

# My child has Down syndrome

Information for Queensland families of young children



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*- A Parent Connect resource*

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# 1. About Down syndrome

This guide is intended to answer some of the questions you may have about Down syndrome and the supports and services available to you and your family in your child's early years.

Down syndrome is one of the most common congenital conditions diagnosed at birth. Down syndrome results from a chromosomal anomaly when an extra copy of chromosome 21 is present in the body's cells, producing 47 rather than 46 chromosomes. There are no known factors which cause this chromosome anomaly and it is not linked to any activity before or during pregnancy.

Babies with Down syndrome can be born to mothers of any age. While women aged 35 years are at greater risk of having a baby with Down syndrome, around 70 per cent of all babies with Down syndrome are born to mothers less than 35 years of age. Down syndrome occurs in all countries and all socioeconomic groups.

About one in every 800 babies is born with Down syndrome. There are gender differences in Down syndrome, with slightly higher numbers of boys than girls.

Like all children, children with Down syndrome have their own personalities, interests and abilities. Although there are more than 100 identified traits associated with Down syndrome, most children have less than 10 of these. In fact, children with Down syndrome are most likely to have physical and personality traits in common with other family members.

There are three types of Down syndrome:

- **Trisomy 21** is the presence of an extra whole chromosome 21 in every cell in the body. Trisomy 21 occurs in the majority of children with Down syndrome (95 per cent).
- **Translocation** is where an extra part of chromosome 21 is attached to another chromosome. Translocation occurs in four per cent of children with Down syndrome.
- **Mosaicism** is the presence of an extra whole chromosome 21 in only some body cells. Mosaicism occurs in about one per cent of children with Down syndrome.

Most children with Down syndrome reach developmental milestones in the same order as their peers without Down syndrome, however, the development progress is slower. Each of the above causes may have a different impact on your child. Talk to your medical professional or other professional staff about what this may mean for your child.

## More information

It is important to know that your child with Down syndrome is a unique individual. Your child will grow, learn to talk and walk, and will be an important part of your family and community.

## Other conditions associated with Down syndrome

Babies with Down syndrome usually grow into healthy children, however, there is an increased risk of children with Down syndrome developing health problems. Potential health problems include congenital heart defects, increased susceptibility to infection, respiratory problems, gastrointestinal disorders and childhood leukaemia.

It is estimated that 30 to 45 per cent of children with Down syndrome have a congenital heart defect present at birth.

It is important to understand that while children with Down syndrome do have an increased risk of developing other conditions, thanks to advances in medical diagnosis and treatment, the conditions can be treated and managed and most children with Down syndrome grow up to be healthy and active people.

### Find out more

Regular health checks are very important for babies with Down syndrome. In addition to your GP or paediatrician, the Down Syndrome Association of Queensland can provide support to new parents through the provision of information about a variety of topics.

*Down syndrome: the first 18 months* is a DVD that shows parents' first-hand experiences with diagnosis, health care, therapies and education. For more information, contact the Down Syndrome Association of Queensland.

## 2. Diagnosis

Parents receive a diagnosis of Down syndrome for their baby either before or soon after birth.

Most commonly, doctors make an initial diagnosis of Down syndrome shortly after birth. When the presence of Down syndrome is suspected through the observation of physical features, genetic tests will then follow to provide a definitive diagnosis. This will also test for the type of Down syndrome that the baby has.

After diagnosis, babies with Down syndrome should also undergo a series of health checks due to other conditions associated with Down syndrome. These checks include:

- physical examination
- heart examination
- thyroid function
- vision and hearing tests.

Many of these health checks will need to be repeated at regular intervals to help doctors and specialists monitor your child's development and ongoing health needs.

### After diagnosis

It is common for parents to feel overwhelmed when they first learn about their child's diagnosis of Down syndrome. Many parents describe feelings of shock, disbelief, sorrow, embarrassment, anger and guilt. It is important to recognise that you are likely to need extra support. You may get this support from family and friends, but you can also contact the Down Syndrome Association of Queensland, who can put you in touch with local parent support groups or professional supports such as a counsellor or social worker. You may also like to talk to your GP.

The Down Syndrome Association of Queensland is a valuable contact for families of children with Down

syndrome. The Association has developed an information resource for new parents called the Information for New Parents Kit. This kit contains a range of information resources for parents of newborn babies, which are available from most hospital maternity departments or can be posted out to families on request. The Association also provides a contact centre for information and support on all issues regarding Down syndrome.

### Carers Queensland

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

#### 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 Information Services**  
13 QGOV  
[www.communities.qld.gov.au](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au)

**Down Syndrome Association of Queensland**  
3356 6655  
[www.dsaq.org.au](http://www.dsaq.org.au)

### Parent Connect

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

### 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 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 more information regarding your eligibility as well as information on supplementary payments such as Carer Allowance and Child Disability Assistance Payment.

### Tips for parents

Tell family and friends about your baby's diagnosis — they may surprise you with their understanding, and their support can be invaluable.

### Find out more

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

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

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

**Rockhampton – The Cootharinga Society of North Queensland in partnership with The Umbrella Network**  
49286550  
[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 – Mission Australia**  
3828 9311 (North)  
3713 2602 (South)

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

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



# 3. Early intervention services

Early intervention services are important for all children with disability including children with Down syndrome. Early intervention services can assist your child to develop skills in play, communication, social relationships and everyday tasks. They can also assist in increasing your child's independence and adaptability and improve their readiness to participate in child care, kindergarten and school.

Early intervention services provide a range of supports for families of children with Down syndrome from birth to school-entry age.

These services include:

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

## How will my child benefit from early intervention?

Early intervention for children with Down syndrome is most effective and provides the best possible outcomes when provided to children in the early years.

Early intervention services should be tailored to the individual needs of your child and family. It is important for you as a parent to have a good rapport with the specialists and feel able to ask lots

of questions about your child's therapy and their progress.

Early intervention services provide you and your family with the knowledge, skills and supports you require to meet the needs of your child, to 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.

All early intervention services involve professionals working directly with your child as well as teaching you strategies to support your child to develop their potential. Professionals should spend time with you working on goals that can be incorporated into family routines and play activities.

### Tips for parents

Remember to be patient with your child with Down syndrome. It may take longer for your child to learn to dress, feed and toilet for themselves but they will learn to do these tasks. They will also make friends and develop a range of interests with support and guidance.

Work out what behaviour strategies work best for your child and then apply these strategies consistently. Make sure rules are understood and instructions are short and simple and reward good behaviour.

## Where can I access early intervention supports?

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

### Better Start initiative

Children with Down syndrome under the age of six are eligible for supports and services through the Australian Government's Better Start for Children with a Disability initiative.

Through Better Start you can register to access early intervention funding of up to \$12,000 (up to a maximum of \$6000 in any one financial year). Families have up until their child's seventh birthday to use this funding.

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

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

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

### Medicare

Children with Down syndrome 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, psychologists, speech 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 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 Down syndrome.

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

The Department of Education Training provides therapy and early intervention services to children from birth to prior-to-Prep age with a



suspected or diagnosed disability and significant educational needs. Children with Down syndrome who have a developmental delay, intellectual or physical disability can access these services.

Programs and services may include playgroup session, outreach support in your home, centre-based sessions and support to transition into 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 intervention services to children with a moderate to severe developmental delay or disability aged up to nine years, including children with Down syndrome.

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.

### **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.

### **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 including physiotherapists, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists and psychologists.

### **Find out more**

#### **Better Start**

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

#### **Medicare**

132 011  
<http://www.humanservices.gov.au>

#### **Early Intervention Services**

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

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

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

#### **Child Development Services**

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

#### **Local Area Coordinators**

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

## **Support for parents**

Parents of children with disability may feel overwhelmed from time to time, especially during times of change (e.g. when your child starts early intervention services, child care, kindy or school).

Having a network of support, including formal supports (e.g. early intervention services) and informal supports (other parents of children with Down syndrome, your family and friends), can be a big help.

### **Down Syndrome Association of Queensland**

The Down Syndrome Association of Queensland provides a range of supports to families of newborn babies and children with Down syndrome. These supports include visits to new parents in hospital or at home, information on available services, putting families in touch with other families of children with Down syndrome, access to information kits, library resources, information conferences and training.

### Other parents

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

### 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

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

### Triple P — Positive Parenting Program

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

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

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

### Playgroups

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

### 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 (e.g. suitable computer games for a child who likes computers).

While children with Down syndrome may take longer to reach developmental milestones, studies have shown that appropriate early intervention can minimise these delays.

### 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 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

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

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

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

#### **Speech Pathology Australia**

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

#### **Occupational Therapy Australia**

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

#### **Australian Psychological Society**

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

#### **Down Syndrome Association of Queensland**

3356 6655

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

#### **Raising Children Network: the**

Australian parent website

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

#### **The Umbrella Network**

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

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

3236 1212

[www.triplep-steppingstones.net](http://www.triplep-steppingstones.net)

[www.triplep-parenting.net](http://www.triplep-parenting.net)

#### **Playgroup Queensland**

1800 171 882

[www.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

3245 4266

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

# 4. Early childhood education and care

## What are early childhood education and care services?

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

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

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

## How will my child benefit from child care?

Child care provides all children with an early opportunity to relate to peers and other adults. It is no different for children with Down syndrome. 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 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 Down syndrome.

Participation in a kindergarten program can help your child develop skills in communication, social interaction and positive behaviours. It can also assist your child to follow routines, as well as

### Tips for parents

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

provide exposure to early literacy and numeracy concepts.

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

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

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

- learning to interact with other children
- developing a desire to learn and different ways of learning
- understanding and managing their feelings
- learning about themselves
- developing their confidence and independence
- developing communication skills.

## 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 disability to participate in their programs.

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

Additional support may include:

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

### Tips for parents

Link your therapist or early intervention provider with your child's kindergarten teacher to help plan your child's program. They can also help identify the supports they will need to participate in their program.

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

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 Down syndrome 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 significant transition for children with Down syndrome and their families.

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

Successful transition planning requires a team approach with your family and the kindergarten teacher. Planning

should commence six to 12 months before your child starts in the service.

Transition planning for your child to start their kindergarten program involves a range of activities including enrolment, working with the kindergarten teacher to plan a suitable program for your child, and help to identify the additional supports needed (e.g. training and educational and play equipment).

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

### Tips for parents

Find out where the kindergarten programs are in your area. Talk to kindergarten teachers and other parents to find out how they support the inclusion of children with Down syndrome in kindergarten programs.

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

Or phone 13 QGOV

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

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

## 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 also be asked to attend an interview with a staff member as part of the process.

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

## Is my child ready for Prep?

Prep is offered in all state schools as a full five-day-per-week program. To be eligible for Prep a child must turn five by 30 June in the year they start Prep. With the introduction of the Australian Curriculum, full-time attendance in Prep gives children, including children with Down syndrome, 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 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?

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

We recommend you contact your local school in the year before you enrol your child to discuss your child's individual needs. This will give the school time for planning to ensure your child has a successful and positive start to schooling. If you are concerned about your child's readiness for school discuss this with the school of your choice and your early intervention service provider.

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

### Tips for parents

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

Introducing your child to the concept of visual schedules 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.

There are a number of things you can do to help prepare your child for the transition to school. This should include visiting the new school several times before starting school, initially during quiet times of the day (possibly before or after school hours) and later at busier times so your child becomes familiar with the school environment.

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

The Australian Curriculum Foundation Year has been developed to give children 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 child 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.

### Student support services

Some students with disability will require additional educational support so they are able to access and participate at school alongside their same-age peers.

### Tips for parents

Appropriate visual supports may be useful to prepare your child for school (e.g. photos of your child's new teacher, their new classroom, and the playground).

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

### 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.

### Non-government schools

Catholic Education's Education Adjustment Program supports students with 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 Down syndrome — check with the principal of the school you are considering.

### **Find out more**

Tablet computer applications (apps) can help improve your child's fine-motor skills and communication.

Download a guide to suitable apps:

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

**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.

## **All Abilities Playgrounds**

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

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

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

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

To borrow from the Noah's Ark Educational Resources and Toy

Library, you will need to be a member of Noah's Ark.

Membership is open to:

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

#### Find out more

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

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

##### **Disability Services**

13 QGOV

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

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

[www.qld.gov.au](http://www.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 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 13QGOV (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 access help.

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All images in this document are for illustrative purposes only

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