



# Students with Disability at School - Therapy and Education Relationships

## Purpose

This factsheet clarifies, defines and supports the education sector and therapy service organisations to work in partnership in providing services to school age students with disability (students).

Therapy and education providers share an interest in achieving positive educational outcomes for students.

The Disability Services Commission and the Department of Education (School of Special Educational Needs) consulted with therapy and education providers to document this approach.

## Partnership Approach

- Strengthen the capacity of all people connected to the therapy and education sectors to deliver quality services which facilitate positive educational outcomes for students.
- Strengthen collaboration and cooperation between teachers, principals and therapists and therapy organisations when working in a school setting.
- Help reduce the gap in educational attainment and experience between students with disability and other students.

## Therapy services in school settings

Therapy services contribute to the lives of people with disability, supporting them to reach their potential, enjoy meaningful relationships and participate in their chosen communities.

The benefits of therapy can include:

- promoting individual and family health and wellbeing
- supporting the development of skills and independence in areas such as communication, mobility, daily living and behaviour
- preventing, minimising or remediating existing or emerging disability
- developing or enhancing meaningful relationships
- encouraging community inclusion and participation.

In some cases, therapy may be delivered in school settings, which will require positive relationships between therapy and education providers.



### **Roles and responsibilities of therapy and education**

- The role of therapists when working in schools is to support the student, school staff, families and carers and contribute to positive educational outcomes for the student
- The role of teachers and schools in relation to therapy services is to facilitate all reasonable measures which enable students to access specialist services to support positive educational outcomes for the student.

### **Guiding principles for relationships**

- Student safety, wellbeing and educational development is the priority for any therapy provided in school settings
- Legislation, policies, procedures and functions of both therapy and education are acknowledged and respected by each sector, as well as the mutual need to operate within resources
- Schools are ultimately responsible for student educational outcomes and are accountable for activities which take place in the school environment
- Therapy services are responsible and accountable for the interventions they provide
- The views and perspectives of the student, their families and carers are valued and respected
- A collaborative approach between teachers, therapists, the student, their families and carers is in the best interests of students to achieve positive educational outcomes.

### **Guiding practices for relationships**

- The delivery of therapy services within schools is planned and documented in partnership with the school and family or carers. In this way all partners have a clear understanding of their roles and can resolve issues collaboratively where they may arise
- The student's educational goals are developed within the school setting through an individual education plan. Therapy services delivered in schools will link to a student's plan where therapy goals relate to educational goals. Sometimes they may form part of the broader individual planning process which relates to outcomes across the student's life
- The inclusion of families and carers in planning for the student's educational and therapy goals is important to ensure the effectiveness of interventions outside of the school setting
- Evaluations of therapy interventions are more effective where there is collaboration between therapists, teachers, students, families and carers.

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- Each service has a different domain of responsibility and may take different pathways to achieve the same goal for students
  - Effective relationships between therapists and teachers are responsive and have the flexibility required to meet educational goals where resources and priorities change
  - A high standard of confidentiality and adherence to relevant legislation regarding information is maintained where information is shared between partners.

### **Related legislation and guidelines**

Disability Discrimination Act 1992  
Equal Opportunity Act 1984  
The Disability Standards for Education 2005  
National Standards for Disability Services  
School Education Act 1999  
School Education Act Regulations, 2000  
Disability Services Act 1993  
Carers Recognition Act 2004