

# My child has Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Information for Queensland families of young children



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*A Parent Connect resource*

# Message from the Minister



As a parent, finding out your child has disability will raise many questions. Particularly about what services and supports may be available.

Early access to services and supports is critical for all children with disability, including children with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

Early intervention services will not only enable your child to achieve important developmental milestones, but provide crucial support for you and your family.

This guide has been developed for families of children with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

It includes the practical information you need to support your child's inclusion in family and community life, and the services and support available during your child's early years and their transition to kindergarten and school.

The Queensland Government is committed to improving direct services to families. We are delivering more assistance to families through initiatives such as Parent Connect, and by increasing the number of speech and language pathologists for all children with disability in Queensland schools.

I would like to thank the Umbrella Network and the National Organisation for Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and Related Disorders for their contributions to this guide and for their ongoing support for Queensland children with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder and their families.

As we deliver new priorities for Queensland, I look forward to enabling a better future for Queensland families of children with disability.

**The Honourable Tracy Davis MP**  
Minister for Communities, Child Safety  
and Disability Services

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# 1. About Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

This guide is intended to answer some of the questions that you may have if you are concerned your child has foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) or your child has recently been diagnosed with FASD.

FASD is the umbrella term used to describe a spectrum of disorders that can occur in an unborn child exposed to maternal alcohol consumption during pregnancy. FASD disorders may include a range of physical, intellectual, behavioural and learning impairments which will have lifelong implications.

Maternal alcohol consumption can have a number of effects on an unborn child. Of most significance is the amount and pattern of alcohol consumption and the stage of the pregnancy when alcohol was consumed. As a result, babies exposed to alcohol during pregnancy are often affected to varying degrees.

FASD occurs because the alcohol in the mother's blood crosses over to the unborn baby through the placenta, meaning the baby has much the same alcohol level as the mother.

Alcohol causes harm to the unborn baby because it is a neurotoxin (poison). Exposure to neurotoxins can cause physical defects and permanent brain damage.

## What are the early signs of FASD?

If you are worried about your child's development and alcohol was a factor during pregnancy, you should seek further advice.

Babies who have FASD may demonstrate:

- low birth weight
- irritability
- sensitivity to light, noise and or touch
- feeding problems
- a failure to thrive
- unusual facial features.

Toddlers who have FASD may demonstrate:

- poor memory
- attention problems
- hyperactivity
- behaviour problems
- lack of fear
- poor sense of boundaries
- problems with gross or fine motor skills
- poor balance or clumsiness
- smaller height for their age.

The most important thing for you to do is to seek a diagnosis as early as possible if you feel your child may have FASD.

Speak to your GP or paediatrician as soon as possible so you can access early intervention services and get the best possible support for your child. These services are critical in helping to maximise your child's developmental potential.

## Are there different types of FASD?

FASD refers to a range of disorders that includes foetal alcohol syndrome, alcohol-related birth defects and alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorder.

### Foetal alcohol syndrome (FAS)

FAS is the most extreme disorder in the FASD spectrum. Babies born with FAS will often have low birth weights and unusual facial features and will experience significant developmental delay. Some will also have heart defects, limb abnormalities and physical and intellectual impairment.

As children with FAS develop they may begin to exhibit learning and behavioural problems.

### Alcohol-related birth defects (ARBD)

ARBD is a diagnosis relating to children who were exposed to alcohol during pregnancy and exhibit otherwise unexplained impairments including heart, kidney, vision, speech and skeletal abnormalities.

### Alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorder (ARND)

ARND is a diagnosis relating to children with central nervous system developmental abnormalities who were exposed to alcohol during pregnancy. Characteristics can include small head size at birth, structural brain abnormalities, impaired neurological development, impaired fine motor skills, hearing loss, poor eye-hand coordination and unexplained behavioural or cognitive impairment.

#### Find out more

See also the National Organisation for Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and Related Disorders website  
[www.nofasard.org.au](http://www.nofasard.org.au)

## How common is FASD?

The true extent of FASD in Australia is unclear. However, research has shown that around 50 per cent of births result from unplanned pregnancies. Many pregnancies may therefore be exposed to alcohol before a woman realises she is pregnant.

In the United States, the estimated rate of FASD is one in 100 births with three in 1000 births having a diagnosis of FAS.

## What does the future hold?

All parents worry about the future for their child. Remember that having FASD is just one part of who your child is and that each child is affected differently. It is important not to underestimate what your child can achieve with the right support.

With early diagnosis and support, children with FASD can live full and productive lives. To achieve the best outcomes for your child it is critical you seek an early diagnosis and access appropriate early intervention services and supports as soon as possible.

Children with FASD are likely to need support throughout their school years, including an individualised program to support their learning, social and behavioural needs.

## 2. Diagnosis

The first five years of a child's life are critical for development. It is the time when your child's brain is still developing and is especially responsive to therapies and supportive environments.

Having your child assessed and formally diagnosed with FASD will enable access to early intervention services which will help to improve your child's health needs, social and emotional abilities and behaviour. Early intervention services will also provide information and support for you, as parents, about caring for your child. With a formal diagnosis, your family may be able to access funding or early intervention services provided by the Australian Government, Queensland Government and non-government organisations.

As parents, you may feel concerned about experiencing stigma and blame in seeking a diagnosis of FASD. Health professionals understand that women who consume alcohol during pregnancy do not intend to harm their unborn child. They understand that many factors, including being unaware of the pregnancy, may be at play. The important factor is that you are seeking advice and support and that you care about your child and their future.

A formal diagnosis may also assist you to better understand what your child is experiencing.

### Who provides a diagnosis of FASD in Queensland?

In Queensland, your GP or paediatrician will be able to assist in getting a diagnosis of FASD.

There is no single medical test to diagnose FASD, which may mean many children with FASD go undiagnosed.

Diagnosis is based on consideration of characteristics such as growth deficiency, low weight to height ratio, developmental delay, learning and behavioural problems, intellectual impairment and unusual structural features (such as unusual facial features). Not all children with FASD will experience all of these characteristics. Some children with FASD may experience a number of characteristics to a lesser degree.

You may be asked to provide information about your pregnancy to help your child's paediatrician consider all information in making a diagnosis.

Your GP or child health nurse, based at a community health centre, can provide a referral to a paediatrician.

Your child can be seen privately or through the public health system. There will usually be costs for private paediatricians, however, waiting times for an appointment may be shorter. The consultation will be at no cost if it is with a paediatrician in the public health system.

Families living in rural and remote areas can access a visiting Department of Health paediatrician. Talk to your GP about getting a referral.

Local Area Coordinators in Disability Services can provide information to families about this and other key services to obtain a diagnosis.

## After diagnosis

It is not unusual for parents to feel overwhelmed when they first learn about their child's diagnosis of FASD. Even if you have suspected for some time that your child may have FASD-related disability it is important to recognise that you are likely to need extra support.

You may get this support from your family and friends, but it is also good to talk to your GP. Your GP can tell you about local parent support groups and the availability of professional support such as a counsellor or social worker if you are feeling overwhelmed. Your local hospital, GP or child health nurse should be able to refer you to a counsellor or social worker.

When your child receives a diagnosis of FASD a number of things will happen. Your paediatrician will discuss the types of supports and services that will optimise your child's development and a plan may be developed. You will also receive information on the services and supports available in your local community.

Many children will require a combination of therapies, or will develop different needs at different stages of their development. Ideally, therapies should be family-centred because disability impacts on all members of the family.

All members of the family need to be involved, to learn skills to understand and support their child or sibling with FASD.

### Other service providers

While there are early intervention services available for children with disability, some families may want to seek support from a range of providers. Your GP or paediatrician can refer you to a range of therapists.

### Tips for parents

Even if you do not as yet have a diagnosis, you can encourage your child's development through creating regular opportunities for play and social interaction.

Links to websites which may help you locate professionals such as physiotherapists, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists and psychologists are provided throughout this booklet.

### Parent Connect

The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services' Parent Connect initiative supports parents of newborns and children newly diagnosed with disability. It is an early response service providing information and linking families to family support networks, community services and funding to access specialist services.

### Carers Queensland

Carers Queensland provides carers with information, education, training, advocacy, counselling and other support services that may assist them in their caring role. The organisation also raises awareness about the valuable role and contributions of carers.

### Child health services in the community

Staffed by nurses and allied health professionals, free child health services are available at community clinics. Home visiting may also be provided. Child health checks are recommended at one, two, four, six and 12 months of age. Information is available on child health, parenting, child development, immunisation and nutrition. Families can be linked to local services and parent groups.

For further information refer to your baby's Red Book (personal health record).

### Financial support

If you live in a rural or remote area and need to travel to attend specialist medical appointments, you may be eligible for the Queensland Patient Transport Assistance Scheme. Ask your GP for further information.

Should your child's support needs mean that you are unable to enter paid employment, you may be eligible for a Carer's Payment. Centrelink can provide you with more information on supplementary payments such as Carer's Allowance or Child Disability Assistance Payment.

#### Find out more

##### Child health services in the community

13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)  
[www.health.qld.gov.au](http://www.health.qld.gov.au)

##### Carers Queensland

3900 8100  
1800 242 636 (Advisory Service)

##### Queensland Patient Transport Assistance Scheme

[www.health.qld.gov.au](http://www.health.qld.gov.au)

##### Centrelink

132 468  
[www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au)

##### Disability Services

13 QGOV (13 74 68)  
[www.communities.qld.gov.au](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au)

#### Find out more

**Parent Connect** is provided by the following organisations:

**Cairns – The Benevolent Society**  
4045 0003  
[www.benevolent.org.au](http://www.benevolent.org.au)

**Townsville – The Cootharinga Society of North Queensland**  
4759 2008  
[www.cootharinga.org.au](http://www.cootharinga.org.au)

**Rockhampton – The Cootharinga Society of North Queensland in partnership with The Umbrella Network**  
4928 6550  
[www.theumbrellanetwork.org](http://www.theumbrellanetwork.org)

**Sunshine Coast – Sunshine Coast Children's Therapy Centre**  
5441 4937  
[www.scctc.org.au](http://www.scctc.org.au)

**Brisbane North – Mission Australia**  
3828 9311

**Brisbane South – Mission Australia**  
3713 2602

**Ipswich – Mission Australia**  
3713 2602  
[www.missionaustralia.com.au](http://www.missionaustralia.com.au)

**Gold Coast – The Benevolent Society**  
5644 9400  
[www.benevolent.org.au](http://www.benevolent.org.au)

# 3. Early intervention services

Early intervention services are important for all children with disability including children with FASD. Early intervention services can assist children to develop skills in play, communication, social relationships and functional behaviours. Early intervention can also assist in increasing a child's independence and adaptability, which improves their readiness to participate in child care, kindergarten and school.

Early intervention services provide a range of supports for families of children with disability (including children with disability resulting from FASD) from birth to Prep.

These services include:

- information and planning
- advice on the child's developmental needs
- multidisciplinary therapy to support the child's development and help reach developmental milestones
- referrals to other specialist services and mainstream services
- coordination of services for children with complex needs
- support with transitioning to a kindergarten program and school
- counselling and linking families with other families and support groups.

## How will my child benefit from early intervention?

Early intervention for all children with disability, including FASD, is most effective and provides the best possible outcomes when provided as early as possible after diagnosis.

### Tips for parents

Talk to your child's therapist about your child's interests and strengths. Ask for ideas for incorporating these into home activities such as suitable computer games for a child who likes computers.

Early intervention services should be tailored to the individual needs of your child and family. It is important for you as a parent to have a good rapport with the therapists and feel able to ask lots of questions about your child's therapy and their progress.

All services recognise the importance of working in partnership with families. Ideally services are provided in a flexible way that meets the needs of as many families as possible.

Successful early intervention services may involve professionals working directly with your child as well as teaching you strategies to support your child to develop their potential.

Professionals should spend time with you working on goals that can be incorporated into family routines and play activities.

### Tips for parents

Children with FASD often have poor memory — to support your child, try to repeat information or instructions you have given them.

## Where can I access early intervention supports?

Your child may receive supports and services from a range of professionals. For example, speech pathologists may support your child if they have communication issues, to help develop your child's speech and language skills. Your child's paediatrician will be able to advise you on what supports and services your child may benefit from.

The Queensland Government also funds early intervention services for children with FASD in Queensland. This section details the main services available.

### Early intervention services

The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services provides early intervention support to children who have a developmental delay or who are at risk of having a developmental delay. This includes children with FASD.

These services can support your child in their play and independence, as well as develop their communication skills, and gross and fine motor movements.

The department also provides information on a range of topics and will support you to connect with other services such as playgroups, childcare and parent support groups.

Children are prioritised for services according to their level of need and availability of places.

### Tips for parents

Children with FASD often have difficulty understanding the right way to behave or how to make appropriate decisions. Try to model desired behaviour and only give one clear instruction at a time.

### Child development services

The Department of Health provides early childhood intervention services to eligible children with a moderate to severe developmental delay or disability up to nine years of age.

Priority is given to children not eligible to receive services from other Queensland Government agencies.

Services include providing advice on your child's developmental needs and therapy services that encourage your child's development. Parent education and information sessions are also provided.

### Early childhood development programs and services

Therapy and early intervention services available through the Department of Education, Training and Employment are available for children from birth to prior-to-Prep age who have a suspected or diagnosed disability with significant educational needs. This includes children with FASD who meet the eligibility for these services.

Programs and services may include playgroup session, outreach support in your home, centre-based sessions and support to transition to Prep. Early Childhood Development Programs and Services can also provide access to advisory visiting teachers, who have

### Find out more

#### Early Intervention Services

Disability Services

13 QGOV

[www.communities.qld.gov.au](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au)

#### Early childhood development programs and services

Contact your local education regional offices

[www.education.qld.gov.au](http://www.education.qld.gov.au)

#### Child Development Services

13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)

[www.health.qld.gov.au](http://www.health.qld.gov.au)

specialist knowledge and skills to support your child at school.

### Local Area Coordinators

Local Area Coordinators link children with disability and their families in regional, rural and remote areas with supports and services which relate to their individual needs and interests, including accessing visiting specialists.

### Mater Children's Hospital Paediatric Complex Care Services

The Paediatric Complex Care Service assists children and their families to access appropriate services and supports in both hospital and community settings.

Children with complex health and disability needs may be eligible for this service.

Services provided include:

- phone contact service (care line)
- regional support for families who live outside the Brisbane area
- hospital support including regular visits and advocacy
- links to community services and supports
- information and training
- equipment support
- referrals.

## Support for parents

As a parent, it can be a challenge to strike the right balance between supporting your child with FASD and the needs of the rest of your family. It is normal to feel overwhelmed from time to time, especially during times of change, such as when your child starts school.

Make sure you have a good network of people around you, and don't be afraid to ask your GP or early intervention service provider for information about formal support such as classes, self-help groups or counselling.

You may find the best support comes from other parents who know what you are going through. Early intervention

### Tips for parents

Children with FASD often respond positively to structure in their physical and emotional environments. Avoid rearranging things like furniture, try to establish routine and be consistent.

service providers will be able to give you advice about how to link with other parents of children who have FASD.

You may also find it useful to access some of the following services that provide support for parents, carers and families of children with disability.

Parents and carers hear up-to-date information from carers and therapists while their child attends a playgroup taken by professional occupational, music or speech specialists.

### Other parents

Parents often find the best support they have comes from other parents of children with FASD. Other parents understand the joys and challenges of raising a child with FASD and can share advice and information about local services and supports.

### Find out more

#### Local Area Coordinators

13 QGOV

[www.communities.qld.gov.au](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au)

#### Mater Children's Hospital Paediatric Complex Care Services

07 3163 1876

Email: [complex\\_care@mater.org.au](mailto:complex_care@mater.org.au)

### **Raising Children Network website**

Is an Australian Government initiative that provides a web-based source of information about parenting and child development activities for children, including children with disability.

### **The Umbrella Network**

Is based in Rockhampton and is a network of support and information for families who have a child with disability, including developmental delay.

### **Triple P — Positive Parenting Program**

Triple P — Positive Parenting Program can help many families who have a child with support needs to creatively problem solve and develop flexible and supportive family routines and strategies to support their child's learning and development.

Stepping Stones Triple P has been specially tailored for parents of children with disability. It can help parents address their children's behaviour and emotional problems which may be more challenging at times (e.g. going to sleep, mealtimes, choosing what clothes to wear, dressing, toileting, going shopping and going to the doctors).

Stepping Stones Triple P can be accessed in different ways, including information seminars, individual sessions on specific issues, group sessions, online options, and tip sheets and workbooks for parents.

### **Playgroups**

Play is an integral part of all children's development, including children with a disability. Through play, a child learns, builds confidence and develops a range of skills in readiness for childcare, kindergarten and school.

Playgroups nurture children with play-based learning experiences during key times of growth and development in their early years.

Playgroups offer an opportunity for young children to come together and play in a safe, relaxed and welcoming environment. Playgroups are low cost and inclusive and all children under school age are welcome.

Playgroups also help families by providing social support for parents. It provides an environment where parents can discuss and share parenting experiences and get information on how to address parenting issues.

There are a range of playgroups available, including community playgroups, supported playgroups, PlayConnect and the Playgroup Plus Program.

### **MyTime groups**

Provide local support for mums, dads, grandparents and anyone caring for a young child under school age with disability or a chronic medical condition.

MyTime gives parents the chance to socialise and share ideas with others who understand the rewards and intensity of the caring role. Parents can meet with people in similar circumstances to have fun, hear from others and find out about available

#### **Find out more**

**Raising Children Network:** the Australian parent website  
[www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)

**The Umbrella Network**  
4723 4278  
[theumbrellanetwork.org](http://theumbrellanetwork.org)

**Triple P — Positive Parenting Program**  
3236 1212  
[www.triplep-steppingstones.net](http://www.triplep-steppingstones.net)  
[www.triplep-parenting.net](http://www.triplep-parenting.net)

**Playgroup Queensland**  
1800 171 882  
[www.playgroupqld.com.au](http://www.playgroupqld.com.au)

community support. Research-based parenting information is also available at group meetings.

Each group has a play helper who can lead children in activities such as singing, drawing, and playing with toys, blocks or sand so parents can spend time focusing on catching up with others.

### **Baby Bridges**

Is a playgroup program for children with disability from birth to five years. Parents and carers hear up-to-date information from carers and specialists while their child attends a playgroup taken by professional occupational, music or speech pathologists.

### **Find out more**

#### **MyTime Groups**

1800 889 997

[www.mytime.net.au](http://www.mytime.net.au)

#### **Baby Bridges**

#### **Contact the Horizon Foundation**

3245 4266

[www.babybridges.com.au](http://www.babybridges.com.au)

Search for services or specialists in your local area through the websites of professional associations.

#### **The Australian Physiotherapy Association**

[www.physiotherapy.asn.au](http://www.physiotherapy.asn.au)

#### **Speech Pathology Australia**

[www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au](http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au)

#### **Occupational Therapy Australia**

[www.otqld.org.au](http://www.otqld.org.au)

#### **Australian Psychological Society**

[www.psychology.org.au/](http://www.psychology.org.au/)

# 4. Early childhood education and care

## What are early childhood education and care services?

Early childhood education and care services include child care and kindergarten services. Children can attend approved child care services from birth and all children are eligible to attend a kindergarten program in the year before they commence school (Prep). The Queensland Government provides funding support to approved kindergarten programs delivered in long day care or kindergarten services.

The early years of any child's life have a significant impact on their future health, development, learning and wellbeing. It is generally accepted that children who participate in early childhood education are likely to have better academic performance, better behaviour, and stay in education for longer. This includes children who have disability as a result of FASD.

By age three, children with FASD are most likely showing delays in meeting developmental milestones.

Participating in a quality early childhood education and care program can provide children with FASD opportunities to develop their social, communication and play skills from an early age.

## How will my child benefit from child care?

Child care provides all children an early opportunity to relate to peers and other adults. This is no different for children with vision impairment. It can

### Tips for parents

To help your child transition to kindergarten, learn about the activities and routine of the kindergarten program. They can also introduce a similar routine at home for your child.

also be an opportunity for you to receive input from qualified early childhood professionals and try new approaches to supporting the development of your child.

Child care can also provide you with opportunities to return to work or study, or to have time with other members of your family.

## What supports are available for my child to attend child care?

The Australian Government supports children with disabilities who attend child care through the Inclusion and Professional Support Program. This support may be available to:

- subsidise the cost of additional educators or carers
- provide access to specialist equipment to assist inclusion
- provide professional development and resources for educators.

## How will my child benefit from a kindergarten program?

All children benefit from participating in an approved quality early education program, including children with disability as a result of FASD.

Participation in a kindergarten program can help your child develop skills in communication, social interaction and behaviour. It can also assist your child to follow routines, as well as provide exposure to early literacy and numeracy concepts.

Participation in a kindergarten program will give your child a greater chance of successfully transitioning into Prep and then into mainstream schooling.

Kindergarten programs offer play-based learning in a fun and nurturing environment.

All children benefit from these early learning experiences and develop abilities such as:

- being involved and learning to interact with other children
- developing a desire to learn as well as ways of getting involved in learning
- understanding and managing their feelings
- learning about themselves, developing their identity, confidence and independence
- building communication skills.

## How will my child be supported in a kindergarten program?

Kindergarten teachers in kindergarten services and long day care services can access support to assist children with FASD to participate in their programs.

Children with disability, including children with FASD, can receive additional supports to participate in a

### Tips for parents

Take photos or a video of your child's kindergarten and new kindergarten teacher. Show these to your child and talk about starting in their kindergarten program in the lead-up to their first day.

kindergarten program. Kindergarten services can apply under the Disability Support Funding Program, Education Queensland, to receive additional funding to support your child's participation in their kindergarten program.

Additional support may include:

- equipment and play resources
- training and professional development for kindergarten teachers
- extra teacher aide time to support the child's inclusion in the kindergarten.

Kindergarten programs in long day care services may be eligible for the Australian Government's Inclusion and Professional Support Program. This provides professional development and other assistance to child care services supporting children with additional needs.

Kindergarten teachers can modify the kindergarten program to support the inclusion of your child.

### Find out more

#### Early childhood education and care services

Early years centres provide education, family support and health services for children 0–8 years.

[www.dete.qld.gov.au](http://www.dete.qld.gov.au)

or phone 13 QGOV

## How do I plan my child's transition into a kindergarten program?

As for all children, starting in a kindergarten program is an exciting time of transition for children with disability and their families. However, for children with disability the transition process may be different and involve more planning than for other students because the child will often have been involved in a range of early intervention services.

Your child will most likely need a period of preparation before they start their kindergarten program (e.g. support to settle in and ongoing support to ensure their needs are being met and they are achieving educational goals).

Successful transition planning requires a team approach with your family and the kindergarten teacher, which should begin six to 12 months before your child starts in the service.

Transition planning also involves activities with your child including visits to the kindergarten to become more familiar with the environment and routines, and gradually adjusting routines at home to be similar to those they will experience in the program.

Other activities involved in transition planning for your child include visiting the kindergarten to become more familiar with the environment and routines, and gradually adjusting routines at home to be similar to those they will experience in the program.

### Find out more

**Disability Support Funding Program, Early Childhood Education and Care Services and Kindergarten Services**

[www.dete.qd.gov.au](http://www.dete.qd.gov.au)

**Inclusion and Professional Support Program (Australian Government)**

[www.mychild.gov.au](http://www.mychild.gov.au)

# 5. Starting school

Starting school is an important time for children and families. The transition to school may present challenges for your child, as well as for the rest of your family, and good planning is critical. It is important to start planning for the transition to school at least 12 months before your child is due to commence.

The choice of school is a decision parents will make depending on their child's needs and abilities and the resources available. It is best to seek advice from your local school before you make a final decision.

## Where can I enrol my child?

All children are able to enrol at their local state school. It is best to talk to the principal of the school about the types and levels of support available for your child before completing enrolment forms. You and your child may be asked to attend an interview with a staff member as part of the process.

Choosing a school for your child is an important decision. It may also be useful to talk to other parents who have children at the school you are considering.

## Is my child ready for Prep?

Prep is offered in all state schools as a full five-day-per-week program. To be eligible for Prep a child must turn five by 30 June in the year they start Prep. With the introduction of the Australian Curriculum, full-time attendance in Prep gives children, including children with FASD, the foundation they need for successful learning in Year 1 and beyond.

### Tips for parents

Check to see if the school you are considering has an open day that you can attend with your child.

If you are concerned that your child is not ready to start Prep at that time, you can choose to start your child a year later when they reach compulsory school age (six years and six months).

You should discuss the specific needs of your child with the principal of the school you plan to enrol your child in. The principal will help you determine suitable options with regard to your child's entry into Prep.

Parents of compulsory school-age children have a legal obligation to ensure that their children are enrolled in school and attend every day of their educational program. Enrolment and full-time attendance at Prep fulfils this obligation.

## How can I prepare my child for school?

Starting school is a big step for all children and their families. Children develop at different rates and in different ways. It is important to tell your child that they are ready for school.

We recommend you contact your local school in the year before you enrol your child to discuss your child's individual needs. This will give the school time for planning to ensure your child has a successful and positive start to schooling.

If you are concerned about your child's readiness for school, discuss this with the school of your choice and your early intervention service provider.

If your child has been receiving services from an early childhood intervention service or a kindergarten program, staff from these services can provide information to the school about your child's strengths and needs, which will assist with the transition process.

There are a number of things you can do to help prepare your child for transitioning to school.

This should include visiting the new school several times before starting school, initially during quiet times of the day (possibly before or after school hours) and later at busier times so your child becomes familiar with the school environment.

## How will my child be supported to learn at school?

The Australian Curriculum Foundation Year has been developed to give students in Prep the important foundational learning they will need for successful progression to Year 1.

The Australian Curriculum started in Queensland in 2012. It aims to provide a high-quality curriculum for all, while understanding the diverse and complex nature of students with disability. It is shaped by the proposition that each student can learn and the needs of every student are important.

### Tips for parents

As a parent, you play a vital role in your child's education. By getting involved in school groups and activities, you can help your child make a smooth and happy start to their school life.

Talk to your school to see if you can visit after hours with your child to help them learn things like how to use the drinking fountains.

The principal is responsible for ensuring that all students with disability are provided with appropriate adjustments to enable them to access the curriculum.

When required, students with disability can be supported through appropriate adjustments made by teachers and schools in relation to:

- what a student learns
- how the student learns and instructional processes
- how the student demonstrates what they have learned.
- the environment in which the student learns.

### Student support services

It is recognised that some students with disability, including FASD, will require additional educational support so they are able to access and participate at school alongside their same age peers.

These students can be supported through the full array of student support services allocated to regions and schools.

This may include assistive technology, alternative format material, specialised equipment, special provisions for assessment, and access to specialist teachers, speech and language pathologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and guidance officers.

Collaboration with parents is an important part of the process of identifying and responding to the individual needs of students.

For specific information regarding what your child will be learning at your chosen school and the types of equipment and support available, you should contact the principal.

### Equipment at school

Education Queensland has an equipment loan service for students with disability who attend state schools. Schools can borrow

specialised equipment and assistive technology from a regionally managed loans service to trial with students with disability. This helps schools to identify and make decisions about appropriate resources to support students' educational programs. The equipment remains the property of the Department of Education, Training and Employment.

### **Non-government schools**

Catholic Education's Education Adjustment Program supports students who have a disability in Catholic schools by identifying the educational adjustments required by a school to meet the learning and teaching needs of your child. Other non-government schools may provide supports for children with FASD-related disability — check with the principal of the school you are considering.

### **Find out more**

**Local schools can provide:**

**Education for children with disability: a guide for parents**

**School Transport Assistance Program for Students with Disability**

**Support for children with disability at school**

[www.education.qld.gov.au](http://www.education.qld.gov.au)

**Delayed entry to Prep**

[www.dete.qld.gov.au](http://www.dete.qld.gov.au)

**Australian curriculum**

[www.australiancurriculum.edu.au](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au)

# 6. Aids, equipment and assistive technology

If your child's disability affects their functioning across a range of areas, you may need to access assistive technology, specialised equipment or other aids to assist them in their daily living, communicating, learning, therapy and play. Professionals involved in your child's health, education and therapy will be able to give you advice regarding the most appropriate aids, equipment and assistive technology to consider.

This section details some services that may assist you to access support in this area.

## **Department of Health — Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme**

The Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme (MASS) provides access to subsidy funding for the provision of MASS endorsed aids and equipment to eligible Queensland residents, including children with disability.

The range of MASS aids and equipment is aimed at assisting people to live at home and include aids for mobility, communication and daily living.

Aids and equipment are subsidy funded either on a permanent loan basis, private ownership or through the purchase of consumables.

## **Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services**

Assistance can be provided to purchase aids, equipment and assistive technology for eligible children if the item is related to the disability and encourages independence and community participation. To access this

assistance, a prescription from your child's therapist is required.

## **Department of Education, Training and Employment**

Education Queensland has an equipment loans service for students with disability. This service provides specialised equipment for students with disability if it supports their educational program. The equipment remains the property of the school when a student leaves.

## **The Community Aids Equipment and Assistive Technologies Initiative**

The Community Aids Equipment and Assistive Technologies Initiative subsidises aids and equipment for eligible clients. Categories for aids and assistive technologies include community mobility, communication support, active participation and postural support.

## **LifeTec**

LifeTec Queensland provides information, consultation, and education on assistive technology which aims to help improve quality of life and increase independent living skills. LifeTec has offices in Brisbane and Townsville and has a mobile outreach team that offers services across the state.

## **All abilities playgrounds**

All abilities playgrounds are specifically designed to enable children with and without disability to enjoy fun and challenging play together, side-by-side. There are 17 playgrounds located across the state.

There is also an All Abilities ePlayground which offers free online fun and games for children of all abilities.

### **Noah's Ark Toy Library**

Noah's Ark Educational Resources and Toy Library has a wide range of toys and equipment, some of which are designed and adapted for children with disability.

To borrow from the Noah's Ark Educational Resources and Toy Library, you will need to be a member of Noah's Ark.

Membership is open to:

- families with a child with a diagnosed disability
- schools supporting a child or children with diagnosed disability
- community organisations supporting a child or children with diagnosed disability
- children's services supporting a child or children with diagnosed disability
- professionals (e.g. teachers, therapists) supporting a child or children with diagnosed disability.

### **Find out more**

#### **Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme**

[www.health.qld.gov.au](http://www.health.qld.gov.au)

#### **Disability Services service centres**

1800 177 120

[www.communities.qld.gov.au](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au)

#### **Lifetec**

[www.lifetec.org.au](http://www.lifetec.org.au)

#### **CAEATI**

[www.disability.qld.gov.au](http://www.disability.qld.gov.au)

#### **Education Queensland**

[www.education.qld.gov.au](http://www.education.qld.gov.au)

#### **All abilities playgrounds**

[www.communities.qld.gov.au](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au)

#### **Noah's Ark Toy Library**

3391 2166

[www.noahsark.net.au](http://www.noahsark.net.au)

For further information contact the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services:

Telephone: 13 QGOV (13 74 68)

Telephone Typewriter (TTY): 133 677

Email: [disabilityinfo@disability.qld.gov.au](mailto:disabilityinfo@disability.qld.gov.au)

Web: [www.communities.qld.gov.au](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au)

If you are deaf, or have a hearing impairment or speech impairment, contact us through the National Relay Service:

- TTY users phone 133 677
- Speak and Listen users phone 1800 555 727 then ask for 13 QGOV (13 74 68)
- Internet relay users connect to the NRS ([www.relayservice.com.au](http://www.relayservice.com.au)) and then ask for 13 74 68

Other languages and formats:

If you need the assistance of an interpreter, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service, TIS National, on 13 14 50 and ask to be connected to the Disability Information Service.

This document is available in alternative formats (including large print) on request. If you would like a copy in another format, please contact Disability Information Service on 13 QGOV or email [disabilityinfo@disability.qld.gov.au](mailto:disabilityinfo@disability.qld.gov.au)

\* Calls from mobile phones are charged at applicable rates.

Queenslanders now have access to disability related information at one easy online location. Visit [www.qld.gov.au/disability](http://www.qld.gov.au/disability) to find out about government supports and services for people with disability, their families and carers. The new site includes links to information about support groups and counselling, education and where to access help.

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