Through the Maze

An overview of services and support for parents of children with a disability in Victoria


Association for Children with a Disability
www.acd.org.au
Association for Children with a Disability (ACD)

We provide information, support and advocacy to families who have a child or young adult with any type of disability or developmental delay across Victoria.

ACD is run by parents and siblings so we know what it means to have a child or sibling with a disability. We understand issues from a family perspective.

Our services include free telephone information and advocacy support for families.

Our member magazine, NoticeBoard, includes family stories that are a great source of strength and inspiration for other families and professionals who work with families.

Association for Children with a Disability
Suite 2, 98 Morang Road
Hawthorn VIC 3122

Phone 03 9818 2000
or 1800 654 013 (rural callers)
Fax 03 9818 2300
Email mail@acd.org.au
Web www.acd.org.au

Language interpreters
If you need a language interpreter to access our service, call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 13 14 50. Tell the operator your preferred language and that you want to speak to the Association for Children with a Disability on 03 9818 2000. This is a free service.

Membership
If you’re not already a member of ACD, it’s easy to join!
Membership is FREE for families for the first 12 months.

Benefits of membership include our member magazine, NoticeBoard, which includes family stories, news and information about services and changes to government policy.
We encourage families to join our Association as well as other disability self-help groups. Our aim is to work together on issues that reach across all disabilities.

Service providers, organisations, interested persons and other community supporters are also encouraged to join our Association.

In addition to membership, we also welcome donations.
All donations over $2 are tax deductible.

For more information contact the ACD office on 03 9818 2000 or 1800 654 013 (rural callers), by email mail@acd.org.au or visit www.acd.org.au or our Facebook page www.facebook.com/acdvic
Any other comments?

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Your name: ____________________________________________________________
Address: ______________________________________________________________
Phone: _________________________________________________________________
Thank you
Acknowledgements

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John T Reid Charitable Trusts
The Trust Company


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The information in this booklet is intended as a general guide only.

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Parent feedback

Your feedback will help us provide information that is relevant and of interest to families of children with a disability. After completing the survey please tear off this page and post to Association for Children with a Disability, Reply Paid 84584, Hawthorn VIC 3122.

You can also email feedback to mail@acd.org.au or fax it to 03 9818 2300.

Did the Through the Maze booklet provide the information you were looking for?  
Yes  No

What other information would you like to see included?

Was the information easy to find?  
Yes  No

Could the layout or design be improved to make it easier to read?  
Yes  No

If yes, how?

Is the size of this booklet right for this type of information?  
Yes  No

How did you receive this booklet?

Do you use the Internet to find information?  
Yes  No

Are you a member of the Association for Children with a Disability?  
Yes  No
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Your feedback
We welcome your feedback on this resource and any other aspect of our service. Send to: Association for Children with a Disability, Suite 2, 98 Morang Road, Hawthorn VIC 3122
Phone: 9818 2000 or 1800 654 013 (rural callers) Fax: 03 9818 2300
Email: mail@acd.org.au Web: www.acd.org.au
ACD is active in advocating to all levels of government and the broader community for improvements to services that support children with a disability and their families. In carrying out this advocacy work, we welcome your thoughts and suggestions about how these services could be improved.

We hope this resource will help you ‘through the maze’ of existing services to find support and assistance of value to you and your family.
Regional Parent Support Co-ordinators

**Contact the Regional Parent Support Co-ordinator in your region for information about support in your local area.**

### Metropolitan Regions

**North Eastern Metropolitan Region**  
Co-ordinator  
Eastern Region Parent Support Network  
Phone 9784 6205  
Email psn-emr@bigpond.net.au  
www.psn-emr.com.au

**South Western Metropolitan Region**  
Pauline Parsons  
Western Region Parent to Parent  
Phone 9680 8444  
Email parent2parent@mackillop.org.au  
www.mackillop.org.au

**North Western Metropolitan Region**  
Thea Calzoni  
Northern Region Parent Support Program  
Phone 9385 3235  
Email tcalzoni@mcm.org.au  
www.melbournefamilymission.org.au

### Non-Metropolitan Regions

**South Western Non- Metropolitan Region**  
Ballarat  
Melissa Delaland-Desfosses, Pinarc Disability Support  
Phone 5329 1361  
Email mdelaland-desfosses@pinarc.org.au  
www.pinarc.org.au

Geelong/Colac  
Carolyn McDiamid, Gateways  
Phone 5221 2984  
Email Carolyn.mcdiarmid@gateways.com.au  
www.gateways.com.au

Horsham  
Anne Page, Wimmera Uniting Care  
Phone 5362 4042  
Email anpage@wuc.org.au  
www.wimmera.unitingcare.org.au

Warrnambool  
Sandy Joyce, Mpower  
Phone 5561 8111  
Email sjoyce@mpower.org.au  
www.mpower.org.au

**North Western Non- Metropolitan Region**  
Bendigo  
Jackie Dacey, SCAFFALD-Supporting children and families for all levels of disability  
Phone 1800 224 799 or 0434 298 834  
Email jackie@ric.org.au  
www.ric.org.au

### Introduction

This resource has been written as a guide through the maze of services that support children with a disability and their families in Victoria.

The 8th edition of *Through the Maze* gives an overview of services and support for children with a disability aged 0 to 18 years and their families living in Victoria.

This resource is designed as a basic introductory guide to help you identify services and support for your child and family.

The range of information included in this booklet may assist your family whether your child is waiting for, or has received, a formal diagnosis of disability or developmental delay.

### Children and families

While families of children with a disability face additional challenges, there are many aspects of daily life that are the same for all families.

When trying to find the right balance of support from services, try not to lose sight of the things you enjoy doing together as a family. Sometimes the most important things have little or nothing to do with services.

### Finding your way through the maze

It can sometimes take a lot of time and energy to find your way ‘through the maze’ of services to the support you need.

You may have to use all your research and communication skills to piece together the information most relevant to you and your family.

The best results are often achieved by seeking information from a range of sources rather than relying on just one professional or service. It takes time to explore all the options but the effort is usually worth it in the long run.

### Your support network

In addition to professionals and services, think about other types of support that might assist you and your family. Three ingredients of a strong support network are:

- information
- support from other parents
- connecting with groups that advocate for improvements to the service system

There are many disability-specific groups and local, regional, statewide and national information and advocacy groups. Explore what these groups have to offer and how they might become part of your personal and family support network.

### For more information

While every effort has been made to make sure the information included in *Through the Maze* is correct and up to date, services and contact details are always changing. If you come across details that have changed, please let us know.

For more information about any of the services and support in this booklet, contact our Parent Support Workers on 9818 2000 or 1800 654 013 (rural callers) or visit our website www.acd.org.au
Your local area & region

Services cover specific areas, so it’s important to know which local government area and region you live in.

DHS East Metropolitan Region
Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Monash, Whitehorse, Yarra Ranges

DHS East Non-Metropolitan Region
Alpine, Benalla, Indigo, Mansfield, Mitchell, Moira, Murrindindi, Greater Shepparton, Strathbogie, Towong, Wangaratta, Wodonga

DHS North Metropolitan Region
Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Moreland, Nillumbik, Whittlesea, Yarra

DHS North Non-Metropolitan Region
Greater Bendigo, Buloke, Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Gannawarra, Loddon, Macedon Ranges, Mildura, Mount Alexander, Swan Hill

DHS South Metropolitan Region
Bayside, Cardinia, Casey, Greater Dandenong, Frankston, Glen Eira, Kingston, Mornington Peninsula, Port Phillip, Stonnington

DHS South Non-metropolitan Region
Bass Coast, Baw Baw, East Gippsland, South Gippsland, Latrobe, Wellington

DHS West Metropolitan Region
Brimbank, Hobson’s Bay, Maribyrnong, Melbourne, and Moorabool, West Wimmera, Yarram

DHS West Non-metropolitan Region
Ararat, Ballarat, Colac-Otway, Corangamite, Greater Geelong, Glenelg, Golden Plains, Hepburn, Hindmarsh, Horsham, Moorabool, Moyne, Queenscliffe, Northern Grampians, Pyrenees, Southern Grampians, Surf Coast, Warrnambool, West Wimmera, Yarriambiack

Migrant Resource Centres

Migrant Resource Centres assist people to settle in Australia by providing information and support to people of all ages from ethnic communities.

Northern Region
Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre
Phone 9496 0200 (Preston)
Phone 9301 7400 (Broadmeadows)
Phone 9300 8600 (Sunshine)
Web www.spectrumvic.org.au

Eastern Region
Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne)
Phone 9285 4888 (Box Hill)
Phone 9020 2969 (Croydon)
Web www.miceastmelb.com.au

Southern Region
Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre
Phone 9767 1900 (Dandenong)
Phone 8574 4600 (Oakleigh)
Phone 9705 6966 (Narre Warren)
Web www.smrc.org.au

Western Region
Migrant Resource Centre North West Region
Phone 9367 6044 (St Albans & Hobsons Bay)
Phone 9351 1278 (Hume)
Web www.mrcnorthwest.org.au
Phoenix Migrant Resource Centre Western Region
Phone 9391 3355
Web www.wmrc.org.au

Barwon South Western Region
Diversitat
Phone 5221 6044
Web www.diversitat.org.au

Gippsland Region
Gippsland Multicultural Services
Phone 5133 7072
Web www.gmsinfo.com.au

Statewide
New Hope Foundation
Phone 9510 5877 (Prahran)
Web www.newhope.asn.au

Ethnic Council of Shepparton & District
Phone 5831 2395
Web www.ethniccouncilshepparton.com.au


For more information about Migrant Resource Centres visit the Victorian Multicultural Commission website www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/resources/community-directory
Department of Human Services (DHS)

The Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS) provides services for people with a disability and their families to participate in community life.

**Disability Intake & Response**
For statewide disability information and support phone 1800 783 783 or TTY 13 36 77 and ask for 1300 650 172.

If you need an interpreter, call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 13 14 50 and ask to be connected to the Intake and Response Service Regional Office in your area.

**DHS Head Office**
Level 8, 50 Lonsdale Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000
Phone 1300 650 172 or 9096 0000 (outside TTY 13 36 77 and ask for 1300 650 172
Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au

**Disability email enquiries**
Eastern
east.disability@dhs.vic.gov.au
Western
west.informationandsupport@dhs.vic.gov.au
Southen
south.disability@dhs.vic.gov.au
Northern
north.intake@dhs.vic.gov.au

**Other contacts**
Concessions Help Line
Phone 1800 658 521
Carer Card Hotline
Phone 1800 901 958
Victorian Emergency Recovery Information Line
Phone 1300 769 926

For more information about the Department of Human Services (DHS) visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au. To find out which region you live in see page 2.
Where to start

There are some key places to start when working your way through the maze of services and support available to you and your family.

The starting point for accessing information and support will depend on where you live, your child’s age and whether your child has received a diagnosis. Each family has different needs and priorities for the best way services can assist them. You are entitled to expect that the range of services available will be flexible enough to be adapted to different family circumstances.

Universal & community services
Services that are available to all families are known as ‘universal’ or ‘community’ services. Families of children with a disability can access these services in the same way as other families. Examples include child care and recreation activities.

Specialist services
Services that are specifically designed for children with a disability are often referred to as ‘specialist’ disability services. Examples include respite care and therapy services.

Many families use a combination of community and specialist services.

Government services
Responsibility for the funding and administration of services for children with a disability and their families is shared between the Victorian Government (state) and the Australian Government (federal). Some services receive a combination of state and federal funding.

Local governments also provide a range of services and support for children with a disability and their families, and there are many community service organisations that provide services with government funding.

Referral to a service
While it’s not always easy to ask for help, remember that services exist to assist children with a disability and their families. Making that first phone call can be difficult but it’s better to make it as soon as possible rather than putting it off or waiting until you are in a crisis situation. You can self refer to a service or someone else can do this with your permission.

Eligibility
Most services and programs have defined eligibility criteria and you can ask for a copy of these in writing. Sometimes these are clear and easy to understand, while other times it may not be clear whether your child or family is eligible. If you’re not sure, ask the service provider for clarification.

Community services organisations that are Registered Disability Service Providers may determine eligibility for their service based on whether your child has a disability according to the Disability Act 2006. To find out if the service is registered, you can view the list of Registered Disability Service Providers on the Department of Human Services (DHS) website www.dhs.vic.gov.au

If it is unclear whether your child meets the eligibility criteria for disability support under the Disability Act 2006, you can seek clarification from DHS or seek a review from the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). See page 36.

South-Eastern ECI S Intake
Metropolitan
Local government areas: Bayside, Cardinia, Casey Frankston ,Glen Eira, Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Mornington Port Phillip, Stonnington, Phone 1300 720 151 Fax 8765 5666 Email sevr.ecis@edumail.vic.gov.au

South-Western ECI S Intake
Metropolitan
Local government areas: Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Melbourne, Maribyrnong, Melton, Moonee Valley and Wyndham Phone 9291 6500 Fax 9291 6555 Email swvr.ecis@edumail.vic.gov.au

Rural
Local government area: Greater Geelong, Surf Coast and Colac-Otway Shires, and the Borough of Queenscliff Phone 9291 6500 Fax 9291 6565 Email swvr.ecis@edumail.vic.gov.au

DEECD Regional Offices

Education

North-Eastern Victoria Region
(Includes the former Eastern Metropolitan and Hume regions.) Email nrwvr.edumail.vic.gov.au Web www.education.vic.gov.au

Benalla
Phone 5761 2100 Fax 5762 5039

Glen Waverley
Phone 9265 2400 Fax 9265 2444

North-Western Victoria Region
(Includes the former Northern Metropolitan and Loddon Mallee regions.) Email nwvr.edumail.vic.gov.au Web www.education.vic.gov.au

Bendigo
Phone 5440 3111 Fax 5442 5321

Coburg
Phone 9488 9488 Fax 9488 9400

South-Eastern Victoria Region
(Includes the former Southern Metropolitan and Gippsland regions.) Email sevr.edumail.vic.gov.au Web www.education.vic.gov.au

Dandenong
Phone 8765 5600 Fax 8765 5666

Moe
Phone 5127 0400 Fax 5126 1933

South-Western Victoria Region
(Includes the former Western Metropolitan, Barwon South West and Grampians regions.) Email swvr.edumail.vic.gov.au Web www.education.vic.gov.au

Ballarat
Phone 5337 8444 Fax 5333 2135

West Footscray
Phone 9291 6500 Fax 9291 6565

Geelong
Phone 5225 1000 Fax 5225 1099
DEECD provides services to children and young people through government schools and regulation and funding of early childhood services and non-government schools.

DEECD Central Office
GPO Box 4367
MELBOURNE VIC 3001
Phone 9637 2000 (general inquiries)
Web www.education.vic.gov.au

DEECD Information & Referral Service
Provides general information on Victorian education and schools, including term dates, special education events, school enrolment, school policy, health and wellbeing issues and financial support, as well as teacher qualifications and legislation.
Phone 1800 809 834 (freecall)
Email edline@edumail.vic.gov.au
Web www.education.vic.gov.au

Parent Complaints
Refer to the DEECD website for information about how to raise an issue or make a complaint about child care, children’s services or education.
Web www.education.vic.gov.au

Children’s Services Regulations Enquiry Line
Provides information about licensing and monitoring requirements for children’s services.
Email licensed.childrens.services@edumail.vic.gov.au
Phone 1300 307 415
Web www.education.vic.gov.au

DEECD Regional Offices

Early Childhood Intervention Children’s Services (ECIS)

Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) have a regional central point of entry. Central Intake gathers information and determines whether your child meets eligibility criteria for ECIS. In the first instance, referrals for ECIS must go to Central Intake who will work with you to identify concerns, to plan next steps and to make a referral to an ECIS agency.

North-Eastern ECIS Intake

Metropolitan
Local government areas: Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Monash, Whitehorse and Yarra Ranges
Phone 1300 662 655 Fax 9265 2575
Email nevr.ecis@edumail.vic.gov.au

Rural
Local government areas: Alpine, Benalla, Greater Shepparton, Indigo, Mansfield, Mitchell, Moira, Murrindindi, Strathbogie, Towong, Wangaratta and Wodonga
Phone 1800 627 391 Fax 5762 5039
Email nwvr.ecis@edumail.vic.gov.au

North-Western ECIS Intake

Metropolitan
Local government areas: Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Moreland, Nillumbik, Whittlesea and Yarra
Phone 9304 0775 Fax 9300 3872
Email mwvr.ecis@edumail.vic.gov.au

Rural
Local government areas: Benalla, Greater Shepparton, Indigo, Mansfield, Mitchell, Moira, Murrindindi, Strathbogie, Towong, Wangaratta and Wodonga
Phone 1800 654 013
Email nwvr.ecis@edumail.vic.gov.au

Accessing services
If there is high demand for a service, you may not be able to access it straight away. Services usually determine ‘priority of access’ on an ongoing basis. It’s important to make sure that your family’s needs are represented as clearly as possible. Services can only accurately assess your situation if you give them all the relevant information about your family.

Be honest and clear about your situation and contact the service again if your circumstances change. Putting your name down for a service is worthwhile because it means you are better placed to access the service in the future.

Working together
It is reasonable to expect that professionals and service providers will work together with you to identify and deliver the support that is most important to you and your family.

Positive partnerships are based on mutual respect and good communication. Trust your instincts and be prepared to ask questions and seek further explanations if there is something you disagree with or don’t understand. Sometimes you have to be creative and put together a package of different services to achieve the right support for your family.

Planning and communication
An important part of the way services and support are delivered involves planning. Good planning is almost always based on good communication. This can include informal conversations and meetings as well as formal processes and written documents.

Under the Disability Act 2006, anyone can ask for assistance with planning but people with an intellectual disability must be offered assistance on request.

The most important thing to keep in mind is that planning is an ongoing process that allows you to explore your child’s and family’s needs, goals, aspirations and the support available to achieve these.

Transition planning
As your child gets older, you may need to use different combinations of services and support at different times.

Key times in your child’s life are often referred to as times of ‘transition’, such as the transition from early intervention to kindergarten, from kindergarten to primary school, from primary school to secondary school, and from secondary school to adult life.

It’s a good idea to plan for these transitions as early as possible so that you can explore all your options. Transition planning can involve collecting documents and reports, getting assessments, filling out forms and visiting schools and services.

Key contacts
When thinking about accessing services and support, remember that the full range of universal and community services is available to all families.

Some key contacts for accessing services and support are listed on the following page. If you don’t have access to the Internet, you can ring and ask the service to send you some written information.

If you are a new parent, a range of parenting information is available on the Raising Children Network website.
Web www.raisingchildren.net.au

If English is not your preferred language, a service should assist you with either an interpreter or written information in your preferred language.

For more information
For more information about any of the services and support in this booklet, contact our Parent Support Workers on 9818 2000 or 1800 654 013 (rural callers) or visit our website www.acd.org.au
10 Key contacts

1. **Local council/shires**
   Contact your local council or shire to discuss your needs with the Home and Community Care (HACC) team. Also explore your local council directory for other local services. See page 37.

2. **Centrelink**
   Contact Centrelink to find out if you are eligible for Carer Allowance (Child) or Carer Adjustment Payment. Phone 132 717. See page 29.

3. **Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) Central Intake 0 to 6**
   Contact ECIS for support for children with a disability or developmental delay aged 0 to 6. See page 10.

4. **Disability Intake and Response Service, Department of Human Services**
   Contact your regional Disability Intake and Response Service for information about community supports and services for people with a disability, their families and carers in your local area. Phone 1800 783 783. See page 11.

5. **Disability-specific groups**
   Contact a disability-specific group for information and support. See page 24. These include:
   - Amaze (formerly Autism Victoria), phone 1300 308 699, web www.amaze.org.au
   - Cerebral Palsy Support Network, phone 1300 277 600, web www.cpsn.org.au
   - Down Syndrome Victoria, phone 1300 658 873, web www.downsyndromevictoria.org.au
   - Genetic Support Network Victoria, phone 8341 6315, web www.gsnv.org.au

6. **Regional Parent Support Co-ordinator**
   Contact the Regional Parent Support Co-ordinator in your region for information about local services and groups, newsletters, workshops and events. See page 52.

7. **MyTime Groups**
   Contact your local MyTime group for support and parenting information for anyone caring for a child with a disability or chronic medical condition. Phone 1800 889 997
   Web www.mytime.net.au

8. **Community Health Centres**
   Contact your Community Health Centre for information about services such as physiotherapy and speech pathology. Web www.health.vic.gov.au/pch/commhealth/directory.htm

9. **Neighbourhood Houses**
   Contact your local Neighbourhood House to find out about social, educational and recreational activities. Phone 9654 1104, web www.anhlc.asn.au

10. **Raising Children Network website**
    Visit the Raising Children Network website for parenting information. Web www.raisingchildren.net.au

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**Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme**
Provides help for students who cannot go to an appropriate school because of geographical isolation, disability or special health need.
Phone 132 318
Web www.humanservices.gov.au
Community transport
Some local governments and community service organisations operate community transport services that are available to children and young adults with a disability.
Contact your local council or shire for more information. See page 37.

**Public transport concessions & travel passes**
Children under the age of four can travel free on public transport. Children aged 4 to 16 years are eligible for concession fares. Children aged 17 or older may qualify for concession fares through a Victorian Public Transport (VPT) Student Concession Card. Holders of a Health Care Card or Pension Concession Card qualify for concession fares without needing to purchase a VPT Student Concession Card.

Travel passes include:
- Access Travel Pass
- Scooter and Wheelchair Travel Pass
- Travel Trainer Pass
- Vision Impaired Travel Pass

For more information phone Public Transport Victoria on 1800 800 007 or TTY 9619 2727
Web ptv.vic.gov.au

**Travellers Aid Access Service (TAAS)**
Provides assistance with personal care needs and travel related emergency relief to the travelling public.

**Travellers Aid, Flinders Street Station**
Includes a track mounted hoist.
Phone 9610 2030
Web www.travellersaid.org.au

**Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme (VPTAS)**
Provides financial subsidies to patients living in rural and regional Victoria who need to travel long distances to access specialist medical services.
Phone 1300 737 073 or 5333 6040
Web health.vic.gov.au/ruralhealth/patient-transport-assistance

**Air travel**
Assistance is available for boarding and special arrangements for people with a disability. Contact the airline for more information.

**Vehicle registration**
Concession card holders can pay registration fees six monthly. NIL registration fees and other exemptions may apply.
Phone 131 171
Web www.vicroads.vic.gov.au

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**More information**
- Vehicle Modification Subsidy Scheme, 16
- Mobility Allowance, 13
**Transport**

Whether your child is travelling to and from school or just out and about, a range of travel assistance and concessions are available.

Most children who attend specialist schools are eligible for free bus transport to and from school within a designated transport zone. Eligible children may attend a school outside the zone but will not receive transport assistance. For more information ask the school for information about their transport policy.

**Conveyance Allowance**

Students with severe multiple disabilities may be eligible for Conveyance Allowance to assist with travel costs to and from school. Schools must submit conveyance claims online to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) each semester. Guidelines and application forms are available from the DEECD website [www.education.vic.gov.au](http://www.education.vic.gov.au).

**Taxis**

Wheelchair accessible taxis (Melbourne)

Phone [Silver Top Taxis](tel:84137202) on 8413 7202


Phone 9277 3877 or 136 294 (Maxi Taxi)


Talking taxis communication tools

Resources to improve communication between taxi drivers and passengers are available from the Taxi Services Commission.

**Multi Purpose Taxi Program (MPTT)**

Provides subsidised taxi fares for Victorians with severe or permanent disability who also experience financial hardship.

Phone the [Taxi Services Commission](tel:1800 638 802) on 1800 638 802


**Disability Parking**

A statewide Disabled Persons’ Parking Scheme currently operates in Victoria. The current scheme provides for two permit categories with varying parking concessions based on the applicant’s need for assistance. Application forms are available from your local council.

The permit must only be displayed when the vehicle is being used to transport the individual to whom the permit was issued. It cannot be used if the permit holder is not travelling in the vehicle. Permits must be clearly displayed so the permit number and expiry date are visible from the exterior of the vehicle. Parking is not permitted in restricted locations such as Clearways, No Stopping, No Parking Areas, Taxi Only Areas, Bus Zones, and Authorised Resident Areas.

An individual is entitled to hold only one disability parking permit.


**Australian Disability Parking Scheme**

The Australian Disability Parking Scheme is an initiative developed by the Australian Government, in conjunction with the states and territories to improve disability parking schemes across Australia.


**NDIS**

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a new way of providing support for people with permanent and significant disability, their families and carers.

The NDIS aims to ensure that people with a disability are given every opportunity to make their own decisions and exercise choice and control. Through the NDIS families and carers can access information, referral and link with supports in the community.

The NDIS is being trialled in the Barwon region and includes people who live in the local government areas of:

- City of Greater Geelong
- Colac-Otway Shire
- Borough of Queenscliffe
- Surf Coast Shire

By July 2016, all Barwon area residents with significant and permanent disability will be able to access the scheme.

By July 2019, all eligible residents in Victoria will be covered. Check the NDIS website for updates on when the NDS will be rolled out in your area.

You can use the My Access Checker tool on the NDIS website to see if you can get assistance from the NDIS.

**Participant Plans**

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) will work with you and the person you care for in planning, decision making and support co-ordination.

Each participant in the NDIS will have an individualised plan that is tailored to their goals, personal circumstances and disability support needs.

The types of supports that the NDIS may include:

- personal care to support an individual in their home or the community
- supports to assist people with disability to enjoy social and community interaction without relying solely on you
- supports that maintain a carer’s health and wellbeing. This support may include participation in a support group or a special interest network. In deciding whether to fund or provide a support, the NDIA will take account of what it is reasonable to expect families, carers, informal networks and the community to provide.
- assistance with tasks of daily living including to help improve a person’s ability to do things
- supported employment services and help for people to move to work programs that prepare people with disability in work, and
- training related to the caring role that may enhance your ability to provide care.
**Reasonable and necessary supports**

The NDIS funds ‘reasonable and necessary supports’ that help people with a disability to reach their goals, objectives and aspirations, and to undertake activities that enable their social and economic participation.

This support includes both informal supports such as informal arrangements with family, friends and community as well as formal supports such as health and education.

Decisions about what constitutes ‘reasonable and necessary supports’ are made by NDIA staff based on the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 (NDIS Act) and the rules made under the NDIS Act. The operational guidelines also provide practical guidance for decision makers.

In order to be considered reasonable and necessary, a support must:

- be related to the participant’s disability
- not include day-to-day living costs that are not related to a participant’s disability support needs
- represent value for money
- be likely to be effective and beneficial to the participant, and
- take into account informal supports given to participants by families, carers, networks, and the community.

**Types of supports that are funded**

The types of supports that the NDIS may fund for participants include:

- daily personal activities
- transport to enable participation in community, social, economic and daily life activities
- workplace help to allow a participant to successfully get or keep employment in the open or supported labour market
- therapeutic supports including behaviour support
- help with household tasks to allow the participant to maintain their home environment
- help to a participant by skilled personnel in aids or equipment assessment, set up and training
- home modification design and construction
- mobility equipment, and
- vehicle modifications.

**Supports not funded by the NDIS**

Under the NDIS, a support will not be funded if it:

- is not related to the participant’s disability
- duplicates other supports already funded by a different mechanism through the NDIS
- relates to day-to-day living costs that are not related to a participant’s support needs, or
- is likely to cause harm to the participant or pose a risk to others.

**Choice and control over funded supports**

You have choice and the control over how you use funded supports in your plan and which service providers you use.

**Reviewing your plan**

You can ask the NDIA to review your plan. Usually, a review happens when your circumstances have changed or at your next scheduled plan review.

The NDIA will look at all of the funded supports in the plan, not just one of them. You can also ask for an internal review of the decision to approve your statement of participant supports in your plan. This request needs to be made within three months after you are notified of this decision.

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Siblings

Siblings who grow up together with a brother or sister with a disability may face some unique experiences and challenges.

For many siblings with a brother or sister with a disability, life can be challenging while at the same time very rewarding. Sibling experiences are often different from those of their friends.

Parents can support siblings by maintaining good communication and giving them opportunities to connect with other siblings.

ACD resources to support siblings include Growing Together and a Sibling Program Directory.

Sibling Program Directory
Sibling programs provide opportunities for siblings to connect with other siblings or young people with caring responsibilities by attending a group, camp or other activities.

The Sibling Program Directory lists sibling programs available in Victoria. Most programs have eligibility criteria and some charge a fee.
Phone 9818 2000 or 1800 654 013 (rural callers)
Web www.acd.org.au

Siblings Australia
Provides information and support for siblings.
Web www.siblingsaustralia.org.au

Interchange Victoria
Runs sibling programs across Victoria.
Phone 1300 300 436
Web www.interchange.org.au

Livewire
An online community for young people living with a serious illness, chronic health condition or disability, and their families.
Phone 02 8425 5971
Web www.livewire.org.au

Growing Together resource
Growing Together is written for parents and highlights the experiences of siblings growing up with a brother or sister with a disability. The booklet includes strategies for parents to support siblings, stories written by parents and siblings and a list of resources.
Copies are available from the Association office or www.acd.org.au

National Carer Counselling Program
Provides free short-term counselling for parents and carers, including young carers.
Phone 1800 242 636
Web www.carersvictoria.org.au

Very Special Kids
Runs a range of activities for siblings of children with a life limiting illness.
Phone 9804 6222 or 1800 888 875
Web www.vsk.org.au/our-services/sibling-support

Young Carers
Provides information and support for young carers.
Phone 1800 242 636
Web www.youngcarers.net.au

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Early childhood services

Early childhood services support the health, well-being and development of children.

All families with children access early childhood services in their local community and usually combine a range of services to monitor their child’s health, development and early childhood education. These can include Maternal and Child Health Services, playgroups, child care, kindergarten and early childhood intervention services, many of which are funded by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). See page 48.

Diagnosis and assessment
The process of identifying a child’s disability or developmental delay can vary greatly. Some conditions are evident at birth or soon after, while others can occur as the result of an accident or illness. While it can be common to get a diagnosis in the early years, diagnosis can occur at any age.

If you are concerned about your child, you can ask your doctor for a referral to a paediatrician (a doctor who specialises in caring for infants, children and adolescents). The paediatrician may then do a formal assessment of your child that can involve a series of visits and tests. Information and reports from these assessments can help to identify what services and support will benefit your child now, and in the future. These reports may also be useful when applying for some services.

The time surrounding a diagnosis can be very emotional and difficult for parents and families. You may want to ask for extra support from family, friends or a counsellor. See page 22.

Support for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) is available through the Helping Children with Autism package. See page 17.

Welcome to Early Childhood Services
A Parent’s Guide to Early Childcare Services in Victoria
Provides information about early childhood development and services, including assistance for children with additional needs.

Maternal and Child Health Services
Provide information about child health and development and links to a range of services and support including playgroups and parent groups.

Maternal and Child Health Line
24-hour telephone support.
Phone 132 229

Early Parenting Centres
Provide information, education, counselling and practical support in the early parenting years.
The Maternal and Child Health Service or your doctor can refer you to an Early Parenting Centre or you can contact the centre yourself.

Mercy Health O’Connell Family Centre
Phone 8416 7600
Web www.mercyhealth.com.au

Queen Elizabeth Centre
Phone 9549 2777
Web www.qec.org.au

Tweddle Child and Family Health Service
Phone 9689 1577
Web www.tweddle.org.au

Growing Together is a book written for parents and highlights the experiences of siblings growing up with a brother or sister with a disability. The booklet includes strategies for parents to support siblings, stories written by parents and siblings and a list of resources. Copies are available from the Association office or www.acd.org.au.
Self-directed planning & support

Self-directed planning describes a process that we already use as parents when we make choices and plan for our family’s future.

As parents, we seek a wide range of experiences to enrich the physical, emotional, spiritual, cultural and academic growth of our children. Whenever we find information, identify choices and make decisions, we are using a process of self-directed planning.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) uses a self-directed planning approach to guide the way people access disability supports. This means that families and young people can choose and control the supports they need to achieve their goals and live the way they want to.

Planning & identifying supports
Exploring both formal and informal supports to meet your child and family’s needs may include bringing together important people in your child’s life, such as family, friends or supporters, to think about and document the supports that are needed and how they can be provided. You can choose to use a facilitator or planner to help you with this process.

The supports you choose can come from DHS disability services as well as community service organisations and may or may not require funding. Funding for ongoing disability supports can be directly managed by you or by a service provider once approved by DHS. It’s important that everyone involved in the planning process knows who is responsible for undertaking all actions and tasks.

Flexible Support Packages (FSPs)
These can be short or long term funding packages that provide a range of services to meet your family’s needs including respite care, referral, case management, practical support, service co-ordination and discretionary funding.

Assistance with planning
Under the Disability Act 2006, anyone can ask for assistance with planning and people with an intellectual disability must be offered assistance on request.

A series of information sheets about the Disability Act 2006, including Information sheet 4 on Planning for people with a disability, are available from the DHS website www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Disability Support Register (DSR)
If you have ongoing disability support needs, you can discuss and apply to DHS for ongoing support via the Disability Support Register (DSR). The DSR is a mechanism for registering current ongoing need. This can include anything from family or carer support to long-term accommodation needs, but it can only be used to meet a need that your child has now, not at some time in the future.

Individual Support Packages (ISPs)
One outcome of registering on the DSR can be an Individual Support Package of funds allocated to a person to meet their disability related support needs. Funding may complement existing informal support arrangements from family and friends and community service organisations.

For more information phone your regional Disability Intake and Response Service on 1800 783 783, your local community service organisation or visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au
Respite care

Respite care refers to a wide range of services that can give families a break from the caring role and provide a positive experience for children.

Families of children with a disability can use respite in a number of different ways. It can involve planned, regular respite as well as assistance for one-off emergency situations. Care can be available for a few hours, overnight, a few days or weeks.

In-home respite is where a paid carer comes into your home.

Out-of-home respite is where your child attends a service and participates in activities outside the home under the supervision of a paid care worker.

Most respite services are provided through state government and community service organisations. Some of these organisations publish regional respite information booklets. The cost of care will depend on the type of respite and the service. For information about local respite services visit www.respitevic.org.au

Home and Community Care (HACC) program

A joint federal-state program that provides services to young people with a disability and their carers and people who are frail aged. HACC services can include a combination of in-home respite and personal care. For more information contact your local council or shire or HACC team for assessment.

Interchange Victoria

Provides respite and recreational experiences for children with a disability.

Phone 1300 300 436
Web www.interchange.org.au

Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres

The federal government funds a network of Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres that provide information and referral to respite services including emergency and after-hours care. Each region has an allocation of flexible respite funding to provide respite not available through other programs.

Phone 1800 052 222
or 1800 059 059 (after hours)
Web www.commcarelink.health.gov.au

Extended Families Australia

Provides opportunities for volunteers to support children with a disability and their families in a friendship and companionship role.

Phone 9355 8848
Web www.extendedfamilies.org.au

Foster Care Association of Victoria

Provides information and support to families who care for children in foster care.

Phone 9416 4292
Web www.fcav.org.au

Very Special Kids

Supports children with a life limiting condition.

Phone 9804 6222 or 1800 888 875
Web www.vsk.org.au

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Disability services

Disability services can be provided by government, community services organisations and other agencies.

Depending on your child’s age, development and your family’s needs, you may access a number of different disability services. By connecting with one of these services you can begin to identify the range of other supports available to you and your family. Many disability service providers publish directories of services covering respite care and recreation.

Registered Disability Service Providers

Community service organisations funded by the Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide disability services must be approved as a Registered Disability Service Provider and comply with the Disability Act 2006. A list of Registered Disability Service Providers is available on the DHS website www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Disability Services, Department of Human Services

Disability Services of the Department of Human Services (DHS) provides a range of specialist services including, assessment, information and referral, service planning, case management and behaviour support.

Access to these services is via your regional Disability Intake and Response Service. When you contact Disability Intake and Response, an Intake and Response Worker will assess your eligibility of your child and family for services.

The Disability Act 2006 defines disability as an impairment that may be sensory, physical, neurological or an acquired brain injury, which results in substantially reduced capacity in at least one of the areas of self-care, self-management, mobility or communication. This can include a range of disabilities including autism spectrum disorders.

Disability Intake and Response Service

Your regional Disability Intake and Response Service provides information about community supports and services for people with a disability, their families and carers.

Phone 1800 783 783
Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Case Management

Your regional Disability Intake and Response Service or a community service organisation may assign a Case Manager to work with you to identify services and support to meet the needs of your child and family. A Case Manager can work with you to implement a support plan and assist by providing information, referral to services, arranging visits, dispute resolution and service coordination. One outcome of this planning may be access to a Flexible Support Package or Individual Support Package. See page 43.

Transport Accident Commission (TAC) Case Management

Some case management may be available through TAC for children whose disability is the result of a road accident.

Phone 1300 654 329 or 1800 332 556 (rural callers)
Web www.tac.vic.gov.au

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The transition from school to adult life can include further study, employment, volunteer work, training or a combination of these.

There is a range of community and specialist supports available to help young people with a disability find work, undertake further study or to participate in community activities once they finish school. Planning for the transition from school to adult life should focus on your child’s goals and aspirations and be guided by people who have knowledge of your child’s abilities and needs.

Programs and supports to help students with a disability find future pathways while still at school include the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), Special School Programs, Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS), Pre-apprenticeship programs, School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships, and Workplace learning.

Centrelink can assist people with a disability with referral to employment services and advice on disability related payments. Tertiary education institutions in Victoria have a Disability Liaison Officer or equivalent who can assist students with a disability to choose and complete a course of study.

Managed Individualised Pathways (MI Ps)
Managed Individual Pathways (MI Ps) co-ordinators and careers teachers can support students to explore a range of post-school options while they are still at school. This may include developing a post-school plan to help students identify the things they are good at, interested in, enjoy doing and the supports that might be needed to achieve life goals. Ask your child’s school for more information. Web www.education.vic.gov.au/school/support/pages/mips.aspx

Exploring the Possibilities booklet
Provides a guide to transition planning from school to post-school options.
Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Futures for Young Adults (FFYA) Program
The Futures for Young Adults (FFYA) Program is funded by the Department of Human Services (DHS) and provides information and support to young people with a disability leaving school who need additional transition support. Eligible young people can receive assistance from a transition planner to set goals and develop a Transition Plan. A Safety Net provision allows young people to get advice from a transition planner at any time within a three-year eligibility period until they turn 21.

Transition to Employment initiative
Assists young people with a disability leaving school who want to get a job but who are not yet ready to move into employment or receive assistance through a Commonwealth employment program. Phone your regional Disability Intake and Response Service on 1800 783 783
Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au

National Disability Co-ordination Program
Assists people with a disability to access post-school education, training and employment. Web www.ndcovicotoria.net.au

Inner Melbourne VET Cluster (IMVC)
Career and transition information and support services for young people with a disability. Web www.imvc.com.au

Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre
Phone 1300 364 133
Web www.vtac.edu.au

When thinking about recreation opportunities for your child, start by identifying what your child enjoys doing.

As for any child, recreation for a child with a disability can involve many different things. A good place to start is by looking at recreation opportunities in your local area that are available to all children.

Access for All Abilities — First Point of Call Service
Connects people with a disability to sports and recreation opportunities. Phone 1800 222 842
Web www.aaavic.org.au

Reclink Australia
Provides and promotes sport and art programs for people experiencing disadvantage. Phone 9419 6672
Web www.reclink.org

Disability Sport and Recreation
SportRec Access Line 1800 234 648
Web www.dsr.org.au

Arts Access Victoria
Phone 9699 8299
Web artsaccess.com.au

Australian Camps Association
Phone 9365 7100
Web www.auscamps.asn.au

Nican
Provides information about recreation, tourism, sport and the arts for people with a disability. Phone 1800 806 769
Web www.nican.com.au

People Outdoors
Phone 9365 7150
Web www.peopleoutdoors.org.au

Playground Finder
Web www.playgroundfinder.com

Interchange Victoria
Provides respite and recreational experiences for children with a disability. Phone 1300 300 436
Web www.interchange.org.au

Riding Develops Abilities
Phone 9258 4730
Web www.rdav.asn.au

Sailability Victoria
Web www.s4e.org.au/vic
Contact Yachting Victoria on 9574 8335
Web www.yachtingvictoria.com.au

School holiday programs
Contact your local council or shire.

Special Olympics Victoria
Phone 9877 2769

Swimming Victoria
Phone 9686 5222
Web vic.swimming.org.au

VICTORIAN CAMPS CO-OPERATIVE (VCC)
Phone 9926 1380
Web www.vicsrapid.websyte.com.au

VICTORIAN ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIR SPORTS ASSOCIATION
Phone 9574 8335
Web www.vewsa.com.au

Contact your local area that are available to all children.

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Parent advocacy

It is common for parents to act as advocates for their child in many situations, even though you might not think of it as advocacy.

An advocate is someone who can support, assist or represent another person to achieve a positive outcome in a difficult situation or meeting.

As a parent, you have the most experience and personal knowledge about your child. If you have a strong instinct about what could improve your child’s situation, be firm and persistent. Remember that you are your child’s best advocate and you do not have to apologise for standing up for your child.

Sometimes it isn’t easy being an advocate for your child. It can be hard work! It may mean developing new skills, learning new words and terminology and asking lots of questions.

With persistence, and the right support, parent advocacy can help you work towards positive outcomes for your child and family.

Individual advocacy is where someone assists you to advocate for the needs of your child and family or takes up a matter on your behalf. Advocates can include friends, family, other parents or professional advocates.

You can take an advocate with you to any meeting. However, to comply with Student Support Group Guidelines, advocates attending an education Program Support Group meeting must not be paid a fee.

Systemic advocacy involves telling governments and decision-makers about changes required to improve the service system for families of children with a disability.

A range of organisations provide information as well as individual and systemic advocacy. See page 33.

Tips for being an effective advocate

- Have a clear idea about the outcome you are seeking.
- Prioritise your concerns in case there isn’t time to address them all at once.
- Find out who is responsible for the decision and action you are seeking.
- Think about issues that others may raise and how you might respond.
- Don’t always expect conflict but be prepared with a positive strategy if there is conflict.
- Listen to other points of view.
- Be prepared to negotiate and accept a compromise if an alternative solution is just as effective.
- Try to stay calm.
- Focus on getting a positive outcome for your child.
- Follow up verbal agreements in writing if needed.
- Keep accurate records about your efforts relating to a specific issue.
- Ask a friend or professional to help you if you need support.
- Seek further information and advice from an advocacy organisation if you need to.
People of all ages and abilities have a right to be included and participate in the community.

Accessibility is about being able to fully participate in life. When thinking about services and support, remember that the full range of services in the community is available to all families. This can include local sporting clubs, events and a wide range of other activities. Your family’s participation also helps to broaden the community’s diversity and understanding and acceptance of varying abilities. Local governments play an important role in providing an accessible environment for everyone in the community. See page 37.

Victorian Building Authority
Oversees the building control system in Victoria and provides information about accessibility in the built environment as well as a complaints service. Phone 1300 815 127 Web www.vba.vic.gov.au

SCOPE Building Advisory Service (BAS)
Advises on access related issues in new and existing buildings and community facilities. Phone 9843 2094 Web www.scopevic.org.au

Play Australia
Works to promote safe and developmentally appropriate play experiences for children. Phone 8846 4111 Web www.playaustralia.org.au

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) National
A free 24-hour, seven day a week interpreting service that can assist non-English speakers who need to communicate in English. Phone 131 450 Web www.tsnational.gov.au

 Companion Card
The Companion Card is issued to people with a significant, permanent disability, who can demonstrate that they are unable to access most community activities and venues without attendant care support. A companion can be a paid or unpaid assistant or carer, which may include a friend or family member. The card is recognised by participating organisations called Affiliates. Terms and conditions for both Affiliates and cardholders are available on the Companion Card website. Phone 1800 650 611 or TTY 1800 898 888 Web www.companioncard.org.au

Victorian State Disability Plan 2013-2016
The Victorian State Disability Plan includes the Victorian Government’s ideas to make life better for people with a disability, their families and carers. The plan is part of a set of three documents:
- Victorian State Disability Plan: implementation plan 2013 and 2014
Phone 1300 880 043 Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Making a complaint
If there is no positive change, contact DEECD Regional Office for any discussion.

Concerns about your child’s school
- Concerns about an issue or incident at school are best addressed by speaking to the teacher in the first instance.
- Get all the facts and be clear about what outcome you are seeking.
- Concerns about your child’s program are best addressed by the Student Support Group.
- Concerns about staff or personnel should be directed to the principal.
- Find out if there are any policies or guidelines for addressing your concern.
- Expected standards of behaviour are outlined in Student Engagement Policy Guidelines available from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) website.
- Organise an appropriate time and place for any discussion.
- Put serious concerns in writing to the principal.
- Focus on moving towards positive change.
- Make sure any changes are reviewed and adjusted if needed.
- If there is no positive change, contact DEECD and/or an independent agency.

More information
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Raising a concern at your child’s school
- Concerns about an issue or incident at school are best addressed by speaking to the teacher in the first instance.
- Get all the facts and be clear about what outcome you are seeking.
- Concerns about your child’s program are best addressed by the Student Support Group.
- Concerns about staff or personnel should be directed to the principal.
- Find out if there are any policies or guidelines for addressing your concern.
- Expected standards of behaviour are outlined in Student Engagement Policy Guidelines available from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) website.
- Organise an appropriate time and place for any discussion.
- Put serious concerns in writing to the principal.
- Focus on moving towards positive change.
- Make sure any changes are reviewed and adjusted if needed.
- If there is no positive change, contact DEECD and/or an independent agency.

More information
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Consumer Affairs Victoria
Provides advice on consumer issues.
Phone 1300 558 181 Web www.consumer.gov.au

Disability Education Standards
The Disability Standards for Education clarify the obligations of education and training providers and seek to ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students. The Standards were formulated under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and came into effect in August 2005.

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Education Standards website
Includes an information booklet ‘Your right to an education: A guide for students with a disability, their associates and education providers’. Web www.ddaedustandards.info

Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria
A free dispute resolutions service that provides mediation and assistance to resolve a wide range of issues without having to take legal action.
Phone 1800 658 528 Web www.disputes.vic.gov.au

Social Security Appeals Tribunal
An independent statutory body that reviews decisions by the Commonwealth funded Department of Human Services (DHS).
Phone 1800 011 140 Web www.ssat.gov.au

National Welfare Rights Network
Provides assistance with difficulties with the social security system including appeals of Centrelink decisions.
Phone 9416 1111 or 1800 094 164 (rural callers) Web www.welfarerights.org.au

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Making a complaint

When making a complaint, it’s important to make sure you have all the facts and to follow the right process when trying to resolve the issue.

There may be times when you want to appeal a decision, request a review of your situation or make a complaint about some aspect of the care or service your child or family receives. Your feedback can also help to improve service quality for other families in the future.

As part of the Disability Act 2006, all Registrered Disability Service Providers must have a complaints management process in place. Ask the service provider for information about this process to help determine the best way to resolve your complaint.

Complaints about the provision of disability services can be made directly to the service provider and to the Disability Services Commissioner. If you’re unable to resolve your complaint or raise it with the service provider, the Disability Services Commissioner can assist.

Quality Framework for Disability Services
Ensures that services and supports for people with a disability are regularly reviewed and meet agreed standards. Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Office of Health Services Commissioner
Provides information and assistance to resolve complaints about health service providers. Phone 1300 582 113 Web www.health.vic.gov.au/hsc

Office of the Senior Practitioner
Works with families and service providers to find positive alternative solutions to support children in a better way than the use of restraints or seclusion. Phone 9096 8427 Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au/ds/osp

Disability Services Commissioner
The Disability Services Commissioner is an independent body that provides advice and assistance in the resolution of complaints about Victorian disability services. Phone 1800 677 342 (free call) or TTY 1300 726 563 Web www.odsc.vic.gov.au

National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline
A telephone service for reporting cases of neglect or abuse of people with a disability. Phone 1800 880 052 or TTY 1800 301 130 Web www.disabilityhotline.net.au

Victorian Ombudsman
Investigates complaints about Victorian Government authorities, including the Department of Human Services (DHS), councils, schools, universities and TAFEs. In most cases, you will need to make your complaint to the authority first to allow them to resolve the issue. If you are still not satisfied, you can then contact the Victorian Ombudsman. Phone 9613 6222 or 1800 806 314 (regional) Web ombudsman.vic.gov.au

Commonwealth Ombudsman
Investigates complaints about Australian Government departments and agencies in a similar way to the Victorian Ombudsman. Phone 1300 362 072 Web www.ombudsman.gov.au

Aids & equipment

Aids and equipment such as wheelchairs, standing frames and continence products may assist your child with daily living tasks and independence.

Depending on your child’s and family’s needs, a therapist may recommend an item or piece of equipment or you may have to find it yourself. Applications for aids and equipment often require an assessment and report from a therapist or health professional.

State-wide equipment program (SWEP)
SWEP provides people who have a permanent or long-term disability with subsidised aids, equipment, home and vehicle modifications to enhance their independence and facilitate community participation. SWEP is funded by the Department of Human Services (DHS) and administered by Ballarat Health Services.

SWEP incorporates the following programs:

- Aids and Equipment Program (A&EP)
- Continence Aids (CA)
- DisabilityCare Australia (DCA)
- Domiciliary Oxygen Program (DOP)
- Supported Accommodation Equipment Assistance Scheme (SAEAS)
- Top-up fund for children (TFC)
- Vehicle Modification Subsidy Scheme (VMSS)

All programs require your child’s treating therapist to confirm that your child has a permanent or long term disability by completing page 4 of the A&EP application form. In many cases, the SWEP subsidy does not cover the full cost of the item and you will need to pay the difference.

Refer to the SWEP website for eligibility requirements and the A&EP guidelines.

Aids and Equipment Program (A&EP)
SWEP provides subsidised aids, equipment and home modifications to enhance independence, community participation and to support families and carers in their caring role. Refer to the A&EP guidelines on the SWEP website for eligibility requirements.

Specialist Equipment: Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP)
If your child has ongoing high support needs, in addition to the Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS), childcare services may also be able to access additional support through specialist equipment available on loan from a Specialist Equipment Provider. Gowrie Victoria currently contracts SWEP to provide specialist equipment. For more information visit www.gowrievictoria.org.au/Support/SpecialistEquipment

Contidence Aids (CA)
Subsidised continence aids are available to people who are incontinent as a result of their disability. SWEP will fund continence aids but it will not fund disposable continence pants or pads, drip collectors, colostomy appliances or urinals. People receiving continence products from SWEP may also be eligible for funding from other government continence programs at the same time.

State-wide equipment program (SWEP)
Phone 1300 747 937 (PH SWEP) Email swepcentralintake@bhs.org.au Web swep.bhs.org.au

Aids and equipment as such wheelchairs, standing frames and continence products may assist your child with daily living tasks and independence.

depending on your child’s and family’s needs, a therapist may recommend an item or piece of equipment or you may have to find it yourself. Applications for aids and equipment often require an assessment and report from a therapist or health professional.

State-wide equipment program (SWEP)
SWEP provides people who have a permanent or long-term disability with subsidised aids, equipment, home and vehicle modifications to enhance their independence and facilitate community participation. SWEP is funded by the Department of Human Services (DHS) and administered by Ballarat Health Services.

SWEP incorporates the following programs:

- Aids and Equipment Program (A&EP)
- Continence Aids (CA)
- DisabilityCare Australia (DCA)
- Domiciliary Oxygen Program (DOP)
- Supported Accommodation Equipment Assistance Scheme (SAEAS)
- Top-up fund for children (TFC)
- Vehicle Modification Subsidy Scheme (VMSS)

All programs require your child’s treating therapist to confirm that your child has a permanent or long term disability by completing page 4 of the A&EP application form. In many cases, the SWEP subsidy does not cover the full cost of the item and you will need to pay the difference.

Refer to the SWEP website for eligibility requirements and the A&EP guidelines.

Aids and Equipment Program (A&EP)
SWEP provides subsidised aids, equipment and home modifications to enhance independence, community participation and to support families and carers in their caring role. Refer to the A&EP guidelines on the SWEP website for eligibility requirements.

Specialist Equipment: Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP)
If your child has ongoing high support needs, in addition to the Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS), childcare services may also be able to access additional support through specialist equipment available on loan from a Specialist Equipment Provider. Gowrie Victoria currently contracts SWEP to provide specialist equipment. For more information visit www.gowrievictoria.org.au/Support/SpecialistEquipment

Contidence Aids (CA)
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Local government

Your local government council or shire is a good place to start for information about local services and support.

Local councils and shires provide a range of child and family services including:

• Home and Community Care (HACC) program (respite care)
• Maternal and Child Health Services
• Child care
• Kindergarten services
• Libraries and toy libraries
• School holiday programs

Most councils and shires publish information directories with contact details of local community groups and services. These directories are often available in print and online. For more information contact your local council or shire.

Disability Action Plan

Local governments play an important role in providing an accessible environment for all members of the community.

As part of the Victorian State Disability Plan 2013–2016, all local governments must develop a Disability Action Plan that supports building an inclusive community for people with a disability. These plans are usually available on council websites or from council offices.

A Disability Advisory Committee oversees implementation of the plan and provides a forum for discussion of issues that affect people with a disability.

The committee is open to people with a disability, their families and carers. For more information contact your local council or shire.

MetroAccess, RuralAccess and Deafaccess Programs

These programs aim to build the capacity of local communities to be welcoming and inclusive of people with a disability. There are MetroAccess and RuralAccess workers in each local government area who work to develop opportunities for greater participation and inclusion of people with a disability. Deafaccess workers are based in five community organisations across rural Victoria.

The programs are initiatives of the Victorian State Disability Plan 2013–2016. For more information contact your local council or shire.

Local Government

Provides links to council websites and information about local government.
Phone 1300 366 356

Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)

The peak body representing local councils.
Provides links to council websites and information about local government.
Phone 9667 5555
Web www.mav.asn.au

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Autism spectrum disorders (ASD)

Children with autism spectrum disorders may need extra support with behaviour, communication and social skills.

Autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) can cause impairments in social interaction and communication and are often associated with unusual behaviours and interests. ASDs are described according to a spectrum that ranges from mild to severe. Children with ASD can benefit from early support so that they can reach their full potential.

Raising Children Network
ASD website
Provides evidence based information about autism spectrum disorders including, diagnosis, assessment and therapies.
Web raisingchildren.net.au/autism

PlayConnect Playgroups
Phone 1800 171 882
Web www.playconnect.com.au

Early Days Workshops
Phone 1300 307 909
Web www.amaze.org.au

Positive Partnerships Workshops
Web www.positivepartnerships.com.au

For more information phone the ASD Support Helpdesk on 1800 778 581
Web www.dss.gov.au

Victorian Autism State Plan
The Department of Human Services, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Amaze/Autism Victoria worked together in partnership to develop the Autism State Plan that was launched in May 2009, following a statewide consultation process involving people with autism spectrum disorder, their families and other stakeholders. Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Autism spectrum disorders (ASD)

Victoria Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)
VCAT can make decisions about disputes and has a number of ‘lists’ (sections) which specialise in particular types of cases. Phone 9628 9900 (Health - Privacy/Disability Act)
Web www.vcat.vic.gov.au

Victoria Legal Aid
Provides free legal advice and publications including ‘Securing their future’ for parents of children with a decision-making disability.
Phone 1300 792 387
Web www.legalaid.vic.gov.au

Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service
A Community Legal Centre that provides advice on disability related legal issues.
Phone 1800 014 111
Web www.villamanta.org.au

Working with Children Check
The Working with Children Check helps protect children from harm by preventing those who pose a risk to children from working with them in either paid or voluntary work.
Phone 1300 652 879
Web www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au

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**Behaviour**

Most behaviour is an attempt to communicate some kind of emotional, intellectual or physical need.

Most children display inappropriate behaviour at some time. It can be a healthy part of growing up and testing the boundaries of what is acceptable. In some children, severe behaviours may indicate an underlying issue or some other difficulty. Behaviours of concern can affect a child’s ability to cope with stress, solve problems and enjoy everyday activities with family and friends. Acting early to understand and address the behaviour can prevent more serious issues later in life.

Support is available for children who have not been diagnosed with a specific disability and for children who have mental health issues in addition to other disabilities. If your child attends an early childhood intervention service, they may be able to assist with behaviour support. See page 9.

The best outcomes are usually achieved when everyone supporting the child takes the time to identify the causes of the behaviour and develops a positive approach based on the child’s strengths and abilities.

**Student Support Services**

Schools have a responsibility to support students to behave appropriately and to provide a safe environment for both staff and students. Student Support Services Officers in schools can include guidance officers, psychologists, social workers, visiting teachers and curriculum consultants.

In addition to addressing a student’s learning needs, planning with the Student Support Group can also include developing a Behaviour Support Plan. See page 27.

**Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)**

Provide free assessment and treatment of children and adolescents experiencing significant psychological distress or mental illness. Assistance can include crisis assessment, case management, individual, family and group therapy, parent support and medication. Web: www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/services/child/index.htm

**Mental Health Care Plan**

Your GP can make referrals to other services and support such as a psychologist, psychiatrist or paediatrician. See page 22.

**Behaviour Support Services**

Behaviour support services deliver therapeutic strategies to prevent the occurrence of behaviours of concern. These are behaviours that are a barrier to a person participating in and contributing to their community and pose a risk to the health and safety of a person and the community. This can include aggressive, self-injurious, anti social or dangerous behaviours.

Behaviour support services are delivered by practitioners in DHS, community service organisations or private practitioners. Behaviour support services teams (sometimes know as Specialist Services Teams or Behaviour Intervention Services Teams) use techniques that maximise quality of life and reduce behaviours of concern. Phone your regional Disability Intake and Response Service on 1800 783 783.

**Legal services**

Legal services may be able to assist with a range of issues including discrimination, service quality, guardianship, wills and estate planning.

There can be many reasons for seeking legal advice. If you have a concern about the quality of a service or want to make a complaint, it’s best to approach the service in question first to give them an opportunity to resolve the issue before you seek legal advice. See page 38.

**Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission**

Provides a free telephone Enquiry Line and an impartial no-cost complaint handling process for people who may have experienced discrimination, victimisation, sexual harassment, racial or religious vilification. Phone 1300 292 153 or 9032 3583 or TTY 1300 289 621 www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au

**AED Legal Centre**

Advocates to assist people with a disability in employment, education and training. Phone 9639 4333 Web: www.aed.org.au

**Attorney-General’s Department**

Provides information about Australia’s legal and justice system, including family law and disability discrimination. Web: www.ag.gov.au

**Child Protection Crisis Line**

24-hour emergency service for immediate concerns about the safety of a child. Phone 131 278

**Disability Discrimination Legal Service Inc**

Statewide independent community legal centre that specialises in disability discrimination. Phone 9654 8644 or 1300 882 872 (rural callers) or TTY 9654 6817 Web: www.communitylaw.org.au/ddsl

**Disability Act 2006**

The Disability Act 2006 provides a framework for a whole-of-government approach to enable people with a disability to actively participate in the community.

The Act is guided by principles of human rights and citizenship and aims to ensure that services are of a high quality and accountable to people with a disability.

You can view the Act online at www.legislation.vic.gov.au

**Federation of Community Legal Centres**

Provides legal information and resources and contact details for Community Legal Centres in Victoria. Phone 9652 1500 Web: www.fclc.org.au

**Law Help Guide**

A directory of free and low cost legal services, complaint or dispute settlement serviced and private lawyers. Phone: 9604 8100 Web: www.victorialawfoundation.org.au

**The Law Handbook Online**

A practical guide to the law in Victoria. Web: www.lawhandbook.gov.au
Advocacy
Action for More Independence and Dignity in Accommodation (AMIDA)
Phone 9650 2722
Web www.amida.org.au

Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities (ADEC)
Phone 9480 1666 or 1800 626 078
Web www.adec.org.au

Belonging Matters
Phone 9739 8333
Web www.belongingmatters.org

Blind Citizens Australia
Phone 9654 1400 or 1800 033 660
Web bca.org.au

Brain Injury Matters
Phone 9639 7222
Web www.bim.org.au

Children with Disability Australia
Phone 9482 1130 or 1800 222 660
(regional or interstate)
Web www.cda.org.au

Communication Rights Australia
Phone 9555 8552 or 8948
Web www.cda.org.au

Defence Special Needs Support Group
Phone 1800 037 674
Web dsnsg.org.au

Disability Justice Advocacy
Phone 1800 808 126 or 9474 0077
Web www.justadvocacy.com

Disability Resources Centre (DRC)
Phone 9671 3000
Web www.drc.org.au

FKA Children’s Services
Phone 9428 4471
Web www.fka.com.au

Leadership Plus
Phone 9489 2999
Web www.leadershipplus.com

National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN)
Phone 8073 3300
Web napcan.org.au

Social Security Rights Victoria
Phone 9481 0355 or
1800 094 164 (rural callers)
Web www.ssrv.org.au

Parents Victoria
Phone 9380 2158 or
1800 032 023 (rural callers)
Web www.parents.victoria.asn.au

Star Victoria
Phone 9650 2730
Web www.starvictoria.org.au

Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability (VALID)
Phone 9416 4003 or
1800 655 570 (rural callers)
Web www.valid.org.au

VICSEG New Futures
Phone 9383 2533
Web www.vicsegnewfutures.org.au

Victorian Aboriginal Education Association (VAEAI)
Phone 9481 0800
Web www.vaeai.org.au

Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS)
Phone 9267 3755 (co-ordinator)
9267 3733 (individual advocate)
1300 727 176 (for rural callers)
TTY via the National Relay Service 133 677
SMS 0412 814 851
Web www.ydas.org.au

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The Senior Practitioner
The Senior Practitioner understands that most families and carers find it challenging to care for a child with a disability who shows behaviours of concern, and may sometimes use restraints and seclusion as a last resort.

The Office of the Senior Practitioner can work with families and service providers to find positive alternative solutions to support children in a better way than the use of restraints or seclusion. The Senior Practitioner’s vision is for an inclusive and safe community that supports people to achieve dignity without restraints.

The Senior Practitioner is responsible for protecting the rights of persons who are subject to restrictive interventions and compulsory treatment and that appropriate standards in relation to restrictive interventions and compulsory treatment are complied with. Disability Act 2006, s.23 (2) (a)

In Victoria, the Disability Act 2006 states that restraint and seclusion should only be used where the person poses a risk of harm to themselves or others, and restraining or secluding is the least restrictive option available. The Disability Act 2006 defines three kinds of restrictive practices: mechanical, chemical and seclusion.

An online application for a review by the Office of the Senior Practitioner of matters regarding support provided to a person with a disability subject to restrictive interventions or compulsory treatment in receipt of a disability service is available on the DHS website.

For more information phone 9096 8427 or visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Signposts for Building Better Behaviour
Helps families manage and prevent behaviours of concern in children aged 3 to 15 years who have developmental delay or a disability.
Phone 8660 3562
Web www.signposts.net.au

Triple P Parenting Program
Provides parenting and family support to enhance parent knowledge, skills and confidence in raising pre-adolescent children.
Phone 07 3236 1212
Web www.triplep-parenting.net

Brainlink
Provides information and programs for individuals and carers affected by an acquired brain injury.
Phone 1800 677 579
Web www.brainlink.org.au

Statewide Acquired Brain Injury Paediatric Consultants
Assists people aged 0 to 18 with an acquired brain injury to access services and support.
Phone 9487 9250
Web www.melbournecitymission.org.au

Melbourne Case Management Services
Supports people aged 5 to 65 who have received compensation as a result of an acquired brain injury and who have an Individualised Support Package or are able to self-fund services.
Phone 9487 9242
Web www.melbournecitymission.org.au

Statewide Acquired Brain Injury Case Management Service
Supports people aged 18 to 64 who have had an ABI for less than two years and received no compensation as a result of an acquired brain injury.
Phone 8625 9945
Web www.melbournecitymission.org.au

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Child care

If you need to access child care, the child care service may be eligible for additional support.

Child care is available to all families, including families of children with a disability. The cost of care will depend on the type of service you choose. You may be eligible for Child Care Benefit, Child Care Rebate, Jobs, Education and Training (JET) Child Care Fee Assistance, Family Tax Benefit, Parental Leave Pay or Baby Bonus and other government payments. For more information phone the Department of Human Services (DHS) on 136 150 or visit www.humanservices.gov.au.

Family day care is where children are looked after in the home of an approved carer.

In-home care is for families who cannot access a standard child care service or where child care services do not meet their needs.

Outside school hours care (also known as Before and After School Care or Vacation Care) is for primary aged children or children of any age in special or emergency situations.

Inclusion Support Subsidy

Child care services may be eligible for additional support to create an inclusive environment for all children through the Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP). A Professional Support Co-ordinator will work with the child care service to develop a Service Support Plan that identifies the need for additional support. This can include extra staff, resources, training, equipment or an extra payment for home-based carers.

Once a Service Support Plan is approved, the child care service can apply for funding through the Inclusion Support Subsidy which is paid to the child care service. In addition to the Inclusion Support Subsidy, child care services may also be able to access additional support through Flexible Support Funding, Bicultural Support, Specialist Equipment and the General Resource Library.

Child Care Access Hotline

Provides information about child care and government financial assistance.

For more information phone the Child Care Access Hotline or visit education.gov.au/inclusion-and-professional-support-program.

My Child website

Web www.mychild.gov.au

Community Child Care Association

Advocates for community-owned children's services.

Phone 1800 177 017

Web www.cccc.org.au

Family Day Care Australia

National organisation for family day care.

Phone 1800 621 218

Web www.familydaycare.com.au

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)

Provides a National Quality Framework that sets levels of safety and quality to benefit all children and their families who use approved education and care services.

Phone 1300 422 327

Web www.acecqa.gov.au

National In-home Childcare Association

National organisation for in-home child care.

Phone 02 6026 3899

Web www.nica.org.au

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Information & advocacy

A number of statewide and national organisations provide disability information and advocacy.

Information

There are many ways to find and access information. This may include reading print publications, online resources, using telephone information lines and finding out about services and support by word of mouth.

Most local libraries provide public Internet access and assistance with learning how to use the Internet to find information. Most websites have a ‘search’ function that you can use by entering key words that describe the information you are looking for.

Disability-specific groups provide information and some may also be able to assist with advocacy. See page 21.

Many regional community services organisations publish their own information directories with details of local services and support.

Regional Parent Support Co-ordinator

Provides information about local services and support. See page 48.

Better Health Channel

Web www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Raising Children Network website

Web www.raisingchildren.net.au

Health Direct Australia

Web www.healthdirect.gov.au

Infoxchange Australia

Phone 9418 7400

Web www.infoxchange.net.au

MyChild website

Web www.mychild.gov.au

Self Advocacy Resource Unit (SARU) provides information and resources to self advocacy groups.

Phone SARU on 9639 6856

Web www.saru.net.au

Disability Advocacy Resource Unit (DARU) provides resources to the disability advocacy sector in Victoria.

Phone DARU on 9639 5807

Web www.daru.org.au

Community Information and Support Victoria

Phone 9672 2000

Web www.cisvic.org.au

Parent to Parent: Raising your child with special needs resource

Web www.deakin.edu.au/dhs/parent_to_parent

DiVine website

An online community for and by people with a disability.

Web www.divine.vic.gov.au

Kids Health Info Bookshop, RCH sells books and co-ordinates a listing of Victorian parent support groups.

Phone 9345 6429

Web www.rch.org.au/chas

Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS)

Phone 9419 3000

Web www.vahs.org.au
Housing & accommodation

Housing support can include home modifications as well as options for long-term accommodation for young adults with a disability.

Creating and maintaining a place to call home can involve a combination of modifications and support services.

**Home Renovation Service**
Provides free home inspections for homeowners or renters who hold either a current Commonwealth Health Care Card or a Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card and have a disability or are permanently caring for someone with a disability. Home owners may be eligible for financial assistance with a Home Renovation loan. Phone Archicentre Home Services on 9815 1900 or 1300 136 513 Web [www.dhs.vic.gov.au](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au)

**Outreach Support**
Provides up to 15 hours per week of home and community based support so that people with a disability can live outside staffed residential accommodation, remain living in their own homes or move to more independent living arrangements. Phone your regional **Disability Intake and Response Service** on 1800 783 783.

**Social Housing Advocacy & Support Program (SHASP)**
Provides support to public housing tenants to maintain their housing and preve nt homelessness. Phone the Tenants Union of Victoria on 1800 068 860 Web [www.dhs.vic.gov.au](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au)

**Housing Choices Australia**
Creates safe, quality, affordable housing for people who are disadvantaged. Phone 1300 312 447 Web [www.hcau.org.au](http://www.hcau.org.au)

**Communication & speech**

All children can be supported to communicate their thoughts, feelings, needs and dreams, and to interact with the world around them.

Children with complex communication needs may be able to communicate using sign and gesture, pictures, technology, speech therapy or a combination of these.

**Electronic Communication Devices Scheme**
A state-wide service supporting people who have no speech or speech that is difficult to understand, to buy speech generating devices and software, administered through the Statewide equipment program (SWEP). [See page 15.](#)
Phone 9362 6111

**ComTEC**
Provides an advisory service, equipment library, online resources, education and training. Phone 9362 6111 or 1300 885 886 (regional) Web [www.yooralla.com.au](http://www.yooralla.com.au)

**Communication Resource Centre, SCOPE**
Provides information, resources and services about communication disabilities. Phone 9843 2000
Web [www.scopevic.org.au](http://www.scopevic.org.au)

**Key Word Sign Australia**
Phone 02 4921 6293

**Australian Hearing Services**
Phone 1300 412 512

**Speech Pathology**
Speech pathologists can assist with any aspect of communication including speech, writing, reading, signs, symbols and gestures as well as with difficulties swallowing food and drink. Children can access speech therapy through early childhood intervention services (ECIS), school or specialist providers. For more information contact Speech Pathology Australia (Vic) on 1300 368 835 or 9642 4899 or visit [www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au](http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au)

**Anne McDonald Centre**
Phone 9509 6324
Web [www.annemcdonaldcentre.org.au](http://www.annemcdonaldcentre.org.au)

**National Relay Service**
Phone Voice 1800 555 660 TTY 1800 555 630 or SMS 0416 001 350

**Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)**
Phone 9314 5374
Web [www.pecsaustralia.com](http://www.pecsaustralia.com)

**Telstra Disability Equipment Program**
Phone 1800 068 424 or TTY 1800 808 981

**Vision Australia**
Phone 1300 847 466
Web [www.visionaustralia.org](http://www.visionaustralia.org)

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**Accommodation options for people with a disability include:**

- Support to live in your own home, or the family home through an Individual Support Package
- Support for younger people at risk of admission to residential aged care (my future my choice)
- Shared Supported Accommodation

Phone your regional **Disability Intake and Response Service** on 1800 783 783.

**Movable Units**
Self-contained units that can be set up in the back yard of a friend or relatives home. Phone 1800 460 505

**EW Tipping Foundation**
Provides in-home and community based services for people with a disability. Phone 9564 1000
Web [www.tipping.org.au](http://www.tipping.org.au)

**Special Disability Trusts**
A Special Disability Trust can be set up by parents and immediate family to plan for the future care and accommodation needs of a person with a severe disability. Phone 1800 734 750

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Counselling & support

Support from services and from other parents is available to help you and your family through difficult times.

Every family situation is different and everyone responds differently to challenges in life. Sometimes it can help to talk about things with someone who really understands. This can happen informally by talking with other parents and friends or more formally by talking with a health professional.

Most hospitals have social workers and other services to assist families of children with a disability. There are also many private psychologists and counsellors. School Welfare Officers can provide counselling for children at school. Assistance with the cost of counselling may be available through Flexible Support Packages (see page 43), your Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre (see page 42) or private practitioners covered by private health insurance. Some Community Health Centres offer low-cost counselling (see page 6).

Mental Health Care Plan
Anyone who has a mental health condition that lasts longer than six months and needs the care of several providers may benefit from a Mental Health Care Plan. The plan explains the support given by each provider and is done in consultation with your doctor.

Medicare will cover some or all of the cost of care planning by a doctor and may rebate some of the costs of specialists or other health professionals. Ask your doctor or mental health professional for more information. Web www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement
Bereavement information and referral service. Phone 1800 642 066 or 9265 2100 Web www.grief.org.au

National Carer Counselling Program
Provides free short-term counselling for parents and carers. Your GP or case manager can make a referral or you can contact the service yourself. Phone 1800 242 636 Web www.carersvictoria.org.au

Amaze (formerly Autism Victoria)
Provides family counselling. Phone 9657 1616 Web www.amaze.org.au

Beyond Blue
Provides support for depression and anxiety. Phone 1300 224 636 Web www.beyondblue.org.au

Family Bereavement Support Programme, RCH
Provides support for bereaved families. Phone 9345 6111 Web www.rch.org.au/socialwork

Family Planning Victoria
Provides information about sexual and reproductive health care. Phone 9257 0100 Web www.fpva.org.au

Family Relationships Advice Line
Provides support for family relationship issues. Phone 1800 050 321 Web www.familyrelationships.gov.au

Family Relationship Services for Carers
Provides support for carers around future planning. Phone the Family Relationship Advice Line on 1800 050 321 Web www.frsc.org.au

Health & medical

A reliable source of health and medical information for your child and family is your local doctor or GP.

Your GP may also refer you to a specialist such as a paediatrician or other health professional. Developing a good relationship with health professionals relies on good communication. Ask for things to be explained in words you understand and don’t be afraid to ask for information to be repeated. You can also ask for more information or a second opinion.

Accelerated Care through Emergency (ACE) Program, RCH
Provides care co-ordination and 24 hour phone support to assist families to manage their child at home or to fast track admission to RCH. Phone 9345 6159 (office) or 0409 882 197 (on call) Web www.rch.org.au/ace/program

Safety Resource Centre, RCH
Phone 9345 5085 Web www.rch.org.au/safetycentre

Family Resource and Respite Centre, RCH
Phone 9345 4662 or 4660 Web www.rch.org.au/frc

RCH@Home
Provides support services in the home and community for children aged 0-18 years. Phone 9345 5695 (Parkville) or 9345 9410 (Hawthorn) Web www.rch.org.au/hacc/

Gastrostomy Information Support Service
Phone 9843 2011 Web www.scopevic.org.au

Home Enteral Nutrition (HEN) Program
Ask your GP or hospital for more information. NURSE-ON-CALL Phone 1300 606 024

There’s No Such Thing as a Silly Question booklet
A guide for families living with a child with chronic illness, disability, mental illness or life-threatening condition. Phone 9804 6222 or 1800 888 875 Web www.vsk.org.au

Very Special Kids
Supports children with a life limiting condition. Phone 9804 6222 or 1800 888 875 Web www.vsk.org.au

Medicare Allied Health and Dental Care
People with a chronic condition and complex care needs being managed by their doctor under an Chronic Disease Management plan can access Medicare rebates for allied health services and dental services. Ask your GP for more information. Phone Medicare on 132 011 Web www.health.gov.au

Net Medical Expenses Tax Offset
Net medical expenses are the medical expenses you have paid less any refunds from Medicare or a private health insurer. The percentage of net medical expenses you can claim is determined by your adjusted taxable income and family status. Phone the Australian Tax Office on 132 861 Web www.ato.gov.au

More information
Therapy, 45 Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme (VPTAS), 47
Financial assistance

**Carer Allowance (Adult)**
A supplementary payment for people who care at home for an adult with a disability or severe medical condition or who is frail aged.

**Carer Payment (Adult)**
An income support payment for people who cannot support themselves through participation in the workforce due to the demands of their caring role. Carer Payment is income and assets tested.

For more information visit www.centrelink.gov.au or humanservices.gov.au

**Other Centrelink services**

**Health Care Card**
Entitles you to cheaper medicines and other concessions. You or your child may be eligible for a Health Care Card if you receive certain Centrelink payments such as Carer Allowance (Child).

**Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) Safety Net Card**
If you reach the Safety Net threshold you can apply for a PBS Safety Net Card and your PBS medicine will be less expensive or free for the rest of the calendar year. Phone 1800 020 613 Web www.pbs.gov.au

**Pensioner Concession Card**
Entitles you to reduced cost medicines under the PBS and other concessions. People who receive Centrelink payments such as Carer Payment, Disability Support Pension or Parenting Payment (Single) are eligible for a Pensioner Concession Card.

**Authorising a Person Permitted to Enquire Form**
Authorises a person or organisation to make an enquiry, act or receive payment on your behalf. You can authorise a person to enquire on your behalf in relation to your payment and decisions regarding your payment.

**Concessions**
Concessions are available to eligible people on a low income who cannot pay council rates, water, gas and electricity bills. Phone the Concessions Help Line on 1800 658 521 Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au/concessions

**Carer Card**
The Carer Card program offers discounts from businesses, government and community organisations, free travel on public transport on Sundays and travel vouchers. Phone the Carer Card Hotline on 1800 901 958 Web carercard.vic.gov.au

**Service Clubs, Charities and Foundations**
Financial assistance may also be available from service clubs, charities and foundations either directly or through an organisation.

**Kids Helpline**
24-hour telephone and online counselling for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years. Phone 1800 551 800 Web www.kidshelp.com.au

**Lifeline**
24-hour telephone and online counselling. Phone 131 114 Web www.lifeline.org.au

**MensLine Australia**
24-hour telephone counselling service for men. Phone 1300 789 978 Web www.mensline.org.au

**Mindhealthconnect website**
Online gateway to mental health services. Web mindhealthconnect.org.au

**MyTime groups**
Provide local support and parenting information for anyone caring for a child with a disability or chronic medical condition. Phone 1800 889 997 Web www.mytime.net.au

**Parentline Victoria**
Telephone counselling service for parents and carers of children aged 0–18. Phone 132 289 Web www.parentline.vic.gov.au

**More information**
Turning 16 and Centrelink, 13
Net Medical Expenses Tax Offset, 31

**Genetic Support Network Victoria (GSNV)**
Provides information and support for families affected by a genetic condition. Phone 8341 6315 Web www.gsvn.org.au

**Griefline**
Telephone and online counselling service. Phone 1300 845 745 or 9935 7400 Web www.griefline.org.au

**Healthspace**
Provides health advice, support and information for young people aged 12 to 25. Phone 9027 0100 (national office) or see website for details of headspace centres Web www.headspace.org.au

**Wide Medical Expenses Tax Offset, 31**

**Turning 16 and Centrelink, 13**

**Relationships Australia**
Provides relationship support. Phone 1300 364 277 Web www.relationships.org.au

**Sids and Kids NSW and Victoria**
Provides support for families affected by the sudden death of a child. Phone 1800 240 400 Web www.sidsandkisdeastcoast.org

**The Australian Psychological Society**
Provides contact details for psychologists. Phone 8662 3300 Web www.psychology.org.au

**The Bouverie Centre**
Provides family therapy and counselling. Phone 9385 5100 Web www.bouverie.org.au

**The Compassionate Friends**
24-hour grief support for bereaved families. Phone 9888 4944 or 1800 641 091 (rural) Web www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au

**Very Special Kids**
Supports children with a life limiting condition. Phone 9804 6222 or 1800 888 875 Web www.vsk.org.au

**Victorian Paediatric Palliative Care Program**
Supports children with life limiting conditions. Phone 9345 5374 Web www.rch.org.au/rch_palliative

**Victorian Centres against Sexual Assault (CASA)**
Supports victims of sexual assault. Phone 1800 806 292 Web www.casa.org.au

**Women’s Domestic Violence Crisis Service**
24-hour telephone support and intervention. Phone 1800 015 188 or 9322 3555 Web www.wdpcs.org.au

**WIRE – Women’s Information**
Free information and support for women. Phone 1300 134 130 Web www.wire.org.au
Disability-specific groups

Joining a disability-specific group is one way to connect with other families, share information and build your support network.

There are many local and regional disability-specific groups that meet in person as well as a range of online groups and forums. Find out what works for you and how they might become part of your support network.

In addition to joining ACD, we encourage families to join any relevant statewide disability-specific groups. Our aim is to work together on issues that reach across all disabilities.

**ARAFEMI**
Supports people with a mental illness and their carers.
Phone 1300 550 265
Web www.arafemi.org.au

**Asperger’s Victoria**
Phone 9845 2766
Web www.aspergersvic.org.au

**Australian Leukodystrophy Support Group**
Phone 9845 2831 or 1800 141 400 (rural callers)
Web www.alds.org.au

**Amaze (formerly Autism Victoria)**
Phone 1300 308 699
Web www.amaze.org.au

**Autistic Family Support Association (AFSA)**
Phone 0428 938 794
Web www.afsaconnect.org.au

**Brainlink**
Phone 1800 677 579
Web www.brainlink.org.au

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Financial assistance

A range of financial assistance is available to families of children with a disability, most of which is administered by Centrelink.

In addition to payments and benefits that relate directly to ‘disability’ or ‘caring’, you may also be eligible for other entitlements, depending on your circumstances.

Allow plenty of time when making any application as there are often detailed eligibility criteria, forms to complete and other supporting information to prepare. It may be helpful to ask friends or family to support you with this. Speaking to other people who have already been through the process can also be helpful.

Make an appointment at your local Centrelink Customer Service Centre to discuss your situation in detail and to pick up any forms and information. You can also register to access some online Centrelink services as a customer and/or a nominee. When your child turns 16, the Centrelink payment system changes. See page 13.

**Carer Allowance (Child)**
A supplementary payment for carers who provide additional daily care and attention for someone with a disability or who is frail aged. This payment is not income or assets tested and can be paid in addition to wages or other Centrelink payments.

**Health Care Card**
Provides help with the cost of prescription medicine under the PBS, Australian Government funded medical services and access to government concessions.

**Health Care Card & fortnightly payment**
For children who meet the eligibility criteria or whose needs are below a certain level for their age. You and your doctor must complete separate claim forms from Centrelink.

**Child Disability Assistance Payment**
An annual payment of up to $1000 for people who receive Carer Allowance for a child under 16. This payment is not income tested and can be used to purchase support, aids, therapy or respite.

**Carer Payment (Child)**
An income support payment for people who personally provide constant care, aids, therapy or respite.

For more information phone Centrelink on 132 717 or visit humanservices.gov.au

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**Searching for disability and health information in the Internet**
When searching for health and medical information on the Internet:

- Check that the site is run by a reputable organisation before you trust its content.
- Check that the information is current.
- Be mindful of the difference between ‘advertising’ and ‘information’, particularly if the site is trying to sell you products or services.
- Look for balanced information that lists both risks and benefits of treatment or therapies.
- Visit the ‘Links’ page as these often include other sources of information.
- Follow up with your GP or health professional before acting on any online health or medical information.

In addition to information from your GP or health professional, the following websites provide information on a range of disabilities and conditions.

**Better Health Channel**
Web www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

**Raising Children Network**
Web raisingchildren.net.au

**Health Direct Australia**
Web healthdirect.gov.au
**Individual Learning Plans**

An Individual Learning Plan is a working document for the planning, provision and evaluation of your child’s education.

In Victorian government schools, all students receiving support through the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) should have an Individual Learning Plan. However, any student who has additional needs may benefit from having an Individual Learning Plan, regardless of their eligibility for the Program for Students with Disabilities.

Everyone involved with your child at school should support your child’s Individual Learning Plan. This includes all of your child’s teachers across all subject areas, integration aides and co-ordinators, the principal, and Student Support Services Officers such as speech therapists.

The Individual Learning Plan is developed by the Student Support Group and written by your child’s school. The plan is a working document that evolves as goals are achieved or modified. The plan should be referred to regularly and adjusted as needed.

**Abilities Based Learning and Educational Support (ABLES)**

To assist with the development of Individual Learning Plans, teachers now have access to a new suite of tools to better support your child’s education. ABLES will allow teachers to better support students by encouraging them to implement the Learning and Teaching Cycle. This requires teachers to 1. assess 2. gather data 3. plan appropriate learning goals and 4. teach using appropriate selected strategies.

ABLES supports the teacher to base their assessment of your child’s needs by focusing on their abilities.


**More information**

Raising a concern at your child’s school, 39 Conveyance Allowance, 46

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), 48

**Supports for children with a disability at school**

Funding support for children with a disability at school is different for government, independent and Catholic schools. Ask the school for more information about the application process and eligibility criteria.

**Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD)**

The Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) is available to government schools to support the education of eligible students with a moderate to severe disability. There are detailed eligibility criteria and an application process that the Student Support Group must follow.

PSD funds can be used to provide specialist staff, professional development, education support staff, and specialist equipment. The school can apply to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) for building modifications such as ramps and toilet facilities. It is up to the Student Support Group to plan how funds are used and to make recommendations for approval by the principal.


**Autism Friendly Learning**

The Autism Friendly Learning website provides links to information about ASD, school supports and specific issues such as transitions.


**Cerebral Palsy Support Network**

Phone 1300 277 600
Web www.cpsn.info

**CleftPALS Victoria**

Phone 0425 784 130
Web www.cleftpalsvic.com

**Cri Du Chat Support Group of Australia**

Phone 9775 9962
Web www.criduchat.asn.au

**Cystic Fibrosis Victoria**

Phone 9686 1811
Web www.cysticfibrosis.org.au/vic/

**Deaf Children Australia**

Phone 1800 645 916 or 9539 5300
Web www.deafchildrenaustralia.org.au

**Down Syndrome Victoria**

Phone 1300 658 873 or 9486 9600
Web www.downsyndromevictoria.org.au

**Epilepsy Foundation of Victoria**

Phone 1300 852 853 or 8809 0600
Web www.epinet.org.au

**Fragile X Association of Australia (Vic)**

Phone 1300 394 636
Web www.fragilex.org.au

**Genetic Support Network Victoria (GSNV)**

Phone 8341 6315
Web www.gsnv.org.au

**Independence Australia**

Provides specialised support services for people with a disability or physical need.
Phone 1300 704 456
Web www.independenceaustralia.com

**Life’s Little Treasures Foundation**

Supports families of premature and sick babies.
Phone 1300 697 736
Web www.lifeslittletreasures.org.au

**Muscular Dystrophy Association**

Phone 9320 9555
Web www.mda.org.au

**National Organisation for Rare Disorders (NORD) US**

Web www.rarediseases.org

**Prada-Willi Association of Victoria**

Phone 0451 797 284
Web www.pws.asn.au

**Scope Victoria**

Phone 9843 3000
Web www.scopevic.org.au

**SPELD Victoria**

Supports people with dyslexia and learning difficulties.
Parent Information Line 1800 051 533
Phone 9480 4422
Web www.speldvic.org.au

**Spina Bifida Foundation Victoria**

Phone 9663 0075
Web www.sbfv.org.au

**Syndromes Without a Name (SWAN)**

Phone 0404 280 441
Web www.swanvas.com.au

**Tourette Syndrome Association of Australia**

Phone 02 9382 3726
Web www.tourette.org.au

**Vision Australia**

Phone 1300 847 466
Web www.visionaustralia.org.au

**Yooralla**

Phone 9666 4500
Web www.yooralla.com.au

**More information**

Visit www.acd.org.au for links to other disability-specific groups.
A positive school experience requires planning and good communication by everyone involved in your child’s education.

An effective parent-school partnership is the key to a positive school experience for your child. This requires a strong commitment by both parents and schools to working together as partners in your child’s education.

By establishing and maintaining good communication with the school, you can effectively plan for the year ahead, address issues as they arise, measure progress and celebrate your child’s achievements.

Transition to school
When planning for your child’s transition to school, allow plenty of time to look at different schools and attend open days. Make an appointment with the principal to discuss how the school can support your child.

If your child attends an early childhood intervention service, ask them about completing a Transition Learning and Development Statement which assists teachers to get to know your child before they start school.

For more information visit: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/transition/Pages/transition.aspx

Sharing Our Journey Information Kit
For families of children with severe disabilities who receive a Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services package. Phone 1800 809 834

Positive Education Planning resource
Supporting children with a disability in Victorian government primary schools
Provides information about developing positive parent-school partnerships, Student Support Groups, Individual Learning Plans, Supports for children with a disability, Raising a concern, Advocating for your child, and more. The planning principles outlined in this booklet can also be applied to other school settings.
Web www.acd.org.au

Inclusive Classroom School Resource
An online resource for teachers that includes information, videos, family stories and links to enhance the inclusion of children with a disability at school.
Web www.acd.org.au

Transition to Secondary School resource
Supporting students with a disability in the transition to Victorian government secondary schools
Transition to Secondary School provides information on all aspects of school transition from choosing a secondary school and planning for the right supports to be in place, to developing positive partnerships and raising concerns.
Web www.acd.org.au

Choosing a school
All children have a right to attend their local school. There are government schools, independent schools, Catholic schools and specialist schools. Support for children with a disability in government schools is guided by a process of regular planning by the Student Support Group. A similar planning process can be used for independent and Catholic schools. If you choose to enrol your child in two schools, this is known as dual enrolment.

Choosing a Primary School

Find a school website

My School website
Web www.myschool.edu.au

Catholic Education Commission
Phone 9267 0228
Web http://www.cecc.vic.edu.au

Independent Schools Victoria
Phone 9825 7200
Web www.is.vic.edu.au

Starting Primary School

Starting Secondary School

Home schooling
In Victoria, home schooling is a recognised alternative to attending school but you must register your child with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority. Tel 9637 2806
Web www.vrqa.vic.gov.au

Distance Education Centre Victoria
Phone 1800 133 511
Web www.distance.vic.edu.au

Home-Based Educational Support Program
Supports schools to provide students with severe disabilities with an educational program when they are unable to attend school due to the nature of their disability and health needs.
Web www.education.vic.gov.au

Victorian Parents Council
Provides information, support and advocacy about education in non-government schools.
Phone 9592 0894
Web www.vicparentsCouncil.vic.edu.au

The Bar None Community Awareness Kit for Schools
Provides information and curriculum support for teachers to enhance their knowledge and understanding of disability.
Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Student Support Group (SSG)
The Student Support Group is a group of people who come together to form a co-operative partnership to support students with additional learning needs. A Student Support Group is available to any student with additional learning needs.

Student Support Group Guidelines
Information about the aims and responsibilities of the group are detailed in the Student Support Group Guidelines published by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD).

The aims of the Student Support Group are to:

• ensure that those with the most knowledge of, and responsibility for the student, work together to establish shared goals for the student’s educational future

• plan reasonable adjustments for the student to access the curriculum

• provide educational planning that is ongoing throughout the student’s life

• monitor the progress of the student.
Web www.education.vic.gov.au
A positive school experience requires planning and good communication by everyone involved in your child's education.

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Web http://www.cecv.catholic.edu.au

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- provide educational planning that is ongoing throughout the student’s life
- monitor the progress of the student.

Web www.education.vic.gov.au
Through the Maze | www.acd.org.au

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Phone 1300 277 600
Web [www.cpsn.info](http://www.cpsn.info)

**CleftPALS Victoria**

Phone 0425 784 130
Web [www.cleftpalsvic.com](http://www.cleftpalsvic.com)

**Cri Du Chat Support Group of Australia**

Phone 9775 9962
Web [www.criduchatsn.au](http://www.criduchatsn.au)

**Cystic Fibrosis Victoria**

Phone 9686 1811

**Deaf Children Australia**

Phone 1800 645 916 or 9539 5300
Web [www.deafchildrenaustralia.org.au](http://www.deafchildrenaustralia.org.au)

**Down Syndrome Victoria**

Phone 1300 658 873 or 9486 9600
Web [www.downsyndromevictoria.org.au](http://www.downsyndromevictoria.org.au)

**Epilepsy Foundation of Victoria**

Phone 1300 852 853 or 8809 0600
Web [www.epinet.org.au](http://www.epinet.org.au)

**Fragile X Association of Australia (Vic)**

Phone 1300 394 636
Web [www.fragilex.org.au](http://www.fragilex.org.au)

**Genetic Support Network Victoria (GSNV)**

Phone 8341 6315
Web [www.gsvn.org.au](http://www.gsvn.org.au)

**Independence Australia**

Provides specialised support services for people with a disability or physical need.

Phone 1300 704 456
Web [www.independenceaustralia.com](http://www.independenceaustralia.com)

**Life’s Little Treasures Foundation**

Supports families of premature and sick babies.

Phone 1300 697 736
Web [www.lifeslittletreasures.org.au](http://www.lifeslittletreasures.org.au)

**Muscular Dystrophy Association**

Phone 9320 9555
Web [www.mda.org.au](http://www.mda.org.au)

**National Organisation for Rare Disorders (NORD) US**

Web [www.rarediseases.org](http://www.rarediseases.org)

**Prada-Willi Association of Victoria**

Phone 0451 797 284
Web [www.pws.asn.au](http://www.pws.asn.au)

**Scope Victoria**

Phone 9843 3000
Web [www.scopevic.org.au](http://www.scopevic.org.au)

**SPELD Victoria**

Supports people with dyslexia and learning difficulties.

Parent Information Line 1800 051 533
Phone 9480 4422
Web [www.speidvic.org.au](http://www.speidvic.org.au)

**Spinal Muscular Atrophy Association of Australia**

Phone 9545 3633
Web [www.smaaustralia.com](http://www.smaaustralia.com)

**Spina Bifida Foundation Victoria**

Phone 9663 0075
Web [www.sbfv.org.au](http://www.sbfv.org.au)

**Syndromes Without a Name (SWAN)**

Phone 0404 280 441

**Tourette Syndrome Association of Australia**

Phone 02 9382 3726
Web [www.tourette.org.au](http://www.tourette.org.au)

**Vision Australia**

Phone 1300 847 466
Web [www.visionaustralia.org.au](http://www.visionaustralia.org.au)

**Yooralla**

Phone 9666 4500

For more information visit [www.cpsn.info](http://www.cpsn.info) or [www.rarediseases.org](http://www.rarediseases.org) for links to other disability-specific groups.
Disability-specific groups

Joining a disability-specific group is one way to connect with other families, share information and build your support network.

There are many local and regional disability-specific groups that meet in person as well as a range of online groups and forums. Find out what works for you and how they might become part of your support network.

In addition to joining ACD, we encourage families to join any relevant statewide disability-specific groups. Our aim is to work together on issues that reach across all disabilities.

**ARAFEMI**
Supports people with a mental illness and their carers.
Phone 1300 550 265
Web www.arafemi.org.au

**Asperger’s Victoria**
Phone 9845 2766
Web www.aspergersvic.org.au

**Australian Leukodystrophy Support Group**
Phone 9845 2831 or 1800 141 400 (rural callers)
Web www.alds.org.au

**Amaze (formerly Autism Victoria)**
Phone 1300 308 699
Web www.amaze.org.au

**Autistic Family Support Association (AFSA)**
Phone 0428 938 794
Web www.afsaconnect.org.au

**Brainlink**
Phone 1800 677 579
Web www.brainlink.org.au

**Raising Children Network**
Web raisingchildren.net.au

**Health Direct Australia**
Web healthdirect.gov.au

**Better Health Channel**
Web www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

**Searching for disability and health information in the Internet**
When searching for health and medical information on the Internet:
- Check that the site is run by a reputable organisation before you trust its content.
- Check that the information is current.
- Be mindful of the difference between ‘advertising’ and ‘information’, particularly if the site is trying to sell you products or services.
- Look for balanced information that lists both risks and benefits of treatment or therapies.
- Visit the ‘Links’ page as these often include other sources of information.
- Follow up with your GP or health professional before acting on any online health or medical information.

In addition to information from your GP or health professional, the following websites provide information on a range of disabilities and conditions.

**Carer Allowance (Child)**
A supplementary payment for carers who provide additional daily care and attention for someone with a disability or who is frail aged. This payment is not income or assets tested and can be paid in addition to wages or other Centrelink payments.

**Health Care Card**
Provides help with the cost of prescription medicine under the PBS, Australian Government funded medical services and access to government concessions.

**Health Care Card & fortnightly payment**
For children who meet the eligibility criteria or whose needs are below a certain level for their age. You and your doctor must complete separate claim forms for Centrelink.

**Child Disability Assistance Payment**
An annual payment of up to $1000 for people who receive Carer Allowance for a child under 16. This payment is not income tested and can be used to purchase support, aids, therapy or respite.

**Carer Payment (Child)**
An income support payment for people who personally provide constant care and attention for someone with a severe disability, illness or who is frail aged. This payment is income and assets tested.

For more information visit humanservices.gov.au

Financial assistance

A range of financial assistance is available to families of children with a disability, most of which is administered by Centrelink.

In addition to payments and benefits that relate directly to ‘disability’ or ‘caring’, you may also be eligible for other entitlements, depending on your circumstances.

Allow plenty of time when making any application as there are often detailed eligibility criteria, forms to complete and other supporting information to prepare. It may be helpful to ask friends or family to support you with this. Speaking to other people who have already been through the process can also be helpful.

Make an appointment at your local Centrelink Customer Service Centre to discuss your situation in detail and to pick up any forms and information. You can also register to access some online Centrelink services as a customer and/or a nominee. When your child turns 16, the Centrelink payment system changes. See page 13.

**Centrelink**
Families of children with a disability may be eligible for a range of disability related payments from Centrelink including:
- Carer Allowance (Child)
- Carer Payment (Child), Carer Adjustment Payment
- Child Disability Assistance Payment
- Carer Supplement
- Carer Allowance (Adult)
- Carer Payment (Adult)
- Disability Support Pension
- Mobility Allowance
- Pensioner Education Supplement

For more information phone Centrelink on 132 717 or visit humanservices.gov.au

For more information visit humanservices.gov.au
Carer Allowance (Adult)
A supplementary payment for people who care at home for an adult with a disability or severe medical condition or who is frail aged.

Carer Payment (Adult)
An income support payment for people who cannot support themselves through participation in the workforce due to the demands of their caring role. Carer Payment is income and assets tested.

For more information visit www.centrelink.gov.au or humanservices.gov.au

Other Centrelink services
Health Care Card
Entitles you to cheaper medicines and other concessions. You or your child may be eligible for a Health Care Card if you receive certain Centrelink payments such as Carer Allowance (Child).

Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) Safety Net Card
If you reach the Safety Net threshold you can apply for a PBS Safety Net Card and your PBS medicine will be less expensive or free for the rest of the calendar year. Phone 1800 020 613 Web www.pbs.gov.au

Pensioner Concession Card
Entitles you to reduced cost medicines under the PBS and other concessions. People who receive Centrelink payments such as Carer Payment, Disability Support Pension or Parenting Payment (Single) are eligible for a Pensioner Concession Card.

Authorising a Person Permitted to Enquire Form
Authorises a person or organisation to make an enquiry, act or receive payment on your behalf. You can authorise a person to enquire on your behalf in relation to your payment and decisions regarding your payment.

More information
Turning 16 and Centrelink, 13
Net Medical Expenses Tax Offset, 31

Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme
Provides help for students who cannot go to an appropriate state school because of geographical isolation or because they have a disability or special health needs.

For more information visit humanservices.gov.au

Chronic Disease Individual Allied Health Services under Medicare
A Medicare rebate is available for up to 5 allied health services per calendar year for people with a chronic or terminal medical condition or complex care needs on referral from their GP. Phone 132 011 Web health.gov.au

Concessions
Concessions are available to eligible people on a low income who cannot pay council rates, water, gas and electricity bills. Phone the Concessions Help Line on 1800 658 521 Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au/concessions

Carer Card
The Carer Card program offers discounts from businesses, government and community organisations, free travel on public transport on Sundays and travel vouchers. Phone the Carer Card Hotline on 1800 901 958 Web carer.card.vic.gov.au

Service Clubs, Charities and Foundations
Financial assistance may also be available from service clubs, charities and foundations either directly or through an organisation.

Genetic Support Network Victoria (GSNV)
Provides information and support for families affected by a genetic condition. Phone 8341 6315 Web www.gsnv.org.au

Griefline
Telephone and online counselling service. Phone 1300 845 745 or 9935 7400 Web www.griefline.org.au

Headspace
Provides health advice, support and information for young people aged 12 to 25. Phone 9027 0100 (national office) or see website for details of headspace centres Web www.headspace.org.au

Kids Helpline
24-hour telephone and online counselling for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years. Phone 1800 551 800 Web www.kidshelp.com.au

Lifeline
24-hour telephone and online counselling. Phone 131 114 Web www.lifeline.org.au

MensLine Australia
24-hour telephone counselling service for men. Phone 1300 789 978 Web www.mensline.org.au

Mindhealthconnect website
Online gateway to mental health services. Web mindhealthconnect.org.au

MyTime groups
Provide local support and parenting information for anyone caring for a child with a disability or chronic medical condition. Phone 1800 889 997 Web www.mytime.net.au

Parentline Victoria
Telephone counselling service for parents and carers of children aged 0–18. Phone 132 289 Web www.parentline.vic.gov.au

Relationships Australia
Provides relationship support. Phone 1300 364 277 Web www.relationshiops.org.au

Sids and Kids NSW and Victoria
Provides support for families affected by the sudden death of a child. Phone 1800 240 400 Web www.sidsandkidseastcoast.org

The Australian Psychological Society
Provides contact details for psychologists. Phone 8662 3300 Web www.psychology.org.au

The Bouverie Centre
Provides family therapy and counselling. Phone 9385 5100 Web www.bouverie.org.au

The Compassionate Friends
24-hour grief support for bereaved families. Phone 9888 4944 or 1800 641 091 (rural) Web www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au

Very Special Kids
Supports children with a life limiting condition. Phone 9804 6222 or 1800 888 875 Web www.vsk.org.au

Victorian Paediatric Palliative Care Program
Supports children with life limiting conditions. Phone 9345 5374 Web www.rch.org.au/rch_palliative

Victorian Centres against Sexual Assault (CASA)
Supports victims of sexual assault. Phone 1800 806 292 Web www.casa.org.au

Women’s Domestic Violence Crisis Service
24-hour telephone support and intervention. Phone 1800 015 188 or 9322 3555 Web www.wdvs.org.au

WIRE – Women’s Information
Free information and support for women. Phone 1300 134 130 Web www.wire.org.au
Counselling & support

Support from services and from other parents is available to help you and your family through difficult times.

Every family situation is different and everyone responds differently to challenges in life. Sometimes it can help to talk about things with someone who really understands. This can happen informally by talking with other parents and friends or more formally by talking with a health professional.

Most hospitals have social workers and other services to assist families of children with a disability. There are also many private psychologists and counselors. School Welfare Officers can provide counseling for children at school. Assistance with the cost of counseling may be available through Flexible Support Packages (see page 43), your Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre (see page 42) or private practitioners covered by private health insurance. Some Community Health Centres offer low-cost counseling (see page 6).

Mental Health Care Plan

Anyone who has a mental health condition that lasts longer than six months and needs the care of several providers may benefit from a Mental Health Care Plan. The plan explains the support given by each provider and is done in consultation with your doctor.

Medicare will cover some or all of the cost of care planning by a doctor and may rebate some of the costs of specialists or other health professionals. Ask your doctor or mental health professional for more information. Web www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

National Carer Counselling Program

Provides free short-term counselling for parents and carers. Your GP or case manager can make a referral or you can contact the service yourself.

Phone 1800 242 636
Web www.carersvictoria.org.au

Amaze (formerly Autism Victoria)

Provides family counselling.

Phone 9657 1616
Web www.amaze.org.au

Beyond Blue

Provides support for depression and anxiety.

Phone 1300 224 636
Web www.beyondblue.org.au

Family Bereavement Support Programme, RCH

Provides support for bereaved families.

Phone 9345 6111
Web www.rch.org.au/socialwork

Family Planning Victoria

Provides information about sexual and reproductive health care.

Phone 9257 0100
Web www.fpva.org.au

Family Relationships Advice Line

Provides support for family relationship issues.

Phone 1800 050 321
Web www.familyrelationships.gov.au

Family Relationship Services for Carers

Provides support for carers around future planning. Phone the Family Relationship Advice Line on 1800 050 321

Web www.frsa.org.au

Health & medical

A reliable source of health and medical information for your child and family is your local doctor or GP.

Your GP may also refer you to a specialist such as a paediatrician or other health professional. Developing a good relationship with health professionals relies on good communication. Ask for things to be explained in words you understand and don’t be afraid to ask for information to be repeated. You can also ask for more information or a second opinion.

Accelerated Care through Emergency (ACE) Program, RCH

Provides care co-ordination and 24 hour phone support to assist families to manage their child at home or to fast track admission to RCH.

Phone 9345 6159 (office) or 0409 882 197 (on call)

Web www.rch.org.au/ace/programs

Safety Resource Centre, RCH

Phone 9345 5085
Web www.rch.org.au/safetycentre

Family Resource and Respite Centre, RCH

Phone 9345 4662 or 4660
Web www.rch.org.au/frc

RCH@Home

Provides support services in the home and community for children aged 0-18 years.

Phone 9345 5695 (Parkville) or 9345 9410 (Hawthorn)
Web www.rch.org.au/hacc/

Gastrostomy Information Support Service

Phone 9843 2011
Web www.scopevic.org.au

Home Enteral Nutrition (HEN) Program

Ask your GP or hospital for more information.

NURSE-ON-CALL

Phone 1300 606 024

Through the Maze | www.acd.org.au
Housing & accommodation

Housing support can include home modifications as well as options for long-term accommodation for young adults with a disability.

Creating and maintaining a place to call home can involve a combination of modifications and support services.

**Home Renovation Service**
Provides free home inspections for homeowners or renters who hold either a current Commonwealth Health Care Card or a Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card and have a disability or are permanently caring for someone with a disability. Home owners may be eligible for financial assistance with a Home Renovation loan. Phone Archicentre Home Services on 9815 1900 or 1300 136 513 Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au

**Outreach Support**
Provides up to 15 hours per week of home and community based support so that people with a disability can live outside staffed residential accommodation, remain living in their own homes or move to more independent living arrangements. Phone your regional Disability Intake and Response Service on 1800 783 783.

**Social Housing Advocacy & Support Program (SHASP)**
Provides support to public housing tenants to maintain their housing and preve nt homelessness. Phone the Tenants Union of Victoria on 1800 068 860 Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au

**Housing Choices Australia**
Creates safe, quality, affordable housing for people who are disadvantaged. Phone 1300 312 447 Web www.hcau.org.au

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**Accommodation options for people with a disability include:**
- Support to live in your own home, or the family home through an Individual Support Package
- Support for younger people at risk of admission to residential aged care (my future my choice)
- Shared Supported Accommodation

Phone your regional Disability Intake and Response Service on 1800 783 783.

**Movable Units**
Self-contained units that can be set up in the back yard of a friend or relatives home. Phone 1800 460 505 Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au

**EW Tipping Foundation**
Provides in-home and community based services for people with a disability. Phone 9564 1000 Web www.tipping.org.au

**Special Disability Trusts**
A Special Disability Trust can be set up by parents and immediate family to plan for the future care and accommodation needs of a person with a severe disability. Phone 1800 734 750 Web www.humanservices.gov.au

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**More information**
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Communication & speech

All children can be supported to communicate their thoughts, feelings, needs and dreams, and to interact with the world around them.

Children with complex communication needs may be able to communicate using sign and gesture, pictures, technology, speech therapy or a combination of these.

**Electronic Communication Devices Scheme**
A state-wide service supporting people who have no speech or speech that is difficult to understand, to buy speech generating devices and software, administered through the Statewide equipment program (SWEP). See page 15. Phone 9362 6111 Web www.yooralla.com.au

**ComTEC**
Provides an advisory service, equipment library, online resources, education and training. Phone 9362 6111 or 1300 885 886 (regional) Web www.yooralla.com.au

**Communication Resource Centre, SCOPE**
Provides information, resources and services about communication disabilities. Phone 9843 2000 Web www.scopevic.org.au

**Key Word Sign Australia**
Phone 02 4921 6293 Web www.newcastle.edu.au/research-centre/special-education/key-word-sign-australia/

**Australian Hearing Services**
Phone 1300 412 512 Web www.hearing.com.au

**Deaf Children Australia**
Phone 1800 645 916 Web www.deafchildrenaustralia.org.au

**Communication Rights Australia**
Phone 9555 8552 or 0948 Web www.caus.com.au

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**Speech pathology**
Speech pathologists can assist with any aspect of communication including speech, writing, reading, signs, symbols and gestures as well as with difficulties swallowing food and drink. Children can access speech therapy through early childhood intervention services (ECIS), school or specialist providers. For more information contact Speech Pathology Australia (Vic) on 1300 368 835 or 9642 4899 or visit www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au

**Anne McDonald Centre**
Phone 9509 6324 Web www.annemcdonaldcentre.org.au

**National Relay Service**
Phone Voice 1800 555 660 TTY 1800 555 630 or SMS 0416 001 350 Web relayservice.com.au

**Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)**
Phone 9314 5374 Web www.pecsaustralia.com

**Telstra Disability Equipment Program**
Phone 1800 068 424 or TTY 1800 808 981 Web www.telstra.com.au

**Vision Australia**
Phone 1300 847 466 Web www.visionaustralia.org

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More information
Aids and equipment, 15 Disability-specific groups, 24
Child care

If you need to access child care, the child care service may be eligible for additional support.

Child care is available to all families, including families of children with a disability. The cost of care will depend on the type of service you choose. You may be eligible for Child Care Benefit, Child Care Rebate, Jobs, Education and Training (JET) Child Care Fee Assistance, Family Tax Benefit, Parental Leave Pay or Baby Bonus and other government payments. For more information phone the Department of Human Services (DHS) on 136 150 or visit www.humanservices.gov.au

Family day care is where children are looked after in the home of an approved carer. In-home care is for families who cannot access a standard child care service or where child care services do not meet their needs. Outside school hours care (also known as Before and After School Care or Vacation Care) is for primary aged children or children of any age in special or emergency situations.

Inclusion Support Subsidy

Child care services may be eligible for additional support to create an inclusive environment for all children through the Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP). A Professional Support Co-ordinator will work with the child care service to develop a Service Support Plan that identifies the need for additional support. This can include extra staff, resources, training, equipment or an extra payment for home-based carers.

Once a Service Support Plan is approved, the child care service can apply for funding through the Inclusion Support Subsidy which is paid to the child care service. In addition to the Inclusion Support Subsidy, child care services may also be able to access additional support through Flexible Support Funding, Bicultural Support, Specialist Equipment and the General Resource Library.

Information & advocacy

A number of statewide and national organisations provide disability information and advocacy.

Information

There are many ways to find and access information. This may include reading print publications, online resources, using telephone information lines and finding out about services and support by word of mouth.

Most local libraries provide public Internet access and assistance with learning how to use the Internet to find information. Most websites have a ‘search’ function that you can use by entering key words that describe the information you are looking for.

Disability-specific groups provide information and some may also be able to assist with advocacy. See page 21.

Many regional community services organisations publish their own information directories with details of local services and support.

Regional Parent Support Co-ordinator

Provides information about local services and support. See page 48.

Better Health Channel

Web www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Raising Children Network website

Web raisingchildren.net.au

Health Direct Australia

Web www.healthdirect.gov.au

Infoxchange Australia

Phone 9418 7400
Web www.infoxchange.net.au

MyChild website

Web www.mychild.gov.au

Self Advocacy Resource Unit (SARU)

Provides information and resources to self advocacy groups.
Phone SARU on 9639 6856
Web www.saru.net.au

Disability Advocacy Resource Unit (DARU)

Provides resource to the disability advocacy sector in Victoria.
Phone DARU on 9639 5807
Web www.daru.org.au

Community Information and Support Victoria

Phone 9672 2000
Web www.cisvic.org.au

Parent to Parent: Raising your child with special needs resource
Web www.deakin.edu.au/dhs/parent_to_parent

DIVINE website

An online community for and by people with a disability.
Web www.divine.vic.gov.au

Kids Health Info Bookshop, RCH

Sells books and co-ordinates a listing of Victorian parent support groups.
Phone 9345 6429
Web www.rch.org.au/chas

Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS)

Phone 9419 3000
Web www.vahs.org.au
Advocacy
Action for More Independence and Dignity in Accommodation (AMI DA)  
Phone 9650 2722  
Web www.amida.org.au

Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities (ADEC)  
Phone 9480 1666 or 1800 626 078  
Web www.adec.org.au

Belonging Matters  
Phone 9739 8333  
Web www.belongingmatters.org

Blind Citizens Australia  
Phone 9654 1400 or 1800 033 660  
Web bca.org.au

Brain Injury Matters  
Phone 9639 7222  
Web www.bim.org.au

Children with Disability Australia  
Phone 9482 1130 or 1800 222 660  
(regional or interstate)  
Web www.bim.org.au

Communication Rights Australia  
Phone 9555 8552 or 8948  
Web www.cda.org.au

Defence Special Needs Support Group  
Phone 1800 037 674  
Web dsnsig.org.au

Disability Justice Advocacy  
Phone 1800 808 126 or 9474 0077  
Web www.justadvocacy.com

Disability Resources Centre (DRC)  
Phone 9671 3000  
Web www.drc.org.au

FKA Children’s Services  
Phone 9428 4471  
Web www.fka.com.au

Leadership Plus  
Phone 9489 2999  
Web www.leadershipplus.com

National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN)  
Phone 8073 3300  
Web napcan.org.au

Social Security Rights Victoria  
Phone 9481 0355 or 1800 094 164 (rural callers)  
Web www.ssvr.org.au

Parents Victoria  
Phone 9380 2158 or 1800 032 023 (rural callers)  
Web www.parents.victoria.asn.au

Star Victoria  
Phone 9650 2730  
Web www.starvictoria.org.au

Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability (VALID)  
Phone 9416 4003 or 1800 655 570 (rural callers)  
Web www.valid.org.au

VI CSEG New Futures  
Phone 9383 2533  
Web www.vicesegnewfutures.org.au

Victorian Aboriginal Education Association (VAEAI)  
Phone 9481 0800  
Web www.vaeai.org.au

Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS)  
Phone 9267 3755 (co-ordinator)  
9267 3733 (individual advocate)  
1300 727 176 (for rural callers)  
TTY via the National Relay Service 133 677  
SMS 0412 814 851  
Web www.ydas.org.au

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The Senior Practitioner
The Senior Practitioner understands that most families and carers find it challenging to care for a child with a disability who shows behaviours of concern, and may sometimes use restraints and seclusion as a last resort.

The Office of the Senior Practitioner can work with families and service providers to find positive alternative solutions to support children in a better way than the use of restraints or seclusion. The Senior Practitioner’s vision is for an inclusive and safe community that supports people to achieve dignity without restraints.

The Senior Practitioner is responsible for protecting the rights of persons who are subject to restrictive interventions and compulsory treatment and that appropriate standards in relation to restrictive interventions and compulsory treatment are complied with. Disability Act 2006, s.23 (2) (a)

In Victoria, the Disability Act 2006 states that restraint and seclusion should only be used where the person poses a risk of harm to themselves or others, and restraining or secluding is the least restrictive option available.

The Disability Act 2006 defines three kinds of restrictive practices: mechanical, chemical and seclusion.

An online application for a review by the Office of the Senior Practitioner of matters regarding support provided to a person with a disability subject to restrictive interventions or compulsory treatment in receipt of a disability service is available on the DHS website.

For more information phone 9096 8427 or visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Signposts for Building Better Behaviour  
Helps families manage and prevent behaviours of concern in children aged 3 to 15 years who have developmental delay or a disability.  
Phone 8660 3562  
Web www.signposts.net.au

Triple P Parenting Program  
Provides parenting and family support to enhance parent knowledge, skills and confidence in raising pre-adolescent children.  
Phone 07 3236 1212  
Web www.triplep-parenting.net

Brainlink  
Provides information and programs for individuals and carers affected by an acquired brain injury.  
Phone 1800 677 579  
Web www.brainlink.org.au

Statewide Acquired Brain Injury Paediatric Consultants  
Assists people aged 0 to 18 with an acquired brain injury to access services and support.  
Phone 9487 9250  
Web www.melbournecitymission.org.au

Melbourne Case Management Services  
Supports people aged 5 to 65 who have received compensation as a result of an acquired brain injury and who have an Individualised Support Package or are able to self-fund services.  
Phone 9487 9242  
Web www.melbournecitymission.org.au

Statewide Acquired Brain Injury Case Management Service  
Supports people aged 18 to 64 who have had an ABI for less than two years and received no compensation as a result of an acquired brain injury.  
Phone 8625 9945  
Web www.melbournecitymission.org.au

More information  
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**Behaviour**

Most behaviour is an attempt to communicate some kind of emotional, intellectual or physical need.

Most children display inappropriate behaviour at some time. It can be a healthy part of growing up and testing the boundaries of what is acceptable. In some children, severe behaviours may indicate an underlying issue or some other difficulty. Behaviours of concern can affect a child’s ability to cope with stress, solve problems and enjoy everyday activities with family and friends. Acting early to understand and address the behaviour can prevent more serious issues later in life.

Support is available for children who have not been diagnosed with a specific disability and for children who have mental health issues in addition to other disabilities. If your child attends an early childhood intervention service, they may be able to assist with behaviour support. See page 9.

The best outcomes are usually achieved when everyone supporting the child takes the time to identify the causes of the behaviour and develops a positive approach based on the child’s strengths and abilities.

**Student Support Services**

Schools have a responsibility to support students to behave appropriately and to provide a safe environment for both staff and students. Student Support Services Officers in schools can include guidance officers, psychologists, social workers, visiting teachers and curriculum consultants.

In addition to addressing a student’s learning needs, planning with the Student Support Group can also include developing a Behaviour Support Plan. See page 27.

**Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)**

Provide free assessment and treatment of children and adolescents experiencing significant psychological distress or mental illness. Assistance can include crisis assessment, case management, individual, family and group therapy, parent support and medication.


**Mental Health Care Plan**

Your GP can make referrals to other services and support such as a psychologist, psychiatrist or paediatrician. See page 22.

**Behaviour Support Services**

Behaviour support services deliver therapeutic strategies to prevent the occurrence of behaviours of concern. These are behaviours that are a barrier to a person participating in and contributing to their community and pose a risk to the health and safety of a person and the community. This can include aggressive, self-injurious, anti social or dangerous behaviours.

Behaviour support services are delivered by practitioners in DHS, community service organisations or private practitioners. Behaviour support services teams (sometimes know as Specialist Services Teams or Behaviour Intervention Services Teams) use techniques that maximise quality of life and reduce behaviours of concern.

Phone your regional Disability Intake and Response Service on 1800 783 783.

**Legal services**

Legal services may be able to assist with a range of issues including discrimination, service quality, guardianship, wills and estate planning.

There can be many reasons for seeking legal advice. If you have a concern about the quality of a service or want to make a complaint, it’s best to approach the service in question first to give them an opportunity to resolve the issue before you seek legal advice. See page 38.

**Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission**

Provides a free telephone Enquiry Line and an impartial no-cost complaint handling process for people who may have experienced discrimination, victimisation, sexual harassment, racial or religious vilification.

Phone 1300 292 153 or 9032 3583 or TTY 1300 289 621


**AED Legal Centre**

Advocates to assist people with a disability in employment, education and training.

Phone 9639 4333

Web [www.aed.org.au](http://www.aed.org.au)

**Attorney-General’s Department**

Provides information about Australia’s legal and justice system, including family law and disability discrimination.


**Child Protection Crisis Line**

24-hour emergency service for immediate concerns about the safety of a child.

Phone 131 278

**Disability Discrimination Legal Service Inc**

Statewide independent community legal centre that specialises in disability discrimination.

Phone 9654 8644 or 1300 882 872 (rural callers) or TTY 9654 6817


**Disability Act 2006**

The Disability Act 2006 provides a framework for a whole-of-government approach to enable people with a disability to actively participate in the community.

The Act is guided by principles of human rights and citizenship and aims to ensure that services are of a high quality and accountable to people with a disability.

You can view the Act online at [www.legislation.vic.gov.au](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au)

**Federation of Community Legal Centres**

Provides legal information and resources and contact details for Community Legal Centres in Victoria.

Phone 9652 1500

Web [www.fclc.org.au](http://www.fclc.org.au)

**Law Help Guide**

A directory of free and low cost legal services, complaint or dispute settlement serviced and private lawyers.

Phone 9604 8100


**The Law Handbook Online**

A practical guide to the law in Victoria.

Autism spectrum disorders (ASD)

Children with autism spectrum disorders may need extra support with behaviour, communication and social skills.

Autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) can cause impairments in social interaction and communication and are often associated with unusual behaviours and interests. ASDs are described according to a spectrum that ranges from mild to severe. Children with ASD can benefit from early support so that they can reach their full potential.

Amaze (formerly Autism Victoria)
Amaze is the peak body for ASD in Victoria and provides information, services, counselling, training, events and workshops to families and professionals. Phone 1300 308 699
Web www.amaze.org.au

Helping Children with Autism package
The Australian Government’s Helping Children with Autism package is delivered by a range of Commonwealth government departments that provide support including Autism Advisors, funding for early intervention services, PlayConnect Playgroups, Early Days family workshops, an ASD website, and professional development for teachers and school staff.

Autism Advisors
Following diagnosis, families can contact an Autism Advisor for information about eligibility, funding and accessing support. Medicare items for diagnosis and treatment planning are available for children under the age of 13, and for treatment of children under the age of 15. Phone Autism Advisor Line 1300 424 499
Web www.amaze.org.au

Victoria Autism State Plan
The Department of Human Services, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Amaze/Autism Victoria worked together in partnership to develop the Autism State Plan that was launched in May 2009, following a statewide consultation process involving people with autism spectrum disorder, their families and other stakeholders. Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au

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Raising Children Network
ASD website
Provides evidence based information about autism spectrum disorders including, diagnosis, assessment and therapies. Web raisingchildren.net.au/autism

PlayConnect Playgroups
Phone 1800 171 882
Web www.playconnect.com.au

Early Days Workshops
Phone 1300 307 909
Web www.amaze.org.au

Positive Partnerships Workshops
Web www.positivepartnerships.com.au

For more information phone the ASD Support Helpdesk on 1800 778 581
Web www.dss.gov.au

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More information
Early childhood services, 9
Behaviour, 18

Office of the Public Advocate (OPA)
The OPA is an independent body that works towards a just and inclusive society that values, respects, protects and promotes the dignity and human rights of all persons. Services include:
• Advice Service
• Advocate/Guardian Program
• Community Guardian Program
• Community Visitors Program
• Independent Third Person Program
Phone 1300 309 337
Web www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au

Commission for Children and Young People
The Commission promotes continuous improvement and innovation in:
• policies and practices relating to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people generally, and in particular those who are vulnerable
• the provision of out of home care services for children

The Commission is not an official complaints or review body, but is able to provide information and assistance to people with concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Phone 1300 782 978
Web www.ccyp.vic.gov.au

If you have concerns about the immediate safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, you are advised to call 000 or the Department of Human Services (DHS) office nearest to where the child or young person lives. If you are concerned about the services delivered by DHS you can call the DHS complaints line on 1300 884 706.

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)
VCAT can make decisions about disputes and has a number of ‘lists’ (sections) which specialise in particular types of cases. Phone 9628 9900 (Health - Privacy/Disability Act)
Web www.vcat.vic.gov.au

Administration and guardianship
Administration is where a person is appointed to make legal and financial decisions for a person with a disability.

Guardianship is where a person is appointed to make personal and lifestyle decisions for an adult (aged 18+) with a disability.

The appointment of an administrator or guardian can occur on application to the VCAT Guardianship List if it is the ‘least restrictive’ option.

For more information phone the Office of the Public Advocate on 1300 309 337 or visit www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au

Victoria Legal Aid
Provides free legal advice and publications including ‘Securing their future’ for parents of children with a decision-making disability. Phone 1300 792 387
Web www.legalaid.vic.gov.au

Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service
A Community Legal Centre that provides advice only on disability related legal issues. Phone 1800 014 111
Web www.villamanta.org.au

Working with Children Check
The Working with Children Check helps protect children from harm by preventing those who pose a risk to children from working with them in either paid or voluntary work. Phone 1300 652 879
Web www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au

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Local government

Your local government council or shire is a good place to start for information about local services and support.

Local councils and shires provide a range of child and family services including:

- Home and Community Care (HACC) program (respite care)
- Maternal and Child Health Services
- Child care
- Kindergarten services
- Libraries and toy libraries
- School holiday programs

Most councils and shires publish information directories with contact details of local community groups and services. These directories are often available in print and online. For more information contact your local council or shire.

Disability Action Plan
Local governments play an important role in providing an accessible environment for all members of the community.

As part of the Victorian State Disability Plan 2013–2016, all local governments must develop a Disability Action Plan that supports building an inclusive community for people with a disability. These plans are usually available on council websites or from council offices.

A Disability Advisory Committee oversees implementation of the plan and provides a forum for discussion of issues that affect people with a disability.

The committee is open to people with a disability, their families and carers. For more information contact your local council or shire.

MetroAccess, RuralAccess and Deafaccess Programs
These programs aim to build the capacity of local communities to be welcoming and inclusive of people with a disability. There are MetroAccess and RuralAccess workers in each local government area who work to develop opportunities for greater participation and inclusion of people with a disability. Deafaccess workers are based in five community organisations across rural Victoria.

The programs are initiatives of the Victorian State Disability Plan 2013–2016. For more information contact your local council or shire.

Local Government
Provides links to council websites and information about local government.
Phone 1300 366 356

Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)
The peak body representing local councils. Provides links to council websites and information about local government.
Phone 9667 5555
Web www.mav.asn.au

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Making a complaint

When making a complaint, it’s important to make sure you have all the facts and to follow the right process when trying to resolve the issue.

There may be times when you want to appeal a decision, request a review of your situation or make a complaint about some aspect of the care or service your child or family receives. Your feedback can also help to improve service quality for other families in the future.

As part of the Disability Act 2006, all Registered Disability Service Providers must have a complaints management process in place. Ask the service provider for information about this process to help determine the best way to resolve your complaint.

Complaints about the provision of disability services can be made directly to the service provider and to the Disability Services Commissioner. If you’re unable to resolve your complaint or raise it with the service provider, the Disability Services Commissioner can assist.

Quality Framework for Disability Services
Ensures that services and supports for people with a disability are regularly reviewed and meet agreed standards. Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Office of Health Services Commissioner
Provides information and assistance to resolve complaints about health service providers. Phone 1300 582 113 or TTY 1800 806 314 (regional) Web www.health.vic.gov.au/hsc

Office of the Senior Practitioner
Works with families and service providers to find positive alternative solutions to support children in a better way than the use of restraints or seclusion. Phone 9096 8427 or 1800 806 314 (regional) Web www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au

Disability Services Commissioner
The Disability Services Commissioner is an independent body that provides advice and assistance in the resolution of complaints about Victorian disability services. Phone 1800 677 342 (free call) or TTY 1300 726 563 Web www.odsc.vic.gov.au

National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline
A telephone service for reporting cases of neglect or abuse of people with a disability. Phone 1800 880 052 or TTY 1800 301 130 Web www.disabilityhotline.net.au

Victorian Ombudsman
Investigates complaints about Victorian Government authorities, including the Department of Human Services (DHS), councils, schools, universities and TAFEs. In most cases, you will need to make your complaint to the authority first to allow them to resolve the issue. If you are still not satisfied, you can then contact the Victorian Ombudsman. Phone 9613 6222 or 1800 806 314 (regional) Web ombudsman.vic.gov.au

Commonwealth Ombudsman
Investigates complaints about Australian Government departments and agencies in a similar way to the Victorian Ombudsman. Phone 1300 362 072 Web www.ombudsman.gov.au

Aids & equipment

Aids and equipment such as wheelchairs, standing frames and continence products may assist your child with daily living tasks and independence.

Depending on your child’s and family's needs, a therapist may recommend an item or piece of equipment or you may have to find it yourself. Applications for aids and equipment often require an assessment and report from a therapist or health professional.

State-wide equipment program (SWEP)
SWEP provides people who have a permanent or long-term disability with subsidised aids, equipment, home and vehicle modifications to enhance their independence and facilitate community participation. SWEP is funded by the Department of Human Services (DHS) and administered by Ballarat Health Services.

SWEP incorporates the following programs:
- Aids and Equipment Program (A&EP)
- Continece Aids (CA)
- DisabilityCare Australia (DCA)
- Domiciliary Oxygen Program (DOP)
- Supported Accommodation Equipment Assistance Scheme (SAEAS)
- Top-up fund for children (TFC)
- Vehicle Modification Subsidy Scheme (VMSS)

All programs require your child’s treating therapist to confirm that your child has a permanent or long-term disability by completing page 4 of the A&EP application form. In many cases, the SWEP subsidy does not cover the full cost of the item and you will need to pay the difference.

Refer to the SWEP website for eligibility requirements and the A&EP guidelines.

Aids and Equipment Program (A&EP)
SWEP provides subsidised aids, equipment and home modifications to enhance independence, community participation and to support families and carers in their caring role. Refer to the A&EP guidelines on the SWEP website for eligibility requirements.

Specialist Equipment: Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP)
If your child has ongoing high support needs, in addition to the Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS), childcare services may also be able to access additional support through specialist equipment available on loan from a Specialist Equipment Provider. Gowrie Victoria currently contracts SWEP to provide specialist equipment. For more information visit www.gowrievictoria.org.au/Support/SpecialistEquipment

Contidence Aids (CA)
Subsidised continence aids are available to people who are incontinent as a result of their disability. SWEP will fund continence aids but it will not fund disposable continence pants or pads, drip collectors, colostomy appliances or urinals. People receiving continence products from SWEP may also be eligible for funding from other government continence programs at the same time.
Accessibility

People of all ages and abilities have a right to be included and participate in the community.

Accessibility is about being able to fully participate in life. When thinking about services and support, remember that the full range of services in the community is available to all families. This can include local sporting clubs, events and a wide range of other activities. Your family’s participation also helps to broaden the community’s diversity and understanding and acceptance of varying abilities. Local governments play an important role in providing an accessible environment for everyone in the community. See page 37.

Victorian Building Authority
Oversees the building control system in Victoria and provides information about accessibility in the built environment as well as a complaints service. Phone 1300 815 127 Web www.vba.vic.gov.au

SCOPE Building Advisory Service (BAS)
Advises on access related issues in new and existing buildings and community facilities. Phone 9843 2094 Web www.scopevic.org.au

Play Australia
Works to promote safe and developmentally appropriate play experiences for children. Phone 8846 4111 Web www.playaustralia.org.au

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) National
A free 24-hour, seven day a week interpreting service that can assist non-English speakers who need to communicate in English. Phone 131 450 Web www.tsnational.gov.au

Companion Card
The Companion Card is issued to people with a significant, permanent disability, who can demonstrate that they are unable to access most community activities and venues without attendant care support. A companion can be a paid or unpaid assistant or carer, which may include a friend or family member. The card is recognised by participating organisations called Affiliates. Terms and conditions for both Affiliates and cardholders are available on the Companion Card website. Phone 1800 650 611 or TTY 1800 898 888 Web www.companioncard.org.au

The Victorian State Disability Plan includes the Victorian Government’s ideas to make life better for people with a disability, their families and carers. The plan is part of a set of three documents:

- Victorian State Disability Plan: implementation plan 2013 and 2014

Phone 1300 880 043 Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Raising a concern at your child’s school
- Concerns about an issue or incident at school are best addressed by speaking to the teacher in the first instance.
- Get all the facts and be clear about what outcome you are seeking.
- Concerns about your child’s program are best addressed by the Student Support Group.
- Concerns about staff or personnel should be directed to the principal.
- Find out if there are any policies or guidelines for addressing your concern.
- Expected standards of behaviour are outlined in Student Engagement Policy Guidelines available from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) website.
- Organise an appropriate time and place for any discussion.
- Put serious concerns in writing to the principal.
- Focus on moving towards positive change.
- Make sure any changes are reviewed and adjusted if needed.
- If there is no positive change, contact DEECD and/or an independent agency.

More information is available from www.education.vic.gov.au. Also see our Positive Education Planning resource on page 26, and DEECD Regional Office contact details on page 49.

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More information is available from www.education.vic.gov.au. Also see our Positive Education Planning resource on page 26, and DEECD Regional Office contact details on page 49.
Parent advocacy

It is common for parents to act as advocates for their child in many situations, even though you might not think of it as advocacy.

An advocate is someone who can support, assist or represent another person to achieve a positive outcome in a difficult situation or meeting.

As a parent, you have the most experience and personal knowledge about your child. If you have a strong instinct about what could improve your child’s situation, be firm and persistent. Remember that you are your child’s best advocate and you do not have to apologise for standing up for your child.

Sometimes it isn’t easy being an advocate for your child. It can be hard work! It may mean developing new skills, learning new words and terminology and asking lots of questions.

With persistence, and the right support, parent advocacy can help you work towards positive outcomes for your child and family.

Individual advocacy is where someone assists you to advocate for the needs of your child and family or takes up a matter on your behalf. Advocates can include friends, family, other parents or professional advocates.

You can take an advocate with you to any meeting. However, to comply with Student Support Group Guidelines, advocates attending an education Program Support Group meeting must not be paid a fee.

Systemic advocacy involves telling governments and decision-makers about changes required to improve the service system for families of children with a disability.

A range of organisations provide information as well as individual and systemic advocacy. See page 33.

Tips for being an effective advocate

- Have a clear idea about the outcome you are seeking.
- Prioritise your concerns in case there isn’t time to address them all at once.
- Find out who is responsible for the decision and action you are seeking.
- Think about issues that others may raise and how you might respond.
- Don’t always expect conflict but be prepared with a positive strategy if there is conflict.
- Listen to other points of view.
- Be prepared to negotiate and accept a compromise if an alternative solution is just as effective.
- Try to stay calm.
- Focus on getting a positive outcome for your child.
- Follow up verbal agreements in writing if needed.
- Keep accurate records about your efforts relating to a specific issue.
- Ask a friend or professional to help you if you need support.
- Seek further information and advice from an advocacy organisation if you need to.
Young adults

The transition from school to adult life can include further study, employment, volunteer work, training or a combination of these.

There is a range of community and specialist supports available to help young people with a disability find work, undertake further study or to participate in community activities once they finish school. Planning for the transition from school to adult life should focus on your child’s goals and aspirations and be guided by people who have knowledge of your child’s abilities and needs.

Programs and supports to help students with a disability find future pathways while still at school include the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), Special School Programs, Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETIS), Pre-apprenticeship programs, School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships, and Workplace learning.

Centrelink can assist people with a disability with referral to employment services and advice on disability related payments. Tertiary education institutions in Victoria have a Disability Liaison Officer or equivalent who can assist students with a disability to choose and complete a course of study.

Managed Individualised Pathways (MIPs)

Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) co-ordinators and careers teachers can support students to explore a range of post-school options while they are still at school. This may include developing a post-school plan to help students identify the things they are good at, interested in, enjoy doing and the supports that might be needed to achieve life goals.

Ask your child’s school for more information.


Exploring the Possibilities booklet

Provides a guide to transition planning from school to post-school options.

Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Futures for Young Adults (FFYA) Program

The Futures for Young Adults (FFYA) Program is funded by the Department of Human Services (DHS) and provides information and support to young people with a disability leaving school who need additional transition support. Eligible young people can receive assistance from a transition planner to set goals and develop a Transition Plan. A Safety Net provision allows young people to get advice from a transition planner at any time within a three-year eligibility period until they turn 21.

Transition to Employment initiative

Assists young people with a disability leaving school who want to get a job but who are not yet ready to move into employment, providing assistance through a Commonwealth employment program.

Phone your regional Disability Intake and Response Service on 1800 783 783

Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au

National Disability Co-ordination Program

Assists people with a disability to access post-school education, training and employment.

Web www.ndcc.vic.gov.au

Inner Melbourne VET Cluster (IMVC)

Career and transition information and support services for young people with a disability.

Web www.imvc.com.au

Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre

Phone 1300 364 133

Web www.vtac.edu.au

Recreation

When thinking about recreation opportunities for your child, start by identifying what your child enjoys doing.

As for any child, recreation for a child with a disability can involve many different things. A good place to start is by looking at recreation opportunities in your local area that are available to all children.

Access for All Abilities — First Point of Call Service

Connects people with a disability to sports and recreation opportunities.

Phone 1800 222 842

Web www.aaavic.org.au

Reclink Australia

Provides and promotes sport and art programs for people experiencing disadvantage.

Phone 9419 6672

Web www.reclink.org

Disability Sport and Recreation

SportRec Access Line 1800 234 648

Web www.sportrec.org.au

Arts Access Victoria

Phone 9699 8299

Web artsaccess.com.au

Australian Camps Association

Phone 9365 7100

Web www.auscamps.asn.au

Nican

Provides information about recreation, tourism, sport and the arts for people with a disability.

Phone 1800 806 769

Web www.nican.com.au

People Outdoors

Phone 9365 7150

Web www.peopleoutdoors.org.au

Playground Finder

Web www.playgroundfinder.com

Interchange Victoria

Provides respite and recreational experiences for children with a disability.

Phone 1300 300 436

Web www.interchange.org.au

Riding Develops Abilities

Phone 9258 4730

Web www.rivm.asn.au

Sailability Victoria

Web www.s4e.org.au/vic

Contact Yachting Victoria on 9597 0066

Web www.yachtingvictoria.com.au

School holiday programs

Contact your local council or shire.

Special Olympics Victoria

Phone 9877 2769


Swimming Victoria

Phone 9686 5222

Web www.swimmingvictoria.asn.au

VICSRAPID

Phone 9926 1380

Web www.vicsrapid.websyte.com.au

Victorian Electric Wheelchair Sports Association

Phone 9574 8335

Web www.vewsa.com.au

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Respite care

Respite care refers to a wide range of services that can give families a break from the caring role and provide a positive experience for children.

Families of children with a disability can use respite in a number of different ways. It can involve planned, regular respite as well as assistance for one-off emergency situations. Care can be available for a few hours, overnight, a few days or weeks.

In-home respite is where a paid carer comes into your home. Out-of-home respite is where your child attends a service and participates in activities outside the home under the supervision of a paid care worker.

Most respite services are provided through state government and community service organisations. Some of these organisations publish regional respite information booklets. The cost of care will depend on the type of respite and the service. For information about local respite services visit www.respitevictoria.org.au

Home and Community Care (HACC) program
A joint federal-state program that provides services to young people with a disability and their carers and people who are frail aged. HACC services can include a combination of in-home respite and personal care. For more information contact your local council or shire or HACC team for assessment.

Interchange Victoria
Provides respite and recreational experiences for children with a disability. Phone 1300 300 436 Web www.interchange.org.au

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Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres
The federal government funds a network of Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres that provide information and referral to respite services including emergency and after-hours care. Each region has an allocation of flexible respite funding to provide respite not available through other programs. Phone 1800 052 222 or 1800 059 059 (after hours) Web www.commcarelink.health.gov.au.

Extended Families Australia
Provides opportunities for volunteers to support children with a disability and their families in a friendship and companionship role. Phone 9355 8848 Web www.extendedfamilies.org.au

Foster Care Association of Victoria
Provides information and support to families who care for children in foster care. Phone 9416 4292 Web www.fcav.org.au

Very Special Kids
Supports children with a life limiting condition. Phone 9804 6222 or 1800 888 875 Web www.vsk.org.au

Disability services

Disability services can be provided by government, community services organisations and other agencies.

Depending on your child’s age, development and your family’s needs, you may access a number of different disability services. By connecting with one of these services you can begin to identify the range of other supports available to you and your family. Many disability service providers publish directories of services covering respite care and recreation.

Registered Disability Service Providers
Community service organisations funded by the Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide disability services must be approved as a Registered Disability Service Provider and comply with the Disability Act 2006. A list of Registered Disability Service Providers is available on the DHS website www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Disability Services, Department of Human Services
Disability Services of the Department of Human Services (DHS) provide a range of specialist services including, assessment, information and referral, service planning, case management and behaviour support.

Access to these services is via your regional Disability Intake and Response Service. When you contact Disability Intake and Response, an Intake and Response Worker will assess your needs and access the eligibility of your child and family for services.

The Disability Act 2006 defines disability as an impairment that may be sensory, physical, neurological or an acquired brain injury, which results in substantially reduced capacity in at least one of the areas of self-care, self-management, mobility or communication. This can include a range of disabilities including autism spectrum disorders.

Disability Intake and Response Service
Your regional Disability Intake and Response Service provides information about community supports and services for people with a disability, their families and carers. Phone 1800 783 783 Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Case Management
Your regional Disability Intake and Response Service or a community service organisation may assign a Case Manager to work with you to identify services and support to meet the needs of your child and family. A Case Manager can work with you to implement a support plan and assist by providing information, referral to services, arranging visits, dispute resolution and service co-ordination. One outcome of this planning may be access to a Flexible Support Package or Individual Support Package. See page 43.

Transport Accident Commission (TAC) Case Management
Some case management may be available through TAC for children whose disability is the result of a road accident. Phone 1300 654 329 or 1800 332 556 (rural callers) Web www.tac.vic.gov.au

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Disability Act 2006, 35
Disability Services Commissioner, 38
Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS)

Supports children with a disability or developmental delay from birth to school entry and their families. ECIS services are funded through DEECD and delivered by a range of providers including Specialist Children’s Services and early childhood intervention agencies. Additional supports are available to families of children diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Delay Not Otherwise Specified (PDDNOS) or with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). See page 17.

ECIS Flexible Support Packages

Assist children with complex support needs including, autism and social, behavioural, emotional and physical needs that cannot otherwise be provided through ECIS. It is a short-term response that can assist in achieving the agreed goals outlined in the Family Service and Support Plan. Packages can fund supports such as respite, access to transport, therapy, equipment, participation in playgroups or childcare, and support for siblings.

ECIS Central Intake

Provides information about specialist services including, assessment, educational and therapy services, planning and service co-ordination, parent support, flexible support packages and additional resources for kindergarten. See page 48.

Find an early childhood service or school website


Kindergarten Inclusion Tip Sheets

Provide information about including children with a disability in kindergarten. Copies are available from the ACD office or www.acd.org.au

Making a Start: Building support for your child and family booklet

Free booklet for families that provides information about early intervention support. Phone Carers Victoria on 1800 242 636


Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA) (VC)

Phone 9819 5266

Web www.eciavic.org.au

Early Learning Association Australia

Phone 9489 3500 or 1300 730 119 (rural callers)

Web www.elaa.org.au

Playgroup Victoria

Phone 1800 171 882

Web www.playgroup.org.au

PlayConnect playgroups

Offer play-based learning opportunities for children with ASD or ASD-like symptoms and social support networks for families and carers, as part of the Australian Government’s Helping Children with Autism package. See page 17.

Phone 1800 171 882

Web www.playconnect.com.au

MyTime groups

Provide local support and parenting information for anyone caring for a child with a disability or chronic medical condition.

Phone 1800 889 997

Web www.mytime.net.au

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Self-directed planning & support

Self-directed planning describes a process that we already use as parents when we make choices and plan for our family’s future.

As parents, we seek a wide range of experiences to enrich the physical, emotional, spiritual, cultural and academic growth of our children. Whenever we find information, identify choices and make decisions, we are using a process of self-directed planning.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) uses a self-directed planning approach to guide the way people access disability supports. This means that families and young people can choose and control the supports they need to achieve their goals and live the way they want to.

Planning & identifying supports

Exploring both formal and informal supports to meet your child and family’s needs may include bringing together important people in your child’s life, such as family, friends or supporters, to think about and document the supports that are needed and how they can be provided. You can choose to use a facilitator or planner to help you with this process.

The supports you choose can come from DHS disability services as well as community service organisations and may or may not require funding. Funding for ongoing disability supports can be directly managed by you or by a service provider once approved by DHS. It’s important that everyone involved in the planning process knows who is responsible for undertaking all actions and tasks.

Flexible Support Packages (FSPs)

These can be short or long term funding packages that provide a range of services to meet your family’s needs including respite care, referral, case management, practical support, service co-ordination and discretionary funding.

Assistance with planning

Under the Disability Act 2006, anyone can ask for assistance with planning and people with an intellectual disability must be offered assistance on request.

A series of information sheets about the Disability Act 2006, including Information sheet 4 on Planning for people with a disability, are available from the DHS website www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Disability Support Register (DSR)

If you have ongoing disability support needs, you can discuss and apply to DHS for ongoing support via the Disability Support Register (DSR). The DSR is a mechanism for registering current ongoing need. This can include anything from family or carer support to long-term accommodation needs, but it can only be used to meet a need that your child has now, not at some time in the future.

Individual Support Packages (ISPs)

One outcome of registering on the DSR can be an Individual Support Package of funds allocated to a person to meet their disability related support needs. Funding may complement existing informal support arrangements from family and friends and community service organisations.

For more information phone your regional Disability Intake and Response Service on 1800 783 783, your local community service organisation or visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au
Siblings

Siblings who grow up together with a brother or sister with a disability may face some unique experiences and challenges.

For many siblings with a brother or sister with a disability, life can be challenging while at the same time very rewarding. Sibling experiences are often different from those of their friends.

Parents can support siblings by maintaining good communication and giving them opportunities to connect with other siblings.

ACD resources to support siblings include Growing Together and a Sibling Program Directory.

Sibling Program Directory
Sibling programs provide opportunities for siblings to connect with other siblings or young people with caring responsibilities by attending a group, camp or other activities. The Sibling Program Directory lists sibling programs available in Victoria. Most programs have eligibility criteria and some charge a fee.

Phone 9818 2000 or 1800 654 013 (rural callers)
Web www.acd.org.au

Siblings Australia
Provides information and support for siblings.
Web www.siblingsaustralia.org.au

Interchange Victoria
Runs sibling programs across Victoria.
Phone 1300 300 436
Web www.interchange.org.au

Livewire
An online community for young people living with a serious illness, chronic health condition or disability, and their families.
Phone 02 8425 5971
Web www.livewire.org.au

Growing Together resource
Growing Together is written for parents and highlights the experiences of siblings growing up with a brother or sister with a disability. The booklet includes strategies for parents to support siblings, stories written by parents and siblings and a list of resources. Copies are available from the Association office or www.acd.org.au

National Carer Counselling Program
Provides free short-term counselling for parents and carers, including young carers.
Phone 1800 242 636
Web www.carersvictoria.org.au

Very Special Kids
Runs a range of activities for siblings of children with a life limiting illness.
Phone 9804 6222 or 1800 888 875
Web www.vsk.org.au/our-services/sibling-support

Young Carers
Provides information and support for young carers.
Phone 1800 242 636
Web www.youngcarers.net.au

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Early childhood services

Early childhood services support the health, well-being and development of children.

All families with children access early childhood services in their local community and usually combine a range of services to monitor their child’s health, development and early childhood education. These can include Maternal and Child Health Services, playgroups, child care, kindergarten and early childhood intervention services, many of which are funded by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). See page 48.

Diagnosis and assessment
The process of identifying a child’s disability or developmental delay can vary greatly. Some conditions are evident at birth or soon after, while others can occur as the result of an accident or illness. While it can be common to get a diagnosis in the early years, diagnosis can occur at any age.

If you are concerned about your child, you can ask your doctor for a referral to a paediatrician (a doctor who specialises in caring for infants, children and adolescents). The paediatrician may then do a formal assessment of your child that can involve a series of visits and tests. Information and reports from these assessments can help to identify what services and support will benefit your child now, and in the future. These reports may also be useful when applying for some services.

The time surrounding a diagnosis can be very emotional and difficult for parents and families. You may want to ask for extra support from family, friends or a counsellor. See page 22.

Support for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) is available through the Helping Children with Autism package. See page 17.

Welcome to Early Childhood Services
A Parent’s Guide to Early Childhood Services in Victoria
Provides information about early childhood development and services, including assistance for children with additional needs.

Maternal and Child Health Services
Provide information about child health and development and links to a range of services and support including playgroups and parent groups.

Maternal and Child Health Line
24-hour telephone support.
Phone 132 229

Early Parenting Centres
Provide information, education, counselling and practical support in the early parenting years. The Maternal and Child Health Service or your doctor can refer you to an Early Parenting Centre or you can contact the centre yourself.

Mercy Health O’Connell Family Centre
Phone 8416 7600
Web www.mercyhealth.com.au

Queen Elizabeth Centre
Phone 9549 2777
Web www.qec.org.au

Tweddle Child and Family Health Service
Phone 9689 1577
Web www.tweddle.org.au
Reasonable and necessary supports

The NDIS funds ‘reasonable and necessary supports’ that help people with a disability to reach their goals, objectives and aspirations, and to undertake activities that enable their social and economic participation.

This support includes both informal supports such as informal arrangements with family, friends and community as well as formal supports such as health and education.

Decisions about what constitutes ‘reasonable and necessary supports’ are made by NDIA staff based on the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 (NDIS Act) and the rules made under the NDIS Act. The operational guidelines also provide practical guidance for decision makers.

In order to be considered reasonable and necessary, a support must:

- be related to the participant’s disability
- not include day-to-day living costs that are not related to a participant’s disability support needs
- represent value for money
- be likely to be effective and beneficial to the participant, and
- take into account informal supports given to participants by families, carers, networks, and the community.

Types of supports that are funded

The types of supports that the NDIS may fund for participants include:

- daily personal activities
- transport to enable participation in community, social, economic and daily life activities
- workplace help to allow a participant to successfully get or keep employment in the open or supported labour market
- therapeutic supports including behaviour support
- help with household tasks to allow the participant to maintain their home environment
- help to a participant by skilled personnel in aids or equipment assessment, set up and training
- home modification design and construction
- mobility equipment, and
- vehicle modifications.

Supports not funded by the NDIS

Under the NDIS, a support will not be funded if it:

- is not related to the participant’s disability
- duplicates other supports already funded by a different mechanism through the NDIS
- relates to day-to-day living costs that are not related to a participant’s support needs, or
- is likely to cause harm to the participant or pose a risk to others.

Choice and control over funded supports

You have choice and the control over how you use funded supports in your plan and which service providers you use.

Reviewing your plan

You can ask the NDIA to review your plan. Usually, a review happens when your circumstances have changed or at your next scheduled plan review. The NDIA will look at all of the funded supports in the plan, not just one of them. You can also ask for an internal review of the decision to approve your statement of participant supports in your plan. This request needs to be made within three months after you are notified of this decision.

More information

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Transport

Whether your child is travelling to and from school or just out and about, a range of travel assistance and concessions are available.

Most children who attend specialist schools are eligible for free bus transport to and from school within a designated transport zone. Eligible children may attend a school outside the zone but will not receive transport assistance. For more information ask the school for information about their transport policy.

Conveyance Allowance

Students with severe multiple disabilities may be eligible for Conveyance Allowance to assist with travel costs to and from school. Schools must submit conveyance claims online to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) each semester. Guidelines and application forms are available from the DEECD website [www.education.vic.gov.au](http://www.education.vic.gov.au).

Taxis

Wheelchair accessible taxis (Melbourne)

Phone [Silver Top Taxis](http://silvertop.com.au) on 8413 7202 or 136 294 (Maxi Taxi) or visit [www.silvertop.com.au](http://www.silvertop.com.au)

Talking taxis communication tools

Resources to improve communication between taxi drivers and passengers are available from the Taxi Services Commission.

Multi Purpose Taxi Program (MPTP)

Provides subsidised taxi fares for Victorians with severe or permanent disability who also experience financial hardship.

Phone the Taxi Services Commission on 1800 638 802 or visit [www.taxi.vic.gov.au](http://www.taxi.vic.gov.au)

Disability Parking

A statewide Disabled Persons’ Parking Scheme currently operates in Victoria. The current scheme provides for two permit categories with varying parking concessions based on the applicant’s need for assistance. Application forms are available from your local council.

The permit must only be displayed when the vehicle is being used to transport the individual to whom the permit was issued. It cannot be used if the permit holder is not travelling in the vehicle. Permits must be clearly displayed so the permit number and expiry date are visible from the exterior of the vehicle. Parking is not permitted in restricted locations such as Clearways, No Stopping, No Parking Areas, Taxi Only Areas, Bus Zones, and Authorised Resident Areas. An individual is entitled to hold only one disability parking permit.


Australian Disability Parking Scheme

The Australian Disability Parking Scheme is an initiative developed by the Australian Government, in conjunction with the states and territories to improve disability parking schemes across Australia.


NDIS

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a new way of providing support for people with permanent and significant disability, their families and carers.

The NDIS aims to ensure that people with a disability are given every opportunity to make their own decisions and exercise choice and control. Through the NDIS families and carers can access information, referral and link with supports in the community.

The NDIS is being trialled in the Barwon region and includes people who live in the local government areas of:

- City of Greater Geelong
- Colac-Otway Shire
- Borough of Queenscliffe
- Surf Coast Shire

By July 2016, all Barwon area residents with significant and permanent disability will be able to access the scheme.

By July 2019, all eligible residents in Victoria will be covered. Check the NDIS website for updates on when the NDIS will be rolled out in your area.

You can use the My Access Checker tool on the NDIS website to see if you can get assistance from the NDIS.

Participant Plans

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) will work with you and the person you care for in planning, decision making and support co-ordination.

Each participant in the NDIS will have an individualised plan that is tailored to their goals, personal circumstances and disability support needs.

The types of supports that the NDIS may include:

- personal care to support an individual in their home or the community
- supports to assist people with disability to enjoy social and community interaction without relying solely on you
- supports that maintain a carer’s health and wellbeing. This support may include participation in a support group or a special interest network. In deciding whether to fund or provide a support, the NDIA will take account of what it is reasonable to expect families, carers, informal networks and the community to provide.
- assistance with tasks of daily living including to help improve a person’s ability to do things
- supported employment services and help for people to move to work programs that prepare people with disability in work, and
- training related to the caring role that may enhance your ability to provide care.
10 Key contacts

1. Local council/shires
   Contact your local council or shire to discuss your needs with the Home and Community Care (HACC) team. Also explore your local council directory for other local services. See page 29.

2. Centrelink
   Contact Centrelink to find out if you are eligible for Carer Allowance (Child) or Carer Adjustment Payment. Phone 132 717. See page 29.

3. Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) Central Intake 0 to 6
   Contact ECIS for support for children with a disability or developmental delay aged 0 to 6. See page 10.

4. Disability Intake and Response Service, Department of Human Services
   Contact your regional Disability Intake and Response Service for information about community supports and services for people with a disability, their families and carers in your local area. Phone 1800 783 783. See page 11.

5. Disability-specific groups
   Contact a disability-specific group for information and support. See page 24. These include:
   - Amaze (formerly Autism Victoria), phone 1300 308 699, web www.amaze.org.au
   - Cerebral Palsy Support Network, phone 1300 277 600, web www.cpsn.org.au
   - Down Syndrome Victoria, phone 1300 658 873, web www.downsyndromevictoria.org.au
   - Genetic Support Network Victoria, phone 8341 6315, web www.gsnv.org.au

6. Regional Parent Support Co-ordinator
   Contact the Regional Parent Support Co-ordinator in your region for information about local services and groups, newsletters, workshops and events. See page 52.

7. MyTime Groups
   Contact your local MyTime group for support and parenting information for anyone caring for a child with a disability or chronic medical condition. Phone 1800 889 997. Web www.mytime.net.au

8. Community Health Centres
   Contact your Community Health Centre for information about services such as physiotherapy and speech pathology. Web www.health.vic.gov.au/pch/commhealth/directory.htm

9. Neighbourhood Houses
   Contact your local Neighbourhood House to find out about social, educational and recreational activities. Phone 9654 1104, web www.anhlc.asn.au

10. Raising Children Network website
    Visit the Raising Children Network website for parenting information. Web www.raisingchildren.net.au

Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme
Provides help for students who cannot go to an appropriate school because of geographical isolation, disability or special health need. Phone 132 318
Web www.humanservices.gov.au

Community transport
Some local governments and community service organisations operate community transport services that are available to children and young adults with a disability. Contact your local council or shire for more information. See page 37.

Public transport concessions & travel passes
Children under the age of four can travel free on public transport. Children aged 4 to 16 years are eligible for concession fares. Children aged 17 or older may qualify for concession fares through a Victorian Public Transport (VPT) Student Concession Card. Holders of a Health Care Card or Pension Concession Card qualify for concession fares without needing to purchase a VPT Student Concession Card.

Travel passes include:

- Access Travel Pass
- Scooter and Wheelchair Travel Pass
- Travel Trainer Pass
- Vision Impaired Travel Pass

For more information phone Public Transport Victoria on 1800 800 007 or TTY 9619 2727
Web ptv.vic.gov.au

A Companion Card provides free travel for the carer/companion of the cardholder on all public transport services. See page 14.

A Carer Card entitles cardholders to free travel on public transport on Sundays and travel vouchers for two free return off-peak trips in Victoria. See page 30.

Guide for choosing and using motorised mobility devices: mobility scooters and electric wheelchairs
Provides information about how to use an electric wheelchair or other motorised mobility device safely. Phone 131 171
Web www.vicroads.vic.gov.au

Vehicle registration
Concession card holders can pay registration fees six monthly. NIL registration fees and other exemptions may apply. Phone 131 171
Web www.vicroads.vic.gov.au

Travellers Aid Access Service (TAAS)
Provides assistance with personal care needs and travel related emergency relief to the travelling public.

Travellers Aid, Flinders Street Station
Includes a track mounted hoist. Phone 9610 2030
Web www.travellersaid.org.au

Travellers Aid, Southern Cross Station
Provides emergency relief. Phone 9670 2072
Web www.travellersaid.org.au

Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme (VPTAS)
Provides financial subsidies to patients living in rural and regional Victoria who need to travel long distances to access specialist medical services. Phone 1300 737 073 or 5333 6040
Web health.vic.gov.au/ruralhealth/patient-transport-assistance

Air travel
Assistance is available for boarding and special arrangements for people with a disability. Contact the airline for more information.

More information
Vehicle Modification Subsidy Scheme, 16 Mobility Allowance, 13
DEECD provides services to children and young people through government schools and regulation and funding of early childhood services and non-government schools.

DEECD Central Office
GPO Box 4367
MELBOURNE VIC 3001
Phone 9637 2000 (general inquiries)
Web www.education.vic.gov.au

DEECD Information & Referral Service
Provides general information on Victorian education and schools, including term dates, special education events, school enrolment, school policy, health and wellbeing issues and financial support, as well as teacher qualifications and legislation.
Phone 1800 809 834 (freecall)
Email edline@edumail.vic.gov.au
Web www.education.vic.gov.au

Parent Complaints
Refer to the DEECD website for information about how to raise an issue or make a complaint about child care, children’s services or education.
Web www.education.vic.gov.au

Children’s Services Regulations Enquiry Line
Provides information about licensing and monitoring requirements for children’s services.
Email licensed.childrens.services@edumail.vic.gov.au
Phone 1300 307 415
Web www.education.vic.gov.au

DEECD Regional Offices Early Childhood Intervention Children’s Services (ECIS)
Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) have a regional central point of entry. Central Intake gathers information and determines whether your child meets eligibility criteria for ECIS. In the first instance, referrals for ECIS must go to Central Intake who will work with you to identify concerns, to plan next steps and to make a referral to an ECIS agency.

North-Eastern ECIS Intake
Metropolitan
Local government areas: Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Monash, Whitehorse and Yarra Ranges
Phone 1300 662 655 Fax 9265 2575
Email nevr.ecis@edumail.vic.gov.au

Rural
Local government areas: Alpine, Benalla, Greater Shepparton, Indigo, Mansfield, Mitchell, Moira, Murrindindi, Strathbogie, Towong, Wangaarat and Wodonga
Phone 1800 627 391 Fax 5762 5039
Email nevr.ecis@edumail.vic.gov.au

North-Western ECIS Intake
Metropolitan
Local government areas: Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Moreland, Nillumbik, Whittlesea and Yarra
Phone 9304 0775 Fax 9300 3872
Email nwvr.ecis@edumail.vic.gov.au

Accessing services
If there is high demand for a service, you may not be able to access it straight away. Services usually determine ‘priority of access’ on an ongoing basis. It’s important to make sure that your family’s needs are represented as clearly as possible. Services can only accurately assess your situation if you give them all the relevant information about your family.

Be honest and clear about your situation and contact the service again if your circumstances change. Putting your name down for a service is worthwhile because it means you are better placed to access the service in the future.

Working together
It is reasonable to expect that professionals and service providers will work together with you to identify and deliver the support that is most important to you and your family.

Positive partnerships are based on mutual respect and good communication. Trust your instincts and be prepared to ask questions and seek further explanations if there is something you disagree with or don’t understand. Sometimes you have to be creative and put together a package of different services to achieve the right support for your family.

Planning and communication
An important part of the way services and support are delivered involves planning. Good planning is almost always based on good communication. This can include informal conversations and meetings as well as formal processes and written documents.

Under the Disability Act 2006, anyone can ask for assistance with planning but people with an intellectual disability must be offered assistance on request.

The most important thing to keep in mind is that planning is an ongoing process that allows you to explore your child’s and family’s needs, goals, aspirations and the support available to achieve these.

Transition planning
As your child gets older, you may need to use different combinations of services and support at different times.

Key times in your child’s life are often referred to as times of ‘transition’, such as the transition from early intervention to kindergarten, from kindergarten to primary school, from primary school to secondary school, and from secondary school to adult life.

It’s a good idea to plan for these transitions as early as possible so that you can explore all your options. Transition planning can involve collecting documents and reports, getting assessments, filling out forms and visiting schools and services.

Key contacts
When thinking about accessing services and support, remember that the full range of universal and community services is available to all families.

Some key contacts for accessing services and support are listed on the following page. If you don’t have access to the Internet, you can ring and ask the service to send you some written information.

If you are a new parent, a range of parenting information is available on the Raising Children Network website.
Web www.raisingchildren.net.au
If English is not your preferred language, a service should assist you with either an interpreter or written information in your preferred language.

For more information
For more information about any of the services and support in this booklet, contact our Parent Support Workers on 9818 2000 or 1800 654 013 (rural callers) or visit our website www.acd.org.au
Where to start

There are some key places to start when working your way through the maze of services and support available to you and your family.

The starting point for accessing information and support will depend on where you live, your child’s age and whether your child has received a diagnosis. Each family has different needs and priorities for the best way services can assist them. You are entitled to expect that the range of services available will be flexible enough to be adapted to different family circumstances.

Universal & community services
Services that are available to all families are known as ‘universal’ or ‘community’ services. Families of children with a disability can access these services in the same way as other families. Examples include child care and recreation activities.

Specialist services
Services that are specifically designed for children with a disability are often referred to as ‘specialist’ disability services. Examples include respite care and therapy services.

Many families use a combination of community and specialist services.

Government services
Responsibility for the funding and administration of services for children with a disability and their families is shared between the Victorian Government (state) and the Australian Government (federal). Some services receive a combination of state and federal funding.

Local governments also provide a range of services and support for children with a disability and their families, and there are many community service organisations that provide services with government funding.

Eligibility
Most services and programs have defined eligibility criteria and you can ask for a copy of these in writing. Sometimes these are clear and easy to understand, while other times it may not be clear whether your child or family is eligible. If you’re not sure, ask the service provider for clarification.

Community services organisations that are Registered Disability Service Providers may determine eligibility for their service based on whether your child has a disability according to the Disability Act 2006. To find out if the service is registered, you can view the list of Registered Disability Service Providers on the Department of Human Services (DHS) website www.dhs.vic.gov.au

If it is unclear whether your child meets the eligibility criteria for disability support under the Disability Act 2006, you can seek clarification from DHS or seek a review from the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). See page 36.

Referral to a service
While it’s not always easy to ask for help, remember that services exist to assist children with a disability and their families. Making that first phone call can be difficult but it’s better to make it as soon as possible rather than putting it off or waiting until you are in a crisis situation. You can self refer to a service or someone else can do this with your permission.

DEECD Regional Offices
Education
North-Eastern Victoria Region
(Includes the former Eastern Metropolitan and Hume regions.)
Email nevr@edumail.vic.gov.au
Web www.education.vic.gov.au

Benalla
Phone 5761 2100 Fax 5762 5039

Glen Waverley
Phone 9265 2400 Fax 9265 2444

North-Western Victoria Region
(Includes the former Northern Metropolitan and Loddon Mallee regions.)
Email nwvr@edumail.vic.gov.au
Web www.education.vic.gov.au

Benidigo
Phone 5440 3111 Fax 5442 5321

Coburg
Phone 9488 9488 Fax 9488 9400

South-Eastern Victoria Region
(Includes the former Southern Metropolitan and Gippsland regions.)
Email sevr@edumail.vic.gov.au
Web www.education.vic.gov.au

Dandenong
Phone 8765 5600 Fax 8765 5666

Moe
Phone 5127 0400 Fax 5126 1933

South-Western Victoria Region
(Includes the former Western Metropolitan, Barwon South West and Grampians regions.)
Email swvr@edmail.vic.gov.au
Web www.education.vic.gov.au

Ballarat
Phone 5337 8444 Fax 5333 2135

West Footscray
Phone 9291 6500 Fax 9291 6565

Geelong
Phone 5225 1000 Fax 5225 1099

Rural
Local government areas: Bendigo, Buloke, Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Gannawarra, Greater Macedon Ranges, Loddon, Mildura, Mt Alexander and Swan Hill
Phone 1300 363514 Fax 5442 5321
Email nwvr.ecis@edumail.vic.gov.au

South-Western ECIS Intake
Metropolitan
Local government areas: Bayside, Cardinia, Casey Frankston, Glen Eira, Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Mornington Port Phillip, Stonnington
Phone 1300 720 151 Fax 8765 5666
Email sevr.ecis@edumail.vic.gov.au

South-Western ECIS Intake
Rural
Local Government Areas: Bass Coast, Baw Baw, East Gippsland, Latrobe, South Gippsland, Wellington
Phone 1800 336 010 Fax 5127 0451
Email sevr.ecis@edumail.vic.gov.au

South-Western ECIS Intake
Metropolitan
Local government areas: Ararat, Ballarat, Golden Plains, Hepburn, Hindmarsh, Horsham, Moorabool, Northern Grampians, Pyrenees, West Wimmera, Yarriambiack
Phone 9291 6500 Fax 9291 6565
Email swvr.ecis@edumail.vic.gov.au

South-Western ECIS Intake
Rural
Local government area: Greater Geelong, Surf Coast and Colac-Otway Shires, and the Borough of Queenscliff
Phone 9291 6500 Fax 9291 6565
Email swvr.ecis@edumail.vic.gov.au
Department of Human Services (DHS)

The Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS) provides services for people with a disability and their families to participate in community life.

Disability Intake & Response
For statewide disability information and support phone 1800 783 783 or TTY 13 36 77 and ask for 1300 650 172.

If you need an interpreter, call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 13 14 50 and ask to be connected to the Intake and Response Service Regional Office in your area.

DHS Head Office
Level 8, 50 Lonsdale Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000
Phone 1300 650 172 or 9096 0000 (outside TTY 13 36 77 and ask for 1300 650 172
Web www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Disability email enquiries
Eastern
est.dialability@dhs.vic.gov.au
Western
west.informationandsupport@dhs.vic.gov.au
Southern
south.dialability@dhs.vic.gov.au
Northern
north.intake@dhs.vic.gov.au

Other contacts
Concessions Help Line
Phone 1800 658 521
Carer Card Hotline
Phone 1800 901 958
Victorian Emergency Recovery Information Line
Phone 1300 769 926

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) Regions

DEECD North Eastern Metropolitan Region
Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Monash, Whitehorse, Yarra Ranges

DEECD North Eastern Non-Metropolitan Region
Alpine, Benalla, Indigo, Mansfield, Mitchell, Moira, Murrindindi, Greater Shepparton, Strathbogie, Towong, Wangaratta, Wodonga

DEECD North Western Metropolitan Region
Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Moreland, Nillumbik, Whittlesea, Yarra

DEECD North Western Non-Metropolitan Region
Greater Bendigo, Buloke, Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Gannawarra, Loddon, Macedon Ranges, Mildura, Mount Alexander, Swan Hill

DEECD South Eastern Metropolitan Region
Bayside, Cardinia, Casey, Greater Dandenong, Frankston, Glen Eira, Kingston, Mornington Peninsula, Port Phillip, Stonnington

DEECD South Eastern Non-metropolitan Region
Ararat, Ballarat, Colac-Otway, Corangamite, Greater Geelong, Glenelg, Golden Plains, Hepburn, Hindmarsh, Horsham, Lady Jula Percy Island, Mooroobool, Moyn, Queenscliffe, Northern Grampians, Pyrenees, Southern Grampians, Surf Coast, Warrnambool, West Wimmera, Yarrambiack
Your local area & region

Services cover specific areas, so it’s important to know which local government area and region you live in.

Migrant Resource Centres

Migrant Resource Centres assist people to settle in Australia by providing information and support to people of all ages from ethnic communities.

**Northern Region**
- Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre
  - Phone 9496 0200 (Preston)
  - Phone 9301 7400 (Broadmeadows)
  - Phone 9300 8600 (Sunshine)
  - Web [www.spectrumvic.org.au](http://www.spectrumvic.org.au)

**Eastern Region**
- Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne)
  - Phone 9285 4888 (Box Hill)
  - Phone 9020 2969 (Croydon)

**Southern Region**
- Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre
  - Phone 9767 1900 (Dandenong)
  - Phone 8574 4600 (Oakleigh)
  - Phone 9705 6966 (Narre Warren)
  - Web [www.smrc.org.au](http://www.smrc.org.au)

**Western Region**
- Migrant Resource Centre North West Region
  - Phone 9367 6044 (St Albans & Hobsons Bay)
  - Phone 9351 1278 (Hume)
  - Web [www.mrcnorthwest.org.au](http://www.mrcnorthwest.org.au)
- Phoenix Migrant Resource Centre Western Region
  - Phone 9391 3355
  - Web [www.wmrc.org.au](http://www.wmrc.org.au)

**Barwon South Western Region**
- Diversitat
  - Phone 5221 6044
  - Web [www.diversitat.org.au](http://www.diversitat.org.au)

**Gippsland Region**
- Gippsland Multicultural Services
  - Phone 5133 7072

**Statewide**
- New Hope Foundation
  - Phone 9510 5877 (Prahran)
  - Web [www.newhope.asn.au](http://www.newhope.asn.au)
- Ethnic Council of Shepparton & District
  - Phone 5831 2395


Department of Human Services (DHS) Regions

**DHS East Metropolitan Region**
- Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Monash, Whitehorse, Yarra Ranges

**DHS East Non-Metropolitan Region**
- Alpine, Benalla, Indigo, Mansfield, Mitchell, Moira, Murrindindi, Greater Shepparton, Strathbogie, Towong, Wangaratta, Wodonga

**DHS North Metropolitan Region**
- Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Moreland, Nillumbik, Whittlesea, Yarra

**DHS North Non-Metropolitan Region**
- Greater Bendigo, Buloke, Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Gannawarra, Loddon, Macedon Ranges, Mildura, Mount Alexander, Swan Hill

**DHS South Metropolitan Region**
- Bayside, Cardinia, Casey, Greater Dandenong, Frankston, Glen Eira, Kingston, Mornington Peninsula, Port Phillip, Stonnington

**DHS South Non-metropolitan Region**
- Bass Coast, Baw Baw, East Gippsland, South Gippsland, Latrobe, Wellington

**DHS West Metropolitan Region**
- Brimbank, Hobson’s Bay, Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Melton, Moonee Valley, Wyndham

**DHS West Non-metropolitan Region**
- Ararat, Ballarat, Colac-Otway, Corangamite, Greater Geelong, Glenelg, Golden Plains, Hepburn, Hindmarsh, Horsham, Moorabool, Moyne, Queenscliff, Northern Grampians, Pyrenees, Southern Grampians, Surf Coast, Warrnambool, West Wimmera, Yarriambiack

Contact the Regional Parent Support Co-ordinator in your region for information about support in your local area.

**Metropolitan Regions**

**North Eastern Metropolitan Region**
Co-ordinator
Eastern Region Parent Support Network
Phone 9874 6205
Email psn-emr@bigpond.net.au
www.psn-emr.com.au

**North Western Metropolitan Region**
Thea Calzoni
Northern Region Parent Support Program
Phone 9385 1325
Email tcalzoni@mcm.org.au
www.melbournecitymission.org.au

**South Western Metropolitan Region**
Pauline Parsons
Western Region Parent to Parent
Phone 9680 8444
Email regionalparentingservices@mackillop.org.au
www.mackillop.org.au

**Rural Regions**

**South Western Non-Metropolitan Region**
Ballarat
Melissa Delaland Desfosses, Pinarc Disability Support
Phone 5329 1361
Email mdelaland-desfosses@pinarc.org.au
www.pinarc.org.au

Geelong/Colac
Carolyn McDiarmid, Gateways
Phone 5221 2984
Email Carolyn.mcdiarmid@gateways.com.au
www.gateways.com.au

Horsham
Anne Page, Wimmera Uniting Care
Phone 5362 4042
Email annpage@wuc.org.au
www.wimmera.unitingcare.org.au

Warraimbool
Sandy Joyce, Mpower
Phone 5561 8111
Email sjoyce@mpower.org.au
www.mpower.org.au

**North Western Non-Metropolitan Region**
Benalla
Roslyn Archer, Benalla Support Group for Children with Special Needs
Phone 5762 7057
Email bggroup@telcoplus.com.au
www.benalla.vic.gov.au

Mansfield
Liz Klein, Mansfield Support Group for Children with Special Needs
Phone 0428 410 883
Email smansfield2010@gmail.com
www.mansfield.vic.au

Seymour, Shepparton & Yarrawonga
Nicole C’Brian, Goulburn Valley Support Group for Children with Special Needs Inc
Phone 5831 7157
Email information@gvsgcsn.com.au

Wodonga
Sue Pringle, Aspire Support Services
Phone 02 6058 4000
Email sue.pringle@aspiress.com.au
www.aspire.com.au

**South Eastern Non-Metropolitan Region**
Gippsland
Yvonne Waite, Parent to Parent Gippsland
Phone 1800 010 453 or 5135 3131
Email yvonne.waite@noahsarkinc.org.au
www.noahsarkinc.org.au

**Regional Support Co-ordinators**

**Regional Parent Support Co-ordinators**

**Regional Quick Guides**
Through the Maze is complemented by a series of Regional Quick Guides available on our website www.acd.org.au

**Your support network**
In addition to professionals and services, think about other types of support that might assist you and your family. Three ingredients of a strong support network are:

- information
- support from other parents
- connecting with groups that advocate for improvements to the service system

There are many disability-specific groups and local, regional, statewide and national information and advocacy groups. Explore what these groups have to offer and how they might become part of your personal and family support network.

**For more information**
While every effort has been made to make sure the information included in Through the Maze is correct and up to date, services and contact details are always changing. If you come across details that have changed, please let us know.

For more information about any of the services and support in this booklet, contact our Parent Support Workers on 9818 2000 or 1800 654 013 (rural callers) or visit our website www.acd.org.au

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**Introduction**

This resource has been written as a guide through the maze of services that support children with a disability and their families in Victoria.

The 8th edition of Through the Maze gives an overview of services and support for children with a disability aged 0 to 18 years and their families living in Victoria.

This resource is designed as a basic introductory guide to help you identify services and support for your child and family.

The range of information included in this booklet may assist your family whether your child is waiting for, or has received, a formal diagnosis of disability or developmental delay.

**Children and families**

While families of children with a disability face additional challenges, there are many aspects of daily life that are the same for all families.

When trying to find the right balance of support from services, try not to lose sight of the things you enjoy doing together as a family. Sometimes the most important things have little or nothing to do with services.

**Finding your way through the maze**

It can sometimes take a lot of time and energy to find your way ‘through the maze’ of services to the support you need.

You may have to use all your research and communication skills to piece together the information most relevant to you and your family.

The best results are often achieved by seeking information from a range of sources rather than relying on just one professional or service. It takes time to explore all the options but the effort is usually worth it in the long run.

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The range of information included in this booklet may assist your family whether your child is waiting for, or has received, a formal diagnosis of disability or developmental delay.
ACD is active in advocating to all levels of government and the broader community for improvements to services that support children with a disability and their families.

In carrying out this advocacy work, we welcome your thoughts and suggestions about how these services could be improved.

We hope this resource will help you ‘through the maze’ of existing services to find support and assistance of value to you and your family.
Acknowledgements
Through the Maze is available free of charge to families in Victoria thanks to the generous financial assistance provided by the Victorian Government and philanthropic trusts including:

John T Reid Charitable Trusts
The Trust Company

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The information in this booklet is intended as a general guide only.
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Parent feedback

Your feedback will help us provide information that is relevant and of interest to families of children with a disability. After completing the survey please tear off this page and post to Association for Children with a Disability, Reply Paid 84584, Hawthorn VIC 3122. You can also email feedback to mail@acd.org.au or fax it to 03 9818 2300.

Did the Through the Maze booklet provide the information you were looking for?  Yes  No

What other information would you like to see included?

Was the information easy to find?  Yes  No

Could the layout or design be improved to make it easier to read?  Yes  No

If yes, how?

Is the size of this booklet right for this type of information?  Yes  No

How did you receive this booklet?

Do you use the Internet to find information?  Yes  No

Are you a member of the Association for Children with a Disability?  Yes  No
Any other comments?

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____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
Your name: ____________________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________________________
Phone: __________________________________________________________________
Thank you
Association for Children with a Disability (ACD)

We provide information, support and advocacy to families who have a child or young adult with any type of disability or developmental delay across Victoria.

ACD is run by parents and siblings so we know what it means to have a child or sibling with a disability. We understand issues from a family perspective.

Our services include free telephone information and advocacy support for families.

Our member magazine, NoticeBoard, includes family stories that are a great source of strength and inspiration for other families and professionals who work with families.

Association for Children with a Disability
Suite 2, 98 Morang Road
Hawthorn VIC 3122

Phone 03 9818 2000
or 1800 654 013 (rural callers)
Fax 03 9818 2300
Email mail@acd.org.au
Web www.acd.org.au

Language interpreters
If you need a language interpreter to access our service, call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 13 14 50. Tell the operator your preferred language and that you want to speak to the Association for Children with a Disability on 03 9818 2000. This is a free service.

Membership

If you’re not already a member of ACD, it’s easy to join!

Membership is FREE for families for the first 12 months.

Benefits of membership include our member magazine, NoticeBoard, which includes family stories, news and information about services and changes to government policy.

We encourage families to join our Association as well as other disability self-help groups. Our aim is to work together on issues that reach across all disabilities.

Service providers, organisations, interested persons and other community supporters are also encouraged to join our Association.

In addition to membership, we also welcome donations. All donations over $2 are tax deductible.

For more information contact the ACD office on 03 9818 2000 or 1800 654 013 (rural callers), by email mail@acd.org.au or visit www.acd.org.au or our Facebook page www.facebook.com/acdvic