

My child has neurological impairment

Information for Queensland families of young children



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A Parent Connect resource

Message from the Minister



When your child is diagnosed with a neurological impairment, you will have a range of questions, especially about what supports and services are at hand for you, your child and your family.

Neurological impairment can result from many different conditions including genetic disorders and acquired brain injuries.

My child has a neurological impairment provides families with the information they need to support their child's inclusion in family and community life.

The resource includes practical information about the services and supports available to your child with a neurological impairment, as well as how you, as parents, can best support your child's development.

During the early years, specialist services are critical for children with a neurological impairment as the brain is still developing and most responsive to therapies and interventions. Specialist services accessed early can help establish a network of support that will enable your child to live a full and happy life.

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

By delivering these priorities, we will enable a better future for Queensland families of children with a disability.

I would like to thank Epilepsy Queensland and Synapse for their contribution to this guide, and for their ongoing support for Queensland families.

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

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1. About neurological impairments

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

Neurological impairment occurs when there is damage to the nervous system, which includes the brain and spinal cord. Damage to either or both of these areas can affect the way the brain processes information and communicates with the rest of the body.

What are the different causes of neurological impairment?

There are many different conditions which may result in neurological impairment. Some are genetic and others are acquired as the result of injury, illness or complications experienced during pregnancy or at birth. The consequences of these conditions and injuries can vary greatly.

Some of the most prevalent conditions which are referred to as neurological impairment in children are detailed in some of our other information resources. These include:

- Autism
- Cerebral Palsy
- Acquired Brain Injury
- Physical Disability – including Spina Bifida and Muscular Dystrophy
- Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
- Fragile X syndrome.

Other children's conditions referred to as neurological impairment include:

- Epilepsy
- Angelman syndrome
- Tourette syndrome
- Rett syndrome
- Tuberous sclerosis.

Epilepsy is a neurological condition in which recurring seizures of varying severity are experienced. These seizures are caused by disruption to the electrical impulse patterns of the brain.

Children who have a seizure may experience temporary confusion, uncontrolled jerking movements of the arms and legs and loss of consciousness or awareness.

Approximately 50 per cent of people with epilepsy do not know the cause of their condition. Some known causes of epilepsy in children include head injury, illness (such as meningitis or encephalitis), brain tumour, birth trauma or abnormal brain development.

Most children with epilepsy grow up to lead full and active lives. With medication most achieve good seizure control and many become seizure free.

Angelman syndrome is a rare genetic condition present at birth. The condition is caused by an abnormality of chromosome 15.

Children with Angelman syndrome will usually have the following symptoms:

- intellectual disability
- delayed motor development (including sitting, crawling and walking)
- speech problems
- jerky (puppet-like movements)
- stiff-legged walking style
- hand flapping
- hyperactive behaviour
- loving, happy and social demeanour.

Children with Angelman syndrome may also develop the following physical characteristics over childhood:

- flattened back of the head
- deep-set eyes
- wide, ever-smiling mouth
- prominent jaw with widely spaced teeth
- lightly pigmented hair, skin and eyes
- small head (sometimes present).

While there is no cure for the condition, children with Angelman syndrome can benefit from targeted therapies and specialised education programs.

Tourette syndrome is a condition characterised by involuntary movements, actions and vocal utterances (tics). Commonly experienced tics include: jumping; touching other people; twisting and twirling the body and limbs; head jerking, shoulder shrugging; eye blinking; facial grimacing; nose and mouth twitching; repeating sounds and words or uttering inappropriate words and phrases. However, it is very rare for people with Tourette syndrome to experience all of these symptoms.

Children with Tourette syndrome may also experience problems with paying attention and learning, hyperactivity, impulsivity and obsessive-compulsive or repetitive behaviours.

Around 80 per cent of children with Tourette syndrome will also experience epilepsy.

While there is no cure for Tourette syndrome, children with the condition have a normal life expectancy and for many, psychological and behavioural therapy and or medications will reduce symptoms from the late teen years onward. Some will even become symptom-free, no longer requiring medication.

Rett syndrome is a rare genetic disorder which affects the way the brain develops. Rett syndrome occurs almost exclusively in girls.

Although Rett syndrome is a genetic disorder caused by a mutation of the MECP2 gene attached to the X chromosome, less than one per cent of cases are inherited. Almost all incidents of Rett syndrome occur randomly.

Children with Rett syndrome usually develop normally until around 6 – 18 months of age, at which time they begin to lose previously developed abilities (such as fine and gross motor control and speech) and cease to gain new skills.

Children with Rett syndrome will experience difficulties with talking, walking, hand movements and lack of stability in the upper body. Some children will also experience seizures and intellectual impairment.

There is no cure for Rett syndrome but symptoms can be managed and slowed with appropriate therapies and medications.

Despite the difficulties caused by symptoms, many people with Rett syndrome live well into middle age and beyond.

Tuberous sclerosis is an uncommon genetic condition in which benign lesions begin to form in the brain prior to birth. Lesions may also develop in other vital organs including the kidneys, heart, eyes, lungs and skin.

Symptoms of tuberous sclerosis vary from child to child and may include seizures, delayed development, learning difficulties, intellectual impairment and hyperactive behaviours. Some children with tuberous sclerosis may also have other symptoms such as difficulties with communication and social interaction.

While there is no cure for tuberous sclerosis, around 50 per cent of children born with the condition will go on to lead normal lives with no apparent intellectual impairment.

What are the early signs of a neurological impairment?

There are over 600 identified disorders and conditions which may result in a neurological impairment.

The early signs of a neurological impairment will vary from child to child. Many children with a neurological impairment will demonstrate developmental delays.

Developmental delay is a descriptive term used when a young child's development is delayed in all or a majority of key developmental areas. These areas include:

- gross motor skills development
- fine motor skills development
- cognitive development
- social and emotional skills development
- speech and language development.

More information on developmental delay can be found in *My child has developmental delay*.

Children with a neurological impairment may also demonstrate difficulty with communication and memory.

Find out more

Epilepsy Queensland

www.epilepsyqueensland.com.au

Australian Angelman Syndrome Association

www.angelmansyndrome.org

Tourette Syndrome Association Australia

www.tourette.org.au

International Rett Syndrome Association

www.rettsyndrome.org

Rett Syndrome Association of Australia

www.aussierett.org.au

The Australian Tuberous Sclerosis Society

www.atss.org.au

Synapse (formally the Brain Injury Association of Queensland)

www.synapse.org.au

2. Diagnosis

The early years are critical to a child's development. It is the time when the brain is still developing and is most responsive to therapies and interventions. If you are concerned your child has a neurological impairment it is important that you seek a formal diagnosis as soon as possible.

Having your child assessed and diagnosed with a neurological impairment will give you access to a range of supports, treatments and therapies, including early intervention services.

Diagnosis will also help you to better understand changes in your child's functioning, including memory and learning abilities, fine and gross motor skills, behaviour, and health in general.

With a formal diagnosis, your family may also be able to access funding or programs provided by the Australian and Queensland Governments, and non-government organisations.

Who provides a diagnosis of neurological impairments in Queensland?

In Queensland, a specialist such as a paediatrician or neurologist can arrange for your child to be tested for a neurological disorder. Your GP or paediatrician can provide a referral to either of these specialists.

A range of therapists including physiotherapists, occupational therapists, psychologists and speech and language pathologists may play a role in the diagnosis and assessment of neurological disorders.

These professionals can also assist in planning for your child's support needs.

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

After diagnosis

It is normal for you to feel overwhelmed when you first learn about your child's diagnosis of a neurological impairment. Even if you have suspected for sometime that your child may have a neurological disorder it can still come as a shock to have this confirmed.

You may experience feelings of anger, self-blame, resentment, fear, grief, loss and frustration. These are all normal reactions to what is a life changing event for your child and your family.

You may also feel uncertainty about your child's future and it is important to recognise that you may 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.

When your child receives a diagnosis of a neurological impairment 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 treatment plan will be developed. You will also receive information on the services and supports available in your local community.

Parent Connect

The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services' Parent Connect initiative supports parents of newborns and children newly diagnosed with a 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, counseling 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 twelve 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 and remote area and need to travel to attend medical appointments, you may be eligible for the Patient Travel Subsidy 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 Carer Payment. Centrelink can provide you with information regarding your eligibility as well as information on supplementary payments such as

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.humanservices.gov.au

Disability Information Services

13 QGOV
www.communities.qld.gov.au

Carer Allowance or Child Disability Assistance Payment.

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 North - Mission Australia

3828 9311

Brisbane South - Mission Australia

3713 2602

Ipswich - Mission Australia

3713 2602

www.missionaustralia.com.au

Gold Coast - The Benevolent Society

5644 9400

www.benevolent.org.au

3. Early intervention services

Early intervention services are important for all children with a disability to help develop skills in communication, play, social relationships and functional behaviours. Services can also assist in increasing children's independence and ability to adapt to new environments.

Early intervention services will help children with neurological impairment to develop the skills needed to participate in child care and kindergarten and improves their readiness for school.

Early intervention services provide a range of supports for families of children with a disability, including children with a neurological impairment from birth to school entry. 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.

Tips for parents

When you are giving instructions to your child with a neurological impairment – keep it short and simple. If your child doesn't understand something, say it again slowly or communicate it in another way.

How will my child benefit from early intervention?

Early intervention for children with a neurological impairment is most effective and provides the best possible outcomes for children when provided as early as possible after diagnosis.

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

Early intervention services provide you and your family with knowledge, skills and support to meet the needs of your child, optimise your child's development and increase their ability to participate in family and community life.

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

Where can I access early intervention services?

Some children may require a combination of therapies, such as speech and language therapy, or will develop different needs at different stages of their development.

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

Early Intervention Services

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

Tips for parents

Practising communication is very important for children with a neurological impairment - be patient and allow your child to finish what they are saying. Ask them short questions to clarify information.

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.

Early Childhood Development Programs and Services

Early intervention education and therapy services are available through the Department of Education, Training and Employment for children from birth to Prep age who have a suspected or diagnosed disability with significant educational needs. This includes children with a neurological impairment.

Programs and services may include playgroup session, outreach support in your home, centre-based sessions and support to transition to Prep. The program can also provide access to advisory visiting teachers who have specialist knowledge and skills to support your child at school.

Find out more

Early Intervention Services

13 QGOV

www.communities.qld.gov.au

Early childhood development programs and services

Contact your local education regional offices

www.education.qld.gov.au

Child Development Services

13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)

www.health.qld.gov.au

Local Area Coordinators

13 QGOV

www.communities.qld.gov.au

Better Start

Australian Government funding for early intervention services is available for children with a neurological impairment resulting from Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, Fragile X syndrome, or a moderate or greater vision or hearing impairment, including deaf blindness who are under six years.

Through Better Start, children can be registered to access early intervention funding of up to \$12,000 (up to a maximum of \$6,000 in any one financial year). Families have up until their child's seventh birthday to use this funding.

Better Start funding can be used to pay for early intervention services provided by a range of early intervention professionals who are Better Start service providers. These professionals include speech and language pathologists, audiologists, occupational specialists, physiotherapists, psychologists, orthoptists and others.

Families living in outer regional or remote areas may be eligible for an additional one-off payment of \$2,000. This payment is to assist with additional expenses associated with accessing services.

Up to \$2,100 (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.

Child Development Services

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

Mater Children's Hospital Paediatric Complex Care Services

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

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

- a 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.

Find out more

Better Start

Call Carers Queensland
1800 242 636
www.betterstart.net.au

Child Development Services

13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)
www.health.qld.gov.au

Mater Children's Hospital Paediatric Complex Care Services

3163 1876
complex_care@mater.org.au

Support for parents

As a parent, it can be a challenge to strike the right balance between supporting your child with an neurological 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 a neurological impairment.

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

Other parents

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

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 a disability, including neurological disabilities.

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 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 - such as 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 through 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 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.

Play groups 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

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

Find out more

Raising Children Network: Australian parent website

www.raisingchildren.net.au

The Umbrella Network

4928 6550

www.theumbrellanetwork.org

Triple P — Positive Parenting Program

3236 1212

www.triplep-steppingstones.net

www.triplep-parenting.net

Playgroup Queensland

1800 171 882

www.playgroupqld.com.au

MyTime Groups

1800 889 997

www.mytime.net.au

Baby Bridges

Contact the Horizon Foundation

3245 4266

www.babybridges.com.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 with a neurological impairment.

Participating in a quality early childhood education and care program can provide children with a neurological 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 with an early opportunity to relate to peers and other adults. It is no different for children with neurological 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, 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 a neurological 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.

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

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

- 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 a neurological impairment to participate in their programs.

Children with disability, including children with a neurological impairment, can receive additional supports to participate in a kindergarten program. Kindergarten services can apply under the Disability Support Funding Program, Department of Education and Training, to receive additional funding to support your child's participation in their kindergarten program.

Tips for parents

- Provide information to the kindergarten teachers so they are aware of the whole picture of what is happening for your child with a neurological impairment. This will best ensure your child's needs are planned for.
- Children with a neurological impairment often struggle to express themselves clearly – make sure your child's kindergarten teacher is aware of this so you can work together to develop strategies to manage it.

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

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 a disability and their families. However, for children with an a neurological impairment the transition process may be different and involve more planning than for other students because the child will generally have been involved in a range of early intervention services.

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 your child's 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 6 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, such as training and educational and play equipment.

Other activities involved in transition planning for your child includes 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

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.

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

Or phone 13 QGOV

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 so 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. You will need to complete enrolment forms and may be asked to have an interview with a staff member.

It is best to talk to the principal of the school you are considering to check the type and level of support available for your child before completing enrolment forms. You may also 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.

Getting to school — transport assistance

While it is the responsibility of parents to get their child to and from school, families who have had difficulty with transport for their child can contact the Department of Education, Training and Employment for an assessment to see if their child might be eligible for transport assistance.

Tips for parents

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

The types of assistance available include passes for public transport and an allowance for driving your child to school, taxi or minibus services, or other arrangements.

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 a neurological 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 become of 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?

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 you believe 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 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 transitioning 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 at different times of the day.

Tips for parents

Make sure that your child's teacher understands how your child communicates best. Share the strategies that you developed for kindy and at home.

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 disabilities. 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 a neurological 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
- the environment in which the student learns.

Student support services

Students who have a neurological impairment are likely to 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, specialised equipment, special provisions for assessment, and access to specialist advisory visiting teachers. 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 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 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 a neurological impairment — check with the principal of the school you are considering.

Tips for parents

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.

Find out more

Local schools can provide:

Education for children with a disability: a guide for parents

School Transport Assistance Program for Students with Disabilities

Support for children with a disability at school

www.education.qld.gov.au

Delayed entry to Prep

www.dete.qld.gov.au

Australian curriculum

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, 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 this

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 which offers services across the state.

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 school.

All abilities playgrounds

All abilities playgrounds are located across Queensland and are specifically designed to enable children with and without a 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 playground 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 disabilities
- community organisations supporting a child or children with diagnosed disabilities
- children's services supporting a child or children with diagnosed disabilities
- professionals (e.g. teachers, therapists) supporting a child or children with diagnosed disabilities.

Find out more

Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme

www.health.qld.gov.au

Disability Services

13 QGOV

www.communities.qld.gov.au

CAEATI

www.qld.gov.au/disability

Education Queensland

www.education.qld.gov.au

Lifetec

www.lifetec.org.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

You can find this document online at www.qld.gov.au/disability

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 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

* 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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Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
GPO Box 806
Brisbane Q 4001

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Information is current as at March 2014.