

Including children with disability in Outside School Hours Care: A Guide



This guide provides information and resources for staff and service providers to support children with disability in outside school hours care (OSHC).

Inclusion of children with disability in OSHC settings

Increasing the participation and inclusion of people with disability in their community and mainstream settings is one of the aims of the Disability Inclusion Act 2014.

It is important that children with disability are included and given the chance to play, learn and interact with their peers.

Inclusion benefits everyone. For children with disability, participating in activities with their peers helps them to develop and build their social, communication, cognitive and motor skills. It also helps other children to develop positive attitudes and be accepting of people who are different to them. It helps all children to develop their social skills, build stronger families and relationships, and helps to create healthy and vibrant communities.

*Eligible childcare services, including OSHC providers, can apply for funding through the **Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS)** to improve their capacity to include children with ongoing high support needs in quality child care. This funding can be used towards the costs associated with employing an additional Educator. This funding should be sought prior to enrolling a child in the OSHC service to ensure that the transition is a smooth one.*

Getting the information you need

Children with disability and their families have a range of interests, goals and needs. It is important that the service you provide is tailored to meet the individual interests and needs of each child and their family.

When supporting a child with disability, it is essential that you obtain information about the child's preferences, routines, abilities and needs. The best source of information is the child's parents. It is important to take the time to speak with parents and get as much information about their child's needs and abilities as possible before they start accessing your service. School aged children can also contribute to this process, so it is important to take the opportunity to speak to them and listen to their opinion. This will help you to tailor your service to support the participation of their child. You may need to reassure the parent that providing this information will not jeopardise their place at the centre.

Speak with parents about:

- their child's likes, dislikes and interests, including what activities their child enjoys
- how their child communicates and if they have any specific communication needs
- medical and health information
- strategies that you can use that reinforces their child's participation
- if there are any behaviours of concern, what might be triggers and what strategies have worked well before that you can adopt

If the family has access to ISS funding much of this information will be found in their Inclusion Support Plan.

Another good source of information is the child's teacher or professionals (such as a speech pathologist or occupational therapist) who work with the child in an ongoing way. You will need to seek written consent from the parents before you talk with their teacher or other professionals.

The Raising Children Network is a good source of up-to-date information and resources including guides to disabilities, links to services and supports.

Strategies to build an inclusive OSHC service

Children with disability may need additional supports to participate and be included in everyday activities. It is important that mainstream services, including OSHC providers, are accessible and enable their participation. Some strategies to build an inclusive OSHC service include:

- view all children as children first. Their disability is just one part of their life. It is important to focus on their strengths, abilities and interests
- ensure policies and procedures are inclusive and don't exclude children with disability
- adjust activities and environment to enable all children to participate meaningfully. This may include making physical adjustments so that your service is accessible, or selecting activities that you know all children will enjoy
- seek information and support from other professionals (such as their teacher or therapist) who already know the child and what has been in place to support their participation.

Online Inclusion – is a disability hub that provides a range of information, resources, support links and factsheets. Access online group sessions, workshops and conversations all in one place for a variety of service providers.

Kids Matter – is a mental health initiative set in primary schools and in early childhood education and care services. It includes a range of **information sheets** on support for children with additional needs and information sheets – including **Disability: suggestions for school staff**.

Supporting children with communication and behaviours of concern

Children with disability may experience difficulties in communicating with those around them. OSHC Educators should speak with parents and the child's teacher or professionals about how their child communicates. There may be specific communication needs that you can support and strategies you can use.

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) is a term used to describe systems that enhance or replace speech when the child with disability has communication difficulties. A child may express their needs, wants and ideas through the use of gestures, eye pointing, body language, signing, using a communication aid or technology. Sometimes a child with disability requires help to understand the spoken word alone, and so AAC strategies can be used to communicate with them. This includes use of visual supports or aids such as photo or symbol communication books, routine boards, activity schedules and social stories. This approach may also involve the use of high-tech communication aids and equipment, such as iPads, computers and speech generating devices.

A range of resources and tools are available online to assist you in supporting children with communication difficulties including <http://www.carsonst.wa.edu.au/parent-info/getting-started-books/>, www.speechteach.co.uk and <http://www.tinsnips.org>.

Behaviour Support

Some children with disability may present with behaviours of concern, which can be for a range of reasons. They may have trouble understanding what's happening around them or may lack the communication skills needed to express themselves and needs, which leads to frustration. OSHC Educators should speak with the child's family, their teacher or Inclusion Support Facilitator for advice, support and strategies that are effective in supporting appropriate behaviour and approaches to avoid.

- *The Raising Children Network has a Behaviour Skills Builder tool and other resources to assist parents and professionals to manage **difficult behaviour**.*
- *Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) **behaviour support services** can provide support to service providers to enhance their behaviour support capacity. For more information contact your local FACS District via the **ADHC website**.*
- *ADHC's **Practice Improvement Framework** is a tool to help practitioners working with people with disability, including improving work practice in specialist behaviour support.*
- *Using visuals to support children's learning DVD shows how to use visual supports to promote communication, social skills, general learning and participation amongst all children for non-specialist staff. To order, visit the **ECIA NSW website**.*
- ***Behaviour Support Plan guidelines** have been developed by the Victorian Government to assist individual students who have experienced harm, are at risk of harm, or have caused harm to others. The guidelines enable targeted plans to be developed for students.*
- ***Aspect Autism Spectrum Australia** provide a range of services to support children and people with autism including positive behaviour support that encourages children, young people and adults to develop the skills for an improved quality of life.*

Useful resources and services

- **Network of Community Activities** is the peak body of OSHC services in NSW and has a dedicated phone and resource line for OSHC services and is able to provide training and support to services to build capacity for inclusive practices.
- The **NSW Transition to School Statement** is a tool designed to make it easier for information to be shared between families, early childhood services and schools. The Statement is completed by the child's early childhood educator in partnership with the family and summarises the child's strengths, interests, approaches to learning, and suggests ways these can be supported. The Statement is a useful tool for OSHC providers to use to prepare for the child's transition into the new learning environment. OSHC providers are encouraged to discuss the statement with parents, who will have a copy of their child's statement and can share it with you.
- Early Childhood Intervention Australia **Transition to School** online resource has a range of tools that you can use to support families of children with disability transitioning to OSHC. It contains tips and resources for working with families such as "**a snapshot of my child**" template for families to share information with your service regarding their child's learning styles, learning needs and their interests.

- **Positive Partnerships** provides a range of useful fact sheets and professional development and online learning for teachers and education professionals, focusing on a range of topics including supporting behaviour and communication.
- **EnableNSW Aids and Equipment Program** assists eligible residents of NSW, who have a life-long or long-term disability, to live and participate within their community by providing appropriate equipment, aids and appliances.
- **Ability Links** assists people with disability, their family and carers to access supports in their community, including working alongside mainstream services to support them to be more welcoming and inclusive.
- **Vision Australia** provides information on how to best support and communicate effectively with children with vision impairment.
- **Down Syndrome NSW** offers a range of one-day workshops and seminar events for preschool, primary and secondary teachers and other school personnel across NSW.
- **The Cerebral Palsy Alliance** provides support and services to children with Cerebral Palsy including early intervention, specialised assessments, therapy, aids and equipment, hydrotherapy, exercise and sport, and supports inclusion at school and in the community.
- The **HSNet service directory** can help you find a service in the aging, disability, community welfare or justice sector in NSW.
- The **National Disability Insurance Agency** provides a range of information for people with disability, families, carers, providers and community on the National Disability Insurance Scheme, including information on community capacity building.

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