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## **Guide to children's therapy services funded by the Disability Services Commission**

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### **Section 1: Where to begin?**

#### **I think my child has a disability. What do I do?**

It can be confusing and stressful to think that your child may have a disability. The best starting point is to raise your concern with your family doctor or paediatrician. If your child is at school, it may help to talk to your child's teacher or school psychologist. You may want to prepare for this conversation by making a note of any health, behavioural, or emotional issues that you find concerning or different. Health professionals will find this information useful in determining the next steps.

Your child may need to undergo a process of assessment to determine what is causing his or her difficulties. You may be asked to seek assessment from different health professionals to build up a picture about your child.

Generally speaking, assessments are not too stressful for a child. They usually involve a parent interview to find out about your child's medical history, current health, and his or her level of functioning with different skills such as mobility, self-care or communication. You may also be asked about how your child interacts with others in different environments such as home, childcare or school. The health professional may want to observe and interact with your child. Some formal or informal tests may also be used, most of which will involve your child playing or following directions using toys, pictures, puzzles or books.

This can be a challenging time. It is natural to feel frustrated by the process at times. Try to remain positive that each appointment is gathering important information about how your child is managing in different areas.

Remember that you know your child best and your 'gut instinct' is often worth trusting. Seek out professionals who you feel listen carefully to your concerns and who explain things clearly. It can be helpful to take notes during each appointment and don't hesitate to ask questions if you don't understand something. Some people find it helpful to take a trusted friend or advocate to appointments who can help 'digest' the information.

Some parents seek help and are told to 'wait and see' or that they are 'worrying about nothing'. If you really feel that something is not right, seek a second opinion to get a different perspective on your situation.

#### **Recordkeeping**

Keeping all your disability related information in one file is useful when you begin accessing support and services. Important documents to store safely are:

- results and reports from diagnostic tests
- medical records, including details about past surgeries or treatments
- allied health assessment results, reports and therapy treatment plans
- brochures and booklets about services and support
- a list of past and current medications and spare prescriptions
- a single list of contact details for relevant medical and health professionals to make it easier if you (or someone else) need to make contact at short notice
- information about child care arrangements
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs), educational assessments and copies of school psychologist reports for school age children
- documents that are often requested by government agencies or service providers such as proof of residency, address and income.

### **My child has received a diagnosis. What now?**

Receiving a disability diagnosis – at any age – is a life-changing experience. Everyone reacts differently and there is no right or wrong way to feel. Many parents experience a range of emotions including shock, denial, anxiety and confusion. Many parents experience these feelings of loss as they let go of certain expectations for their child, while not quite knowing what the future holds.

Others feel a sense of relief as they finally feel that their concerns for their child have been officially recognised. They may see a diagnosis as a starting point for getting the right help.

Family and friends will each have their own reaction. You may find some more supportive than others. Many people will not know what to say. This doesn't mean that they don't care. Everyone copes differently. Some people will want to tell you about stories of people with disability who they know. Remember that even with the same diagnosis, everyone's story and situation is different.

As much as possible, surround yourself with people who make you feel comfortable and supported. Online communities and real world support groups can be a great way of connecting with parents who are going through similar experiences. Hearing the experiences and opinions of others is valuable but should also be balanced with facts and professional advice based on evidence that is personally targeted for you.

### **What happens after the diagnosis?**

With a diagnosis comes the opportunity to get specific information about support and services, learn new skills, obtain help for your family to manage the changes ahead, and receive personalised advice from occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech pathologists, social workers and psychologists.

At the time of receiving the diagnosis, you may have received contact details for different therapy service providers. If not, for further information, please refer to table one in the section 'How many service providers are out there?'

### **My child hasn't received a diagnosis. What happens next?**

Unfortunately despite rigorous assessment processes, a small number of children never receive a diagnosis. This can be frustrating and exhausting for parents who are looking for answers.

In these instances it is important to remember that although a diagnosis may not be found, there will still be useful options for treatment and support. It is still worth contacting a service provider to talk about your situation.

Particularly for very young children, access to early intervention is not always reliant on a child having a specific diagnosis. A service provider will consider how your child manages across a range of different tasks and consider the need for intervention. Even if a service provider cannot provide services to your child, they may be able to point you in the direction of more relevant service providers or other avenues of support.

## **Section 2: Gathering information**

### **There is so much information. Where do I start?**

It is easy to feel overwhelmed by information. While it is wonderful to have so much information available, it can feel like a huge task to gather disability related information from a range of sources, filter out the irrelevant, and find out what support options and services are available and useful to you.

It is also worth remembering that when you are going through the process of learning about your child's diagnosis, it is natural to seek explanations and possible causes or cures. However this can make you vulnerable to misinformation and possible exploitation.

### **Searching online**

Judging the quality and relevance of online material is important and can be difficult. However you need to determine whether the material seems balanced in terms of explaining the benefits and risks associated with particular therapies or treatments. Talk about the information you may find with your doctor or health professional. If they are not familiar with material, ask them to explore this option rather than dismissing it.

It is also important to decide if the main focus seems to promote a product rather than providing sound, evidence-based information. Some information may be presented in a professional manner but be untrue, misleading or unnecessarily alarming. This includes treatments, supplements or diet regimes that claim to 'cure' certain types of disability. If you are unsure about whether a claim is legitimate, ask a relevant health professional for their opinion.

The Better Health Channel ([www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)), Health Insite ([www.healthinsite.gov.au](http://www.healthinsite.gov.au)), and the Raising Children Network

([www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)) websites have reliable information on a range of disabilities and conditions and are a good place to start.

The Disability Services Commission's library – Activ library ([www.activ.asn.au](http://www.activ.asn.au)) – has an extensive collection of books and videos in subject areas including developmental delay, health and wellbeing, and social skills. Activ's Parent Portal also provides contact details for parent support groups, websites and resources on different syndromes and conditions.

Online discussion groups and forums can be useful, but remember that they are personal experiences. A decision that suits one family's needs, values and personal situation is not necessarily suitable for all.

Overall it's important to balance online information with material obtained from health professionals, independent evidence based research, and publications produced by government agencies and community organisations in order to obtain a range of perspectives.

### **Section 3: Accessing therapy services for children**

#### **What is therapy?**

The Disability Services Commission funds therapy services that help children with disability to communicate, move, eat, play, learn and be part of their families and communities. Therapy services may be provided by a range of different allied health professionals such as speech pathologists, occupational therapist, physiotherapists, social workers and psychologists. These health professionals form a team with children and their families. Together they can:

- provide information and advice about disability and child development
- suggest ideas and activities to help children develop new skills
- help parents to find solutions to issues that arise when raising a child with disability
- assist if a child needs special equipment
- work with others involved in the child's life to support periods of 'transition', such as starting kindy or full-time school
- help the family and wider community to create a welcoming, positive and inclusive environment for children with disability.

Therapists also work with local communities and mainstream service providers to support and include children with disability and their families in all aspects of community life by overcoming physical, social and attitudinal barriers.

#### **What does therapy look like?**

Therapy outcomes can be achieved using a range of different strategies, such as:

- one-on-one sessions at home, child care, school or at community activities such as swimming lessons
- group therapy activities when small groups of children working towards similar goals participate in activities together

- consultation and/or training with other people in the child’s life such as teachers to support them to include children with disability in the classroom in a meaningful way
- parent workshops to gain information and learn new skills
- specialist clinics such as equipment and assistive technology clinics.

No strategy is better or worse than another. Your child’s therapy team is skilled at knowing which strategy will be best suited to the goal you are working on, given your child’s age, ability and other circumstances.

It is important to remember that you, not your therapy team, spend the most time with your child. Therefore you can have a profound positive impact on your child’s development and well-being. Therapists will have many ideas about strategies you can use in everyday life to help your child develop the skills needed to participate at home, school and in the community.

### **How many service providers are out there?**

The Disability Services Commission funds twelve organisations to provide therapy services for children and young people with disability in the Perth metropolitan area. Therapy services in regional and remote areas of Western Australia are delivered by the WA Country Health Service.

Of the twelve metropolitan organisations funded by the Disability Services Commission, most provide services for children with a variety of disability types. Some organisations specialise in services for children with a particular diagnosis such as autism or vision impairment. Several service providers have two service streams – generalist services for all children with all types of disability, and specialist services for children with a particular type of disability as seen in Table 1.

**Table 1: Disability therapy services – Perth metropolitan area**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Service description</b>
Association for the Blind of WA 9311 8202 <a href="http://www.guidedogswa.com.au">www.guidedogswa.com.au</a>	These services are for children with vision impairment.
Autism Association of WA 9489 8900 <a href="http://www.autism.org.au">www.autism.org.au</a>	These services are for children with autism spectrum disorders.
ISADD WA 9427 0872 <a href="http://www.isadd.org">www.isadd.org</a>	These services are for children with autism spectrum disorders or other developmental disorders.
Kids are Kids! Therapy & Education Centre 9313 6566 <a href="http://www.kidsarekids.org.au">www.kidsarekids.org.au</a>	These services are for children with all eligible disability types.

Next Challenge 9201 0707 <a href="http://www.nextchallenge.com.au">www.nextchallenge.com.au</a>	These services are for children with all eligible disability types.
Rocky Bay 9383 5151 <a href="http://www.rockybay.org.au">www.rockybay.org.au</a>	Two service types: One service for children with all eligible disability types. One service for children with neurological and physical impairments.
Senses Foundation 9473 5400 <a href="http://www.senses.asn.au">www.senses.asn.au</a>	Two service types: One service for children with all eligible disability types. One service for children who are deafblind.
Statewide Specialist Services 9329 2400 / 9301 3816 <a href="http://www.dsc.wa.gov.au">www.dsc.wa.gov.au</a>	These services are for children with intellectual disability, intellectual disability and autism or autism.
Telethon Speech and Hearing Centre 9387 9888 <a href="http://www.tsh.org.au">www.tsh.org.au</a>	These services are for children with a permanent sensory-neural hearing loss.
The Centre for Cerebral Palsy 9443 0211 <a href="http://www.tccp.com.au">www.tccp.com.au</a>	Two service types: 1. children with all eligible disability types. 2. children with cerebral palsy and similar disorders.
Therapy Focus 9478 9500 <a href="http://www.therapyfocus.org.au">www.therapyfocus.org.au</a>	These services are for children with all eligible disability types.
Wize Therapy 9317 7932 <a href="http://www.wizetherapy.com.au">www.wizetherapy.com.au</a>	These services are for children with all eligible disability types.

### **How are therapy services delivered?**

All therapy services funded by the Disability Services Commission use a family-centred approach. This approach recognises that parents are the main people who are, and will continue to be, involved in their children's lives. They know their children best and want the best for their children. It also acknowledges that all families are different and unique and services will reflect those differences and uniqueness.

Family members will be encouraged to become involved in all parts of the child's program – planning, putting the plan into action, and deciding which parts of the plan have worked and which need to be changed.

Services will concentrate on the strengths of the family and child and will help the family develop those strengths. Everyone involved in the program will be treated with respect, supported in working out what are their strengths and what services they need and will be treated as capable and competent.

Services will be designed around the particular needs of each person, taking into account what aspects of the service are important and what each family can contribute.

Staff will be respectful of what makes a family unique (cultural background, language, ethnicity and socio-economic diversity) and the services will be tailored to accommodate this uniqueness.

Good, accurate and relevant information will be provided in plain English, or in a language appropriate to the family and in a format or style that makes it acceptable and accessible to families.

Families will be encouraged and assisted to make choices about the services they will use and their choice and decision will be respected.

For each child and family within the program, one staff member is allocated as the family's key contact. The role of the key contact is to work in partnership with the family to coordinate the services provided by the team.

### **Which service provider is right for our family?**

You may have noticed that more than one organisation provides services for children with your child's disability type. It is worth phoning them to find out more information. Obviously your circumstances and values will guide the questions that you ask, but the following questions can help navigate you towards the right service provider for you and your child:

- Where do you provide services? Will you visit us at home, child care, or school or will most activities occur at the organisation's centre?
- What strategies do you have to help working parents be part of their child's intervention program? Eg flexible meeting times, information updates provided by email etc.
- How will I communicate with my child's therapy team? Is there one main contact person or do I talk directly with each team member as needed?
- Does your organisation provide avenues for me to meet other parents in similar circumstances?
- Do you provide disability related advice and support to help siblings/grandparents/others important people in my child's life?
- What happens if I need to cancel or change appointments?
- Does your organisation already have relationships with my child's school or schools we are considering for the future?
- My child needs specialised equipment. What kind of services do you have to help us access the right kind of equipment and other assistive technology?
- Do you provide other types of services that may be useful for us? Eg respite, school holiday programs, positive behaviour services, equipment clinics.
- Are translator services available through your organisation?

### **How do I know how many hours I can get?**

Families who are new to a service provider will work with a therapy team to develop a support plan which outlines the goals you would like to achieve in the next six to twelve months. The number of hours of intervention provided at any given time will fluctuate depending on your child's needs, goals and stage of life.

Many service providers provide an intensive series of appointments to assist a child and his/her family to achieve a specific goal. This is then followed by a break or reduction in contact with your therapy team while that skill is consolidated. Another burst of intervention can be scheduled when the next goal is targeted. A burst of intervention may also be beneficial during periods of life transition, such as when your child starts school.

### **If I receive WA therapy service, can I receive other services?**

Eligibility for Disability Service Commission services or WA therapy services does not impact on your eligibility for other funded services. Families that use a Western Australia therapy service provider may be eligible for other funded services. For example, Commonwealth funded services delivered by FaHCSIA (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) such as Better Start.

### **What if we live in a regional or remote area of Western Australia?**

Contact WA Country Health Services for further information on supports for country health specialist services delivered through targeted Disability Professional Services. To gain further information and support contact your LAC.

## **Section 4: Is my child eligible for services?**

### **Who is eligible?**

The Disability Services Commission funds therapy services for children and young people from birth until the completion of secondary school.

To be eligible for disability services a person must meet all of the following:

- have a permanent disability which is attributable to either an intellectual, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairment, or a combination of these impairments
- need significant and ongoing help every day with either self-care, communication, mobility, making decisions, interacting with others
- be legally entitled to permanently reside in Australia
- permanently reside in Western Australia.

Eligibility is not only about having a diagnosis or condition, but how this affects a person's everyday life. Not everyone who is eligible needs or wants to receive services.

Each service provider may also apply service access criteria. For example, to access services from a specialist autism service provider a child must have received an official diagnosis of autism.

## **Section 5: How do we apply?**

### **Who can make a referral?**

Any parent or legal guardian can refer their child for services. Referrals may also come from other sources such as GPs, paediatricians and teachers but they **must** have the consent of the parent or legal guardian.

### **What information is needed?**

You will need to provide information in three main areas:

- personal/demographic details – eg name, address, residency status
- details of disability – eg diagnosis, related medical and health issues
- level of function – eg how does the disability impact on your child's function in areas such as self care, mobility, communication, social skills, learning and behaviour.

You may be asked for supporting documentation such as a birth certificate or visa in order to determine your child's eligibility. The service provider will request the minimum documentation required to verify eligibility. Your permission will be requested if further information needs to be sourced from other service providers or government agencies. All information is collected and assessed under the provisions of the Privacy Act 1988.

### **Who makes the decision?**

Each service provider assesses eligibility in a slightly different way. You will generally have contact with one person who will gather and assess your information. If your child is clearly eligible or ineligible you will just interact with that person. If the situation is unclear, your application may be assessed by a team and further information may be sought from your referrers and/or other sources such as other health professionals or the Disability Services Commission. You may be invited for a meeting to discuss the information that is required.

### **How long does this assessment process take and how can I get an update of where we are in the process?**

Eligibility for a service provider can generally be assessed quickly. If all the required information is submitted at the time of referral, the process may be completed in one or two weeks. However the process may take longer if the child is not an Australian citizen, if their diagnosis is rare or unusual, if their diagnosis is unclear or if the service provider is unable to access adequate paperwork to confirm eligibility. The eligibility process is generally fastest if you maintain good communication with the service provider and can provide eligibility paperwork promptly.

### **How do I know if my child has been referred to the Disability Services Commission Eligibility Team?**

Once the diagnosis of Autism, or Intellectual disability, is confirmed, the Eligibility Team forwards a letter to the family advising them to contact the Area Manager in the Local Area Coordinator office for further information on supports and services from the providers.

Updated information on the Eligibility decision process can be provided by the Eligibility team by emailing [eligibility@dsc.wa.gov.au](mailto:eligibility@dsc.wa.gov.au)

### **What is the difference between referring to DSC for eligibility and referring to DSC (or one of their providers) for services?**

- For pre-school children vulnerable to intellectual disability seeking access to Commission provided Early Childhood intervention services – referral to the Commission’s eligibility team is required.
- For pre-school children vulnerable to intellectual disability seeking access to early intervention services through a service provider – eligibility can be determined through the service provider. However, if you wish to access support through LAC – the diagnosis must be verified by the eligibility team.
- For preschool children with Autism Spectrum Disorder seeking access to Commission funded and provided early childhood intervention services – a referral to the eligibility team is required.
- School age children and adults with an intellectual disability or autism spectrum disorder seeking access to Commission provided supports – a referral to the Commission’s eligibility team is required.
- School age children and adults with intellectual disability or Autism Spectrum Disorder seeking access to funded specialist disability services – eligibility can be determined through the service provider. However, if you to access support through LAC – the diagnosis must be verified by the Commission’s eligibility team.

### **What will happen once my child is assessed as eligible?**

If your child is assessed as eligible, you will be informed of this news in writing. Depending on your child’s needs and the service provider’s capacity to deliver a service that meets those needs, you may be given one of the following options:

- The service provider may offer services to you and your family and make arrangements to start services.
- Due to high demand for therapy services, the service provider may need to place your child on a waitlist if they do not have the capacity to provide full services at that point in time.
- If your child is placed on a waitlist the service provider may be able to offer other strategies or services which may help you to get started in an area of need, but these will not be as complete as a full service.

### **What will happen if my child is not eligible?**

If your child is assessed as not being eligible for services, you may still be provided with information about other services and support options that would be suitable.

If you wish to appeal your eligibility decision, the following avenues are available:

- the service provider's complaints/disputes process (in accordance with Standard 7 of the Disability Service Standards)
- the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office (HaDSCO).

### **Can I apply to different service providers?**

Yes, you can apply to several different service providers. However if your child is assessed as eligible and accepted into services, he or she must not simultaneously access ongoing therapy services from any other WA State Government funded therapy service provider including Child Development Services and PMH outpatient therapy services.

### **Is there a difference between eligibility and access to services?**

Yes, it is worth noting that while a person may be eligible, there is no automatic entitlement to services.

### **What can I do if I can't access services straight away?**

Speak with your service provider regarding waitlist strategies or services. If your service provider cannot offer a service straight away they may be able to provide some supports whilst you are waiting. For example a parenting group or a parent support group or linking you with other services. However please note that these will not be as complete as a full service.

### **What is the difference between staying with my existing service provider (such as PMH or Child Development Services) and moving to Disability Professional Services?**

You will need to make a choice between which service you use. You cannot access services such as PMH or Child State Development Services at the same time as Disability Professional Services. Services such as Child State Development generally only offer services up to school age and generally only offer generalised services. Contact your existing specialist service and the service provider through Disability Professional Services to see what each will offer. Your LAC will be able to provide you will support and information.

### **Once I have started with one Disability Professional Services provider can I change to a different service provider?**

You may decide that you would rather seek services from another provider. You should contact the new service provider to check that they are able to offer services to your child prior to stopping your existing services.

### **What if I am unhappy with my service provider?**

In the first instance, speak to your key contact person about any concerns or problems that have arisen. They may not be aware that you are unhappy with your services or that your circumstances have changed. They would welcome the opportunity to learn about what may not be working for you and can revise therapy plans to be more responsive to your needs. Therapists are seeking to make things work with you and your family. You may consider talking to a team leader, manager or consumer liaison officer.

If your complaint remains unresolved you can contact Health and Disability Services Complaints Office (HADSCO) or seek support from a disability advocacy agency such as People with Disabilities or Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre.

**I am moving to Western Australia from interstate. How do I find out if my child is eligible for services?**

Contact the service provider that you think best meets your child's needs, they may be able to advise you on matters such as eligibility, services offered, linking into other supports and if they currently have a waitlist.

**What happens for children with Global Developmental Delay?**

A child with the diagnosis of Global Developmental Delay may be offered temporary or provisional eligibility for specialist disability services, assuming that he/she meets all other criteria. This means that the child be considered eligible for services until the end of Pre-Primary or the child's 6th birthday, whichever event occurs first. At this time the child will need to undergo a reassessment by a clinical psychologist to determine whether a different permanent diagnosis applies that will enable the child to continue to receive specialist disability services.

**What happens for children with learning disabilities?**

People often use the term disability to describe a range of conditions, illnesses and impairments. Learning disabilities on their own are not considered a disability under the Disability Services Act definition. Please contact the LAC in your area if you wish to discuss this further.

**What happens for children with Asperger's Syndrome or High Functioning Autism?**

Classifications are now moving towards using DSMV tool, which uses the term Autism Spectrum Disorder. This includes what was previously known as Asperger's Syndrome and High Functioning Autism. Anyone that received a diagnosis prior to the introduction of DSMV will continue to receive services under a grandfathering clause.

**What does a Local Area Coordinator do?**

Local Area Coordinators (LACs) as based throughout the State and with local knowledge help people advocate, plan, organise and access the support and services they need to live a good life.

LACs work with family members and others involved in supporting people with disability, helping them to further strengthen their caring role. In addition, LACs work to help make local communities more inclusive and welcoming. This is achieved through education, advocacy and partnerships with local community members, businesses, government and non-government organisations.

LAC support is available to people with intellectual, physical, sensory, neurological and/or cognitive disabilities who are under the age of 65 at the

time they apply. Each LAC works with between 50 and 65 people with disability, providing support which is personalised, flexible and responsive.

### **Contact details**

Disability Services Commission, Local Area Coordination

Phone: 9426 9352

Freecall (country callers): 1800 998 214

Email: [lacinfo@dsc.wa.gov.au](mailto:lacinfo@dsc.wa.gov.au)

Find an LAC in your area by using our 'Your local support directory' on the Commission's website.

### **Once I am eligible for Disability Professional Services, can I get support from a Local Area Coordinator (LAC)?**

Yes. Contact the Local Area Coordinator in your area to see what supports they can offer and what supports and services are available in your area that you also may be able to link into.

### **What do I do if I cannot access LAC?**

If you have difficulties accessing LAC, contact the LAC Area Manager to discuss that you are accessing a service provider and the supports you would see benefitting you and your family by accessing Local Area Coordination. To find out who your LAC Area Manager is go to the Disability Services Commission website [www.disability.wa.gov.au](http://www.disability.wa.gov.au) > Individuals, families and carers > Planning > Local Area Coordination.

### **My child needs special equipment. Who helps with that?**

Equipment designed to assist people with disability is commonly referred to as assistive technology. Assistive technology is diverse and can include wheelchairs, communication devices or a height adjustable table.

As equipment is continually being developed and improved, finding and choosing the right device can be difficult. It helps to have the advice of allied health professionals to assist in the selection of assistive technology and home modifications.

The Disability Services Commission funds the Community Aids and Equipment Program (CAEP) which assists people with disability to live in their own homes by:

- providing equipment such as a wheelchair on a long-term loan to help with mobility in the home, or
- funding home modifications such as installing a ramp to assist mobility into the home.

Equipment and home modifications that are funded are basic and essential. There are maximum funding limits for equipment items and home modifications. You may be asked to provide some funding for the equipment and/or home modification. CAEP equipment is recycled and therefore the equipment you receive may not be new.

Equipment and home modifications funded by CAEP include:

- bed equipment eg bed rails, pressure mattress
- communication eg communication devices
- daily living items eg height adjustable table
- home modifications eg minor (grab rails) or major (widen the doorway)
- orthoses eg splints, surgical footwear
- personal care items eg shower chair, commodes
- positioning and seating equipment eg standing frames
- respiratory appliances eg ventilators
- transfer aids eg hoists and transfer boards
- walking aids eg walking frames
- wheeled mobility devices eg manual and power wheelchairs.

If you receive equipment from CAEP you may use it for as long as you need. All equipment belongs to CAEP and must be returned when no longer needed, so that it may be given to others.

To apply:

- If you are accepted into a specialist disability service provider, your therapy team will support you in accessing CAEP. If you cannot access a specialist disability service provider, ask your GP or paediatrician to refer you to a local CAEP service provider. This may be a public hospital or health service.
- The CAEP service provider will arrange for a health professional such as a physiotherapist or occupational therapist to work out your equipment and/or home modification needs.
- Your health professional will order the equipment or arrange for the home modification. When the equipment arrives they will ensure it fits and provide training, maintenance and follow up as required.

Useful websites:

- Independent Living Centre [www.ilc.com.au](http://www.ilc.com.au)
- Technology Assisting Disability WA Inc [www.tadwa.org.au](http://www.tadwa.org.au)
- Vehicle modifications [www.disability.wa.gov.au](http://www.disability.wa.gov.au)

### **What happens when my child starts year one or compulsory schooling?**

When a child starts year one or compulsory schooling the child also needs to transfer from Early Intervention into a School Age disability specialist services program. You will need to re-apply for a school aged place. Your service provider will be able to help you with this.

### **What happens when my child leaves school or becomes an adult?**

When your child leaves school or becomes an adult they move to adult services. Your LAC or service provider can provide you with information regarding services available, eligibility and planning for the future.

## Section 6: Useful resources

### Early childhood

#### **Department of Education**

[www.det.wa.edu.au/curriculum-support/earlychildhood/detcms/portal](http://www.det.wa.edu.au/curriculum-support/earlychildhood/detcms/portal)

Provides information and advice – from Kindergarten to Year 2 schooling.

#### **Early Years Program**

[www.communities.wa.gov.au/childrenandfamilies/earlyyears/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.communities.wa.gov.au/childrenandfamilies/earlyyears/Pages/default.aspx)

The Western Australian Government works with non-government organisations developing a program that helps meet the needs of young children and their families.

#### **Navigating your choices: a guide for parents of children with special education needs**

[www.det.wa.edu.au/schoolsandyou/detcms/navigation/support-for-your-child/children-with-special-learning-needs/](http://www.det.wa.edu.au/schoolsandyou/detcms/navigation/support-for-your-child/children-with-special-learning-needs/)

### Child care services

#### **My Child**

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

Australian Government information about finding child care services in your area - includes long day care, family day care, vacation care, in home care, and before and after school care.

### Playgroups

#### **Playgroup Australia**

[www.playgroupaustralia.com.au/wa](http://www.playgroupaustralia.com.au/wa)

Play is an important part of a child's development. Through play, a child learns, builds confidence and develops social and physical skills. This website helps locate playgroups in your area.

### School years

#### **Australian Government's Disability Standards for Education**

[www.deewr.gov.au/schooling/programs/pages/disabilitystandardsforeducation.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/schooling/programs/pages/disabilitystandardsforeducation.aspx)

The standards clarify the obligations of education and training providers to ensure that students with disability are able to access and participate in education and training on the same basis as those without disability.

**Education conventions**

[www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/inclusive-education](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/inclusive-education)

**Navigating your choices: a guide for parents of children with special education needs**

[www.det.wa.edu.au/schoolsandyou/detcms/navigation/support-for-your-child/children-with-special-learning-needs](http://www.det.wa.edu.au/schoolsandyou/detcms/navigation/support-for-your-child/children-with-special-learning-needs)

**Australian Government Assistance with schooling Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme**

[www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/assistance-for-isolated-children?utm\\_id=7](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/assistance-for-isolated-children?utm_id=7)

This Australian Government scheme provides support for parents and carers of primary or secondary students who cannot go to an appropriate State school because of geographical isolation, disability or special health need.

**Department of Education**

[www.det.wa.edu.au](http://www.det.wa.edu.au)

**Directory of public schools**

[www.det.wa.edu.au/schoolsonline/home.do](http://www.det.wa.edu.au/schoolsonline/home.do)

**Disability Standards for Education**

[www.deewr.gov.au/schooling/programs/pages/disabilitystandardsforeducation.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/schooling/programs/pages/disabilitystandardsforeducation.aspx)

**Early childhood education**

[www.det.wa.edu.au/curriculumsupport/earlychildhood/detcms/portal](http://www.det.wa.edu.au/curriculumsupport/earlychildhood/detcms/portal)

**Education planning**

[www.det.wa.edu.au/inclusiveeducation/detcms/navigation/category.jsp?categoryID=361490](http://www.det.wa.edu.au/inclusiveeducation/detcms/navigation/category.jsp?categoryID=361490)

**Educational pathways**

[www.det.wa.edu.au/inclusiveeducation/detcms/navigation/transition-planning/pathways](http://www.det.wa.edu.au/inclusiveeducation/detcms/navigation/transition-planning/pathways)

**Inclusive education**

[www.det.wa.edu.au/inclusiveeducation/detcms/portal/](http://www.det.wa.edu.au/inclusiveeducation/detcms/portal/)

**Association of Independent Schools WA** [www.ais.wa.edu.au](http://www.ais.wa.edu.au)

**Catholic Education Office** [www.ceo.wa.edu.au](http://www.ceo.wa.edu.au)

## Financial assistance

### **Concessions WA**

[www.concessions.wa.gov.au](http://www.concessions.wa.gov.au) – Western Australian Government concessions

### **Australian Government assistance**

[www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/payments-for-people-living-with-illness-or-disability](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/payments-for-people-living-with-illness-or-disability)

Payments and other support options for people living with disability, including Child Disability Assistance Payment.

## Continence support

### **WA State Government assistance**

[www.disability.wa.gov.au](http://www.disability.wa.gov.au) > Services, supports and eligibility > Services and supports > Services funded by the Commission > Continence services

A subsidy is available to assist families with meeting the cost of continence products for their children aged between three and 16 years. This scheme is funded by the Disability Services Commission and administered by Independence Australia.

### **Australian Government assistance**

[www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/medicare/continence-aids-payment-scheme](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/medicare/continence-aids-payment-scheme)

The Continence Aids Payment Scheme helps people aged five years or more who have permanent and severe incontinence to meet some of the costs of incontinence products.

## Advocacy organisations

### **A comprehensive list of advocacy organisations can be found at:**

[www.disability.wa.gov.au](http://www.disability.wa.gov.au) > Services, supports and eligibility > Services and supports > Services funded by the Commission > Advocacy

### **People with Disabilities WA (PWD WA)**

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

PWD WA represents the rights, needs and equity of all Western Australians with a physical, intellectual, psychiatric or sensory disability via individual and systemic advocacy.

### **Developmental Disability Council (DDC)**

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

As the peak advocacy organisation in WA for people with intellectual and other developmental disability and their families, DDC welcomes membership from people who have an interest in advancing the rights and needs of people with disability and their families.

### **Health and Disability Services Complaints Office**

[www.hadsco.wa.gov.au](http://www.hadsco.wa.gov.au)

independent statutory authority works to improve the delivery of health and disability services in Western Australia.

## **Respite and support organisations**

**A comprehensive list of support and respite organisations can be found at:**

[www.disability.wa.gov.au](http://www.disability.wa.gov.au) > Services, supports and eligibility > Services and supports > Services provided by support groups

**Commonwealth Carelink and Respite** – 1800 052 222

### **Kalparrin**

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

Helping families of children with disabilities and special needs to carry their load by providing practical information and support, and connecting them with the services that they need. Kalparrin helps families connect with other families in similar situations through.

### **Noah's Ark - Toy Library and Supported Playgroups**

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

Noah's Ark provides essential support services to agencies and parents working with children and young adults with disability, including specialised toys, resources and educational development programmes. The toy library has hundreds of toys for children with special needs, books, specialist resources and equipment and a mobile and postal services for regional, rural and remote areas.

### **Independent Living Centre of WA (ILC)**

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

Provides information and advice, assessment, funding and hire services that enable Western Australians of all ages and abilities to live more independent and fulfilling lives.

Service areas include respite and carelink, multicultural aged care, assistive technology and equipment, occupational therapy driver assessment, Home and Community Care regional assessment, and grants and equipment funding.

### **Parenting WA Telephone Line**

The family helpline is a confidential telephone counselling and information service for families with relationship difficulties.

It operates 24 hours, 7 days a week. Telephone (08) 9223 1100 or 1800 000 (country free call)

### **Carer's WA**

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

the peak body that represents the needs and interests of carers in Western Australia, working to achieve an improved quality of life for family carers in WA.

**Centrelink**

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

**My Time Support Groups**

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

MyTime groups provide facilitated peer support for mums, dads, grandparents and anyone caring for children with a disability, developmental delay or chronic medical condition. Socialise and share ideas and information with others who understand the rewards and intensity of caring for a child with special needs.

**Early Days Workshops**

[www.autism.org.au/training-seminars/metro-online-calendar/early-days.aspx](http://www.autism.org.au/training-seminars/metro-online-calendar/early-days.aspx)

Early Days Workshops are specifically for parents and carers in the “early days” of their journey through the diagnostic process; and for those with a child recently diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

**Siblings Australia**

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

Siblings Australia is a unique national organisation committed to improving the support available for siblings of children and adults with chronic conditions including disability, chronic illness and mental health issues.

**WA Special Families**

[www.waspecialfamilies.com/](http://www.waspecialfamilies.com/)

WA Special Families is an on line facebook community for families and carers of children with special needs. It is a place for families to communicate, share ideas and chat about life in a special needs family.

**Lady Lawley**

[www.redcross.org.au/ladylawleycottage.aspx](http://www.redcross.org.au/ladylawleycottage.aspx)

Lady Lawley Cottage provides support to families with children from babies up to 16 years of age, who have multiple disabilities and or chronic medical disorders which impact on the physical and emotional health and wellbeing of the family as a whole. Services include planned residential or day respite, home-based intensive family support and Autism early intervention support.

**Therapy support****Better Start**

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

**Helping Children with Autism Package (FaHCSIA)**

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

## Section 7: Glossary

- **Audiologists** provide a range of services to meet the hearing and communication needs of people of all ages. These services include:
  - diagnostic evaluation of hearing
  - tinnitus
  - balance and auditory processing disorders
  - rehabilitation services such as communication training and hearing aid fitting
  - public and primary health care strategies for managing and promoting ear health
- **Dieticians** assist people to select food and fluids that are good for their health and to help treat or prevent some medical conditions. A dietitian can provide support if you:
  - have difficulty eating or swallowing
  - are not growing well or are underweight or have mobility difficulties and have gained too much weight
  - take food in liquid form through a feeding tube or need a special diet.
- **Disability:**
  - attributable to an intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairment or a combination of those impairments
  - is permanent or likely to be permanent
  - may or may not be of a chronic or episodic nature
  - which results in substantially reduced capacity of the person for communication, social interaction, learning or mobility and a need for continuing support services.
- **Early Intervention** – services that are provided to young children who have or at risk for disability or special needs. Services for children age birth to five years are generally comprehensive and family-based, and can include speech pathology, physiotherapy and occupational therapy.
- **Family-centred practice** is service delivery model that focuses on the role of the family in the development of children and is a collection of beliefs, principles, values and procedures that support and strengthen family capacity and promote child development.
- **Occupational therapists** work with people of all abilities to do the things they want to and need to do through the use of therapeutic activities and provision of equipment. For example activities at home eg cooking or at school eg writing or in the community.
- An **Orthotist** assesses, designs, prescribes, fits and monitors orthoses, commonly known as braces and splints. An orthosis is a brace or

appliance that is designed and fitted to the body to achieve one or more of the following: control biomechanical alignment; reduce pain; increase mobility; increase independence.

- **Physiotherapists** support people to recover from injury, reduce pain and stiffness, and increase mobility and are experts in movement and function. A physiotherapist will listen to your needs and work with you to plan the most appropriate treatment for your condition, including setting goals and treatment outcomes.
- **Psychologists** work with people to identify the types of supports they might need to achieve their goals and to support people to develop the skills needed to function better and to prevent ongoing problems. Psychologists make this assessment using a range of techniques which might include specialised tools, questionnaires and interviewing relevant people. They may support you to develop the skills and strategies and can also help you to learn ways to cope in stressful situations.
- **Social workers** engage with people and families to achieve the best possible levels of personal and social wellbeing. This happens by working on personal and other issues identified by the individual as needing change and by connecting with supports to build on strengths and emerging improvements. Social workers provide personal or group counselling, service coordination or care management and advocacy.
- **Speech Pathologists** support people of all ages with communication, eating and drinking. Speech pathologists provide individual therapy or work in small groups at your home, school or in the community. They may support you to find strategies to develop your communication including using communication aids, other assistive technologies, resources, information and advice to you, your family member or carer and other professionals.
- **Strengths based practice** is a theory that emphasizes people's self-determination and strengths. Strengths based practice is individual and family led, with a focus on future outcomes and strengths that the people bring to a problem or crisis.
- **Therapy or multidisciplinary team** – a team of professionals including representatives of different disciplines (eg occupational therapy, social work, physiotherapy, speech pathology, psychologist) who work together to work towards your child's and family's goals.