

# Disability Services Commission

## Responsibility for eligibility determination for access to Specialist Disability Services for people with an Intellectual Disability or Autism Spectrum Disorder

### 1. Keywords

Eligibility. Access. Specialist Disability Services. Intellectual Disability. Autism Spectrum Disorder.

### 2. Policy Statement

This policy supplements the Commission's *Eligibility Policy for Specialist Disability Services funded or provided by the Disability Services Commission 2008* (referred to in this document as the Eligibility Policy). It provides consistency and clarification of the Commission's role and responsibility in determining eligibility for access to funded or provided specialist disability services for people with an intellectual disability or autism spectrum disorder.

### 3. Principles

The principles governing this policy are those articulated in the Eligibility Policy.

### 4. Definitions

**Eligibility** means that a person seeking specialist disability support meets the legislative requirements of the *Disability Services Act 1993* and the policy requirements of the Eligibility Policy. Only people who meet these requirements are 'eligible' to seek specialist disability services. Eligibility does not equate to service entitlement.

**Access** criteria are those requirements that each specialist disability service provider applies to people who have been assessed as eligible. These requirements are reflected in each disability sector organisation's contract with the Commission. Examples of service access requirements include a service operating in a specific geographic location, or having a particular age group focus.

**Determination** means a decision about eligibility for specialist disability services made by the appointed authority following investigation and review of the information provided.

**Verify** means a review by the appointed authority that the information obtained is sufficient to justify the recommended eligibility decision.

**Registration** with the Commission means inclusion in an intellectual disability (or autism spectrum disorder) database of service users eligible for specialist disability services. Registration does not necessarily entitle a person to access specialist disability services.

**Eligibility Team** is a part of the Commission's State-wide Specialist Services Directorate and is responsible for determining the eligibility of a referred person.

**Specialist Disability Services** are specialist supports provided at home or in the community. These include:

- individual advocacy services to help and support people;
- disability professional services including physiotherapy, social work, occupational therapy, psychology and speech pathology;
- family support and respite to provide families with a break and support them in their caring role;
- aids and equipment for community living;
- alternatives to employment to provide opportunities to develop skills and participate in the community; and
- accommodation support to assist people to live in the community.

These services are provided by the Commission and a range of funded disability sector organisations.

**Pre-school Age** refers to children from birth to entering year one of school.

**School Age** refers to children from year one until the time they leave secondary school.

## 5. Background

Historically, the Commission has played a key role in determining the eligibility of people with an intellectual disability and, until recently, autism spectrum disorder. Access to Commission provided specialist disability services (Accommodation Services and State-wide Specialist Services) have required people to be 'registered' with the Commission as having an intellectual disability. Some disability sector organisations have also applied Commission 'registration' as a service access criterion.

Similarly, until recently, people with an autism spectrum disorder were required to have their eligibility verified by the Commission's Eligibility Team to access Commission provided services. Now, this only applies to pre-school age children with an autism spectrum disorder seeking to access Commission funded Early Childhood Intervention disability sector organisations. Children with an autism spectrum disorder who are also vulnerable to intellectual disability may access Commission provided Early Childhood Intervention services.

With the implementation of the Commission's revised Eligibility Policy (2008), the question has arisen as to whether, in line with other diagnostic groups, service providers may determine that someone has an intellectual disability (based on the required documentation), without requiring the person to be formally 'registered' with the Commission. This has led to an examination of the Commission's role in determining eligibility for people with an intellectual disability.

There is a concern, due to the complexity of the diagnostic requirements for determining autism spectrum disorder, and in particular the interface which may arise with mental health, that the Commission is exposed if it does not play a role in maintaining diagnostic standards.

## 6. Consultation

Consultation with directorates of the Commission has informed the development of this policy subsequent to direction from Corporate Executive in August 2009.

## 7. Implementation

This policy has been developed to guide the Commission and disability sector organisation about the process for determining eligibility for people with an intellectual disability or autism spectrum disorder who are seeking access to specialist disability services. The pathways for eligibility determination are described below and Table 1 summarises the registration requirements.

### 7.1 Eligibility Determination Process for **pre-school age children vulnerable to intellectual disability** seeking access to Commission provided Early Childhood Intervention Services (through State-wide Specialist Services).

For these individuals, the eligibility determination process is undertaken by the Commission's Eligibility Team. Eligibility determination and subsequent registration<sup>1</sup> is in accordance with the Eligibility Policy.

If determined as vulnerable to intellectual disability the pre-school age child may also access funded specialist disability services and Local Area Coordination.

### 7.2 Eligibility Determination Process for **pre-school age children vulnerable to intellectual disability** seeking access to Early Childhood Intervention disability sector organisations.

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<sup>1</sup> Pre-school age children deemed eligible by the Commission are registered as vulnerable to intellectual disability and continue to be eligible for services until their status has been reviewed by the Commission's Eligibility Team.

For these individuals, the eligibility determination process may be undertaken by the relevant disability sector organisation in accordance with the Eligibility Policy. The disability sector organisation must have access to relevant information, reports and assessments, and have the necessary skills to make a determination.

A disability sector organisation can, with the appropriate consent, request that the intellectual disability be verified by the Commission.

If an individual, who has been deemed as eligible by a disability sector organisation, then seeks access to support through the Combined Applications Process, Local Area Coordination or Post School Options, he/she must have their diagnosis of intellectual disability **verified** by the Eligibility Team. The disability sector organisation should inform the family of the requirement to be registered<sup>2</sup> with the Commission to be able to access these services. The reports and assessments used by the disability sector organisation to determine eligibility may be used, with consent, by the Commission's Eligibility Team to verify eligibility and registration.

### 7.3 Eligibility Determination Process for **pre-school age children with autism spectrum disorder** seeking access to Commission funded or provided<sup>3</sup> Early Childhood Intervention Services.

For these individuals, the eligibility determination process is undertaken by the Commission's Eligibility Team. Eligibility determination and subsequent registration is in accordance with the Eligibility Policy.

This registration process enables an individual to seek access to Commission provided<sup>3</sup> or funded specialist disability services and Local Area Coordination. This eligibility registration continues beyond the pre-school years<sup>4</sup> and enables an individual to seek access to funded specialist disability services and Local Area Coordination.

### 7.4 Eligibility Determination Process for **school age children and adults with an intellectual disability or autism spectrum disorder** seeking access to

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<sup>2</sup> Pre-school age children deemed eligible by the Commission are registered as vulnerable to intellectual disability and continue to be eligible for services until their status has been reviewed by the Commission's Eligibility Team.

<sup>3</sup> A child with an autism spectrum disorder must also be vulnerable to intellectual disability in order to seek access the Commission's State-wide Specialist Services' Early Childhood Development program (metropolitan). An eligible child with an autism spectrum disorder living in regional Western Australia may seek access to the Commission's State-wide Specialist Services Country Resource and Consultancy Services.

<sup>4</sup> Some people may experience exceptional circumstances which may change their eligibility status. Being assessed as eligible at one point in time does not guarantee continuing eligibility.

support through the Combined Applications Process, Post School Options, State-wide Specialist Services or Local Area Coordination.

For these individuals, the eligibility determination process is undertaken by the Commission's Eligibility Team. Eligibility determination and subsequent registration is in accordance with the Eligibility Policy.

This registration process enables an individual to seek access to Commission provided or funded specialist disability services, individual funding through the Combined Applications Process and Local Area Coordination.

7.5 Eligibility Determination Process for **school age children and adults with an intellectual disability or autism spectrum disorder** seeking access to funded Specialist Disability Services (ie Disability Professional Services, block funded respite).

For these individuals, the eligibility determination process may be undertaken by the relevant disability sector organisation in accordance with the Eligibility Policy where there is access to relevant information and assessments, together with the skills required to make that determination.

A disability sector organisation can, with the appropriate consent, request that the intellectual disability or autism spectrum disorder be verified by the Commission as a part of service access criteria.

If an individual, who has been deemed as eligible by a disability sector organisation, then seeks access to support through the Combined Applications Process, Local Area Coordination or Post School Options, he/she must have their diagnosis of intellectual disability or autism spectrum disorder **verified** by the Disability Services Commission. The disability sector organisation should inform the family of the requirement to be registered<sup>5</sup> with the Commission to be able to access these services. The reports and assessments used by the disability sector organisation to determine eligibility may be used, with consent, by the Commission's Eligibility Team to verify eligibility and subsequent registration.

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<sup>5</sup> Some people may experience exceptional circumstances which may change their eligibility status. Being assessed as eligible at one point in time does not guarantee continuing eligibility.

**Table 1: Summary of Commission registration requirements for access to seek services**

<b>Registration with the Commission requirements</b>						
	Seeking access to State-wide Specialist Services	Seeking access to Commission funded Early Childhood Intervention Disability Sector Organisations	Seeking access to Local Area Co-ordination	Seeking access to Combined Applications Process, Post School Options	Seeking access to Commission Funded Disability Professional Services	Seeking access to block funded respite
Pre-school age child vulnerable to intellectual disability	✓	X	✓	✓	Not applicable - see Early Childhood Intervention column	X
Pre-school age child with autism spectrum disorder (metropolitan)	✓ Child must also be vulnerable to intellectual disability	✓	✓ The child continues to be eligible to access LAC beyond the pre-school years	✓	Not applicable – see Early Childhood Intervention column	X
Pre-school age child with autism spectrum disorder (regional)	✓ Access is to the Country Resource and Consultancy team only	Not applicable	✓ The child continues to be eligible to access LAC beyond the pre-school years	✓	X	X
School age child or adult with an intellectual disability	✓	Not applicable	✓	✓	X	X
School age child or adult with an autism spectrum disorder	Not applicable	Not applicable	✓	✓	X	X

✓ = Commission registration required

X = Commission registration not required

## 8. Funding or Resource Implications

This policy articulates current practice and there are no resource implications.

If an individual is currently in receipt of services or funding and has not had their eligibility verified where required, then the individual continues to receive services until they are no longer required. No additional funding should be granted unless eligibility is verified.

## 9. Related Legislation and Policies

### State Legislation

- Disability Services Act 1993

### Commission Policies

- Eligibility Policy for Specialist Disability Services Funded or Provided by the Disability Services Commission 2008

## 10. Communication

This policy, or information derived from this policy, presented in a user accessible format is to be communicated using the following strategies:

Stakeholder	Strategy
Commission personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy Information Sheet on the Intranet</li> </ul>
Disability Sector Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy Information Sheet on the Internet and posted for inclusion in their Commission Policy Manual Guiding Policies</li> </ul>

## 11. Training

Formal training is not required.

## 12. Evaluation and Review

This policy is evaluated according to the standard Director General policy review mechanism.

## Contact Information

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