



Australian Government

Department of Families, Housing,
Community Services and Indigenous Affairs



Better Start for Children with Disability expansion

Information for parents & carers

From 1 January 2013, children who are aged under 6 years and have been diagnosed with Prader Willi, Williams, Angelman, Kabuki, Smith-Magenis, CHARGE, Cornelia de Lange or Cri du Chat syndromes or microcephaly will be able to register to access early intervention funding of up to \$12,000 (up to a maximum of \$6,000 per financial year) under the Better Start for Children with Disability (Better Start) initiative.

Since 1 July 2011, children who are aged under 6 years and have been diagnosed with cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, Fragile X syndrome and moderate or greater hearing or vision impairments, including deafblindness, have been able to register for access to the early intervention funding under Better Start.

The funding can be used to pay for services such as speech pathology, audiology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, optometry, psychology, orthoptics and services of teachers of the deaf. Families have until their child turns seven to use the early intervention funding.

This targeted early intervention during the pre-school years aims to complement existing Commonwealth and State and Territory services and to assist these children to have the best possible preparation for the transition to school.

Support for Families with older children

In addition to the early intervention funding under Better Start, children with the listed disabilities (including those who are over the age of six) may be eligible for Medicare rebates for:

- the development of a treatment and management plan by a general practitioner or by a specialist or consultant physician (for a child under 13 years of age).
- up to four diagnostic / assessment services delivered by psychologists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, audiologists, optometrists, orthoptists or physiotherapists to assist the referring practitioner with diagnosis or to contribute to a child's treatment and management plan (for a child under 13 years of age).



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- up to twenty treatment services delivered by psychologists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, audiologists, optometrists, orthoptists or physiotherapists (for a child under 15 years of age, providing a treatment and management plan is in place before their 13th birthday).

Parents and carers of eligible children are not required to complete a formal application to access the Medicare component of the initiative, but need to be referred by their general practitioner or by a specialist or consultant physician.

The Medicare component of the Better Start initiative is administered by the Department of Health and Ageing. Further information about the Medicare component of Better Start is available at http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/children_disability

Support for families living in outer regional and remote areas

Families living in outer regional or remote areas may be eligible for a \$2,000 one-off support payment. This payment recognises the difficulties that families living in remote and outer regional areas face in accessing services and will assist with expenses such as travel and home visits.

Registering for the Better Start initiative

Parents or carers of eligible children need to register their child for Better Start before they turn six in order to access the early intervention funding.

The Better Start Registration and Information Service (RIS) is operated by Carers Australia.

To register your child for the Better Start initiative, please call the Carers Australia RIS on **1800 242 636**.

In order to register for the Better Start initiative families will need to provide proof of:

- the child's age (e.g. the child's birth certificate or passport),
- the child's residential address (e.g. a recent utilities bill or rates notice),
- the child's diagnosis,
- residential status (if applicable), and
- the child's Centrelink generated Customer Reference Number (CRN).

Further information

For further information about the Better Start initiative, please visit www.fahcsia.gov.au/betterstart

Enquiries can also be directed to the Better Start Helpline on **1800 778 581** or emailed to Better.Start@fahcsia.gov.au