

My child has Cerebral Palsy

Information for Queensland families of young children



Photo by alborada / iStockphoto

A Parent Connect resource

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1. About cerebral palsy

This guide is intended to answer questions you may have if you're concerned your child has cerebral palsy or your child has recently been diagnosed with cerebral palsy.

Cerebral palsy is a physical disability. It is the most common physical disability in childhood. Cerebral Palsy affects the way the brain controls muscles. The term describes a group of disorders that affect movement, coordination, posture and function.

Cerebral palsy will affect each child differently. For some children the impact may only be mild, causing minimal disruption to a child's motor functioning. In other children it may be severe, resulting in significant impacts of overall functioning.

According to the Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland, one in 500 children is diagnosed with cerebral palsy in Australia.

It is more common in boys than girls. It is not hereditary and it cannot be passed from one generation to the next.

In most cases, the brain damage that leads to cerebral palsy occurs while the mother is pregnant or before a child is one month of age. However, the cause of this damage is often unknown.

Some early signs of cerebral palsy may be:

- early feeding difficulties
- delayed development
- poor muscle control
- unusually low muscle tone
- muscle spasms or stiffness
- lack of coordination.

If you are worried about your child's development, it is always best to seek a qualified medical opinion.

Find out more

Read *You are not alone: a carer's journey* to share experiences of other parents. You can download this on www.cplqld.org.au

Are there different types of cerebral palsy?

Cerebral palsy can be described or classified by its impact on movement, the part of the body that it affects, and its impact on fine motor ability, communication or general function.

There are four main types of cerebral palsy based on these differences:

Spastic cerebral palsy (hypertonic) is the most common type of cerebral palsy. It affects 70 to 80 per cent of people with cerebral palsy and is characterised by stiff or permanently contracted muscles.

Athetoid cerebral palsy (dyskenetic) affects 10 to 20 per cent of people with cerebral palsy and is characterised by uncontrolled and slow movements. Children with athetoid cerebral palsy often have very weak muscles or feel 'floppy' when they are carried.

Ataxic cerebral palsy is a rare form that affects five to 10 per cent of children with cerebral palsy. This form of cerebral palsy affects the sense of depth and perception and results in poor coordination. Children often have a tremor that increases with effort. This makes fine movement difficult and they often have difficulties positioning their body space.

Mixed type cerebral palsy is a term used when more than one type of motor pattern is present and no one type is more common than the other.

Which type of disorder affects an individual most may vary with activity and circumstances.

When you talk to doctors and other health professionals, you might come across some of the following terms which may be used to describe the impacts of cerebral palsy:

- spastic (stiff or tight muscles)
- dyskinetic/athetoid (uncontrolled, erratic movements)
- ataxic (unsteady, shaky movements).

Terms used to describe the parts of the body that are affected include:

- paraplegia — both legs are affected but not the arms
- hemiplegia — one side of the body is affected
- diplegia — all four limbs are affected, but the legs more than the arms
- quadriplegia or tetraplegia — when all four limbs are affected and sometimes the muscles of the face and mouth are also affected.

Other conditions associated with cerebral palsy

Some children with cerebral palsy may experience other difficulties with their development. The following provides information on some of these conditions. However, it is important to remember that cerebral palsy will affect each child differently.

If you are concerned about your child's development in any of these areas, you should discuss these with your child's GP or medical specialist.

Eyesight — the most common eye problem for children with cerebral palsy is a squint which may be corrected with glasses or an operation where it is serious enough.

Hearing — hearing impairment may occur in some children, however, it is important that all children with cerebral palsy have their hearing tested.

Speech and swallowing — talking may be difficult as speech depends on the ability to control muscles in the mouth, tongue, palate and voice box. Children with cerebral palsy may also have difficulties associated with chewing and swallowing.

Spatial perception — processing information about shapes, speed and space may be difficult, for example, visualising a three dimensional building. This is often referred to as a visual or spatial perception difficulty.

Epilepsy — may be present in approximately one in three children with cerebral palsy. Epilepsy is a neurological condition which can result in seizures, however, it is usually treated with medication.

Intellectual or learning disability — learning difficulties or a specific learning difficulty in areas such as reading, drawing or mathematics may be experienced. A child with cerebral palsy may also have an intellectual disability, however, this is more commonly seen in children with quadriplegia.

Find out more

Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland

www.cplqld.org.au

Cerebral Palsy Australia

www.cpaaustralia.com.au

2. Diagnosis

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

Having your child assessed and diagnosed as having cerebral palsy will enable access to necessary early intervention services which aim to improve your child's physical and social abilities and provide information and support for you as parents, about caring for your child.

As a parent, you should seek expert medical advice from a GP or specialist if your child is not achieving developmental milestones such as rolling, sitting, crawling, walking and talking. Some of the signs that might indicate your young child has cerebral palsy are:

- child favouring one side of their body
- abnormal muscle tone — muscles are unusually floppy or stiff
- movements that are jerky or slow
- poor feeding abilities
- lack of alertness
- irritability
- seizures.

Because the effects of cerebral palsy are so different in each child, it may take time before your child receives a diagnosis. Medical professionals may acknowledge the presence of developmental delay and choose to monitor your child's development over time.

Also, the plasticity of a young child's nervous system means there is greater capacity to recover from an injury and children's motor abilities can develop differently and at different rates.

There may be situations where your child's paediatrician may want to defer or hold off on making a diagnosis of cerebral palsy until your child is a bit older.

More information

It's typical for a child to sit without support at nine months old and to be able to stand while holding on to something at 12 months.

Who provides a diagnosis of cerebral palsy in Queensland?

In Queensland, paediatricians diagnose cerebral palsy in young children, although input to diagnosis may be sought from speech and language pathologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and psychologists.

For a paediatrician to make a diagnosis of cerebral palsy, a complete examination of all areas of your child's development and current health status is required. Delays in development, such as impaired muscle tone (unusually floppy or still muscles), unusual posture, coordination and motor skills, and your child's abilities to feed themselves, communicate and play, will be assessed.

Tips for parents

Keep a diary or take video clips of your child's activities or areas of development that you want to discuss with your paediatrician.

Brain scans are also used to determine areas of the brain that may be damaged and underdeveloped. Your child should also be checked for secondary problems such as epilepsy, vision, hearing, perception and intellectual functioning.

A paediatrician may also refer your child to other medical experts such as a neurologist for additional information. Additional information may be obtained from a variety of professionals such as occupational therapists, speech and language pathologists, physiotherapists and psychologists.

Information will also be sought about the mother's pregnancy, labour and delivery, and post-natal care, so the specialist can gain the best possible understanding of your child's development.

Depending on the secondary conditions that your child may experience in addition to cerebral palsy, advice from other specialists may be sought. This may include a neurologist for epilepsy, an orthopaedic surgeon for bone or joint difficulties, an ophthalmologist for vision impairment, or an audiologist for hearing impairment.

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

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

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

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

After diagnosis

It is not unusual for you to feel overwhelmed when you first learn about your child's diagnosis of cerebral palsy. Even if you have suspected for some time that your child may have cerebral palsy, it is important to recognise that you are likely to need extra support.

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

When your child receives a diagnosis of cerebral palsy 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. It is important that your family is involved in your child's plan 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.

Carers Queensland

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

Child Health Services in the community

Staffed by nurses and allied health professionals, free child health services are available at community clinics. Home visiting may also be provided. Child health checks are recommended at one, two, four, six and 12 months of age. Information is available on child health, parenting, child development, immunisation and nutrition. Families can be linked to local services and parent groups. For further information refer to your baby's Red Book (personal health record).

Financial support

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

Child Health Services in the community

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

Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme
www.health.qld.gov.au

Centrelink
132 468
www.humanservices.gov.au

Carers Queensland
3900 8100
www.carersqld.asn.au

Disability Services
13QGOV
www.communities.qld.gov.au

Find out more

Should your child's support needs mean that you are unable to enter paid employment, you may be eligible for a Carer Payment. Centrelink can provide you with more information regarding your eligibility as well as information on supplementary payments such as Carer Allowance and 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.childrenstherapycentre.com.au

Brisbane North – Mission Australia
3828 9311

Brisbane South – Mission Australia
37132602
Ipswich – Mission Australia
37132602

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

3. Early intervention service

Early intervention services are important for children with cerebral palsy to help them develop skills in movement and coordination, play, communication, social relationships and functional behaviours.

Early intervention services can also help develop your child's independence and ability to adapt to their environment, the skills they need to participate in child care and kindergarten, and their readiness for school.

A range of supports for families of children with disability, including children with cerebral palsy, from birth to school entry, can be provided.

These services include:

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

How will my child benefit from early intervention?

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

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

Early childhood 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 will be 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 services?

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

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

Better Start

Australian Government funding for early intervention services is available for children diagnosed with cerebral palsy through the Better Start for Children with Disability 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.

Medicare

Children with cerebral palsy may be eligible for services funded through Medicare. These include:

- developing a treatment and management plan by a specialist, consultant physician or GP for children under 13 years
- up to four sessions with health professionals such as audiologists, occupational therapists, speech

Tips for parents

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

and language pathologists or physiotherapists to develop a child's plan

- twenty intervention sessions with health professionals as identified in a child's plan — available for children up to 15 years.

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

Early Intervention for Children with a Physical Disability initiative

Children with cerebral palsy aged up to eight years of age can access early intervention services through this initiative of the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.

Find out more

Better Start

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

Medicare

132 011
www.humanservices.gov.au

Early Intervention for Children with a Physical Disability initiative

- Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland
3358 8011
www.cplqld.org.au
- Montrose Access
3379 9200
www.montroseaccess.org.au
- Sunshine Coast Children's Therapy Centre
5441 7199
www.scctc.org.au

These services include therapy support, information for families about their child's disability, referrals to other services, assistance to access aids and equipment, and parenting support. Families can access the initiative directly through the Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland, Montrose Access and Sunshine Coast Children's Therapy Centre.

Services respond to the individual needs of your family and will support your child's participation in family and community life.

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 cerebral palsy.

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.

Early Childhood Development Programs and Services

Early intervention education and therapy services are available through the Queensland Department of Education Training for children from birth to prior-to-Prep age who have a suspected or diagnosed disability with significant educational needs. This includes children with cerebral palsy.

Programs and services may include playgroup session, outreach support in the 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

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.

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

Queensland Cerebral Palsy Health Service

The Department of Health provides services to children with cerebral palsy through the Queensland Cerebral Palsy Health Service.

The service provides access to new and existing treatments that reduce the risk of predictable and preventable complications of cerebral palsy. Treatments can include botox therapy, hip displacement management and monitoring or surgery.

The service is available to referred children up to the age of 16 years, and is provided at the Royal Children's Hospital, as well in regional locations across the state through an outreach program.

Local Area Coordinators

Disability Services 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.

Support for parents

As a parent, it can be a challenge to strike the right balance between supporting your child with cerebral palsy and the needs of the rest of your family.

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 cerebral palsy.

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

Cerebral Palsy League

Is a confidential information and support service for anyone who has questions about cerebral palsy. It is available for people with cerebral palsy, families, carers, students and service providers across Australia.

Other parents

Parents often find the best support they have comes from other parents of children with cerebral palsy. Other parents understand the joys and

challenges of raising a child with cerebral palsy 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 all children, including children with 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 Parenting for parents of children with disability can help parents address their children's behaviour and emotional problems, 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 in different ways, including information seminars, individual sessions on specific issues, group sessions, online options, and tip sheets and workbooks for parents.

Find out more

Queensland Cerebral Palsy Health Service

www.health.qld.gov.au

Local Area Coordinators

13 QGOV

www.communities.qld.gov.au

Raising Children Network: the Australian parent website

www.raisingchildren.net.au

Playgroups

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

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

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

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

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

MyTime groups

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 therapists while their child attends a playgroup taken by professional occupational, music or speech therapists.

Find out more

Triple P – Positive Parenting Program

3236 1212

www.triplep-steppingstones.net

www.triplep-parenting.net

Playgroup Queensland

1800 171 882

www.playgroupqueensland.com.au

MyTime Groups

1800 889 997

www.mytime.net.au

Baby Bridges

Contact the Horizon Foundation

1800 843 008

www.babybridges.com.au

More information

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

The Australian Physiotherapy Association

www.physiotherapy.asn.au

Speech Pathology Australia

www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au

Occupational Therapy Australia

www.otqld.org.au

Australian Psychological Society

www.psychology.org.au

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 cerebral palsy.

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

How will my child benefit from child care?

Child care provides all children an early opportunity to relate to peers and other adults. This is no different for children with cerebral palsy. 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 cerebral palsy.

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

Participation in a kindergarten program will give your child a greater chance of successfully transitioning

into Prep and then into mainstream schooling.

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

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

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

Tips for parents

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

How will my child be supported in a kindergarten program?

Teachers in kindergarten services and long day care services can access support to assist children with cerebral palsy to participate in their programs.

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

These additional supports may include:

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

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

Kindergarten teachers can modify the kindergarten program to support the inclusion of your child. The wider kindergarten community can also be provided with information about cerebral palsy to encourage inclusion of your child and your family in the service.

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.

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

Starting in a kindergarten program involves a significant transition for children with cerebral palsy and their families.

Your child will most likely need a period of preparation before they start in a kindergarten program. For example, support to settle in and ongoing support to ensure their

needs are being met and they are achieving educational goals.

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

Transition planning for your child to start their kindergarten program involves a range of activities including enrolment, working with the kindergarten teacher to plan a suitable program for your child, and help to identify the additional supports needed, 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.

Tips for parents

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

Talk to your child's kindergarten teacher about their strengths and areas that may need development, as well as how your child may prefer to learn new things.

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.det.qld.gov.au

Or phone 13 QGOV

Inclusion and Professional Support Program (Australian Government)

www.mychild.gov.au

4. 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 that 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.

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

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 for an assessment to see if their child might be eligible for transport assistance.

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

Tips for parents

Children with cerebral palsy may fatigue more easily than other children as they need to concentrate harder. Try activities that will help your child build their concentration levels such as structured play and reading activities.

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 cerebral palsy, 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?

Beginning school is a big step for all children and their families. Children develop at different rates and in different ways. It is important to 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.

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.

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

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.

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

How will my child be supported to learn at school?

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

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

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

When required, students who have cerebral palsy 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 disability 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 loans service for students with disability who attend state schools. Schools can borrow specialised equipment and assistive technology from a regionally managed loans service to trial with students with disability. This helps schools to identify and make decisions about appropriate resources to support students' educational programs. The equipment remains the property of the Department of Education Training.

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.det.qld.gov.au

Australian curriculum

www.australiancurriculum.edu.au

Queensland Catholic Education Commission

www.qcec.catholic.edu.au

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 cerebral palsy — check with the principal of the school you are considering.

5. 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 aid 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. For more information, contact your nearest Disability Services service centre.

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.

Vehicle Option Subsidy Scheme

The Vehicle Options Subsidy Scheme supports people with disability, their families and carers to have improved access to private transport. Subsidies are available to eligible clients for: assessment and prescriptions; vehicle modifications; and specialist driving lessons.

For more information, contact your nearest Disability Services service centre.

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 Training

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 the school.

All Abilities Playgrounds

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

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

Disability Services service centres

1800 177 120

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

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

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

Other languages and formats:

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

This document is available in alternative formats (including large print) on request. If you would like a copy in another format, please contact Disability Information Service on 13 QGOV (13 64 78) 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 a disability, their families and carers. The new site includes links to information about support groups and counselling, education and where to access help

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