

My child has a hearing impairment

Information for Queensland families of young children



Photo by Danni Curtis / iStockphoto



A Parent Connect resource

Message from the Minister



Finding out your child is diagnosed with disability raises many questions, especially about what supports and services are available.

Many children are affected by hearing impairment in Queensland, and thankfully due to recent mandatory screening programs, young children who have hearing loss are being diagnosed early.

Intervention at this early age provides very positive outcomes for young children with a hearing impairment and their families. It is with specialist supports and services that these children can achieve important developmental milestones.

My child has a hearing impairment is a guide for families about how they can support their child's inclusion in family and community life.

It provides practical information about your child's development and the services and supports available to them.

The Queensland Government is committed to revitalising frontline services such as these for all Queensland families. We are providing better assistance to families through our Parent Connect initiative, and by increasing the number of speech and language pathologists for all children with disability in Queensland schools.

I would like to thank Australian Hearing and Deaf Services Queensland for their contributions to this guide.

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 hearing impairment

This guide is intended to answer questions you may have if your child has recently been diagnosed with a hearing impairment or if you are concerned your child has a hearing impairment.

Hearing impairment occurs if there is a problem in the hearing pathway — in the outer, middle or inner ears or in the auditory nerve that goes to the brain.

There are a range of different terms used to describe hearing impairments including deaf (mainly used to describe a person with little or no hearing), hearing loss, and hard of hearing. In many cases these terms are used interchangeably, although sometimes the word deaf is used to describe people who identify as part of the deaf community and its culture.

If your child has a hearing impairment, the degree of their hearing loss will depend on the nature of their impairment. A hearing impairment can be caused by a range of things including prenatal infections, illness and genetics. It is not always possible to identify the cause of a hearing impairment.

Early detection of hearing loss is important so that delays in a child's language development can be prevented or minimised — babies use their hearing and voice to communicate long before they say their first words.

All children with a hearing impairment can be supported with their development. With the right combination of amplification devices (e.g. hearing aids), therapies and family support, children with a hearing impairment can go on to achieve academically and socially.

What are the early signs of hearing impairment?

There are a number of signs that your child may have a hearing loss. Your child may need an assessment if they:

- do not respond to things said to them, or do not seem to notice that you have spoken to them
- ask you to repeat things often
- need to search to find where a voice or sound is coming from
- start talking later than children of the same age
- have trouble saying words and sentences
- have difficulty hearing when several people are talking
- have difficulty hearing in noisy or reverberant environments
- have problems hearing soft sounds
- do not understand simple words at 11 or 12 months.

Infants with a hearing impairment may make similar sounds to other infants up to 5–6 months. Auditory feedback then plays a part in the development of true babble after this stage, so differences in the quality and quantity of babble may start to appear.

If your child is showing any of these signs, it may indicate a hearing loss, but remember that all children develop differently and it does not automatically mean that your child has a hearing impairment. If you notice delays in your child's development, speak with your GP or paediatrician.

Are there different types of hearing impairment?

Hearing impairment can be described as congenital (present from birth) or acquired (developed after birth), and as being either unilateral (located in one ear) or bilateral (located in both ears). Hearing impairment is also categorised as being mild, moderate, severe or profound, depending on the degree of hearing loss. Even a mild hearing loss can significantly impact development of communication skills in young children.

There are three types of hearing impairment:

- **Conductive hearing loss (CHL)** can affect a child at birth, or be acquired later on. It is caused by damage or blockage to the outer and/or middle ear and results in loss of loudness. In many cases it is not permanent and can be treated medically or with surgery. A hearing aid may compensate for CHL.
- **Sensorineural hearing loss** can affect a child at birth, or might be acquired later on. It can be caused by damage or malfunction of the cochlea or hearing/auditory nerve and is permanent. It results in a loss of loudness and a lack of clarity of speech.
- **Mixed hearing loss** is the combination of both conductive and sensorineural hearing loss.

Most children with a permanent hearing loss benefit from the use of hearing aids. Children with severe to profound deafness may be assessed for suitability for cochlear implants.

There are many factors that shape the way a hearing impairment may affect your child, including the degree of hearing loss and use of communication devices to access spoken language.

There is a lot you can do to encourage your child's communication and development as part of routines at home. Your early intervention therapists will discuss this with you.

Find out more

Deaf Services Queensland

www.deafservicesqld.org.au

Australian Hearing

www.hearing.com.au

2. Diagnosis

If your child does have a hearing impairment, a formal diagnosis is in your child's best interests. Early diagnosis will enable a program of suitable supports tailored specifically to your child's needs.

Having your child assessed and diagnosed with a hearing impairment will enable access to necessary early intervention services that aim to improve your child's communication and learning, and provide information and support for you.

The early years are the most critical for your child's development. It is the time when the brain is still developing and is more responsive to therapies and interventions.

Who provides a diagnosis of hearing impairment in Queensland?

In Queensland, newborn babies are screened for hearing impairment free of charge in private or public hospitals under the Queensland Government Healthy Hearing Program. If your newborn baby is flagged as needing referral at this point, you will be referred to a hospital paediatric audiologist for further testing.

The cause of the impairment will usually be determined by a paediatrician, ear nose and throat specialist or a clinical geneticist.

Hearing tests conducted by an audiologist are able to identify where the hearing problem is located (outer, middle or inner ear) and what can be done to help. These tests are safe, unobtrusive and accurate.

If you suspect your child has a hearing loss, when you first speak to your GP

or paediatrician regarding a referral to an audiologist for your child, they will most likely refer you to an audiology clinic at a public hospital or possibly to Australian Hearing, which is located throughout Queensland in major regional centres.

An audiology consultation at an audiology clinic at a public hospital or Australian Hearing will be at no cost. You can also choose to see a private audiologist. There will usually be costs for private audiologists, however, waiting times for an appointment may be shorter.

Families living in rural and remote areas can access a visiting Department of Health paediatrician. Local Area Coordinators can provide information to families on how to access a visiting paediatrician and other key services to obtain a diagnosis in rural and remote areas of the state.

Clinical geneticists specialise in the way conditions are passed between generations. You may be referred to see a geneticist for diagnosis of the cause of your child's sensorineural

Tips for parents

Keep a diary of any concerns you have about your child's development. This information will help you in your consultation with your GP or medical specialist.

Even though you may not have a diagnosis yet, you can encourage your child's development through play and helping your child communicate and develop social skills. For tips on how you can support your baby's communication at home visit www.babyhearing.org

hearing impairment. Your GP or paediatrician will advise you further about this.

Your child will also be referred to an ear, nose and throat specialist. Referral to an ear, nose and throat specialist is important for treatment and management of persistent middle ear pathology associated with conductive hearing loss. They can also assess your child to see if they are a suitable applicant for a cochlear implant.

After diagnosis

It is not unusual for parents to feel overwhelmed when they first learn about their child's diagnosis, whether permanent or temporary. Even if you have suspected for some time that your child may have a hearing impairment, 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. They can give you information about local parent support groups and the availability of professional support such as a counsellor or social worker if you are feeling overwhelmed.

When your child receives a diagnosis a number of things will happen. Your audiologist, paediatrician or ear, nose and throat specialist will discuss the types of supports and services that will optimise your child's development and a treatment plan will be developed. You will also receive information on the services and supports available in your local community.

Many children will require a combination of early intervention services, and may develop different needs at different stages of their development. Therapies should be family-centred because disability impacts on all members of the family and there is a lot you can do at home to support your child's growth.

Find out more

Australian Hearing's booklet *Choices* will help guide your family through the first six months after your child is diagnosed with a hearing impairment. It also provides simple explanations about the various educational and support programs offered in Queensland. Download the booklet at www.hearing.com.au

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 roles 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).

Find out more

Parent Connect is provided by the following organisations:

Cairns – The Benevolent Society
4045 0003
www.benevolent.org.au

Townsville – The Cootharinga Society of North Queensland
4759 2008
www.cootharinga.org.au

Rockhampton – The Cootharinga Society of North Queensland in partnership with The Umbrella Network
4928 6550
www.theumbrellanetwork.org

Sunshine Coast – Sunshine Coast Children's Therapy Centre
5441 4937
www.scctc.org.au

Brisbane – Mission Australia
3828 9311 (North)
3713 2602 (South)

Ipswich – Mission Australia
3713 2602
www.missionaustralia.com.au

Gold Coast – The Benevolent Society
5644 9400
www.benevolent.org.au

Clinics will include advice on child health, parenting, early infant development, maternal health and wellbeing, immunisation and nutrition

Child health nurses can make referrals to specialist services such as early intervention parenting specialists and the Ellen Barren Family Centre. Child health nurses will also link families to local services and parent groups.

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 Carers Payment. Centrelink can provide you with more information regarding your eligibility as well as information on supplementary payments such as Carers Allowance and Child Disability Assistance Payment.

Queensland Hearing Loss Family Support Service

This service is provided through Department of Health's Healthy Hearing Program. It provides family-centred counselling and support to families of children diagnosed with permanent hearing loss up until they have completed Year 1.

The service is free and can support you in a number of ways including:

- working with you to overcome any difficulties you may have in getting to audiology appointments
- helping you identify your family's needs
- providing you with information about your child's hearing loss and the options available to support your child's development.

Find out more

Child health services in the community

13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)

www.health.qld.gov.au

Carers Queensland

3900 8100

1800 242 636 (Advisory Service)

Queensland Patient Transport Assistance Scheme

www.health.qld.gov.au

Centrelink

132 468

www.centrelink.gov.au

Disability Online — family friendly resources

www.qld.gov.au/disability

Disability Information Services

13 QGOV

www.communities.qld.gov.au

Queensland Hearing Loss Family Support Service

www.health.qld.gov.au

3. Early intervention services

Early intervention services are important for children with hearing impairment to help them develop skills in communication, play and social relationships.

A range of supports for families are available, including:

- information and planning
- advice on your child's developmental needs
- speech and language therapy
- Auslan (Australian sign language) tuition
- counselling and support for your family
- referrals to other specialist services and mainstream services
- coordination of services for children with complex needs
- counselling and linking families with other families and support groups
- support with transitioning to a kindergarten program and school
- helping you to support your child's speech and language at home.

How will my child benefit from early childhood intervention?

Early intervention is most effective and provides the best possible outcomes for your child when provided as early as possible after diagnosis.

Services will provide you with knowledge, skills and support to meet the needs of your child.

All services should be tailored to your individual needs, be flexible and recognise the importance of working in partnership with families.

Professionals should spend time with you working on goals and strategies that can be incorporated into your family routines. This is particularly important for families whose children are unable to attend centre-based programs, for example, families living in rural and remote areas.

Tips for parents

It is important to build a good rapport with your child's therapists. Don't be afraid to ask lots of questions about your child's therapy and progress.

Where can I access early intervention supports?

Your child may receive supports and services from a range of professionals. For example, speech pathologists assess and diagnose communication issues and will be able to support your child to develop their speech and language skills including their voice quality. Similarly, if your child has been fitted with a hearing aid or cochlear implant, an auditory-verbal therapist or a specialist teacher of the deaf will be able to teach them how to use their hearing device and develop communication skills.

Both the Queensland Government and the Australian Government fund early intervention services for children with hearing impairment in Queensland. This section details the main services available.

Australian Hearing

Australian Hearing is an Australian Government hearing service provided across Australia.

Australian Hearing focuses on children with permanent or long-term hearing loss. Where there is no indication that a child is at risk of a permanent hearing loss or needs hearing devices, families should contact another agency, such as your local GP, for testing and management.

Services provided by Australian Hearing include:

- comprehensive hearing assessments for children of all ages
- individual assessment of each child and family's needs
- fitting of latest technology hearing aids and other devices.

While not an early intervention service, Australian Hearing provides free amplification equipment (hearing aids and FM systems) to children in Australia.

Hear and Say Centre

The centre uses an approach called Auditory-Verbal Therapy that focuses on learning through listening and speaking. It is a parent-based therapy where a parent is educated to teach their child who has a hearing loss to listen and speak.

The Hear and Say Centre is a not-for-profit organisation based in Brisbane with regional centres on the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Cairns and Toowoomba, and an outreach program for children in rural and remote areas.

Tips for parents

Talk to your child's therapist about your child's interests and strengths and ideas for incorporating these into home activities.

Deaf Services Queensland

Deaf Services Queensland provides and facilitates a range of programs and services aimed at assisting the deaf, hearing impaired, deaf blind and hearing communities. Parents are able to visit Deaf Services Queensland to access a range of information, support and sign languages classes (including baby sign). As a leading not-for-profit organisation servicing the deaf and hearing impaired community, parents can also access Deaf Services Queensland's strong referral network to access further services.

Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children

The Sydney-based Royal Institute's Teleschool provides specialised services to families living in rural and regional areas of Australia who have a child diagnosed with hearing or vision impairment. The service is free, is available from the time a child is diagnosed and no referral is required.

Find out more

Hear and Say Centre

3870 2221

www.hearandsay.com.au

Deaf Services Queensland

3892 8500

www.deafservicesqld.org.au

Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children

www.ridbc.org.au

Better Hearing Australia

3844 5065

www.bhabrisbane.org.au

Early childhood development programs and services

Multidisciplinary early intervention and therapy services are available through the Department of Education, Training and Employment. These services are available from birth to the year prior to the first year of schooling, including children with a hearing impairment or who have a suspected or diagnosed disability with significant educational needs.

Programs and services range from playgroup sessions and outreach support in your home, to centre-based sessions and support to transition to Prep. The program can also provide access to Advisory Visiting Teachers, who have specialist skills and knowledge in hearing impairment. They also support hearing impaired children 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 relating to their individual needs and interests.

Child development services

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 intervention services

The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services provides early intervention services to children who have, or are at risk of, developmental delay. This includes children with hearing impairment.

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 for families on a range of topics and will support you to connect with other services and supports such as playgroups, childcare and parent support groups.

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

Better Start

Australian Government funding for early intervention services is available through the Better Start for Children with Disability initiative. Better Start is intended to complement existing Commonwealth and state and territory government services.

To be eligible, your child must have hearing loss in both ears and meet either of the following two criteria:

- permanent conductive or sensorineural hearing loss that has a four-frequency average hearing loss of 40dBHL or greater in the better-hearing ear
- Auditory Neuropathy Spectrum Disorder diagnosed in both ears.

Eligible children can access funding up to their seventh birthday. Better Start provides up to \$12,000 (maximum \$6000 per year) for your child to access services including audiology, occupational therapy, orthoptics, physiotherapy, psychology, speech and language pathology and early intervention from an approved teacher of the deaf.

Up to \$2100 (35 per cent) per year of a child's early intervention funding can be used to purchase resources. Resources must either be recommended by a Better Start service provider, be directly linked to an early intervention service or be for the delivery of interventions in the family home.

Families living in outer regional or remote areas may be eligible for an additional one-off payment of \$2000 to assist with additional expenses associated with accessing services.

Medicare

Children with hearing impairment may be eligible for services funded through Medicare. These include:

- developing a treatment and management plan by a specialist, consultant physician or GP for children under 13 years
- up to four services with health professionals such as audiologists, occupational specialists, speech and language pathologists or physiotherapists to develop a child's plan
- twenty sessions of intervention services with health professionals as identified in a child's plan — available for children up to 15 years.

Speak to your GP or medical specialist for more information about these Medicare services.

Yeerongpilly Centre for Young Deaf Children

Education Queensland has an early intervention centre that specialises in programs for children who are deaf or have a hearing impairment. Services are for children aged from birth to six years and are designed to help your child's communication skills.

Find out more

Local Area Coordinators

13 QGOV

www.communities.qld.gov.au

Child development services

13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)

www.health.qld.gov.au

Early intervention services

13 QGOV

www.communities.qld.gov.au

Better Start

Call Carers Queensland

1800 242 636

www.betterstart.net.au

Medicare

132 011

www.humanservices.gov.au

Yeerongpilly Centre for Young Deaf Children

3373 1333

www.yeerongpillyecdp.eq.edu.au

Deadly Ears Program

www.health.qld.gov.au

Deadly Ears Program

The Deadly Ears program provides a statewide service working in partnership with Indigenous communities and the relevant Department of Health's Hospital and Health Service Districts.

The program aims to reduce the rates of chronic ear disease among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in regional, rural and remote communities across Queensland.

The program team works directly with services (e.g. health services or schools, daycare and playgroups) to help them meet the needs of the community and children with identified child development needs.

They also raise community awareness about the impact of ear disease on play and speech development, and empower the community to take action.

Support for parents

As a parent, it can be a challenge to strike the right balance between supporting your child with hearing impairment 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 service providers will be able to give you advice about how to link with other parents of children who have hearing impairment.

Aussie Deaf Kids

Aussie Deaf Kids website has lots of resources for parents of children with hearing loss. It includes an online forum for parents to connect with each other as well as details of support groups.

Deaf Children Australia

Deaf Children Australia provides information advocacy services for families of children up to 18 years who are deaf or have a hearing impairment.

POD Qld

POD Qld is a parent network, run by parents of children who are deaf or who have a hearing loss.

Raising Children Network

Raising Children Network is an Australian Government initiative that provides a web-based source of information about parenting and child development activities for all children, including children with disabilities.

Find out more

Aussie Deaf Kids

02 66842571

www.aussiedeafkids.org.au

Deaf Children Australia

1800 645 916

www.deafchildrenaustralia.org.au

POD Qld

www.podqld.com

Raising Children Network

www.raisingchildren.net.au

Playgroup Queensland

1800 171 882

www.playgroupqld.com.au

Playgroup Australia

1800 171 882

www.playgroupaustralia.com.au

MyTime groups

1800 889 997

www.mytime.net.au

Baby Bridges

Contact the Horizon Foundation
3245 4266

www.babybridges.com.au

Triple P — Positive Parenting Program

3236 1212

www.triplep-steppingstones.net

www.triplep-parenting.net

Other parents

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

Playgroups

Play is an integral part of all children's development, including children with 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 a wonderful 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 Playgroup Plus Program.

MyTime groups

MyTime provides 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 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

Baby Bridges is a playgroup program for children with a 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 specialists.

Triple P — Positive Parenting Program

Triple P — Positive Parenting Program can help many parents 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 specifically tailored for parents of children with disability. It can help parents address their children's behaviour and emotional problems (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.

Find out more

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

Australian Physiotherapy Association

www.physiotherapy.asn.au

Speech Pathology Australia

www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au

Occupational Therapy Australia

www.otqld.org.au

Australian Psychological Society

www.psychology.org.au

Healthy Hearing Program

www.health.qld.gov.au

Audiologists

For a list of public and private audiologists who are registered with the Audiological Society of Australia:

www.audiology.asn.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 begin 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 with hearing impairment.

Participating in a quality early childhood education and care program can provide children with hearing impairment 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 hearing impairment. It can 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.

As a parent, child care can also provide you with opportunities to return to work or study or 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.

Tips for parents

Link your therapist or early intervention provider with your child's kindergarten teacher to help plan your child's program. They can also help identify the supports they will need, such as any aids and play equipment being used by your child.

Consider enrolling your child in child care even for a few hours a week. This may help to develop your child's play and social skills and their ability to adapt to new environments.

How will my child benefit from a kindergarten program?

All children benefit from participating in an approved quality early education program, including children with hearing impairment.

Participation in a kindergarten program can help your child to develop skills in communication, social interaction and behaviour. It can also assist your child to follow routines and to be exposed 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, such as:

- learning to interact with other children
- developing a desire to learn and getting involved in learning
- understanding and managing their feelings
- learning about themselves
- developing their identity
- building confidence and independence
- enhancing 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 hearing impairment to participate in their programs.

Children with disability, including children with hearing impairment, can receive additional support to participate in a kindergarten program. Kindergarten services can apply under the Disability

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/earlychildhood or phone 13 QGOV

Support Funding Program through the Department of Education, Training and Employment, to receive additional funding to support your child's participation in their 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 program.

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. The wider kindergarten community can also be provided with information about hearing impairment to encourage inclusion of your child and your family in the service.

Tips for parents

Learn about the activities and routine in the kindergarten program and introduce a similar routine at home. This will help your child become familiar with these activities and routines.

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

Starting in a kindergarten program involves a significant transition for children with hearing impairment and their families.

Your child will most likely need a period of preparation before they start in a kindergarten program. For example, 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 for your child to start their kindergarten program involves a range of activities including enrolment, working with the kindergarten teacher to plan a suitable program for your child, and help to identify the additional supports needed (e.g. training and educational and play equipment).

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.

Tips for parents

Visual supports may be useful to prepare your child for kindergarten. Photos of your child's kindergarten teacher and their new kindergarten classroom and play area will help them become familiar with their new surroundings.

Find out more

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

www.dete.qld.gov.au

Inclusion and Professional Support Program

(Australian Government)

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 type and level of support available for your child before completing enrolment forms. You 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 students, including students with hearing impairment, the foundation they need for successful learning in Year 1.

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, before you make a decision on when your child starts Prep or school. The principal will help you determine the impact of delaying your child's entry into Prep.

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

How can I prepare my child for school?

Beginning 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 you believe they are ready for school.

Tips for parents

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

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 support needs, which will assist with the transition process.

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

This should include visiting the school many 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.

While some early intervention programs finish once a child starts Prep or school, other programs offer support during the transition period. Make sure you check what other supports your early intervention service can offer you during transition. In some cases your early intervention service may be able to attend planning meetings with you and your child's Prep or school staff.

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 the 2012 school year. 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.

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 who have hearing impairment 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.

Teachers of the deaf

These teachers have specialist training in teaching children who are deaf or who have hearing impairment, and work in government and some non-government schools. The teacher works with other teachers and parents to support children's speech, language and cognitive skills, and social and emotional development.

Tips for parents

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

Having good communication with your child's teacher will help your child to have a successful education experience. It will also help you to quickly sort out any issues that arise.

Student support services

Students who have hearing impairment may require additional educational support so they are able to access and participate at school alongside their same-age peers. In particular, specialist Advisory Visiting Teachers (AVTs, usually trained teachers of the deaf) provide support to the teachers of children with hearing impairment in regular classrooms in state and some non-government schools.

Other supports may include assistive technology, specialised equipment, and special provisions for assessment. Students may also have access to speech and language pathologists, teacher aide support, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and guidance officers. Talk to your child's school about these services.

Equipment at school

Education Queensland has an equipment loans 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 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 have specialist services for children with hearing impairment — check with the principal of the school you are considering.

Tips for parents

Work out with your child's teacher how you are going to communicate, such as through regular face-to-face meetings, emails or using a communication book.

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

Delayed entry to Prep
www.dete.qld.gov.au

Australian curriculum
www.australiancurriculum.edu.au

Queensland Catholic Education Commission
www.qcec.catholic.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.

Australian Hearing

Australian Hearing provides hearing aids for children and young adults who have permanent or long-term hearing loss up to the age of 26 years.

You can visit or contact Australian Hearing directly to find out whether your child is eligible for hearing aids.

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

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.

Department of Education, Training and Employment

Education Queensland has an equipment loan service for students with a 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.

Better Start

Australian Government funding for early intervention services is available through the Better Start initiative for eligible children (see a detailed description of Better Start in *Section 3: Early intervention Services*).

Find out more

Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme

www.health.qld.gov.au

Disability Services service centres

13 QGOV

www.communities.qld.gov.au

Common Aids Equipment and Assistive Technologies Initiative

www.qld.gov.au/disability

Education Queensland

www.education.qld.gov.au

All abilities playgrounds

www.communities.qld.gov.au

Noah's Ark Toy Library

3391 2166

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

Web: 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) and then ask for 13 QGOV (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 (13 74 68) or email 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 to find out about government supports and services for people with disability, their families and carers. The website includes links to information about support groups and counselling, education and where to access help.

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