Intervention Programs, Early Learning and Childcare Centers and other professionals supporting your child such as Speech-Language Pathologists, Audiologists, Psychologists and Occupational Therapists.

VIVA Team Members

Clinical Supervisor (CS):

- Responsible for the oversight of your child's Personalized Learning Plan (PLP), and progress.
 - Oversees all activities conducted by the Behaviour Consultants (BC) such as assessments, development of individualized programs, goal identification and caregiver coaching.
 - Supervises and provides training to all members of your child's team.
 - May work directly with your child or work behind the scenes as a support to your Behaviour Consultant (BC).
 - May be more heavily involved with you and your child at certain moments: intake, transition to a new location of services, transition to school, to address barriers to learning, etc.
-

Behaviour Consultant (BC):

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

Lead Therapist (LT):

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

Behaviour Interventionist* (BI):

- Works directly with your child to deliver programming. You may have more than one BI assigned to your child.
- Is responsible to implement the therapy plan designed by the CS, the BC in partnership with you.
- Is responsible to record data on your child's progress.

*Behaviour Interventionists receive intensive introductory training, ongoing on-the-job training and continued support to ensure your child receives a quality therapy program. This includes strategies on how to keep interactions fun, joyful and motivating. Your child will work with different Behaviour Interventionists while in our program.

Speech-Language Pathologist (S-LP):

- Available through a referral made by the VIVA clinical team to receive a consultation.
- Primarily supervises and supports clinical team members related to communication and language development goals, as needed.
- Supervises the implementation and monitoring of S-LP goals and recommendations.
- May complete formal and informal assessments to evaluate communication, language, speech and feeding.
- Collaborates with families and teams to select meaningful and functional goals in the areas of communication, vocabulary, comprehension, speech and feeding.
- Collaborates with external and/or private S-LPs when applicable.
- Provides professional learning opportunities to clinical team members related to best practices in speech and language development
- Supports the transition of S-LP goals into the school setting when applicable.

Teaching Facility*

VIVA Therapeutic Services serves as a teaching facility for new employees, practicum students, and individuals in training at our agency. As such, some assessment and therapy procedures your child or your family receives may involve a practicum student or an employee who is being mentored in carrying out new responsibilities or learning new procedures. A new Behaviour Interventionist may also work with your child as part of their training process. In all cases, individuals in training are working under the direction and supervision of a Clinical Supervisor or Behaviour Consultant and may be supported by a Lead Therapist or Trainer. Prior to any session, you will be informed of an individual's training status and their role in working with your child.

Parent/Caregiver Participation*

As caregivers, you play an integral role in your child's team, and their learning. We will work together to help your child flourish. VIVA team members will work with your child for a portion of the day, and our goal is to empower you to have the tools and knowledge to support your child beyond therapy.

Caregiver involvement is a key component of a successful intake process, and therapy plan. Active participation leads to better outcomes for the child and family. Caregivers will be required to provide ongoing consent to the goals and strategies and may be asked to participate in data collection, and implementation of recommended strategies. Team meetings will be held to discuss your child's progress, barriers to learning, and strategies to achieve positive results for your child and family. Before being assigned to a clinical team, caregivers will participate in an orientation session to understand VIVA services and procedures.

A parent/caregiver goal is required for a Personalized Learning Plan. VIVA will work with you to identify goals that are achievable for you, your child, and your family. The first goal may be identified during the intake process, and additional goals will be identified throughout the therapy process.

Depending on the goals outlined in your child's Personalized Learning Plan, the clinical team may ask for your support in obtaining specific materials and identifying ways to enrich the learning environment. VIVA's employees typically use toys that are available in the home and may also bring toys to use during sessions. Having varied and fun materials and toys during sessions is important to keep learning fun and motivating.

Lack of caregiver involvement may result in VIVA assessing the appropriateness of service, offering alternative options, and as a last resort, a request to terminate services.

Collection and Sharing of Personal Information*

Personal information will be collected during the assessment and therapy processes. This information could include identifying information (e.g., name, contact information), assessment results, reports, progress notes, and any information collected with your permission from other community partners.

Video of your child may be taken during assessments and therapy for the purposes of data collection, analysis, troubleshooting, supervision, and internal consultation, and stored on secure servers. A separate consent form will be completed to authorize *other* uses of images and videos (e.g., presentation to community partners, internal training, etc.).

Our records are kept secure in accordance with legislative health privacy guidelines. Records are kept for a minimum period of seven years as per New Brunswick law and our professional associations. You have the right to obtain copies of your child's file, allowing two weeks for processing.

Your consent allows us to share information between VIVA Therapeutic Services personnel for the purposes of assessment, treatment, and case reviews. This means that your child's information, including recorded materials may be seen by any member of the VIVA Therapeutic Services' clinical team. Your information will also be shared with our Administrative Team for scheduling, and other administrative purposes.

VIVA Therapeutic Services will not share information about your child with individuals outside of VIVA without your written consent, or in specific circumstances (see 'Limits of Confidentiality').

New Referrals

VIVA receives referrals from EECD after your child's diagnosis has been confirmed by a pediatrician or psychologist and you have provided information and consent to EECD to share the file with VIVA. Once VIVA has received your child's referral from EECD, a team member will call you to complete a short questionnaire to gather information about your child's needs and communicate possible wait times for assignment to a clinical team.

Our team will also provide you with a consent form to obtain your permission to speak with any service providers or community partners who are involved in your child's care.

A key step in getting started is the Caregiver Orientation session. Attendance is required before placement on a clinical team. When confirming your child's referral, our team will also provide you with information on our Caregiver Orientation session. Participation and attendance in this session is a key step in beginning VIVA services and required before your child's file can be assigned to a clinical team.

Intake Process*

VIVA uses the term "Intake" to refer to the assessment period, which can last up to four months. The goal is to learn about your child and your family to develop a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) and to understand your priorities and needs. During the intake period, the clinical team will schedule appointments with you and/or your child. Working with your clinical team to schedule and participate in these appointments is required to complete the intake process.

VIVA Therapeutic Services' employees will conduct assessments during intake and will also conduct reassessments and new assessments during our ongoing services.

Assessment procedures will involve asking you questions about your child's development, interests, ability, needs, and daily routines. The clinical team will conduct observations and interact directly with your child to gather information. Prior to conducting an assessment, the clinical team will explain the purpose and procedure. As much as possible, assessments will be conducted in the context of play to ensure that your child is engaged and motivated.

One of the assessment tools is the Comprehensive Assessment of Learning and Independence (CALI), developed by EECD. Other assessments may be used as needed. Assessment results, interpretations and recommendations will be documented and reviewed with you.

We truly believe that it is important for parents and caregivers to understand their child's unique profile and to have the opportunity to share their own values and needs. These important conversations will set the stage for the identification of goals and target skills that will be most impactful to your child and family.

Key Decisions to Make During Intake

Where will services be offered?

- Home
- Early Learning and Childcare Centers (ELCC)
- Agency (if available)



What type of program?

- Comprehensive
- Consultative



What do you hope we will accomplish?

- Identify priority goals



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

Decision #1: Where will services be offered?

Home*

- An adult must be present and readily available to help.
 - The home is a productive learning environment.
 - The home is a safe working environment.
 - Employees will go in your home (up to 3 at a time)
- * See Appendix A for details on requirements for services in the home.

Early Learning and Childcare Centers (ELCC)*

- A team meeting involving VIVA, the ELCC and caregiver(s) will take place prior to service delivery to determine how PLP goals could be implemented in the ELCC context.
 - This meeting will result in a signed agreement outlining how we will all work together in the best interest of the child.
- *See Appendix B for more details on collaboration between VIVA and ELCCs.

Agency*

- Certain regions offer services in an agency.
 - This location may be available on a short-term basis.
 - The team may explore this option with you depending on your child's needs.
- *See Appendix C for details on services in an agency.

Depending on the needs of the child and environmental circumstances, location of service may change during the course of therapy. In these situations, the clinical team will make a recommendation and a decision to change location will be made collaboratively with the caregivers.

Decision #2: What type of program?

The clinical team will recommend and discuss with you one of the following two service types:

Comprehensive

- Supports the child in developing skills in various domains such as communication, language comprehension, social, play, and adaptive functioning.
- Includes 2 to 5 sessions per week of one-on-one therapy with a Behaviour Interventionist.
- Can include caregiver coaching on strategies to support your child at home.
- Offered in all locations of services.
- Requires a high level of commitment and participation.
- Sessions may be scheduled 2 days a week (Tues, Thurs), 3 days a week (Mon, Wed, Fri) or 5 days a week (Mon to Fri), depending on your child's needs and employee availability. Morning sessions can occur between 8am-12pm or afternoon sessions between 1-5pm, and this includes time for driving to your location, if applicable.
- The combined duration of sessions with a Behaviour Interventionist will be no less than 6 hours per week, unless it is recommended to slowly build up the session duration.

There are several considerations that need to be made in determining the right number of hours of therapy if a comprehensive program is selected. The length of session may vary based upon the following factors:

- The child's tolerance, and ability to engage with others for sustained periods; it is better to have shorter sessions in which the child is engaged and learning, than longer sessions in which the child is no longer interested in participating. (Note: the clinical team will assess what is needed to support longer periods of engagement).
- Staff availability, and travel requirements.
- The family's availability, and daily routines.
- The child's sleep schedule, including wake up time, and nap times.

Initially, therapy sessions may be shorter, to support your child in getting comfortable with our team and having therapy sessions.

Consultative

- Focuses on supporting caregivers and ELCC's with 1-2 key goals such as participating in daily routines, increasing communication, or supporting your child in learning a new skill to reduce challenging behaviour.
- Individuals supporting your child and family usually include a Lead Therapist, a Behaviour Consultant and/or a Clinical Supervisor.
- Offered in all locations of services.
- Must occur at a minimum bi-weekly.
- Is most often the starting place (prior to receiving comprehensive services) so that our clinical team can work with your child directly to ensure that programming is effective for your child before introducing a new team member. It can also be long-term option if this is what best suits your child and family's needs.



Ensuring that the child is happy, relaxed, and engaged during sessions is an important factor to consider when selecting or modifying the number of hours of service. Your team will work with you to select the right number of hours for your child's learning and employee availability.

Decision #3: What do you hope we will accomplish?

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

Personal Learning Plan (PLP)

- Is a legal, contractual agreement between VIVA and the caregiver on the agreed upon goals and therapy plan.
- Is required for services to proceed.
- Requires a parent/guardian signature to consent to goals and strategies; a signature is required every time there are significant updates.
- Updates and signatures must occur at a minimum every six months.

Therapeutic Services

Once the Personalized Learning Plan is signed, the Service Level Agreement (SLA) will be created and reviewed. The Service Level Agreement defines the number of therapy hours, type, and location of service. The document serves as consent from the parent/guardian for therapeutic services and it must be signed before services can begin. It must be re-signed whenever a change in hours, type and/or location of services is made. If your child is receiving services in an Early Learning and Childcare Center, a collaborative planning meeting must take place prior to therapy beginning.

At the end of each month, you will receive a calendar with scheduled appointments.

Following visits from the BC/CS, you will receive a clinic note with a summary of the session and any recommendations.

Consultative

The consultative model involves a BC/CS working with you, your child, and possibly an Early Learning and Childcare Center on 1-2 targeted goals. Your Behaviour Consultant / Clinical Supervisor will collaborate with you to create a schedule for weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly visits, either in person, or virtually.

Home/Caregiver Coaching: Goals in the PLP will include a caregiver goal and may include a child-specific goal. During visits, you can expect that the BC/CS will engage you in discussion regarding your observations, your experiences, and possible strategies to teach your child a specific skill. The clinical team may also provide you with coaching as you implement a strategy. For child-specific

goals, the clinical team may also work with your child directly to work on a specific skill. In between visits from the BC/CS, a Lead Therapist may also visit to either work with your child, or to support you with a specific goal. This occurs at a minimum frequency of bi-weekly sessions.

Early Learning and Childcare Center: In addition to the caregiver goal in the PLP, a caregiver goal can be developed in collaboration between VIVA and your child's Early Learning and Childcare Center. A collaborative planning meeting will be required to determine need for support, goal setting, and scheduling of sessions.

Comprehensive

The comprehensive model involves Behaviour Interventionist (BI) working with your child to implement the goals outlined in the PLP under the supervision of the BC/CS. A caregiver goal will also be included in the PLP.

During the sessions, the BI will implement programs developed by the BC/CS. Programs are a set of instructions on how to teach specific skills, and to support a goal in the Personalized Learning Plan. During each session, the BI will have a specific target for each program. For therapy to be effective for your child, the minimum amount of time for a direct program is 6 hours per week. Families who are unable to commit to this amount of time will not be admitted into comprehensive services with access to Behaviour Interventionist support. Alternatively, services may switch to consultative if the family and/or Early Learning Childcare Center can commit to a minimum of bi-weekly sessions and there are appropriate, progressive goals for the family. Session length may be impacted by travel or your child's ability to participate in full sessions. Should your child not yet be ready for full sessions, your clinical team will help support them in meeting this goal.

VIVA's Pre-school Autism Program offers:

- *a flexible, customized approach*
- *the right number of hours for your child and family based on your needs, and employee availability*
- *both learner and caregiver goals*
- *an environment in which your child can learn*
- *a quality service that follows research-based approaches*



Flow of a Session

- *Administration/Paperwork:* During the first and last 15 minutes of your session, the BI will prepare/put away materials, review programs, summarize and review data. During this time, the family/caregiver is responsible for engaging and supervising the child.
- *Play:* The BI will begin the session with play and connecting with your child.

- *Programs:* As young children learn through play, many programs will be embedded within play activities; sessions may also include structured learning activities once your child is able to tolerate ending play, and to cooperate with instructions.
- *Data Collection:* The BI will take data for each program, and record your child's progress towards specific learning goals during the session.
- *Record of Therapy:* The BI will note the beginning and end of each session.
- *Break:* Employees can take a short break during sessions. In the home, the family will be responsible for supervising the child. In an ELCC, a process for allowing the VIVA employee to have a break will be discussed in the collaborative agreement.

During the administrative time or breaks, caregivers are responsible for the child.

Supervision Sessions

Your Behaviour Consultant (BC) will provide you with a schedule of their visits each month. The frequency of visits will depend on the number of hours of therapy your child receives, and your child's needs. The purpose of the session will be to:

- Review your child's progress
- Problem-solve and determine next steps
- Provide feedback and training to BIs

During this visit, the BC will also check in with the caregiver or educator to see if there are any questions or concerns. The session may also include a caregiver coaching component, or a separate coaching session may be scheduled to focus on specific, pre-determined goals.

Overlaps

Another BI may join the regular BI during a scheduled session to meet your child and become familiar with their programming. This allows VIVA to have options for possible coverage if your regular BI is absent.

Overlaps also help BIs connect with their colleagues, grow in their knowledge and skills, and help with staff absence. Overlaps will be discussed with you in advance.

Planning and Documenting Therapy Modifications

The location of service, as well as the length and frequency of sessions will vary during the course of therapy. The clinical team will make recommendations based on your child's needs, progress, and caregiver goals. Changes may require adjustments to your child's goals and/or your child's team.

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

Any modifications to the location of therapy, the intensity or the service type requires a caregiver signature. Making yourself available to promptly sign documents is crucial, either in person or by e-mail.

Schedules

Each month, you will receive a calendar outlining your child's schedule and other activities for the upcoming month.

Please review the schedule and contact your BC should a change be required. It is possible that your schedule may change. We will try our best to communicate changes proactively.

Should you have questions about your schedule, please contact your BC or CS.

Attendance Management*

Regular attendance is a requirement of the program during intake, and therapy (See Appendix D for details). Clients may need to cancel a session due to other commitments, illness, or vacation. We ask that families minimize cancellation when possible.

VIVA recognizes that occasional unexpected, unforeseen, or emergency events happen in the lives of the families we serve. If it is necessary for you to cancel a session, start late, or end early you must notify VIVA's regional office administration as early as possible.

If the family is planning a short-term leave (e.g., vacations over 2 weeks in duration), therapy will be put on hold and a new Service Level Agreement will be needed when therapy resumes. Availability of VIVA staff may be impacted by interruptions to the services and could result in a change in clinical team, or Behaviour Interventionist. If a family is planning a leave or pause in therapy of more than a month in duration, therapy will be stopped; your child will return to the waitlist and will be assigned to the next available clinical team, provided required attendance and participation commitments can be met.

VIVA has a responsibility to ensure therapy is available for all families, and that children are getting the right amount of therapy to facilitate learning. As such, we will manage family participation using the following guidelines:

1. If families miss two appointments without notice during the intake period, your child will return to the waitlist.
2. During therapy, if your child is a "no-show" or "unavailable without notice" 3 times in a 3-month period, therapy will be stopped, and your child will return to the waitlist.
3. During intake or therapy, if VIVA is unable to reach families to book appointments or communicate after two attempts to do so, therapy will be stopped, and your child will return to the waitlist.
4. During intake or therapy, we expect that families will commit to the plan that they selected, attending 80% of the scheduled appointments.

Client Who Needs to Cancel a Session

If your child is sick, please refer to Appendix E for guidance on when services should be cancelled, and exclusion periods for communicable diseases. When you need to cancel a session or an appointment:

- Call the reception office of the agency (please do not e-mail cancellations or contact employees directly).
- Leave the name of your child, the time and location of therapy being cancelled, and the name of the interventionist assigned for that session. Ensure you speak clearly if leaving a voicemail.
- Call the Early Learning and Childcare Center, if applicable

If a family knows that they will be cancelling in the future (e.g., scheduled appointment or vacation), they should notify their BC as soon as possible. If the centre is cancelling due to a staff vacation request or other, they will inform the family as soon as possible.



When Employees Need to Cancel a Session

We expect that our employees will minimize cancellations, but also encourage them to cancel sessions if they are sick and feel unable to work. When an employee must cancel a session:

- The agency will notify the family, and Early Learning and Childcare Center (if applicable) of the cancellations.
- BIs will not contact the family directly.
- If possible, the agency will arrange for another VIVA employee to cover the session with another BI who is familiar with your child and the programming, or a Lead Therapist.

Agency Closures

Planned VIVA Session Cancellations and Closures: VIVA will notify families, and ELCCs, of planned closures on the monthly calendars. VIVA may cancel services to offer professional development opportunities, to train your team on specific programs for your child or for team meetings.

VIVA is closed for one week during the summer months, usually the week following the long weekend in August (New Brunswick Day). Typically, VIVA is closed between Christmas and New Years. VIVA recommends that families plan their vacations during these scheduled closures to allow for consistent and effective therapy.

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

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| • New Year's Day | • Labour Day |
| • Family Day | • Truth and Reconciliation Day |
| • Good Friday | • Thanksgiving |
| • Victoria Day | • Remembrance Day |
| • Canada Day | • Christmas Day |
| • New Brunswick Day | • Boxing Day |

Unforeseen Closures: During extreme weather conditions (e.g., snowstorms, ice storms, power failures, flooding, etc.), VIVA may close, and sessions may be cancelled for the morning, the afternoon, or for the day.

VIVA will communicate cancellations by:

- Recording a message before 7:00am on the agency's main telephone line for morning sessions; and before 11:30am for afternoon sessions
- Families call the center to check for notifications of cancellations.
- Some agencies will send an email to families and ELCCs.

Positive and Safe Work Environment

VIVA employees go into homes and in ELCCs to provide a valuable service for your child. Our organization therefore counts on your collaboration to ensure that employee's work conditions meet the New Brunswick Employment Standards and Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Employees are entitled to the following:

- **Short breaks** during which an adult will need to supervise your child.
- **Work environment that is positive, supportive** in which there is effective communication; VIVA Therapeutic Services reserves the right to instantly interrupt services, including immediately leaving should individuals swear, scream, make threats or derogatory comments or should employees feel unsafe for any reason. This may be cause for termination of services.
- **Work environment that is clean and safe.** The clinical team will complete a Location of Service Safety review with you before services are offered in the home.

Safety Precautions

- Employees are not permitted to offer services in a home or ELCC if an adult over 18yrs old is not present.
- Employees are not permitted to transport any clients in their vehicle due to liability insurance. In addition, staff are not permitted to be transported by clients' families or ELCCs.
- Employees are not permitted to leave the designated service location without prior planning from the BC/CS. If an outing is approved, a caregiver must be present.

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

VIVA does not tolerate harassment, violence, or discrimination toward its employees.

Examples of harassment may include, but are not limited to:

- Offensive or intimidating comments or jokes made in person, in writing, over the phone, or through social media.
- Bullying or aggressive behaviour, in person, over the phone, in writing, or through social media.
- Displaying or circulating offensive pictures or materials in person, over the phone, in writing, or through social media.

- Isolating or making inappropriate comments about an employee because of their gender, identity, religion, or other personal characteristics.
- Abuse of power – involves coercing a person with less authority into an action that benefits the person of higher authority; using one's authority to intimidate, harass, or discriminate.
- Cyber harassment – sending SPAM or content of an offensive nature.

VIVA employees are directed to immediately leave a location if any of the following occur:

- Concerns around intoxication of the adults in the home.
- Any verbal or physically threatening behaviour made toward the employee.
- Any sexual comments made toward the employee.
- Any domestic dispute.
- Presence of unclothed adults.
- Unrestrained, aggressive pets.

Should any of these situations occur, an investigation will take place and may result in a change or termination of services.

Injuries During Therapy

Play-based therapy can involve children jumping running, spinning, climbing and exploring the environment. VIVA takes every precaution to ensure the therapy areas are clean and safe to reduce risk to your child. If your child is receiving services at an agency, first-aid providers are present and up to date with their training in all VIVA locations.

In the event of an incident where your child may be hurt during therapy, the following steps will be taken:

- 1.) The child will be administered first aid if necessary. For example, a band-aid, ice pack, or rest. An incident report will be completed, you will be notified, asked to sign the report, and receive a copy upon pick up.
- 2.) In the case of an emergency, 911 will be called and you will be notified immediately. An incident report will be completed, you will be asked to sign the report, and a copy will be provided to you.
- 3.) You may be asked to come pick-up your child in situations where it is suspected that non-emergency medical care may be needed, or if your child is not able to engage in the therapy session as a result of the injury.

Ethics and Professionalism

To ensure that your child receives professional, high-quality services, it is very important that both VIVA employees and families respect certain boundaries.

Communication

Employees and caregivers are expected to maintain a high level of professionalism in their communication. Discussions with families and ELCCs should center around the child and services being offered. The following guidelines are intended to ensure that VIVA employees respect your confidentiality, maintain professional boundaries, and that sessions with interventionists stay focused on your child.

- We encourage VIVA employees and caregivers to maintain a professional and respectful boundary regarding personal information.
- We ask that families keep conversations focused on their child, and their services during therapy sessions. If there are private personal matters that have an impact on therapy sessions, caregiver goals, etc., please discuss with your BC/CS rather than the BI.
- VIVA employees cannot participate in activities with families outside of your child's therapy (e.g., childcare services, birthday parties, trips).
- VIVA employees will not initiate communication with you and your child in the community to maintain your confidentiality; they will wait for you to initiate an interaction if you wish.
- VIVA employees cannot discuss other clients with your family, and we ask that you not discuss other clients with our employees.
- VIVA employees cannot communicate or connect with you on social media.

Calling the Centre about your child

VIVA takes the protection of your child's personal and health information very seriously. If someone calls the centre asking about your child or your child's services, the only time information will be provided is if the caller is an authorized person, as determined by the caregiver during our consent process.

Before disclosing any client information over the phone, our employee will verify the identity of the caller to ensure they are authorized to request or receive information. This will involve asking for:

- The caller's full name, and relationship with the child and where they are calling from.
- Confirmation of details related to the client such as their date of birth, address on file, etc.

If the caller cannot confirm the information requested, or if the information does not match what we have on file, we will not share client information.

We value clear, tactful, and respectful communication between all team members and families. At times, there may be difficult topics that need to be discussed between VIVA employees and caregivers. Should you wish to discuss a concern about your child's services, we ask that you contact your Clinical Supervisor or Behaviour Consultant directly. Our team wants to work with you to find solutions if there are issues that concern you.

Cell Phone or Tablet Use

Employees are not authorized to use their personal electronic devices for personal reasons during a session with a learner (e.g., social media, texting). However, cell phones or tablets may be used for work purposes (e.g., as a timer, checking schedule, data collection). Employees are not permitted to share their personal phone number with families. If the caregiver would like their child to use their own or family's phone or electronic device (e.g., tablet), they will be required to sign a liability waiver for use of personal devices form.

Dress Code

Employees must dress in a comfortable but professional way, according to VIVA's Dress Code Policy. It is important for employees to be able to sit on the floor with our learners and to move quickly. If a caregiver is concerned that a VIVA staff member is dressing inappropriately, please contact your CS/BC.

Gifts

We understand that offering gifts, food and beverages can be a meaningful way to express appreciation in many cultures. However, to maintain professional boundaries and avoid potential conflicts of interest, VIVA employees cannot receive gifts, including food and beverage, with a monetary value of \$10 or more. A gift is acceptable if it is an *infrequent* expression of gratitude. Please note that gifts are not expected, and a VIVA employee should decline a gift if it falls outside of these guidelines. Should you wish to express your gratitude, we recommend that you write a thank you note or an email to their supervisor highlighting why you wish to acknowledge them. These notes mean a lot to our employees and teams.

Custody Disagreements Within the Family

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

In the event of a custody dispute, we will communicate information equally to both parents unless there is a court order in place, informing us of the contrary. We will not provide recommendations or opinions on parental abilities or on the impact of a separation on the child. This is not within our scope of responsibilities and practice. We can provide documents such as the Personalized Learning Plan (PLP), programs, information regarding progress in the goals outlined in the PLP, clinic notes, and schedules. We cannot disclose personal information for litigation purposes unless required by a court order or subpoena.

School Transition

We recognize that transition to school can be an exciting and sometimes stressful time for families. We value starting the process of school transition early. It is a caregiver's responsibility to register their child in their community school. Please consult your school district's website for registration dates, and process.

The goal of the school transition process is to prepare your child for success in school. During this time VIVA will provide the school with information to help your child transition from our services to an inclusive school setting, with your consent. School transition plans and activities typically begin one year prior to school entry during which time the clinical team will:

- Communicate with the school and school district that your child is a VIVA client.
- Perform assessments and prepare information for school transition meetings, which typically take place in early Spring.
- Create and review the transition to school report. You will have an opportunity to review the information shared in the report before it is shared with the school.
- Facilitate observations by the school team of your child's sessions should this be required.
- Collaborate with the school in developing a support plan for transitioning your child to school.
- Provide copies of your child's PLP, programs and other relevant documents to the school team.

VIVA Therapeutic Services cannot make recommendations for Educational Assistant support, private service providers, or specific accommodations within the school context. It is the responsibility of the school personnel to determine support needs. VIVA's role is to offer detailed information on your child's strengths and needs and to share strategies that have been successful in the past.



Your child's schedule may be reduced during the last week of August to provide time for the team to prepare for your child's school entry and ensure a smooth transition.

VIVA services end once your child begins school. However, members of the VIVA team will coordinate with the school to provide support to your child in their transition. Support will be faded week to week over the month of September, as your child gains independence and the school becomes familiar with your child and their needs.

If your child turns five after September 1st, you can choose to delay their school start until the next school year. If your child turns five before September 1st, the family, in collaboration with VIVA, may request a school exemption to delay the start of school for up to one year, provide the conditions align with the criteria determined by EECDC. Please discuss with your BC/CS if you have questions about the exemption criteria or process.

Complaint Process

VIVA encourages open communication between families and employees to solve conflicts and deal with challenging or emotional situations. In the event where resolution cannot be achieved, VIVA has a formal complaint process for families who wish to express dissatisfaction with an aspect of our program, services, or employees. We value feedback to continuously strive to improve our services.

A summary of the [Complaint Resolution Process](#) can be found on our website and in Appendix G.

Our Regional and Corporate Contacts:

For information on contacting the Regional Director in your region, please visit our website at <https://www.vivanb.ca/regional-offices/>

Regional Office
Fredericton and Woodstock
506-455-7048

Regional Office
Moncton
506-872-2110

Regional Office
Saint John & Surrounding Areas
506-642-6045

Regional Office
Beresford & Northern Areas
506-542-2344

Corporate Office
Chief Operating Officer
506-455-0285

Appendix A – Services in the Home

The child's home is an optimal setting for therapy for some children and families. Delivering services in the home allows children to receive services in a space they are comfortable in. It also allows our teams to work closely with parents/caregivers to ensure that newly learned skills are generalized and maintained beyond service hours.

The following conditions must be met for VIVA to offer services in a client's home:

- A person who can provide help if needed and assume responsibility of the child, is 18 years or older, present and readily available in the home during service delivery.
- The environment is smoke/vape/alcohol free during service delivery.
- The home has running water, a functioning and clean bathroom including hand soap and a clean towel or paper towel.
- Provide an environment free from hazards such as, feces and/or urine, bed bugs, lice, and fleas.
- Ensure that driveways, walkways, and entrances are clear and accessible.
- Ensure that firearms, ammunition, and other weapons are safely stored according to the "Storage, Display, Transportation and Handling of firearms by Individuals Regulations".
- Ensure the environment is non-violent, free of abusive behaviour (verbal, physical, emotional, sexual) and harassment.
- Ensure the location of the service is clean and free of clutter. In particular:
 - high touch surfaces such as light switches, doorknobs, taps, etc.
 - therapy space
 - toys used during therapy
 - bathroom
- Ensure that main entrances and exits are clear for ease of access to safely evacuate the location in case of an emergency.

Caregivers may be asked to do some or all the following to ensure the well-being of VIVA employees:

- Contain pets in a different environment while VIVA employees are in the home environment.
- Prevent siblings or other individuals from interfering with the session unless their involvement is a part of the therapy plan;
- Limit guests during the hours of therapy;
- Coordinate with the VIVA team to determine necessary environmental modifications to support the child's learning such as: identifying an area free of electronics, removing, or adding necessary furniture and toys, or control of distractions.

Service may be interrupted if the above conditions cannot be met until a new location can be found.

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

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

Appendix B – Services in an ELCC

VIVA can offer services to support your child in an Early Learning and Childcare Center (ELCC). When choosing services in an ELCC, it is crucial to discuss with the childcare facility your child's involvement with VIVA, and the implications of VIVA services (i.e., VIVA will work collaboratively with the ELCC; VIVA services will involve having clinical team members in their classroom spaces). Should your child benefit from one-on-one teaching to support their learning, it's recommended that you explore options with your ELCC for accessing a teaching space and the possibility of working in and out of the classroom setting with your child.

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

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

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

Further:

- The child needs to be registered to attend an ELCC; all payment is the responsibility of the family.
- Prior to beginning therapy, a collaborative agreement involving VIVA, the caregivers and the ELCC operator will need to be developed, reviewed in a team meeting and signed prior to beginning services.

Why a Collaborative Agreement?

- The goal of the collaborative agreement is to proactively set the stage for all team members to work together in the best interest of the child. The team, and family will discuss important information such as: The child's strengths, goals and strategies that can help ensure the child is happy, relaxed and engaged while learning functional skills to increase their quality of life.
- The ELCC's policies and procedures to ensure alignment with VIVA's plan, or whether adaptations may be needed.
- The needs for space required to meet the goals outlined in the PLP. Should the child require a one-on-one space to meet PLP goals, determine if the ELCC can accommodate this requirement.
- Roles and responsibilities of the clinical team members and of members of the ELCC operator and educators.
- Procedure for communication between the ELCC operator, educators, and VIVA personnel should questions, concerns or conflict arise.
- A plan for the child should VIVA employees need to cancel on a certain day.

Appendix C – Services in a VIVA Agency

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

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

Should this option be available in your area, please note that space is limited and intended as a short-term option. Your team will need to apply for a space, which will be approved for a maximum of three months and then re-evaluated. This will allow time to find a space in an alternate location or to develop a future plan.

Should your child receive services in an Agency, they require:

- Signed consent forms, including a daily transfer of responsibility
- Snack and drink
- Hat and sunscreen (for locations with a playground)
- Indoor shoes
- Diapers and wipes (if applicable)
- Change of clothes
- Information on who can pick up the child
- Authorization to administer medication (if required)
- Emergency contact information with your child's picture

Appendix D – Attendance Management

Consistent service delivery is key to ensuring your child is learning and thriving. This includes regular therapy sessions, consistent clinical support, collaborative communication, and monitoring of programs.

We recognize that unexpected life events may occur which result in a cancelled session. However, frequent cancellation of therapy sessions presents a risk to the quality of our service and to your child’s learning experience.

We have identified that cancellations by VIVA employees **and** caregivers is an area that can be improved and developed new policy to support this improvement.

To address cancellations by **VIVA employees**, we have implemented a policy: *Management of Employee Attendance* and we have a process to allow for another therapist to cover the session when possible.

To address cancellations by **caregivers**, we have implemented a *Client Attendance Management policy*. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that expectations about attendance to assessment and therapy sessions, and the steps to address any concerns, are clear.

The following are key points within the policy:

- 1.) Punctual and regular attendance of the learner is the responsibility of caregivers. If it is necessary to cancel a session, have a start late or end early because of sudden illness, unforeseen event, or an emergency, the caregiver must notify VIVA’s regional office administration as early as possible.
- 2.) VIVA will review and address unexcused absences or excessive cancellations for the following scenarios:
 - Learner does not show up for the appointment and does not cancel (e.g., no one is home when the therapist arrives, or the learner does not attend their Early Learning and Childcare Center or the Agency appointment)
 - Learner cancellations are excessive over a 3-month period and do not improve (does not meet 80% consistent attendance) following supportive conversations.

A clear, step-by-step process will occur in collaboration with caregivers, that may include:

- supportive conversations regarding barriers to attendance and possible solutions
- a reduction in therapy hours for a period
- termination of services
- a request for documentation of a medical condition

Clients may need to cancel a session due to other commitments, illness, or vacation. We ask that families minimize cancellation when possible.

VIVA recognizes that occasional unexpected, unforeseen, or emergency events happen in the lives of the families we serve. If it is necessary for you to cancel a session, start late, or end early you must notify VIVA’s regional office administration as early as possible.

If the family is planning a short-term leave (e.g., vacations over 2 weeks in duration), therapy will be put on hold and a new Service Level Agreement will be needed when therapy begins. Availability of VIVA staff may be impacted by interruptions to the services and could result in a change in clinical team, or Behaviour

Interventionist. If a family is planning a leave or pause in therapy of more than a month duration, therapy will be stopped, and your child will return to the waitlist and can return to the next available clinical team, provided required attendance and participation commitments can be met.

VIVA has a responsibility to ensure therapy is available for all families and that children are getting the right amount of therapy to facilitate learning. As such, we will manage family participation using the following guidelines:

1. If families miss two appointments without notice during the Intake period, your child will return to the waitlist.
2. During therapy, if your child is a “no-show” or “unavailable without notice” 3 times in a 3-month period, therapy will be stopped, and your child will return to the waitlist.
3. During intake or therapy, if VIVA is unable to reach families to book appointments or communicate after two attempts to do so, therapy will be stopped, and your child will return to the waitlist.
4. During intake or therapy, we expect that families will commit to the plan that they selected, attending 80% of the scheduled appointments.

Should you have concerns regarding attendance or punctuality of a VIVA employee, please speak to your child’s supervisory team.

Caregivers should also review Appendix E concerning communicable diseases and be aware of Public Health Universal Precautions.

Appendix E – Health Guidelines

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

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

The above guidelines are provided by the New Brunswick government and are the standards that all childcare facilities are expected to follow. If any of the above symptoms are apparent to the BI, the BI will contact their supervisor to determine if services should be canceled. For more details regarding the exclusion periods for different communicable diseases, refer to the New Brunswick Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Communicable Diseases in Early Learning and Childcare (ELCC) Facilities: (<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/ed/pdf/ELCC/guidelines-for-the-prevention-and-control-of-communicable-diseases-in-elc-facilities.pdf>)

VIVA employees are fully responsible to adhere to guidelines for the prevention on communicable diseases if they themselves are experiencing symptoms or are diagnosed with a communicable disease.

Administering Medication

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

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

Appendix F – Parent/Guardian Consent to Initiate Services

Client Name:	File #:
Date of Birth:	Meeting Date:
Clinical Supervisor:	Regional Director:
Reviewed with parent(s)/guardian(s):	Reviewed by VIVA representative:

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT TO INITIATE SERVICES

VIVA Therapeutic Services is the contracted service provider for the New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD), Preschool Autism Program. Our mandate is to provide a high quality, evidence-based services in English and French. All children with a diagnosis of autism are eligible for our program until they enter school. At VIVA, our programs are based on behavioural and developmental approaches, and are highly individualized. We are committed to equipping each child and their families with the necessary tools and services needed to promote development.

Following a review of the **Caregiver Guide**, I agree to the following statements (initial each section):

Limits to Confidentiality: I understand and acknowledge receiving information on the limits to confidentiality.

VIVA's approach and core values: I understand and acknowledge VIVA's general approach and core values

ABA: I understand that VIVA uses Applied Behaviour Analysis using a naturalistic and joyful approach; and its risks and benefits.

Problematic Behaviour: I understand and agree to VIVA's general approach to addressing problematic behaviours

VIVA Team Members: I understand the various roles of VIVA team members, and agree to have VIVA team members involved in my child's plan.

Teaching Facility: I understand that VIVA is a teaching facility; including internal training, and training for practicum students from other organizations.

Parent/Caregiver participation: I understand that parent participation is an expected part of my child's program and that VIVA reserves the right to reconsider the appropriateness of service, offer alternative options, and as a last resort, request to terminate services if there is a lack parent/caregiver participation.

Collection and sharing of personal information: I agree with VIVA's protocols regarding the collection and sharing of personal Information; including the use of video for assessment, consultation and internal collaboration and problem-solving, and process for sharing information in a divorce or custody situation.

Intake process: I agree and understand that VIVA will engage my child and family in assessment procedures to develop a Personalized Learning Plan for child over the course of the first 3-4 months; parent participation and input in the assessment process and development of the plan is required.

Service Models: I understand the service delivery models offered by VIVA Therapeutic Services (consultative and comprehensive), and that I will work with the clinical team to

determine the type of service, service location, and intensity (number of hours and scheduling) that will best fit the needs of my child and family.

Attendance Management: I understand and acknowledge the requirements of attendance for families, and process to follow if cancelling or rescheduling an appointment.

Termination of Services

Participation in programming offered by VIVA Therapeutic Services is a voluntary service. Parents/caregivers have the right to terminate the service at any time by contacting their Clinical Supervisor or Regional Director.

If at any time during treatment it is determined that services cannot continue, VIVA Therapeutic Services will provide you with a justification for this decision and submit a Request for Termination document to EECD. Ideally, services end when treatment plan goals have been achieved, or when the child transitions to school.

VIVA may recommend that services be terminated for the following reasons:

- External assessments show that the child’s cognitive, social, language and adaptive functioning is within normal range (no delay exists).
- Following multiple case conferences between the family and clinical team, it is determined that ABA approaches are not acceptable by the family and/or the family’s goals are not within our area of expertise or scope of practice.
- The family has consistent poor attendance (below 80% across three consecutive months or multiple missed meetings). The clinical team will first work with the family to determine a schedule that better aligns with their availability and family priorities.

Please note that VIVA will make every effort to work with the family prior to requesting a Termination of Service. By initialing below, I acknowledge that the information pertaining to the Right to Terminate Services has been shared with me.

Initials

DECLARATION AND CONSENT

- A member of the VIVA Therapeutic Services team has reviewed this information with me. I am in agreement with the conditions described within this consent document. I understand that consent is an ongoing process and that I can ask to revisit this consent at any point in time in the assessment or treatment sessions.
- I understand that I have the right to stop the assessment and/or treatment process at any time.
- I understand that if I am unable to provide relevant background and health information, this omission may affect the completeness and accuracy of assessment conclusions as well as the effectiveness and safety of treatment.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Appendix G – Complaint Process

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure VIVA Therapeutic Services (VIVA) provides a fair, effective, and transparent response to service delivery related complaints. This policy sets out the procedures for receiving, reviewing, recording, and responding to complaints about our service from external sources.

Guiding Principles

VIVA is committed to adhering to high standards of practice. Our company’s core values include teamwork, integrity, quality, dignity, diversity, and joy. Specific to integrity, we value feedback from our service users and continuously strive to improve our services. Our complaint resolution policy is guided by the following principles:

Accessible	VIVA’s complaint resolution policy is publicly available on our website, and service users are informed of their right to complain about our organization. Complaints are accepted in a variety of ways (i.e., website, phone, mail, and email).
Fair	All complaints will be handled in a manner that is impartial and fair. Our formal complaint process provides the opportunity for service users to submit relevant information and have an opportunity to be heard before the summary of findings and decision from the complaint is finalized. Our process also provides opportunity for appeal.
Person-Focused	We recognize that service users have different needs, and each person has their own unique history that they bring to the interaction with our organization. We commit to listen to our service users’ concerns, treat them with dignity and respect, and maintain confidentiality throughout the complaints process.
Responsive	We will acknowledge receipt of formal complaints within two (2) business days and will seek to resolve the complaint at the earliest opportunity. Complaints that cannot be resolved at first contact, or those that raise more serious concerns about our organization, will be forwarded for further review and investigation; we aim to provide a report outlining a summary of findings and decision within ten (10) business days of receipt of a formal complaint. VIVA is committed to these time frames and will inform our service users of the progress of their complaint and reasons for any delay in the complaint resolution process. VIVA will not respond to anonymous or third-party complaints.

The scope of this policy is to address complaints with VIVA’s service delivery with informal strategies and formal procedure. It does not cover complaints related to autism support in schools, autism support provided by Early Learning and Childcare Centres (ELCCs), or the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD).

Complaints must be received within 6-months after the incident occurred that gave rise to the concerns.

DEFINITIONS

Complaint – a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with an aspect of our programs, services, or people. It can include concerns about our employee’s conduct, quality of service, delay in providing a response, or the reasonableness of a decision made, or action taken by a member of our employee. It can also include the response provided by a VIVA employee to a complaint or concern raised about our organization.

A complaint is different than a *conflict* or *challenging* or *emotional situation*. This policy deals with specific complaints about something that has happened or continues to happen and is believed to be unsatisfactory.

Levels of complaints are defined as:

Informal complaints – these are issues that can be resolved at point-of-service. These complaints tend to be regarding interpersonal issues, collaborative issues, concerns with schedules or specific services. There is no formal format or procedure to handle the complaint. These issues are usually resolved by simple solutions or conversations.

Formal complaints – these are issues that require or are requested to be escalated to senior leadership or a third party for investigation. There is a formal service delivery complaint procedure that outlines the steps required, timing and escalating authority, and is documented in writing.

STEPS TO MAKE A FORMAL COMPLAINT

1. File a complaint by emailing: info@vivanb.ca or mailing/telephoning the Regional Director or Provincial Director of Operations at one of our service locations (<https://www.vivanb.ca/regional-offices/>)
2. Include the following information:
 - a. name and contact information of the complainant
 - b. name and position of any employee/s who are involved in the complaint
 - c. the nature of your concern – what happened, when, where, and with what you are dissatisfied
 - d. any related documentation, including notes
 - e. the desired outcome
3. Acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint will occur within two (2) working days by email, letter, or phone call. This acknowledgement will include information about the employee who has primary responsibility for investigating the complaint, as well as information about the complaint resolution process, including applicable timeframes.
4. The complaint will be reviewed and, if appropriate, investigated by the Regional Director or Provincial Director of Operations.
5. A report outlining a summary of the findings and decision will be sent (email or mail) to the complainant within ten (10) business days of receipt of the complaint.
6. When a formal complaint is not investigated the complainant will be notified by email or letter within five (5) business days of receiving the complaint, with reasons provided for the decision to dismiss the complaint. Reasons may include: the issue is not within the jurisdiction for review by VIVA; the concerns raised have previously been investigated and no new complaints have been reported; the issues raised by the complainant are currently under investigation; the remedy sought by the complainant is not achievable.
7. The complainant can appeal the decision by contacting the COO (or designate) and requesting the complaint be escalated to the CEO for final review and decision.
8. Following escalation, final decision will be provided in writing to the complainant and the Regional Director/Provincial Director of Operations within five (5) business days.
9. The complainant can appeal the final decision by contacting the Department of Education and Early Childhood development at autism.autisme@gnb.ca

VIVA may investigate complaints that have been received within 6-months following an incident that gave rise to the concerns.