

# Transition to School

Starting school is a big step for all children and families and it is important that transition to school is a positive experience for everyone.

To ensure a smooth transition to school for children, it is important that families, preschool / daycare staff, and early intervention service teams plan well, working together so that information is shared and provided to everyone.

Every child with cerebral palsy has different abilities and needs so the plan for transition will vary according to the family's goals as well as resources at the school and early childhood setting.

It can be a stressful time for families when choosing a school, and discovering how different it will be compared to preschool / childcare settings.

It is so important that families are listened to and supported in the process of transition to school for their child and that communication channels are kept open.

It is recommended that families choose a transition to school coordinator to give them the support needed. The coordinator may be from preschool / childcare, early intervention setting or a family member.

## 1. Planning Ahead

### Choosing the School

There are many school options available for children. All children have the right to attend their local Department of Education Primary School. Other options that may be considered include:

- Catholic Schools
- Independent schools (waiting lists often apply)
- Supported settings in Dept Ed Schools (eg. Special schools, support classes within mainstream schools)

Where a child with a physical disability needs modifications to the school environment, the transition process needs to commence 18 months - 2 years ahead.

The transition to school coordinator can assist with completion of relevant paperwork that accompanies applications to any school.

Parents should be encouraged to visit the schools they are considering eg. on open days or by appointment with the Principal. The Department of Education has a representative that can support visits to public schools.

## 2. Preparing the Way

Once a school has been chosen, an Early Learning Support Team is usually formed, consisting of parents, childcare staff, school staff and other relevant persons who are involved with the child. This team will be involved in:

- Assessment of the school environment eg. Ramps and rails may need to be added.
- Sharing of information.
- Attending meetings to determine the child's support needs and funding requests.
- Providing reports when requested.

*The Spastic Centre staff can be available to give information sessions to the school if requested.*

## 3. Nearly there

All schools have orientation programs where children beginning school come to visit. This varies from school to school. Some children may require an extended orientation, which can be organized with the school, involving more visits to the school, perhaps at different times of the day.

The Preschool/Childcare centre can encourage the family to talk about school with their children eg:

- What will happen there.
- Which friends are going too.
- What fun it will be at "big school".

## 4. Getting Ready

Children will have a more positive experience of starting school if they have had opportunity to learn the skills they will need, in the year before they commence.

The Preschool / Childcare centre can assist the family by sharing ideas to help their child learn skills such as concentration span, self-care, responsibility for own belongings, communicating and interacting with peers and adults etc. as well as preparing for the 3 R's.

**Each child with cerebral palsy has individual needs.  
In partnership with the child and their family,  
The Spastic Centre team can advise on their needs.**