

Chronic illness and school - Support services

Beginning school, or transitioning to secondary school, can be a challenging time for any student and family. This can be made worse when the student has a chronic health condition. There are a variety of support services available to assist schools in effectively supporting students with a chronic illness. The principal of your child's school is the best person to ask about accessing these support mechanisms.

Student Support Services

Student Support Services is the collective name for a group of professionals who provide support to students and schools. The employment of a Schools Support Services Officer is the responsibility of the Principal. School Support Services Officers include Guidance Officers, Curriculum Consultants, Visiting Teachers, Speech Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists, Social Workers and Integration Aides.

Visiting Teacher Service

In Victoria, the Department of Education and Training (DE&T) provides a Visiting Teacher service. Visiting Teachers (for visually, hearing and physically impaired students) provide additional educational assistance, advice and support to school age students, their parents, schools and school communities. They liaise with other professionals and work with students individually, over periods of time ranging from a few weeks to several years.

Primary Welfare Officer

The Primary Welfare Officer is an active member of the school's student wellbeing team. Primary Welfare Officers support schools to strengthen a whole-school approach to the wellbeing of students. They oversee the development of tailored programs to meet the individual needs, interests and abilities of at risk students.

Student Welfare Coordinators

Funds have been made available to all Government Secondary Colleges to employ Student Welfare Coordinators. They are responsible for helping students handle issues such as truancy, bullying, drug use and depression. Student Welfare Coordinators work with other welfare professionals and agencies to address student needs.

Program for Students with Disabilities

The Program for Students with Disabilities supports the education of students with disabilities and additional learning needs in Victorian government schools by providing

schools with additional resources.

This is specifically for students enrolled in Victorian Government schools.

There are similar programs within the Catholic system and Independent system.

1. Catholic Sector - Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs Program
2. Independent Sector - Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs Program

Who is eligible for the Program?

Victorian government school students with a disability or significant health impairment and additional learning needs, provided they meet the eligibility criteria of one of the following seven categories -

1. Physical disability
2. Visual Impairment
3. Severe Behaviour Disorder
4. Hearing Impairment
5. Intellectual Disability
6. Autism Spectrum Disorder
7. Severe language disorder and critical educational needs

How is eligibility determined?

An Educational Needs Questionnaire is completed, looking at a number of key indicators (such as mobility, fine motor skills, safety, medical and communication)

Each of the indicators is graded to give an overall summary of the students abilities, competencies and needs. The overall score is used to determine the level of resources after eligibility has been established.

Program Support Group (PSG)

Program Support Group meetings are typically held once per term, or more frequently if necessary.

The aims of the Program 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 school life
- monitor the progress of the student

Responsibilities:

- identify the student's needs
- determine adjustments that need to be made to the curriculum
- plan an appropriate educational program

- develop an Individual Educational Plan
- discuss the program with teachers and provide support to implement the educational program
- provide advice to the Principal concerning the additional educational needs of the student and the types of resources required to meet these needs
- review and evaluate the student's program on a regular basis, as determined by the group

Membership:

- the parent/guardian/carer of the student
- a parent/guardian/carer advocate
- a class teacher or teachers nominated as having responsibility for the student
- the principal or nominee
- the student (where appropriate)

Royal Children's Hospital Education Institute (RCH Education Institute)

The Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) Education Institute works to optimise outcomes for all students, including those with a health condition. We achieve this by bringing together and sharing education and health knowledge to provide the best possible outcomes for students, schools and the community. This is accomplished by:

- Forming collaborative partnerships with school systems, individual schools, teachers and families.
- Providing support, information and advice to schools.
- Conducting research and providing knowledge to the decision makers.
- Delivering training and professional development for people working with students who have a health condition.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- School principal
- Royal Children's Hospital
- Royal Children's Hospital Education Institute Tel: 9322 5100
- Chronic Illness Peer Support, Centre for Adolescent Health, Royal Children's Hospital Tel. (03) 9345 6616

Key points to remember

- There are a variety of support services available to assist schools in effectively supporting students with a chronic illness
- The principal of your child's school is the best person to ask about accessing these support services

For more information

Department of Education and Training (DE&T) - Support in Schools
www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/support

Catholic Education Office (CEO) Melbourne
web.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au

Association of Independent Schools of Victoria (AISV)
<http://www.ais.vic.edu.au/schools/gov-programs/special-education.htm>

Royal Children's Hospital Education Institute www.rch.org.au/edinst

Chronic Illness Peer Support, Centre for Adolescent Health, Royal Children's Hospital
<http://www.rch.org.au/chips> Tel. (03) 9345 6616

<http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/wellbeing/disabil/>

<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/stuman/wellbeing/FinalPSD2007June.pdf>

The content for this fact sheet has been written in partnership with the Better Health Channel and the Royal Children's Hospital Education Institute. First published in May 2007

Disclaimer: The information contained on the site is intended to support not replace discussion with your doctor or health care professionals. The authors accept no responsibility for any inaccuracies, information perceived as misleading, or the success of any treatment regimen detailed in the handouts.

More RCH Fact Sheets can be found at www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/.

Last Updated 08-May-2007. Authorised by: [Julie Browning](#). Enquiries: [Hannah Burns](#).
©RCH. <http://www.rch.org.au>