

**Go To Guide**

# Autism and your child 7–12 years



## This booklet was developed by South West Autism Network (SWAN)

We are grateful for the input from autistic individuals and their families who shared their expertise to make this a useful and practical resource for families of young children.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to its development.

The information contained in this guide is constantly being updated, and is current as of June 2025. For more up-to-date information, you can access the digital version at <https://swanautism.org.au/regional-toolkit>.



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Communities**



Australian Government  
Department of Social Services

This project is an NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) initiative, jointly funded by Department of Communities (Disability Services) and Department of Social Services (DSS). For more ILC information and resources please visit:

- Department of Communities (Disability Services):  
[swanautism.org.au/dss-ilc-resources](https://swanautism.org.au/dss-ilc-resources)
- Department of Social Services:  
[swanautism.org.au/dss-ilc-program](https://swanautism.org.au/dss-ilc-program)

Our thanks to the CBA Staff Grant, whose generous contribution helped bring this resource to you.

## Contents Page

About SWAN	4
About this booklet	5

Getting a Diagnosis in Western Australia	6
---	---

Support Services	12
------------------	----

Health	26
--------	----

Education and Childcare (out-of-school care)	36
---	----

For Further Information	52
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## About SWAN

The South West Autism Network (SWAN) supports autistic people and their families in the south west region of Western Australia.

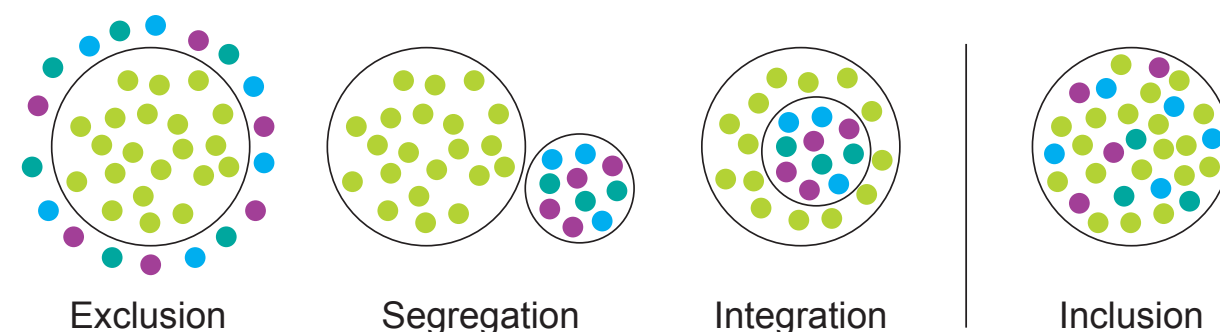
We provide:

- information, resources, and peer support (online, phone or face-to-face)
- social media groups
- accessible information via website and e-newsletter
- a free resource library for members
- training and workshop opportunities
- fun skill-building group programs for children and young adults
- social events such as our Family Christmas Party

SWAN's staff and Board of management includes autistic adults and family members. This gives us an understanding of the experiences of people with autism and guides us in providing the information, services and support people need.

Our vision is to empower autistic people and people with disability in south west WA and beyond. We are a Disabled Persons and Families Organisation (DPFO) and use person-centred language. Most autistic adults prefer to be described as an 'autistic person' rather than 'person with autism', and SWAN uses the language preferred by autistic people.

At SWAN, we believe in inclusion as the truly fair way to honour and respect the rights of all people.



SWAN is a not-for-profit organisation with tax-deductible status. Our services are funded through government grants and the generosity of people who make donations and provide ongoing sponsorship.

Go to our website to learn more about SWAN, join as a member or find out how you can get involved. [www.swanautism.org.au](http://www.swanautism.org.au)

**“High quality inclusion is not just about ‘being there’ or attending a mainstream or universal setting, but about creating environments that provide opportunities for ALL children to actively engage in ALL activities”**

**Denise Luscombe, Chair ECIA WA/NT 2015**

The early years of life are important for the development of every child. The right supports during these early years can help autistic children to develop their individual strengths and capacity. Parents who receive good information and support are better equipped and more confident in their role.

## About this booklet

This booklet has been written to help parents of autistic children navigate the primary school years. As well as schooling, we have included other information to help families find services, community activities and the supports they need. Our aim is that parents are better equipped and more confident in their role, and that autistic children have opportunities and support to be included in their community.

Because some children in this age group may not yet have a diagnosis, this booklet begins with information and guidance on the diagnostic process for children aged 7 and over and how to access the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) at this stage. The rest is useful for parents whether or not their child is already diagnosed.

There is information for families about supports available through the NDIS, including therapies and other relevant supports for this age group, as well as financial entitlements and other supports you might need. This booklet provides information about health services, childcare, primary school education and preparing for high school, recreation and puberty. We've also included information on your child's rights and where to get help when you need it.

This booklet is the second of a series that SWAN has produced for different ages and stages of life. You can find all the booklets on the SWAN website ([www.swanautism.org.au](http://www.swanautism.org.au)) or contact us if you'd like a hard copy.

In this book, you will see that all web addresses start with 'swanautism.org.au/'. This is because we made our own short URLs from longer web addresses. Short URLs are useful if the long web address changes, as the short URL will still work and take you to the right place, even if the long address is different.

## How to use this booklet

Parents using this resource will be at different stages and some will be looking for specific information. Some will want to read the whole booklet first, while others will want to look first at certain topics that are of more interest at the moment. It's up to you.

As well as providing information, we have also included some blank templates and a Notes page. You can use these to map out and record important information about services and supports, so it becomes a handy personal resource.

If you have any comments about the booklet, or need further information, please get in touch with us at SWAN by emailing [info@swanautism.org.au](mailto:info@swanautism.org.au).

# Getting a diagnosis in Western Australia



In WA, a child aged 0-12 years is assessed for autism by two out of three professionals using the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder, version 5 (DSM-V-TR). The three professionals are:

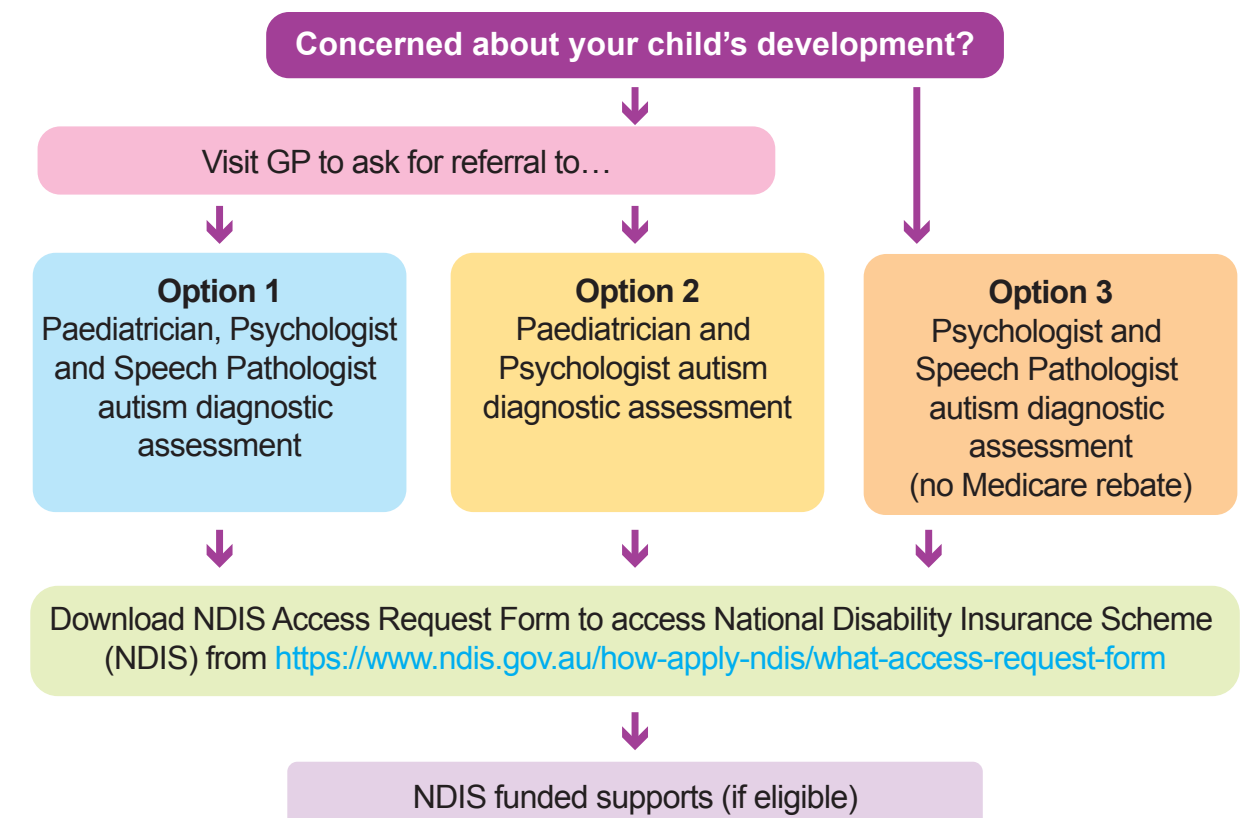
- Paediatrician
- Speech Pathologist
- Registered or Clinical Psychologist (must include psychologist)

Please note, not all qualified professionals carry out autism diagnostic assessments. Also, the diagnosing professionals and processes are different between children and adults.

The process for diagnosing autism varies between different Australian states and territories. If a person was diagnosed outside WA, they may need to be re-assessed to meet the criteria for support in the WA Education system. While children aged under 6 years may be able to access the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) without a formal diagnosis, children aged 6 and over need a diagnosis to either access or to continue to receive NDIS supports.

## Here's how it works

If you are a parent/carer worried about your child's development, here are the different options and steps involved in getting a diagnosis for a child aged between 6 and 12 years.







The autism diagnostic process for children in WA starts with an appointment with your GP to talk about your concerns. Your child needs to go to the appointment with you. The GP can refer your child to see a paediatrician. You can choose which paediatrician, or they can recommend one. The paediatrician's office will contact you to book an appointment. If you don't hear from them within two weeks, it's a good idea to contact them directly.

The paediatrician will carry out an assessment of your child. If they believe your child needs further assessment for autism, they will refer your child to a speech pathologist and a psychologist for them to do a formal autism diagnostic assessment. These assessments can be done either through the public or private systems.

- Public: diagnostic assessments are free, but for children over 7yrs old, the waiting period is up to 2 years. Public autism diagnostic assessments are carried out by the Department of Communities – Disability Services OR the State Child Development Centre (Perth families only).
- Private: the waiting period for a private autism diagnostic assessment is usually around 1 to 4 months, and you will need to pay a fee for the assessments. You may be able to claim some small rebates from Medicare or private health insurance. Please contact the speech pathologist and psychologist before the appointments to find out about their fees and any rebates.

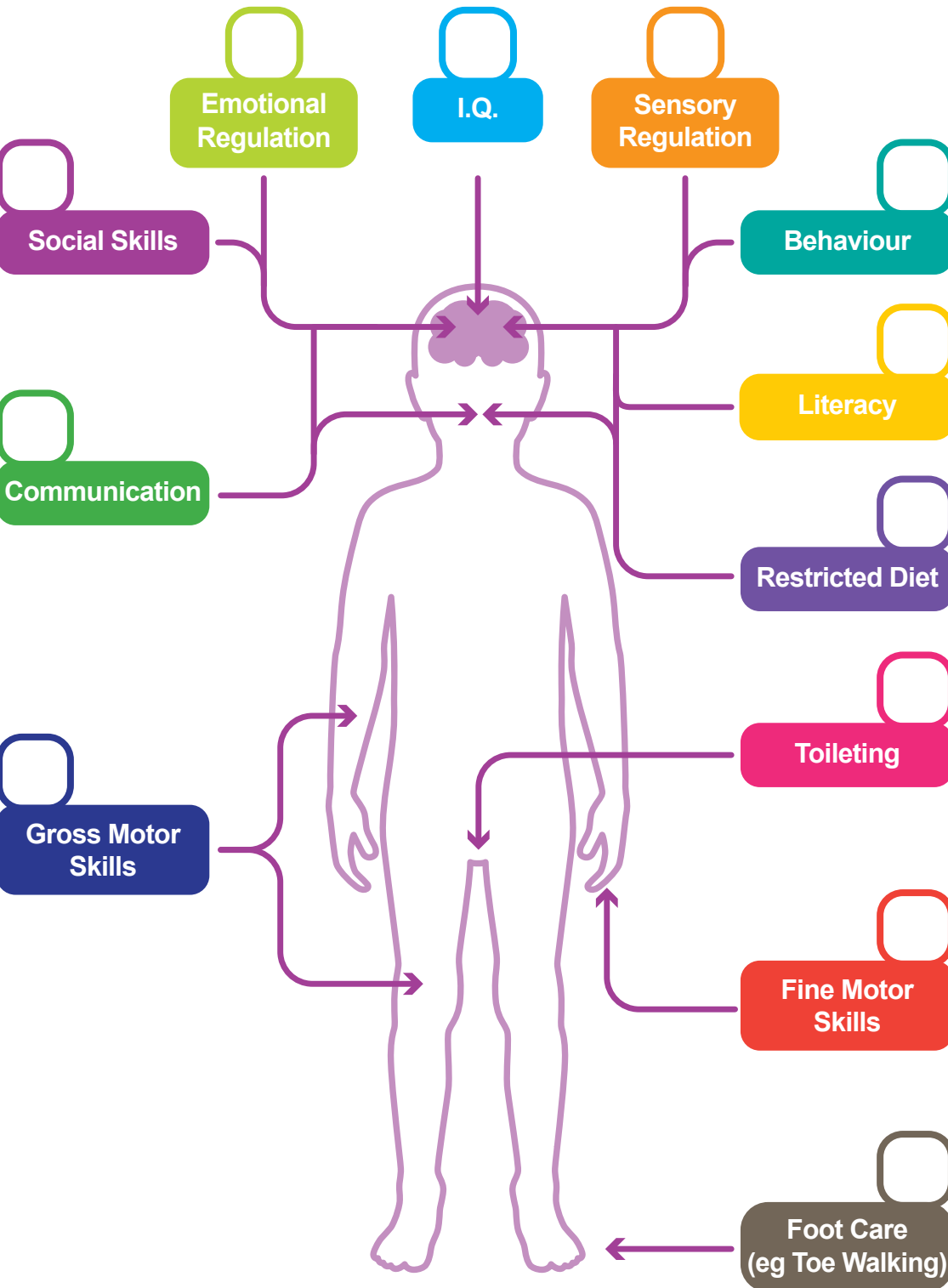
The speech pathologist and psychologist work together to carry out their autism assessments and to write a formal diagnostic report. You may then have a follow up appointment with the paediatrician, to confirm the diagnosis, if they haven't written a letter beforehand stating their opinion that your child meets the criteria for autism.

The diagnostic assessment can be completed by Psychologist and Speech Pathologist (without Paediatrician), but there is no Medicare rebate available this way.





# What Does Your Child Need Support With?



You can use this diagram to think about what your child may need support with. This will be useful when you have your NDIS Planning meeting with your child's LAC or NDIA Planner.



## Handy Hint – Collecting evidence and information

You will probably be asked similar questions by the GP, paediatrician, therapists and other services about your child. You will also receive lots of forms, reports and paperwork. The best way to keep track of it all is to:



- Create a file where you can store everything in one place. Take print copies with you to appointments with your paediatrician, therapists and Local Area Coordinator (LAC). ☐
- Write down your concerns about your child. You can also use video to show the health professional your concerns.\* Remember to keep any notes and videos private – your child will be an adult one day, and the internet is forever. ☐
- Collect supporting evidence of your child's needs from a variety of sources. e.g., letters or reports from day care, school, therapists, family members etc. ☐
- Store digital backups of important reports and paperwork in the cloud. Dropbox, Google Docs and OneDrive are some options. ☐
- Never assume the health professional you are meeting has all your information. Take print copies with you, just in case. ☐



# Support Services



One of the most valuable sources of support when your child has a disability is other parents who are going through similar experiences. Not only for emotional support but for the sharing of everyday useful information, recommendations, and ideas. Many parents/carers find that the connections they make early on through support groups, become enduring friendships as their children grow.

## SWAN

As a member of SWAN, you can join our closed Facebook Peer Support Group to connect with other parents and autistic adults, as well as follow our public Facebook page for news and information. You can also contact us for information, referral, and support, including about NDIS. We have a directory of support services on our website, but you can also contact us for help to find what you need.

- Website:  
[www.swanautism.org.au](http://www.swanautism.org.au)
- Email:  
[info@swanautism.org.au](mailto:info@swanautism.org.au)
- Phone or SMS:  
0499 819 038 or 0476 315 694

## Carer Gateway

As the parent of a young child, you probably don't think of yourself as a 'carer', but you can still tap into a range of services and opportunities offered on the Carer Gateway. These include professional counselling (online, phone or in person), online skills courses and self-guided coaching.

You can find more information about the Carer Gateway here:

[swanautism.org.au/carers-gateway](http://swanautism.org.au/carers-gateway)

Carers WA is the contact and provider for the Carer Gateway in WA:

[swanautism.org.au/carers-gateway-WA](http://swanautism.org.au/carers-gateway-WA)

## Family Support

### Family and friends

Some parents find their extended family and friends to be great supports. If there are people you would like to contact sometimes for practical help or emotional support, check that they are happy for you to do this. Keep their contact details handy for when you need them.



## Advocacy Support

Sometimes, if you are having problems with the NDIS or with other services such as education or health, you might feel you need someone who can give you good advice and practical help.

You may get some help from family, friends, and your peer support networks, but sometimes you might want more formal help from an advocacy organisation. Advocacy organisations provide free advocacy support.



### What can advocacy help me with?

If you have a problem, an advocate can give you advice to help you decide what to do. They may also provide practical support such as someone to go to meetings with you to sort out problems and make sure your child's rights are respected.

### Where can I get advocacy support?

SWAN is a free service and may be able to help you in some situations. We work with people with disability and their families to improve knowledge and understanding about the NDIS, mainstream, and disability services, and can attend meetings with you as an advocate if needed. It can be helpful to speak with a peer support organisation like SWAN before important meetings, to help you prepare. If you know more, and feel prepared, you will feel more confident in meetings to advocate for your child.

Here are some other organisations that offer advocacy support.

### Advocacy WA

Advocacy WA is an organisation based in Bunbury, but they also have offices in other major towns and operate across the southwest of WA. It is a free service for people with disabilities, and parents can contact them on behalf of their child for advocacy support.

You can find out more about Advocacy WA and how to contact them here:

[swanautism.org.au/advocacy-wa](http://swanautism.org.au/advocacy-wa)

### Sussex Street Community Law Services

Sussex Street Community Law Services is a free legal service based in Perth for low-income and disadvantaged people in the community, including people with disabilities. The WA Disability Discrimination Unit is part of the Sussex Street Community Law Services. They provide information and advice to people living anywhere in WA (including the southwest) who feel they have been discriminated against because of their disability. You can find out more about Sussex Street Community Law Services and how to contact them here:

[swanautism.org.au/sussex-st-comm-law](http://swanautism.org.au/sussex-st-comm-law)

### Developmental Disability WA (DDWA)

DDWA also provide free advocacy, and have expertise in advocacy across health, education, disability services (including NDIS), justice (including guardianship), access, recreation and housing.

You can find out more, and contact them here:

- Website: [swanautism.org.au/ddwa-ind-advocacy](http://swanautism.org.au/ddwa-ind-advocacy)

As well as being able to get individual advocacy support, there are national and state advocacy organisations that advocate to the government on issues that are important to people with disabilities. Some also offer a range of information resources. There is a directory of Australian disability advocacy organisations here: [swanautism.org.au/afdo-advocacy](http://swanautism.org.au/afdo-advocacy)

### Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA)

Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) is the national representative organisation for children and young people with disabilities aged 0 to 25 years. CYDA has information on NDIS, inclusive education, and much more. [swanautism.org.au/cyda](http://swanautism.org.au/cyda)

### People With disability WA (PWdWA)

PWdWA provides non-legal individual advocacy to help people with disabilities speak out, express their views, and uphold their rights.

[swanautism.org.au/pwdwa](http://swanautism.org.au/pwdwa)





## Financial Support

### Centrelink Payments

Most parents of autistic children will be eligible for some financial assistance from Centrelink / Services Australia. However, you don't get any allowances or payments automatically when your child has a diagnosis, you have to apply for them.

The rules and application forms may change from time to time, so it's important to look at the current information and use current application forms. The payment starts from the date Centrelink receives your application, not the date your child is diagnosed, so it's a good idea to apply as soon as possible. Here are some payments you may be entitled to:

#### Carer Allowance

Most parents of children diagnosed with autism will qualify for Carer Allowance from Centrelink. This is a fortnightly supplement to help with costs related to the disability. The allowance includes a Health Care Card in your child's name, which entitles them to low-cost prescription medications. The allowance is income-tested but the cut-off rate for the combined family income is \$250,000. Check the Centrelink website for current information:

[swanautism.org.au/sa-carer-allowance](https://www.swanautism.org.au/sa-carer-allowance)

#### Carer Payment

Carer Payment is a means-tested fortnightly payment sometimes known as the Carer Pension. This is a payment for people who can't support themselves because they provide constant care to someone who has a disability, illness or is frail and aged.

#### Carer Supplement

This is a once-a-year payment automatically paid to people who receive Carer Allowance or Carer Payment.

#### Child Disability Assistance Payment

This is a once a year payment automatically paid to people who receive Carer Allowance for a child under 16 years.



## To Do Checklist

Services Australia (Centrelink)

### Check eligibility for:

• Carer Allowance

☐

• Carer Payment

☐

• Carer Supplement

☐

• Child Disability Assistance Payment

☐

You can find more information here:

[swanautism.org.au/sa-carer-payment](https://www.swanautism.org.au/sa-carer-payment)

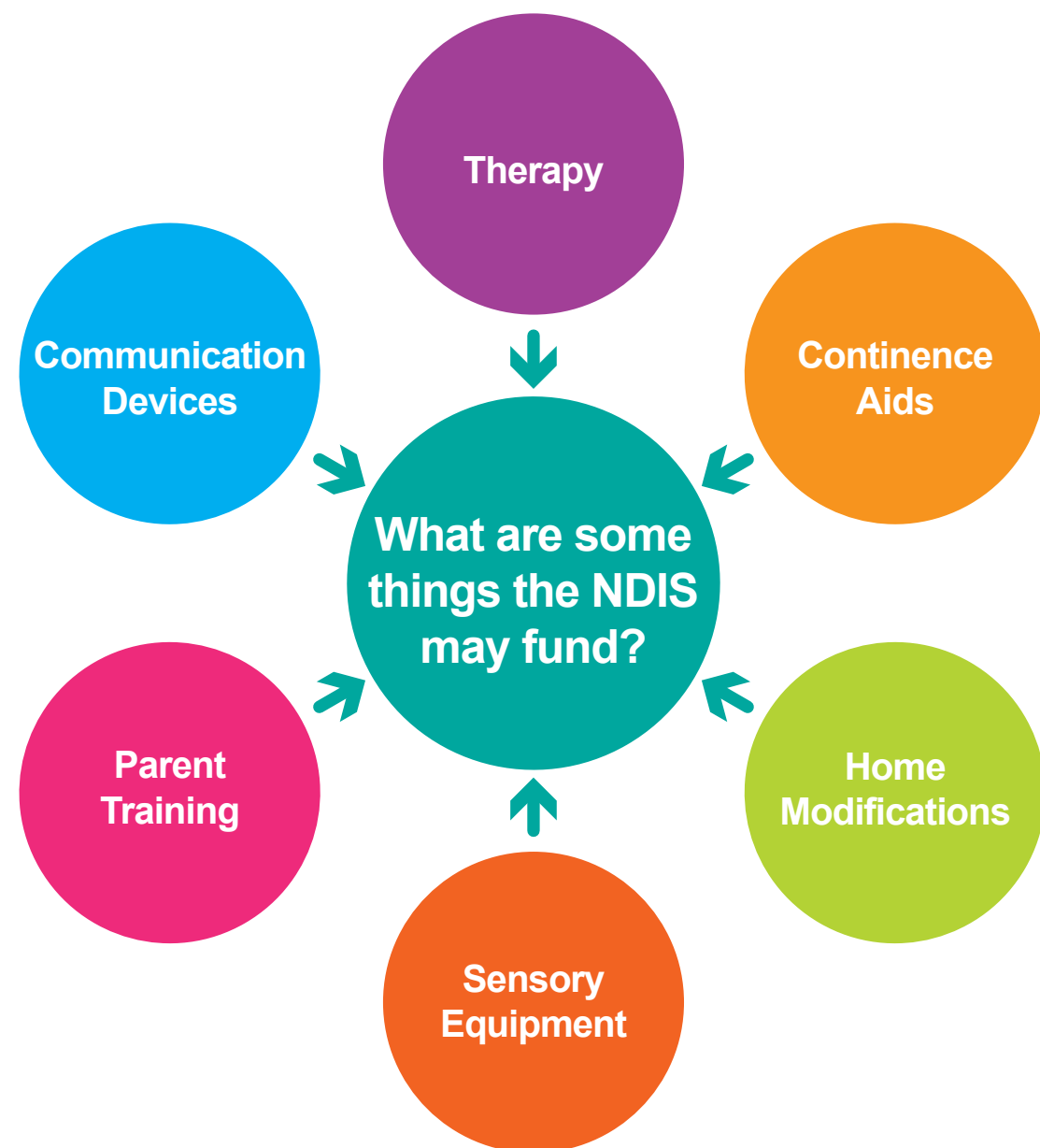
### Companion Card

This is a card for people with a significant and permanent disability, who need support to participate at community venues and activities. When going to venues that accept the Companion Card, the person supporting the person with disability is able to enter for free. The cardholder (person with disability) still pays an entry fee. You can find out about eligibility and how to apply here:

[swanautism.org.au/wa-companion-card](https://www.swanautism.org.au/wa-companion-card)







## Supporting your child's development

### National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

#### National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is the national scheme that funds reasonable and necessary supports to help people with disabilities live the life they want. The NDIS is run by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). In regional Western Australia, NDIA offices are usually co-located at Centrelink.

#### Who is eligible for the NDIS?

If your child is aged 7 and over they must have a significant and permanent disability. They will need a diagnosis of autism or other eligible disability to access the NDIS.

To be eligible, you also need to be an Australian citizen, be a permanent resident, or hold a Protected Special Category Visa.

### How do we access the NDIS?

Download and fill out an NDIS Access Request Form (ARF). If your child is diagnosed with autism level 2 or 3, you can submit a copy of your child's autism diagnostic reports with the ARF to NDIS instead of filling out section 2 of the form. If your child has been diagnosed with autism level 1, you will need to ask your GP, paediatrician, or allied health therapist to fill out section 2 of the form, and submit that to NDIS with the ARF and diagnostic report. You can download the forms here: [swanautism.org.au/ndis-access-request-form](http://swanautism.org.au/ndis-access-request-form). The form can be emailed to [NAT@ndis.gov.au](mailto:NAT@ndis.gov.au), or dropped off at your nearest NDIS office (usually co-located at Centrelink).

### APM Communities

APM Communities is the NDIS Partners in the Community organisation in the south west of WA. They deliver NDIS Local Area Coordination (LAC) services to help people with disability, families and carers to understand the NDIS and identify and access the services and support they need. They work with NDIS participants to develop and use their NDIS plans. As well as disability services, APM can help with connection to community and mainstream services. Approximately 75% of NDIS participants aged 7yrs+ will work with an LAC to prepare and review their NDIS Plans. The other 25% will meet with NDIA Planners direct. The main role of the LAC partner is to draft your child's NDIS Plan and send it to the NDIA for approval.

To speak to someone about LAC Services, call 1800 276 522 (APM LAC) or [apmnet@ndis.gov.au](mailto:apmnet@ndis.gov.au)

There are APM offices in Bunbury, Busselton and Margaret River.

#### APM Communities

Shop 1 16 Victoria Street  
Bunbury WA 6230  
Ph: 1800 276 522

[swanautism.org.au/apm-ndis](http://swanautism.org.au/apm-ndis)

#### APM Communities

Shop 13 69 Prince Street  
Busselton WA 6280  
Ph: 1800 276 522

[swanautism.org.au/apm-ndis](http://swanautism.org.au/apm-ndis)

#### APM Communities

Tenancy 14 The Village at Margs  
49 Town View Terrace  
Margaret River WA 6285  
Ph: 1800 276 522

[swanautism.org.au/apm-ndis](http://swanautism.org.au/apm-ndis)







### What help can we get from NDIS?

Every person is different, so the NDIS works with each child and their family individually at a planning meeting with the APM LAC. The aim of the meeting is to identify needs and goals and work out a plan of supports. It is **VERY** important to prepare for this meeting, to make sure your child gets a plan and the funds to pay for support services. This is called pre-planning.

There are some good resources to help you understand the NDIS and help you with this pre-planning. You can download the resource booklets here:

[swanautism.org.au/ndis-participants](http://swanautism.org.au/ndis-participants).

You can also contact SWAN to help you with the process of working out what your child needs, and what will work best for your family. We can meet with you face to face or via Zoom video-conferencing.

You can find some more pre-planning resources in the 'For Further Information' section of this booklet.

### What is usually in an NDIS plan for a primary school aged child?

When you are doing pre-planning for your meeting with the LAC, you need to think about some goals for your child. NDIS plans are usually for 12 months, and are then reviewed, so it's a good idea to think about some long term goals for the year and some shorter term goals that can be achieved during the year.

An NDIS plan for a primary school age child who is autistic would usually include goals relating to their development, but it's important to also think about goals related to making social connections and taking part in community activities.

Here are a few areas to think about that might help you identify goals for your primary school aged child:

- their current stage of development, including gross and fine motor skills, communication, eating, and self-help skills such as toileting;
- the kinds of skills your child needs for home, school and at play;
- whether your child needs any equipment (Assistive Technology\*) related to their disability, such as for communication;
- whether your child needs help to make friends;
- what kinds of things your child is interested in, and activities they could get involved in outside school hours; and
- whether your child needs specialist support at out of school care and school holiday programs.

The NDIS may also agree to a goal to help you increase your skills and capacity as a parent to support your child's development and inclusion, for example, learning to support their communication, or attending parent training to help with parenting your autistic child.

Here are some examples of goals for this age group:

- (name) to improve communication skills
- (name) to improve self-help and daily living skills, and be able to participate more in their community.
- (name) to learn to recognise and manage their emotions (emotional regulation)
- (name) to improve their executive functioning skills
- (name) to improve balance, coordination, core strength and motor skills
- (name) to be included in after school care and holiday program activities
- (name) to increase the range of foods they are able to eat
- (name) to develop water confidence and swimming skills
- (name) to learn about making and keeping friends, and developing social skills



There are usually 2 short term and 3 long term goals in an NDIS Plan (although you can have fewer or more than this if preferred). It's often a good idea to keep your goals broad and flexible, as your child's needs and goals can change during the year. For example, your broad goal may be to improve self-help and daily living skills, and the specific goals may be things like learning to use the toilet independently or learning money skills.

The NDIS legislation states that people with disability have the right to choose their own goals for their NDIS Plans. You can choose to discuss the goals with your LAC / Planner, or you can tell them to use the goals you have prepared.

In your child's first NDIS Plan, it is a very good idea to organise a 'Functional Capacity Assessment'. This is useful for explaining how your child's disability impacts their ability to function, and is evidence to support the NDIS funding being asked for in future. The Functional Capacity Assessment can also include recommendations about types of supports to meet your child's needs, and how much of these supports are needed.

When you are pre-planning, it is important to understand that the NDIS won't cover supports, resources and equipment that are the responsibility of other government services (such as health or education) to provide.

Supports to work towards your child's goals might include therapy services, assistive technology or consumables. They could include support to be included in community activities or out of school and holiday programs. NDIS generally won't fund the costs of activities that families would generally pay for their children, such as fees for tutoring, dancing classes or sports. However, NDIS may fund specialised programs or the cost difference between individual swimming lessons and group lessons required because of a person's disability.

### Consumables

NDIS may fund items such as continence aids (eg. nappies), waterproof sheets and wipes for children aged 5yrs and over, and clothing to maintain hygiene such as incontinence or period underwear. If your child needs these, it is recommended that you ask for consumables in their plan.

### NDIS Social Media support networks

Here are some online groups you can join to share or find information with other NDIS participants and families:

- NDIS in WA Peer Support Facebook group
- NDIS Grassroots Facebook group
- NDIS Self Management Hub Facebook group

You can also find peer support on a range of things including NDIS online by joining:

- SWAN Group – South West Autism Network Facebook group
- Disability Peer Support South West WA Facebook group

### Your Rights - NDIS

People who receive NDIS funding and supports have a number of fundamental rights. This includes the right to quality services to meet their needs, the right to choose and control their services, the right to be safe when using services, and the right to make complaints.

The NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Commission is the organisation responsible for upholding people's rights and taking complaints relating to the NDIS.

[swanautism.org.au/ndis-participant-rights](https://swanautism.org.au/ndis-participant-rights)



### Therapy

#### What kinds of therapies might your child need?

Every child is different and needs different kinds of support. Some therapies work to help a child's development by teaching skills, while others may focus on providing positive behaviour support. Your child's NDIS plan will include funding for non-diagnostic assessments, therapy, and parent training in a section of their NDIS plan called Capacity Building - Daily Living. You will be able to choose therapists to assess your child's needs, and work with them during the year to build their skills. Here are some of the different kinds of therapy:

#### Speech Pathology

If your child needs help with speech, communication, and comprehension, you and your child can work with a Speech Pathologist (sometimes called a speech therapist). They can also help children who have difficulties with feeding/eating.

#### Psychology

Psychologists help children with understanding and managing their emotions, learning social skills and interaction, staying safe, and positive behaviour support. They also help parents with understanding their child's needs, and how to support them.





### Occupational Therapy

Occupational Therapists help children to develop skills for daily life such as eating, dressing and toileting so they can become more independent. This involves supporting the child with their fine and gross motor difficulties, sensory issues (e.g., over-sensitivity to noise, light, smell, and touch), organisation skills and information processing.

### Physiotherapy

Autistic children sometimes experience difficulties with low muscle tone, low core strength and gross motor skills such as sitting, crawling, and walking. Physiotherapy can help to improve these early skills so that children can go on to master more complex skills such as balancing, riding a bike, skipping, and ball skills; all skills that help children to take part in activities and sport with other children.

### Podiatry

Many autistic children toe-walk. Spending a lot of time toe-walking can cause problems with feet and ankles, such as the Achilles tendon becoming too short as they grow. Podiatrists and physiotherapists can both help with improving foot and ankle flexibility and strength.

### Alternative therapies

Alternative therapies are therapies that are outside of conventional medical and allied health practice. You might see these advertised online, or well-meaning people may tell you about them. However, the benefits are generally not supported by rigorous scientific testing, and some are actually harmful.

### Evidence Based

When you're choosing a type of therapy, it's important to look for 'evidence-based' approaches - that is, interventions that have scientific evidence to show they work for autistic children. Seeking advice from autistic adults who have experienced these therapies can be helpful. Be cautious and use your judgement when considering interventions that haven't been scientifically tested. It's also important to remember that NDIS will only fund therapies and interventions which are evidence-based.

Here are some other terms you will probably come across relating to therapy.

### Child and Family-centred Approach

Therapists will work in partnership with families to better understand their unique circumstances, and to help parents decide what strategies will best suit their child and their family. You should always be involved in setting goals and talking about how you can work towards them.

### Multidisciplinary Team Approach

Each type of therapy is a 'discipline'. Multidisciplinary means that your child sees two or more different types of therapists who each work with your child as part of a team (e.g. Speech Pathologist, Psychologist, and Occupational Therapist). In multidisciplinary therapy, the therapists share what they know about your child and what therapy they are doing with each other, to make sure that your child's needs are understood, and that therapy is holistic.





# Health

When you have children, it's good to know how the health system works before you need it urgently. This section contains some basic, useful information and links to help you find what you need in the health system, as well as some information specifically around disability and health.

## The WA Health System

Western Australia's health system is a mix of different services. Some are provided by Australian and State Governments, and some by private healthcare providers.

The Healthy WA website provides a lot of information about the different kinds of services that make up the health system in WA. They explain what these services are and give links to more information.

The link below gives you an overview of the system and covers some useful information on public and private healthcare, choosing to be a public or private patient, health insurance and different types of hospital care – inpatient or outpatient.

[swanautism.org.au/doh-wa-health-overview](https://swanautism.org.au/doh-wa-health-overview)

## General Practitioners (GP)

Unless the situation is life threatening, your local doctor (GP) is the first person you should contact when your child is unwell or has a minor injury. It's a good idea to build a relationship with a GP so that they get to know your child as a person, and understand their disability and any ongoing health conditions they may have.

## Finding a GP

To find a GP in your local area use the following link and enter your postcode - [swanautism.org.au/doh-wa-service-finder](https://swanautism.org.au/doh-wa-service-finder)

## GP Services

As well as going to your GP when you are sick, GPs provide some services to help you stay well, identify health problems, and manage your care. These services can include annual health assessments and GP-managed health plans.

Talk to your GP about regular health checks for your child and any Medicare-funded health and allied health programs they are entitled to contact your private health insurance provider (if applicable). Find out which services you are covered for such as occupational therapy, speech pathology, psychology, physiotherapy as applicable.





### GP Managed Health plans

People with disability are usually eligible for GP managed health plans. The GP can set up a team care approach and make referrals to other health and allied health practitioners such as therapists. You can do this even if you have therapy in your NDIS plan.

[swanautism.org.au/doh-disease-mgmt](https://swanautism.org.au/doh-disease-mgmt)

### Health Check-ups

People with intellectual disability can have a full health check-up with their GP every year, with a Medicare rebate. Medicare calls this an annual “health assessment for people with an intellectual disability”. Here is the link to information about the Medicare-covered annual health assessment:

[swanautism.org.au/doh-medicare-assessment](https://swanautism.org.au/doh-medicare-assessment)

### HealthDirect

If your child is unwell or injured, and you’re unsure what to do, you can contact HealthDirect 24 hours a day for free advice by phoning 1800 022 222.

You can also visit the HealthDirect website to check symptoms, find information about health, and find a health service near you.

[swanautism.org.au/health-direct](https://swanautism.org.au/health-direct)



### Emergency

In an emergency, you may need to call an ambulance for your child or visit the nearest hospital Emergency Department.

If you need urgent treatment for a serious injury or illness call 000 for an ambulance.

Emergency departments in public hospitals provide free emergency care to anyone who needs immediate treatment for a serious injury or illness.

You don’t need an appointment to go to an emergency department. They are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

In the Perth metropolitan area, WA Health emergency department doctors and nurses are always on duty. Country hospitals and nursing posts can arrange emergency services.

This link gives you the name of each Emergency Hospital and the average amount of time you need to wait to be seen by medical staff.

[swanautism.org.au/doh-wa-emergency](https://swanautism.org.au/doh-wa-emergency)

In Country WA, hospitals and nursing posts provide or can arrange emergency services. Ambulance services or the Royal Flying Doctor Service can also help you access these services. You can find health services information for your area by using the National Health Services Directory:

[swanautism.org.au/doh-wa-service-finder](https://swanautism.org.au/doh-wa-service-finder)

This is the link to search for your closest GP, Emergency Department, Pharmacy, Mental Health, and Hospital Service. Enter your postcode and choose the type of service you need.

[swanautism.org.au/doh-wa-service-finder](https://swanautism.org.au/doh-wa-service-finder)





## Supporting your child in an emergency

Emergency visits to hospital can be very frightening for autistic children. It's important to tell health professionals that your child is autistic, so that they can better support their needs. Some things which may help your child cope with health treatment are:

- Bringing a comfort item with you, if you have time.
- If your child uses a communication system, bring it with you.
- Asking ambulance staff to turn internal lights and sirens off (if appropriate).
- Ask emergency department staff for a separate room (if available), and for the lights to be dimmed.
- Ask medical staff to demonstrate medical treatments on mum, dad, or a toy, to help your child understand what will be done to them.
- Use your smart phone to search for videos or social stories about medical procedures, to help your child understand what will happen. Make sure that you watch any videos first, to make sure they are helpful rather than scary.
- Ask medical staff to carefully explain to your child what will be done to them, before doing it.
- Take snacks that your child likes in case they get hungry (just check with emergency department staff that its ok to eat first).
- Activities to keep them occupied – books, games etc.
- Charging cords for any electrical devices (i.e., iPad, phone).

## Hospital Admission Forms

You can download these forms and use when your child is going to hospital, either urgently or for a planned admission. Families can complete the forms, to be sure important information is seen by the treating professionals and is in the medical record.

[swanautism.org.au/ddwa-hospital-forms](https://swanautism.org.au/ddwa-hospital-forms)

## Medicare

A paediatrician or psychiatrist can refer a person aged 0-24 years for up to 8 Medicare claimable diagnostic/assessment services per lifetime from **psychologists, speech pathologists**, occupational therapists, audiologists, optometrists, orthoptists or physiotherapists to assist the referring Dr with diagnosis, treatment and management.

Note: psychologists and speech pathologists are highlighted here as the primary diagnosticians for autism.

<https://swanautism.org.au/mbs-assessment-rebate>

Once diagnosed with a Complex Neurodevelopmental Disorder (including Autism) a person aged 0-24 years, can be referred by a paediatrician or psychiatrist for up to 20 Medicare claimable treatment services from psychologists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, audiologists, optometrists, orthoptists or physiotherapists.

<https://swanautism.org.au/mbs-treatment-rebate>

Medicare also provides a Safety Net to help people with high medical costs. If your out-of-pocket medical costs reach the threshold between 1st January and 31st December each year, you will receive a higher amount back when claiming from Medicare.

Find out more here:

[swanautism.org.au/medicare-safety-nets](https://swanautism.org.au/medicare-safety-nets)

## NDIS and Health

NDIS doesn't cover services that are seen as the responsibility of the Health system, but there are some health-related supports that can be included in an NDIS plan. So it can be confusing and hard to work out which treatments and therapies are covered by which system.

Here is what the NDIS and Health have agreed on:

[swanautism.org.au/ndis-health](https://swanautism.org.au/ndis-health)





## Your Rights – Health

All Australians including people with disabilities of all ages, have legal rights when it comes to health services. This is covered by the Disability Discrimination Act and also by the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights.

### Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights

The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights describes the rights of patients and other people using the Australian health system. These rights help to make sure that, wherever and whenever care is provided, it is of high quality and is safe.

The charter applies to all health settings anywhere in Australia, including public hospitals, private hospitals, general practice, and other community environments. It allows patients, consumers, families, carers, and service providers to have a common understanding of the rights of people receiving health care.

You can find the charter here:

[swanautism.org.au/healthcare-rights](http://swanautism.org.au/healthcare-rights)

Here is a Guide for Patients and Carers about the charter:

[swanautism.org.au/guide-patients](http://swanautism.org.au/guide-patients)

## Making complaints about health services in WA

You can make a complaint about health services if you've had your rights denied or you feel that you've received bad care. It's a good idea to try first to resolve the problem with the health professional involved, but if that's not possible, or you need some advice or help, talk to the patient liaison officer or representative at the health care service.

### Health and Disability Services Complaints Office (HaDSCO)

You can also contact the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office. HaDSCO is a WA independent statutory authority providing a service to help you resolve complaints relating to health, disability, and mental health services.

Here is information about how to make a complaint about a health service:

[swanautism.org.au/wa-health-complaints](http://swanautism.org.au/wa-health-complaints)

### Care Opinion Australia

You can share your experience on the Care Opinion website. It is an independent service that aims to help make health services better.

Over 50 health services and organisations are currently subscribed to Care Opinion Australia. These include hospitals and hospital networks, primary health networks, mental health services, community health centres, government departments, and other health not-for-profit organisations.

Here's how it works:

1. Go to the Care Opinion website: [swanautism.org.au/care-opinion](http://swanautism.org.au/care-opinion)
2. Share your story of using a health service
3. We send your story to staff so that they can learn from it
4. You might get a response directly from the health service such as an apology, an offer to discuss your complaint, or be asked to advise how to improve their service
5. Your story might help staff to change services







## Puberty

Autism doesn't affect when puberty starts, so you can expect your child to begin to show signs at around the same age as other children. This is around 10 to 11 years for girls and 11 to 13 years for boys. Genetics play a part, so if older siblings or other family members started puberty early, you will need to start preparing your child for puberty as early as possible.

While the age may be similar, an autistic child may find it more difficult and take longer to understand that their body will change during puberty, and may be worried about what is happening to them.

So it's a good idea to prepare early to help your child get used to the idea and understand the changes before they happen. From mid primary school is a good time to begin to talk about what will happen. Each child is different, but you will know if there are individual factors that will influence how and when you help your child to understand and manage the changes.

It's important to be clear and direct about what will happen, using communication and language your child understands while still using correct terminology including for body parts. You can use visuals and social stories to explain puberty and help you answer your child's questions.

## Staying Safe – protective behaviours

Protective behaviours are life and personal safety skills to help children, young people and adults keep themselves safe. It's important for all children to learn protective behaviours. It is especially important for children with disabilities who may be more vulnerable for reasons including communication difficulties and bullying.

Starting early is important in keeping children safe. For example, teaching kids the correct names for body parts can help them understand and communicate about what is ok and what is not ok when it comes to their rights over their own bodies.

Schools include protective behaviours education in the curriculum, and teachers are trained to provide a safe environment and to recognise and support children who may not be safe.

You can find some information and support for parents on puberty, sexual development and protective behaviours here:

### SWAN

SWAN has a resource library you can borrow from. Type 'puberty', or 'protective behaviours' into the search function and you'll find dozens of resources, including some specifically for children with disabilities.

[swanautism.org.au](http://swanautism.org.au)

### SECCA

SECCA is a non-profit organisation that helps people with disabilities to learn about puberty, sexuality, relationships, sexual health and staying safe. They have developed several resources for teachers, carers, parents, professionals and trusted adults to use. Some resources can be borrowed and some you can download from their website: [swanautism.org.au/secca](http://swanautism.org.au/secca)

SECCA also provide individualised counselling in Bunbury which can be funded by NDIS, and have developed a free App: [swanautism.org.au/secca-app](http://swanautism.org.au/secca-app)

### WA Child Safety Services

WA Child Safety Services provides child safety education, including the Protective Behaviours program. Their workshops and training educate and empower children and young people, and help parents, educators, and other professionals create safer communities.

They have a range of other resources you can download free from their website.

[swanautism.org.au/wacss](http://swanautism.org.au/wacss)

'Talk soon. Talk often' is a comprehensive and practical guide for parents of children of all ages.

[swanautism.org.au/talk-soon-talk-often](http://swanautism.org.au/talk-soon-talk-often)

SWAN have print copies of this booklet available for free in our Busselton and Bunbury offices, as well as copies of 'Relationships, sex and other stuff', and the combined book 'Girls & Puberty / Boys & Puberty'.

Please email [info@swanautism.org.au](mailto:info@swanautism.org.au) to request a copy of these resources.





# Education



This section includes practical information to help you work in partnership with your child's school.

If you are looking for information and help on how to choose a school for your child, please see SWAN's Early Years (0 to 6 years) booklet.



## Education and the NDIS

Although the NDIS can fund a range of specialised supports for school-aged children with a disability, it **will not** fund anything that should be the responsibility of the education system. Schools must continue to provide 'reasonable adjustment' for students with disability so that they can learn on an equal basis with other children.

The NDIS **will** fund allied health and other therapy supports such as speech therapy, occupational therapy and other allied health supports depending on what each child needs because of their disability. These can be provided at school.

The school will work with you to develop your child's educational goals and create an Individual Educational Plan (IEP). Therapy plans should be consistent and directly related to the outcomes in your child's IEP.

On the following page is a summary of what NDIS funds and what education systems can fund for children with disability.





#### NDIS funds:

- Self-care at school related to the student's disability, such as support with eating.
- Specialised training of teachers and other staff about the specific personal support needs of a student with disability.
- Specialist transport required because of the student's disability (does not replace parental responsibility).
- Transportable equipment such as a wheelchair or personal communication devices.
- Therapies a family and school have agreed may be delivered during school time but are not for educational purposes.

#### Education systems fund:

- Teachers, education assistants, and other supports e.g., Auslan interpreters.
- General support, resources, and training for teachers and other staff.
- Therapy delivered in schools for education or training purposes, such as allied health practitioners helping teachers and trainers adjust curriculums.
- Aids and equipment to make curriculums accessible, such as modified computer hardware, software, Braille textbooks, other accessible information formats.
- Adjustments to buildings such as ramps, lifts, accessible toilets, and hearing-loops.
- Transport for educational or training activities such as excursions, field trips and sporting carnivals.
- Day-to-day supervision of students at school, including behavioural support.

You can find more information on the NDIS website:  
[swanautism.org.au/ndis-school-education](http://swanautism.org.au/ndis-school-education)

#### Before school starts

Starting school is a big step for any child, but there are a few things that can make it a smoother transition. Once you know which school your child will be going to, begin to familiarise them with the school and staff, practise skills that will help when they go to school, and talk a lot about the good things about going to school, including using social stories or a photo book. There is a section with lists of practical tips for preparing for school in the Early Years 0 to 6 years booklet.

#### Working with the school

Perhaps the most important factor when it comes to your child's education is working in partnership with the school and its staff. An effective partnership involves good communication, sharing of knowledge, respect, and being able to work in different but complimentary ways towards a common goal.

#### Getting to know your child

By the time your child starts school, the teacher should have some detailed information about your child to help them understand the support your child needs, how to communicate with them, what interests and motivates them, their dislikes and triggers, and how to include them in the classroom. Teachers also need to know about any health issues and therapy goals.

You can help by putting together some information about your child. There are different ways of doing this. Some parents put together a booklet of information about their child, and some create a One Page Profile (See page 46). This can be especially helpful when changing to a new class / new teacher / new school.

Whatever you choose to do, it needs to provide a picture of your child's strengths, how they communicate, what they enjoy, what motivates them, and how they need and want to be supported.



## Communication

It is really important to have regular, open communication between you and your child's teacher and education assistant (if they have one), if you are going to have an effective partnership. You can share useful information, celebrate achievements and deal with small problems before they become big problems. This is especially important when your child is very young and/or doesn't use speech to communicate.

Parents need to know what happened at school so that they can encourage their child to talk about the day, and liaise with therapists to address any issues. Teachers need to know if there is anything at home that is either something positive to talk about with your child or that might be affecting their learning.

Most parents and teachers find that a communication book between home and school is the easiest way to keep up two-way communication about daily details. You can just use a small school exercise book. Often the teacher will provide this, or you could supply one if preferred. It need only take a few moments for a teacher to write that it was a good day, to ask a question or report an achievement. Parents can write a quick thanks, let the teacher know their child could be tired, sad, excited for some reason or give other information that the teacher can use to chat with your child. Talk to your child's teacher before or when school starts, and work out a system that works for everyone.

Here are some resources you might like to read in the lead up to your child starting school:

SWAN Early Years (0 to 6 years) booklet. [swanautism.org.au](http://swanautism.org.au)

Starting School

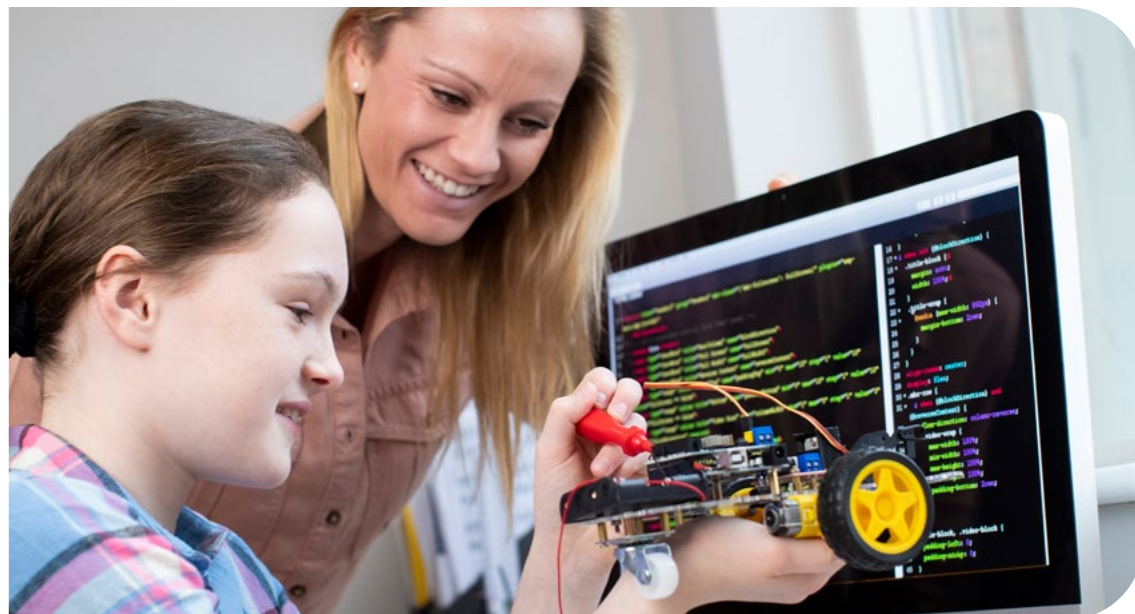
A Guide for parents of children with special needs in Western Australia.

[swanautism.org.au/ddwa-education](http://swanautism.org.au/ddwa-education)

The Really Useful Starting School Book, from Down Syndrome WA.

[swanautism.org.au/down-syndrome-resources](http://swanautism.org.au/down-syndrome-resources)

## Individual Education Plans



The school will work with you to develop your child's educational goals and create an Individual Educational Plan (IEP).

IEPs are sometimes called Individual Learning Plans, Personalised Learning Plans or other names depending on the school or school system. They can also look different, but they must contain all the information needed to ensure children with disabilities have an appropriate learning program to meet their individual needs. They are an action plan so they should be clear and easily understood by everyone involved.

## What is in an IEP?

While each child is unique, your child's IEP is likely to focus on some or all of the following:

- Academic strategies and progress
- Communication strategies and progress
- Physical health and needs
- Independence skills, including building capacity to study and engage in self-care
- Socialisation skills and peer connection issues
- General emotional well-being
- Self-regulation and behaviour skills

IEPs contain information about your child, goals for your child's learning and how the school will help your child work towards those goals; and the 'reasonable adjustments' the school will make to make sure your child has access to teaching, learning and the schooling experience generally.

## What are reasonable adjustments?

Teachers understand that children learn in different ways, and they adapt the teaching environment, the curriculum and materials and how they teach, to suit the child. These kinds of changes are called adjustments. By law, schools must make balanced and fair changes. These are known as reasonable adjustments. Your child's adjustments should be included in their IEP.

The only reasons why schools may refuse to make an adjustment for a child with disability are that:

- It would be too hard for the school,
- It would be dangerous for people in the school, or
- It would be against the law.

When schools choose adjustments, or when they refuse to make adjustments, they must explain their choice to the student and their family. If you disagree with the school's decision, you can complain to the school's education authority. You can also get advice on whether the school's decision meets the Disability Discrimination Education Standards and seek advocacy help if you need to take action. Sussex Street Community Law Service is the disability discrimination lawyer in WA. Their services are free. <http://www.sscls.asn.au>



## Who comes to IEP meetings?

IEP meetings, sometimes called case conferences, involve your child's teacher, maybe their education assistant, the school's learning support coordinator if they have one, and school administrator. A school psychologist and therapists who work with your child may also be present. Importantly, parents are involved in the discussion and decisions.

One or both parents can attend, and you can have another person with you if you wish. This could be a friend, family member or other person you trust to help you.

It's important to prepare for these meetings to get the best IEP for your child.

- Think about your overall vision for your child, to share with and help guide the school.
- Think about some specific goals to go in the plan.
- Decide on your 'bottom line'. While you need to be firm about your vision, the school may want to negotiate on some details. You need to think about what, if any, compromises you are happy to make.
- Gather all relevant documentation and information.
- If you have a partner or other person with you, make sure you both know your goals for the meeting and the way you will approach discussions, so you are 'on the same page'. Make sure any support person understands their role. You may just want moral support, or someone to take notes. You may want them to remind you or help with information as needed. Talk about their role beforehand so it is clear, and you can feel confident about their support.

You may be asked to sign a copy of the IEP at the end of the meeting to show you agree with it. It is reasonable to say you want a copy and a couple of days to read through it. You may find you want to ask questions or have further discussions before you agree to the IEP. You can also seek advice from an advocate or your child's therapist before signing.

There are some useful resources to help you with the IEP process.

You can download these free:

Your Child's IEP – Guide for Families from All Means All, the Australian Alliance for Inclusive Education. [swanautism.org.au/ama-iep-guide](https://swanautism.org.au/ama-iep-guide)

Planning for Personalised Learning and Support, Education Department of WA. <https://www.nccd.edu.au/personalised-learning-and-support>



## Childcare – Out of School Care

When you are looking for out of school care, you need to know the care provider can give your child the supports they need to be included and safe.

It is important to visit the centres you are considering and talk to key staff about your child, their strengths and where they need some extra support. Ask them:

- How do they practice inclusion?
- What do they do to help all children to participate and feel they belong?
- What safety measures do they have?
- What kinds of support can they provide? and
- Will they need assistance to support your child?

### Inclusion Support Program (ISP)

The ISP is a free service that helps childcare services to overcome barriers so that all children can be fully included. If an early education and care service feels they will need it, they can ask for extra support. The WA Inclusion Agency (WAIA) employs a team of Inclusion Professionals to provide tailored support and advice to early childhood education and care services. The childcare service sends WAIA a Request for Inclusion Support form, along with a signed parent permission form.

WAIA will then visit the childcare service and meet with staff and develop a strategic plan that sets out the best supports and actions that are needed to overcome the barriers to inclusion. Services can also apply for funding for extra staff and can borrow specialist equipment if it is needed. It is very important that childcare services keep families informed about the inclusion support they are providing. Families can talk to the service directly, and with the Inclusion Professional at the centre, or you can call the WAIA Helpline on 1800 119 247.

The ISP service is also available for after-school care and school holiday child care programs.



## Things you can do

Here are some ways you can help the childcare service to be ready and have the information and skills they need to support your child:

- Ask your child's therapists to visit the centre to talk to staff, giving them information and some strategies they can use to support and communicate with your child.
- Write out your child's strengths and the areas where they need more support. You could do this as a One Page Profile (OPP) so that all staff can easily see the main information about your child. See page 45 for further information on OPPs.
- Use a communication book to help with everyday communication between home and the childcare centre.
- Understand that it may take your child longer to settle in, so be prepared to spend more time there at first, or to pick up your child early.

Here are some things you can do to help your child get ready for childcare:

- Go to the centre with your child just to visit, so they can meet people and see what happens there. Take some photos while you're there, to look at and talk about later. You can ask the centre for photos of the staff who will be working with your child as well.
- Talk with them about going to childcare and the fun things they will do.
- Talk about the people there, using their names if you can, so they begin to feel familiar.
- Talk about when they will go, who will take them and who will pick them up.



## One Page Profiles

A one-page profile is a great way to communicate important information about a person all in one easy-to-find space.

You can use them in all kinds of settings to help support people of all ages. For example, you might create a child's first one-page profile when they are just about to start going to childcare. Starting kindy, pre-primary or school are also good times to create or update your child's profile.

Because the information is all on one page, this means that anyone reading it can quickly see what is most important to know about the person. The one-page profile is a good ongoing reference for teachers, child care workers, and other support staff, and helpful for new or relief staff so they don't have to read lots of information before they can start their work.

Each one-page profile has the following categories of information in it:

- Name of the person
- What is important to me
- What people like and admire about me
- How I want to be supported

### How to Make a One Page Profile

There are lots of downloadable templates you can use. You can make your own but be sure it has the same categories of information as we've listed above, as these have been shown over many years to be the most effective.

Sometimes parents/carers work by themselves to write their child's profile. With a very young child, this is fine, and parents do know their children and the support they need well. But as your child gets older, it is better to ask other people who know them well to take part in writing the profile. You might be surprised that other people often add some very positive and useful information that you might not have known or thought about. Older children and adults can either write their own or get help to create or contribute to their profile.

One-page profiles need to be updated regularly so that the information is current. It's a good idea to put the date on the profile.


This website has lots of helpful information on creating a one-page profile:

[swanautism.org.au/wordpress-profiles](http://swanautism.org.au/wordpress-profiles)



Profile Example

Name:



What people like about me

Photo

What is important to me

What I don't like

How to support me

Profile Example

Name: Joshua

Age: 10  
Year: 6



What people like about me

- I am honest
- I am loyal
- I always try hard
- I have a good laugh
- I am very kind
- I am very good at lego



What is important to me

- My family and friends
- My dog Jessie
- Playing with lego
- My noise cancelling headphones
- Being included
- Following the rules and being fair

What I don't like

- Being yelled at or people yelling
- People breaking the rules
- Loud noise and bright light
- Too many instructions at once
- Surprises
- Big crowds

How to support me

- Use my visual schedule so that I know what to expect
- Use a calm voice when talking
- Let me wear my noise cancelling headphones and fidget tools in class, especially when it's noisy
- My noise cancelling headphones
- Make sure I have sensory breaks outside the classroom so I don't get overwhelmed





## Choosing a High School

This section includes the main things to think about when you are choosing a secondary school for your autistic child.

Most families will have decided which school system works best for their child and their family when they were choosing a primary school, though you can decide to make a change at any stage. So when it comes to high school, you will usually be looking at options within that system and in your area, and which school would be best to meet your child's needs.

Here are some questions you could ask about when you contact schools you are considering:

- What kinds of support, resources and programs could they offer your child?
- Are there other children with disability at the school?
- What transition options are available? Can your child attend the high school with their primary school education assistant in Term 4 as part of transitioning to the high school?
- What policies do they have to support students with disabilities?
- Are students with disabilities fully included in the school, including school clubs, camps and so on?
- What is the school's policy and attitude regarding homework?



- What does the school offer when it comes to work experience for students with disabilities?
- What kinds of adjustments does the school make for students with disabilities?
- Does the school have a welcoming and positive attitude and culture regarding diversity and disability?
- What is the school's bullying policy and how do they enforce it?
- What does the school do to ensure safety, such as supervision when students are leaving school at the end of the day?
- Will they allow therapists and other professionals to advise and help school staff?
- How does the school communicate with parents?

It's a good idea to consider these and then add other questions that are specific to your child and your family.

Think about the areas where your child has specific support needs such as communication, self-help skills, mental health, sensory processing issues. Make a list of questions you want to ask schools regarding how they can support your child. For example, would they let your child have breaks to move around, or let them wear headphones or have comfort items in the classroom?



## Getting ready for high school

Here are some tips to help your child with the first days at high school.

- Prepare a social story about the high school for your child. You can ask their primary school and the new high school for help with this. The social story should include photos of important areas in the high school that your child will need to be able to find (toilets, student services, classrooms etc), and staff your child will need to recognise and approach when they need help.
- Negotiate a transition process for your child to help them adjust.
- Talk about how high school is different from primary school:
  - It is probably bigger with more students.
  - You move around to different classrooms for different subjects. It's a good idea to look at a timetable and know what class times are, and when the bell will sound.
  - Talk about what happens at recess and lunch and where to go during breaks.
- Visit the school with your child and look around. Meet with their home room teacher and other staff who will be supporting them. Talk with them about a support buddy to help your child learn their way around and how things work. Find out what your child can do if they feel anxious or lost.
- Go to reception and introduce your child.
- Practice changing into uniform, sports uniforms, changing shoes. Are there any things you need to do to help your child do this independently at school?



## Your Child's Legal Rights

Hopefully, you won't need to use legal information, but it is always useful to know about education rights just in case.

According to law, Australian children with disability, in every state and territory, have the right to access and participate in education on the same basis as children without disability.

The law that covers these rights is the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992. The Act also has Education Standards that set out what schools and other education providers must do.

Schools and other education providers must not treat children with disability differently from other children. This is discrimination. They must also provide 'reasonable adjustments'. This includes things such as support staff, equipment, materials, modifications and other things each child needs to support them to learn. This does not mean being told your child should learn in a separate learning environment because that is where the specialist support is located. Children with disability have the right to the supports they need to learn alongside other children in mainstream settings.

If the school you choose will not accept your child into the mainstream or provide the support they need, you can get support from an advocacy organisation to negotiate with the school. You can also get help to make a formal complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission.

[swanautism.org.au/human-rights-complaints](http://swanautism.org.au/human-rights-complaints)

Knowing these rights gives you the knowledge and confidence that you can approach any school in any system and know that by law they must treat your child the same as any other child.







## For Further Information

### NDIS

The NDIS website contains lots of information to help you no matter what stage you are at. There are booklets you can download, videos and Easy Read information. You can begin at this page:

[swanautism.org.au/ndis](https://swanautism.org.au/ndis)

From here, you will find information and videos to explain each stage.

### Planning Resources

#### NDIS

This NDIS page has booklets to help you understand the NDIS, develop some goals for your child's NDIS plan, get ready for a planning meeting and use NDIS plans and funds to find and purchase services and supports.

[swanautism.org.au/ndis-participants](https://swanautism.org.au/ndis-participants)

#### Autism Queensland

Autism Queensland has a Family Goal Setting Tool to help families identify and prioritise goals for their child as well as the family's needs for information, support, and ways of participating in their community. SWAN has copies of this resource at our office that families can borrow.

[swanautism.org.au/autism-qld-family-goal-setting](https://swanautism.org.au/autism-qld-family-goal-setting)

#### Association for Children with a Disability

Association for Children with a Disability have a free downloadable pre-planning workbook to help you prepare for NDIS plan meetings.

[swanautism.org.au/acd-ndis-planning-workbook](https://swanautism.org.au/acd-ndis-planning-workbook)

#### Developmental Disability WA (DDWA)

DDWA's 'Making Changes through Goal Setting', is a step-by-step workbook to guide you through a series of questions to help set goals for your child and create a road map to help your child achieve the goal.

[swanautism.org.au/ddwa-goal-setting-booklet](https://swanautism.org.au/ddwa-goal-setting-booklet)

#### Down Syndrome WA

Down Syndrome WA's pre-planning workbook is for people with any kind of disability and any age to prepare for NDIS plan meetings.

[swanautism.org.au/down-syndrome-resources](https://swanautism.org.au/down-syndrome-resources)



## Recreation

All children benefit from taking part in leisure activities such as sport, hobbies, dance and other skills classes, and from informal play. For autistic children, it is perhaps even more important to find ways they can take part in these activities to gain those physical, social, emotional, creative and intellectual benefits.

As a parent/carer, it can feel challenging when it comes to finding activities that suit your child's interests and that are welcoming and supportive. Here are some places to begin:

### Local Community Directory

One of the best sources of information is your local Community Directory. You can find out about all kinds of services, facilities and groups in your local government area. You can use a search function to find up to date information on sporting clubs, hobby groups, music, dance and drama classes, games clubs, Scouts, play centres, outdoor play spaces, swimming pools, gyms, Coder Dojo and much more.

[swanautism.org.au/my-community-directory](https://swanautism.org.au/my-community-directory)

### SWAN Services Directory

You can find information about sport and recreational activities and services on the SWAN website using the search function. You can also call or email SWAN to discuss ideas and get information and advice on what's available.

[swanautism.org.au](https://swanautism.org.au)

### Therapy and Social Groups

Some therapy providers organise group programs for primary school aged children. These groups often run during school holidays and sometimes after school or on weekends. These programs target friendship social skills, emotion awareness and regulation, and building other skills. They can also provide an opportunity to interact and build friendship with peers with similar interests and experiences. These group programs are often tailored to the needs of the young people, and change regularly. Also available are:

- Secret Agent Society: is available through Outloud Developmental Services and Stepping Stones Therapy Services in Bunbury.  
[swanautism.org.au/sas](https://swanautism.org.au/sas)
- AutStars is available from SWAN [swanautism.org.au/](https://swanautism.org.au/)

## Mental Health

There is a range of mental health services and support organisations, for children and adults, that you can access in the south west of WA. You can use the search function on the SWAN website ([swanautism.org.au](https://swanautism.org.au)) to find a range of government and non-government services and private mental health practitioners.

The Mental Health Commission also has a search engine to help you find services in your area. [swanautism.org.au/my-services](https://swanautism.org.au/my-services)

Here is a handy list of some services in the south west:

### South West Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) – Bunbury

CAMHS provides free mental health programs to infants, children and young people up to the age of 17.

WA Country Health Service

Mental Health Services

Phone(08) 9722 4300

Access time 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM Mon-Fri

### Kids Helpline

Kids Helpline is a free, private, and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25. Counselling from Kids Helpline is available by phone, Webchat and email. Parents can also assist kids to contact Kids Helpline. You can explain that your child is autistic, and that you are helping them to learn to use Kids Helpline.

Phone: 1800 551 800

[swanautism.org.au/kids-helpline-kids](https://swanautism.org.au/kids-helpline-kids)





## Kids Helpline – For parents

Kids Helpline also has a wealth of resources on their website for parents. The Kids Helpline website has information and advice on a wide range of topics to help parents support a child who is experiencing anxiety, bullying, exam stress, abuse, family breakdown and much more.

[swanautism.org.au/kids-helpline-parents](https://swanautism.org.au/kids-helpline-parents)

## Headspace

Headspace Bunbury, Busselton, and Margaret River are free, confidential services that help young people aged 12 to 25 with mental health support from skilled social workers, psychologists and GPs.

### Headspace Bunbury

8 Spencer Street  
Bunbury WA 6230  
Phone: (08) 6164 0680  
Email: [info@headspacebunbury.org.au](mailto:info@headspacebunbury.org.au)

### Headspace Busselton

7 Harris Rd  
Busselton WA 6280  
Phone: (08) 6164 0680  
Email: [info@headspacebunbury.org.au](mailto:info@headspacebunbury.org.au)

### Headspace Margaret River

36 Station Road  
Margaret River WA 6285  
Phone: (08) 6164 0680  
Email: [info@headspacebunbury.org.au](mailto:info@headspacebunbury.org.au)

## eHeadspace

eHeadspace provides free online support and counselling to young people aged 12 - 25 and their families and friends.

[swanautism.org.au/headspace-support](https://swanautism.org.au/headspace-support)

## RuralLink (WA after hours service)

Provides easy telephone access to experienced community mental health staff, with a focus on supporting people with mental health issues.

Hours: 4.30pm – 8:30am Monday to Friday and 24 hours Saturday, Sunday and public holidays. During business hours you will be connected to your local community mental health clinic. Phone: 1800 552 002

**Beyondblue** - 1300 224 636 or chat online at [swanautism.org.au/beyond-blue](https://swanautism.org.au/beyond-blue)

**Lifeline** - 13 11 14 or chat online at [swanautism.org.au/lifeline](https://swanautism.org.au/lifeline)

**Suicide Call Back Service** - 1300 659 467 or chat online at [swanautism.org.au/suicide-call-back](https://swanautism.org.au/suicide-call-back)

## Assistive Technology

Assistive technology (AT) includes all kinds of equipment and technology to support people with disabilities. Each child is different, but some of the kinds of AT a young child with autism might need could be a communication device (AAC/PODD), apps, or sensory equipment such as sensory clothing.

NDIS will fund some AT if it relates to a person's disability and is needed to help them in their daily lives.

[swanautism.org.au/ndis-assistive-tech](https://swanautism.org.au/ndis-assistive-tech)

## Apps

Here are some links to lists of Apps for iPads and other devices that you may find useful to support your child's development.

These are from Indigo:

**AutismApps** is an Autism Association of WA website. It provides comprehensive advice on complex communication, devices, and Apps that they have reviewed.

[swanautism.org.au/autism-wa-apps](https://swanautism.org.au/autism-wa-apps)





### Indigo Australasia (formerly Independent Living Centre)

Indigo provides a range of services including assessments and advice on communication technologies and other kinds of AT including sensory equipment.

[swanautism.org.au/indigo-comm-solutions](https://swanautism.org.au/indigo-comm-solutions)

[swanautism.org.au/indigo-assistive-tech](https://swanautism.org.au/indigo-assistive-tech)

They also have a searchable online equipment database.

[swanautism.org.au/indigo-equipment-database](https://swanautism.org.au/indigo-equipment-database)



## Sensory equipment

SWAN has a list on its website of companies that offer sensory equipment and clothing. Please see: [www.swanautism.org.au](https://www.swanautism.org.au)



## Inclusion

### Developmental Disability WA (DDWA)

DDWA have created a range of resources on inclusion. DDWA's resources include:

#### Choosing what Matters - Ideas For Families

This resource is designed to help you and your family understand some of the strangeness and complexity that there is in our attitudes toward disability

[swanautism.org.au/ddwa-choosing-what-matters](https://swanautism.org.au/ddwa-choosing-what-matters)

#### Planning and Making Choices (updated version)

This Handbook is designed for parents of children with disability who want to learn how to access an ordinary, typical life for their son or daughter. It looks at understanding your child's development and helps you plan and make choices with your child to support them to reach their potential.

[swanautism.org.au/ddwa-choices](https://swanautism.org.au/ddwa-choices)

#### Thinking Ahead

This is a very practical handbook with a wealth of knowledge and tips to help you advocate for your child at school.

[swanautism.org.au/ddwa-thinking-ahead](https://swanautism.org.au/ddwa-thinking-ahead)



## All Means All

All Means All is the Australian Alliance for Inclusive Education, working to implement an inclusive education system and remove the barriers that limit the rights of some students, including students with disabilities, to access full inclusive education in regular classrooms in Australian schools.

All Means All has produced an Inclusion Toolkit to guide parents in supporting their child's inclusive education journey. You can download it here:

[swanautism.org.au/ama-for-parents](https://swanautism.org.au/ama-for-parents)

## School Inclusion Parent Network (SIPN)

SIPN is a network of families supporting each other to navigate the school years and promoting inclusive education. SIPN has an active Facebook group that provides information, support, and connection.

[swanautism.org.au/ama-sipn](https://swanautism.org.au/ama-sipn)



## Behaviour

### What is your Child's Challenging Behaviour trying to tell you?

This introductory guide is for parents, family members and carers who are worried about their child's/family member's behaviour. Parents can feel under a lot of pressure to 'solve' behaviour problems and are naturally very worried about the best approach to take. There are often complex reasons behind a child's behaviour, and it is rarely anyone's fault, rather it is difficult to interpret what their behaviour is trying to tell us.

[swanautism.org.au/ddwa-behaviour](https://swanautism.org.au/ddwa-behaviour)

## Family Support

### Siblings Australia

Siblings Australia works to improve the support available for siblings (brothers and sisters) of children and adults with chronic conditions including disability, chronic illness, and mental health issues. Their website contains information about sibling support – services, resources, research and policy for siblings, parents, workers, and researchers. Siblings Australia also runs workshops and has a Facebook page and a closed Facebook group.

[swanautism.org.au/siblings-australia](https://swanautism.org.au/siblings-australia)

### Relationships WA

Relationships WA runs a free Family Mental Health Support Service called 4families that provides support for families and carers (including grandparents). 4families operates in areas across the southwest, linking families to a variety of services to reduce family stress and enable children and young people to reach their full potential.

[swanautism.org.au/relationships-wa](https://swanautism.org.au/relationships-wa)

### Local Community Directory

One of the best sources of information for families is their local Community Directory. You can find out about all kinds of services, facilities, and groups in your local government area. For example, you can use a search function to find up to date information on playgrounds, playgroups, childcare centres, schools, parent groups, sporting clubs, counselling services and much more.

[swanautism.org.au/my-community-directory](https://swanautism.org.au/my-community-directory)



## Contact List

Write down any useful contacts you may have e.g., GP, Therapist, School etc

[illegible]

## Notes

[illegible]





Current as of June 2025