

# My child has an intellectual disability

Information for Queensland families of young children



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*A Parent Connect resource*

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# 1. About intellectual disability

This guide is intended to answer some of the questions that you may have about your child with an intellectual disability or if your child has recently been diagnosed with an intellectual disability.

Intellectual disability may be characterised by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behaviour, which covers many everyday social and practical skills. This disability originates before age 18.

Children with intellectual disability have greater difficulty in learning new things, understanding concepts, solving problems, concentrating and remembering.

The difficulties children with intellectual disability may experience vary from child to child and depend on factors such as the presence of other disabilities and the child's own unique personality.

Often children aged up to six years are considered too young to receive a diagnosis of intellectual disability. Instead 'developmental delay' is used to indicate that the child is experiencing difficulties in various areas of their skill development. However, this does not mean that because a young child is considered as having a 'developmental delay' they will subsequently be diagnosed with intellectual disability.

## What are the causes of intellectual disability?

The causes of intellectual disability are often unknown. The most common causes include:

- genetic conditions such as Down syndrome, Fragile X syndrome, Williams syndrome and Prader Willi syndrome
- problems during pregnancy such as infections or exposure to alcohol, drugs or other toxins
- problems at birth
- environmental factors such as exposure to poisons, lead or mercury
- consequences of neglect, such as malnourishment or inadequate medical care
- complications from health problems such as meningitis, measles or whooping cough.

While there is no cure for intellectual disability, early intervention, education and support can help children grow to their full potential and achieve happy, productive and fulfilling lives.

## What are the early signs of intellectual disability?

Young children with intellectual disability may have difficulties in a number of areas of their development. These difficulties may include:

- slowness in learning to sit, crawl or walk
- delay in learning to talk or ongoing trouble with talking
- poor attention
- limited planning or problem solving abilities (e.g. a child may be unable to play in a constructive way with toy building blocks)
- difficulty with understanding rules and instructions
- behavioural and social problems
- trouble with self-care tasks such as getting dressed, toileting and feeding themselves.

It is important to remember that all children develop at different rates. Some are slower than others but catch up with time. However, if you are concerned it is better to have your concerns checked than to wait and see.

## How common is intellectual disability?

Intellectual disability is the most common primary disability reported in Australia. Approximately three per cent of Australians (around 700,000 people) have an intellectual disability.

The majority of intellectual disability in Australian children results from autism and genetic disorders such as Down syndrome, Fragile X syndrome, Williams syndrome and Prader Willi syndrome.

## 2. Diagnosis

The early years are critical to a child's development. It is the time when the brain is still developing and is especially responsive to supportive environments and therapies.

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

Diagnosis will help you to better understand how your child's development and functioning is affected by intellectual disability. It may assist you to discuss and explore your child's learning and cognitive abilities, motor skills and health in general. It may also assist you to understand why your child may behave in certain ways.

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

Some younger children may initially receive a diagnosis of developmental delay. This occurs because the significant developmental changes that occur in the early years can make it difficult to determine whether difficulties experienced are temporary or permanent.

Children with mild intellectual disability in particular may not receive a formal diagnosis of intellectual disability until after starting school when it is easier to determine if the child's learning difficulty is permanent.

### Tips for parents

Keep a diary or video clips of any concerns you have about your child's development. This information will help you during your consultation with your GP or paediatrician.

### Who provides a diagnosis of intellectual disability in Queensland?

In Queensland, a paediatrician will diagnose intellectual disability in young children.

Your GP can provide referral to a paediatrician.

A range of therapists including occupational therapists, psychologists and speech and language pathologists may play a role in the diagnosis and assessment of intellectual disability. These professionals may also assist in planning your child's physical, cognitive, social and emotional supports.

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

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

## What might the assessment say?

Children with an intellectual disability will receive a standardised assessment at some stage in their childhood. This will give them an IQ (intelligence quotient) score. Depending on the IQ score, the child will be identified as having a mild, moderate, severe or profound intellectual disability.

Assessments will indicate that your child's cognitive abilities and adaptive behaviour skills (e.g. communication and social skills, personal care skills), when compared to their peers.

IQ scores and other tests are often used to guide the level of support your child will need. However, each child's personality, coping skills, experiences, and type of family and community support, will influence your child's development.

All children have strengths and preferences and these can be used to develop further skills in your child. For many children diagnosed with intellectual disability, there can be other sensory and physical disabilities that make skills and strengths difficult to see, so it is important to explore different ways that your child may be able to be supported to develop a wide range of skills.

## After diagnosis

It is normal for you to feel overwhelmed when you first learn about your child's diagnosis of intellectual disability. Even if you have suspected for some time that your child may have an intellectual disability it can still come as a shock to have this confirmed.

You may need support to help you through this time and to continue to care for and support your child with intellectual disability. You may get support from your family and friends

but it is also good to talk to your GP 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 of intellectual disability a number of things will happen. Your paediatrician will discuss the types of supports and services that will optimise your child's development and a plan may be developed.

The plan is about your child so you and your family should be involved in its development. 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 disability. It is an early response service providing information and linking families to family support networks, community services and funding to access specialist services.

### 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).

### Carers Queensland

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

### 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.

If you are unable to work due to caring for your child, you may be eligible for Carer Payment. Centrelink can assist you with information regarding your eligibility as well as information on supplementary payments such as Carer Allowance or Child Disability Assistants payment.

#### Find out more

##### Child health services in the community

**13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)**

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

##### Carers Queensland

3900 8100

1800 242 636 (Advisory Service)

##### Queensland Patient Transport Assistance Scheme

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

##### Centrelink

132 468

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

##### Disability Online — family friendly resources

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

##### Disability Information Services

13 QGOV (13 74 68)

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

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#### Find out more

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

##### Cairns – The Benevolent Society

4045 0003

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

##### Townsville – The Cootharinga Society of North Queensland

4759 2014

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

##### Rockhampton – The Cootharinga Society of North Queensland in partnership with The Umbrella Network

4928 6550

[www.theumbrellanetwork.org](http://www.theumbrellanetwork.org)

##### Sunshine Coast – Sunshine Coast Children's Therapy Centre

5441 4937

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

##### Brisbane North – Mission Australia

3828 9311

##### Brisbane South – Mission Australia

3713 2602

##### Ipswich – Mission Australia

3713 2602

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

##### Gold Coast – The Benevolent Society

5644 9400

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

# 3. Early intervention services

Early intervention services are important for all children with disability 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 intellectual disability to develop 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 disability, including children with intellectual disability 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

Encouraging your child's development through play and helping your child communicate and develop social skills is an important way you, as parents, can support your child at home.

## More information

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

## How will my child benefit from early intervention?

Early intervention for children with intellectual 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 specialists and feel able to ask lots of questions about your child's therapy and progress.

Early intervention services can assist you and your family to develop knowledge and skills, and provide 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 their potential.

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

## Where can I access early intervention supports?

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

The Queensland Government and the Australia Government also funds early intervention services for children with intellectual disability in Queensland. This section details the main services available.

### Better Start

Australian Government funding for early intervention services is available for children diagnosed with intellectual disability through the Better Start initiative. Your child must have a diagnosis and be registered with Better Start before they turn six years of age, but can access funding up until 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, and speech and language pathology.

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

### Tips for parents

Encouraging your child's development through play and helping your child communicate and develop social skills is an important way you, as parents, can support your child at home.

### 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 intellectual disability.

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 (e.g. playgroups, childcare and parent support groups).

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

### Early childhood development programs and services

Therapy and early intervention services are available through the Queensland Department of Education for children from birth to prior-to-Prep age who have a suspected or diagnosed disability with significant educational needs. This includes children with intellectual disability.

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.

### Child development services

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

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

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

### Other service providers

While there are early intervention services available for children with disabilities, some families may want to seek support from a range of providers. Your GP, paediatrician or child health nurse should be able to refer you to a range of specialists.

Links to websites that may help you locate professionals such as physiotherapists, speech and language pathologists, exercise physiologists, occupational specialists and psychologists are provided in this booklet.

### 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, including accessing visiting specialists to obtain a diagnosis.

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

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
- feeding team.

#### Find out more

##### **Better Start**

Call Carers Queensland  
1800 242 636  
[www.betterstart.net.au](http://www.betterstart.net.au)

##### **Early intervention services**

Disability Services service centres  
1800 177 120  
[www.communities.qld.gov.au](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au)

##### **Early childhood development programs and services**

Contact your local education regional offices  
[www.education.qld.gov.au](http://www.education.qld.gov.au)

##### **Child development services**

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

##### **Local Area Coordinators**

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

##### **Mater Children's Hospital Paediatric Complex Care Unit**

3163 1876  
[complex\\_care@mater.org.au](mailto: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 intellectual disability 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 kindergarten or 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 an intellectual disability.

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

### 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 disability.

### The Umbrella Network

The Umbrella Network is based in Rockhampton and provides support and information for families who have a child with disability, including intellectual disability.

### 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 tipsheets and workbooks for parents.

### Other parents

Parents often find the best support comes from other parents of children with an intellectual disability. Other parents understand the joys and challenges of raising a child with an intellectual disability and can share advice and information.

#### Tips for parents

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

#### Find out more

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

**The Umbrella Network**  
4928 6550  
[theumbrellanetwork.org](http://theumbrellanetwork.org)

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

## 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.

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

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

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

### Find out more

#### **Playgroup Queensland**

1800 171 882

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

#### **MyTime Groups**

1800 889 997

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

#### **Baby Bridges**

Contact the Horizon Foundation

1800 843 008

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

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

#### **Australian Physiotherapy Association**

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

#### **Speech Pathology Australia**

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

#### **Occupational Therapy Australia**

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

#### **Australian Psychological Society**

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

# 4. Early childhood education and care

## What are early childhood education and care services?

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

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

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

## How will my child benefit from child care?

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

Child care provides all children with an early opportunity to relate to peers and other adults. This is no different for children with intellectual disability. It can also be an opportunity for parents to receive input from qualified early childhood professionals and try new approaches to supporting the child's development.

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

The Australian Government supports children with disability 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 an intellectual disability.

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, as well as provide exposure to early literacy and numeracy concepts.

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

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

All children benefit from these early learning experiences and develop abilities 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 intellectual disability to participate in their programs.

Children with disability, including children with intellectual disability, can receive additional support to participate in a kindergarten program. This support can be accessed through the Disability Support Funding Program, Department of Education and Training.

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.

### 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.

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 intellectual disability to encourage inclusion of your child and your family in the service.

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

Starting in a kindergarten program involves a significant transition for children with disability and their families. However, for children with an intellectual disability the transition process may be different and involve more planning than for other students.

### Find out more

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

[www.det.qld.gov.au](http://www.det.qld.gov.au)  
or phone 13 QGOV

Your child will most likely need a period of preparation before they start in a kindergarten program, 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 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, such as 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.

### Find out more

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

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

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

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

# 5. Starting school

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

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 you are considering to check 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.

### Tips for parents

Introducing your child to the concept of timetables is a good idea before they start school. It also provides an opportunity to work with your child to develop new vocabulary they will need at school.

## Is my child ready for Prep?

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

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

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

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

## How can I prepare my child for school?

Beginning school is a big step for all children and families. Children develop at different rates and in different ways. It is important to show your child you believe they are ready for school and not show if you are worried.

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.

### **Tips for parents**

Discuss the best method of communicating with your child's teacher early on. Talk to your child's teacher about ways you can apply skills being taught at home.

## **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. No Queensland child can afford to miss out on this important year.

The Australian Curriculum 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 with disability can be supported through appropriate adjustments made by teachers and schools in relation to:

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

### **Student support services**

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

These students can be supported through the full array of student support services allocated to regions and schools. This may include assistive technology, alternative format material, specialised equipment, special provisions for assessment, and

access to specialist teachers, speech and language pathologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and guidance officers.

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

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

### **Equipment at school**

The Department of Education 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.

### **Non-government schools**

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

### **Find out more**

**Local schools can provide:**

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

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

**Support for children with disability at school**

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

**Delayed entry to Prep**

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

**Australian curriculum**

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

# 6. Aids, equipment and assistive technology

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

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

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

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

The range of MASS aids and equipment is aimed at assisting people to live at home and include aids for mobility, communication, 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 that offers services across the state.

## **Department of Education**

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.

## **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 across the state.

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

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

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

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

Membership is open to:

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

### **Find out more**

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

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

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

13 QGOV (13 74 68)

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

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

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

#### **Education Queensland**

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

#### **Lifetec**

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

#### **All abilities playgrounds**

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

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

3391 2166

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

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

Telephone: 13 QGOV (13 74 68)  
Telephone Typewriter (TTY): 133 677  
Email: [disabilityinfo@disability.qld.gov.au](mailto:disabilityinfo@disability.qld.gov.au)  
Web: [www.communities.qld.gov.au](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au)

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

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

Other languages and formats:

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

This document is available in alternative formats (including large print) on request. If you would like a copy in another format, please contact Disability Information Service on 13 QGOV (13 74 68) or email [disabilityinfo@disability.qld.gov.au](mailto:disabilityinfo@disability.qld.gov.au)

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

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

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Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services  
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