



Better Start for Children  
with Disability Initiative  
Registration and Information Pack

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ph 1800 242 636 | [www.betterstart.net.au](http://www.betterstart.net.au)

# ABOUT BETTER START



In 2010, the Australian Government announced new funding to improve access to early intervention services for eligible children with disability to better prepare them for the transition to school.

Better Start is funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. The initiative provides eligible children with access to:

- A Registration and Information Service to register eligible children and to provide families with information about Better Start and other appropriate services and support.
- Up to \$12,000 (maximum \$6,000 in any one financial year) to pay for early intervention services delivered by members of the Better Start Early Intervention Service Provider Panel.
- An additional one off support payment for families living in outer regional and remote areas to assist with the costs of accessing services.
- The Better Start Early Intervention Service Provider Panel that families will access for early intervention services utilising the Better Start funding.
- New Medicare items.
- Website accessible information for parents, carers and professionals including evidence-based information and online resources about child disability, together with information about other relevant sources of advice and assistance.

**Outer Regional and Remote Access Payment** is available to families who live in outer regional or remote areas but conditions apply. Please see page 6 for more information.

## About Carers Australia

Carers Australia is the national peak body representing the diversity of carers in Australia. We work with the state and territory Carers Associations with the ultimate aim of improving the lives of carers.

## Carers Australia's Role

Carers Australia is funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) to deliver the Better Start Registration and Information Service to eligible children and their families.

The Registration and Information Service is delivered by qualified staff in each of the state and territory Carers Associations.

## About the Registration and Information Service

The Registration and Information Service assists families by providing information about Better Start, registering eligible children and informing families about services and other forms of assistance they may be entitled to. More information about registration can be found within this booklet and at:

[www.betterstart.net.au](http://www.betterstart.net.au)

# ELIGIBILITY FOR BETTER START

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## Who is eligible?

A child must be under the age of six years and have been diagnosed with one of the following disabilities and meets the required thresholds, to be eligible for Better Start funding.

## Eligibility thresholds apply.

These thresholds have been determined by FaHCSIA consultation with an Expert Reference Group and endorsed by the Parliamentary Secretary for Disability and Carers.

All children with a confirmed diagnosis of the disabilities listed below are eligible for Better Start.

## Angelman syndrome

## Cerebral palsy

## CHARGE syndrome

## Cornelia de Lange syndrome

## Cri du Chat syndrome

## Down syndrome

including those with mosaic Down syndrome

## Fragile X syndrome

Fragile X syndrome with full mutation, includes mosaicism.

## Kabuki syndrome

## Prader-Willi syndrome

## Smith-Magenis syndrome

## Williams syndrome

## Thresholds apply to the below disabilities:

### Hearing impairment

Hearing impairment: Children will be eligible if they have a hearing loss in both ears that meets either of the following two criteria:

- A permanent conductive or sensorineural hearing loss that has a four frequency average hearing loss\* of 40dBHL or greater in the better-hearing ear.
- Auditory Neuropathy Spectrum Disorder diagnosed in both ears.

\* The four frequency average hearing loss represents the average of hearing thresholds at 500 Hz, 1000 Hz, 2000 Hz and 4000 Hz.

### Microcephaly

A diagnosis of microcephaly based on a head circumference less than the third percentile and a functional level at or below 2 standard deviations below the mean for age on the Griffiths Mental Development Scales or the Bayley Scales of Infant Development.

### Vision impairment

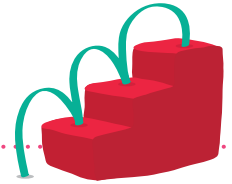
The vision impairment threshold for Better Start eligibility is less than or equal to 6/18 or equivalent field loss, in the better eye with correction.

Conditions do apply with very young children and with children with some other conditions which affect their ability to cooperate during the testing, so it may be difficult to establish an exact level of impairment. Speak to your local RIS Advisor.

### Deafblindness

All children with a diagnosis made by a specialist multidisciplinary team which includes an ophthalmological and audiological evaluation (therefore application of a threshold is not necessary) will be eligible.

# PATH THROUGH BETTER START



## STEP 1 Initial Contact

- contact the Registration and Information Service on: **1800 242 636**, and you will be directed to your local area RIS Advisor
- the RIS Advisor can confirm your child's eligibility based on age and diagnosis
- the RIS Advisor will inform you of the required documents for registration (see step 2)
- You can make an appointment with a RIS Advisor to help you through the registration process. This can be face face to face, via telephone, webcam, email or video link

## STEP 2 Sending in the Required Documents

In order to be assessed for eligibility you will need to have:

- **a completed Application Form** (from this brochure)
- **your child's Centrelink generated Customer Reference Number (CRN)**,
- **proof of your child's age** (eg. the child's birth certificate, passport or cited proof of birth from Centrelink),
- **written confirmation of your child's diagnosis** provided on letterhead and signed by the diagnosing practitioner. For sight and hearing impairments, a moderate (or greater) impairment must be identified in the document,
- **proof of residential status** (where applicable); and
- **proof of residential address** which could be a recent utilities bill, rates notice or similar.

## STEP 3 Letter of Introduction

Once your child's eligibility has been confirmed you will be provided with a *Letter of Introduction*. You are required to show this Letter to each service provider when you attend your first appointment. It confirms your eligibility for Early Intervention funding and allows the provider to access your child's information on the FaHCSIA Online Funding Management System (FOFMS) and submit claims for payment.

Please retain this letter – copies should not be made by the service provider without your permission.

## STEP 4 Accessing Services

- Before you start using your Better Start funding, it may be useful to make an appointment to see your child's medical practitioner for the development of a treatment and management plan. There are a number of new Medicare items available to support this initiative (please ask your RIS Advisor for the Medicare Information sheet about the items available for your child).
- When accessing a *Better Start Early Intervention Service Provider* you should advise them that your child is registered to receive Better Start early intervention funding.
- You can view the online list of Better Start Early Intervention Service Providers by visiting: [www.fahcsia.gov.au/betterstart](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/betterstart)  
If you do not have access to the internet your Registration and Information Service Advisor can provide you with a hardcopy list.

## STEP 5 Entitlements and Payment

Your child is able to access up to **\$12,000** of early intervention funding until he or she turns 7 (**all children must be registered prior to their 6<sup>th</sup> birthday to access funding**).

- Of this funding, no more than **\$6,000** can be spent in any one financial year.
- The funding will be available until your child turns 7, or when you have reached the **\$12,000** limit, whichever happens first.
- Early intervention funding is **not paid directly to you**. You will not need to claim reimbursement for services provided to your child. Rather, each *Better Start Early Intervention Service Provider* will require you to sign a *Consent to Claim Payment Form* for services. Signing this form authorises the provider to claim payment from FaHCSIA for the services provided to your child.

## STEP 6 Purchasing Resources

- Up to **\$4,200** (35%) of your child's funding can be used to purchase resources or equipment that supports the ongoing delivery of early intervention therapies. Of this amount up to **\$2,100** can be used in any **one financial year**.
- All resources must be recommended by the child's *Better Start Early Intervention Service Provider*, be directly linked with early intervention services being delivered to the child, and/or provide support for the delivery of interventions at home.

- Once a resource or equipment need has been identified and agreed between you and your *Better Start Early Intervention Service Provider*, the item can be purchased by the provider (or by you) and reimbursement claimed from FaHCSIA out of the child's Better Start funding.

## STEP 7 Keeping track of your funding allocation

- Once your child starts using Better Start services, you will be sent *Family Activity Statements* (FAS) from FaHCSIA to assist you in tracking your use of the funding.
- The Family Activity Statement (FAS) will be emailed to you, however, if you do not have an email address it will be sent by post. It is very important that you keep the RIS Advisor aware of any **contact detail changes**. The FAS will tell you what you have spent that month and also your remaining funds. Please be aware that this is not always current due to accounting procedures by your service provider, so it is advisable to keep your own financial records on the resource provided in your pack. A resource (spreadsheet) is provided with your Letter of Introduction to assist you to **keep record of your Better Start spending** and the services accessed.

## STEP 8 Questions?

If you have any questions about the registration process, please do not hesitate to contact your local Registration and Information Service Advisor on **1800 242 636**.

# OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

## Need an Interpreter?

An interpreter service can be arranged if required. Carers Associations have access to interpreters who cover more than 170 languages and dialects, including Auslan. If you require interpreting services please contact your Registration and Information Service Advisor who can book an interpreter on your behalf.

## Outer Regional and Remote Access Payment

**Families who live in outer regional or remote areas are entitled to receive a one off payment of \$2,000 per eligible child in addition to the early intervention funding. You will be informed of your eligibility for the outer regional and remote payment by your Advisor at the time of registration.**

**This one off payment is intended to assist families living in regional and remote areas with the costs of accessing services. If you are eligible for this payment, your Registration and Information Service Advisor will require your bank account details to facilitate this payment through Carers Australia.**

## Carer Support

Carers Australia is the national peak body representing carers in Australia. The state and territory Carers Association network provides information, advice and support for carers across Australia.

For more information or to contact your state or territory Carers Association, please contact the Carer Advisory Service on **1800 242 636**, or go to **[carersaustralia.com.au](http://carersaustralia.com.au)**

## What can I use my funding for?

The funding can be used to pay for early intervention services provided by a range of early intervention professionals who are FaHCSIA Registered Service Providers on the Better Start Early Intervention Service Provider Panel. The FaHCSIA Registered Service Providers include but are not limited to:

- speech pathologists
- audiologists
- occupational therapists
- physiotherapists
- psychologists
- orthoptists
- teachers of the deaf
- teachers of the vision impaired
- optometrists
- social workers

## Medicare Items

For children with an eligible diagnoses new Medicare items including the development of a treatment and management plan are also available.

For further information about the Medicare items contact your child's GP or specialist doctor.

**Please note:** children with an eligible diagnosis **do not have to be registered** (for the Better Start early intervention funding) in order to access the Medicare items. Access to the Medicare items is through the child's doctor, who will be responsible for developing the treatment and management plan and making referrals to allied health specialists for clinically relevant services.

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 can be found at: **[health.gov.au/children-disability](http://health.gov.au/children-disability)**

## Raising Children Network

An A-Z Disability Reference is available on the Raising Children website. This resource provides an overview of disability terms and professionals you may encounter.

Go to: **[raisingchildren.net.au/disabilities](http://raisingchildren.net.au/disabilities)** and follow the link through to the Disability Reference

To find out what parenting resources are available in your area, please go to this link: [raisingchildren.net.au/myneighbourhood/](http://raisingchildren.net.au/myneighbourhood/)

## Other assistance

State and territory governments are the main providers of specialist disability services in Australia.

There are also many disability specific organisations in Australia that offer support and advice to families affected by disability.

For a list of state or territory disability services, and disability specific organisations, visit the Better Start website at: **[betterstart.net.au/links-and-resources](http://betterstart.net.au/links-and-resources)**

# STEPS FOR REGISTRATION

## BETTER START FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY INITIATIVE

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### INSTRUCTIONS FOR RETURNING APPLICATION FORM

This application form must be filled out both sides to enable completion of the registration process and sent, as per instructions below, with any other requested documentation.

Once you have **read through** the information contained in this booklet and **completed the Application Form** it should be returned to your Registration and Information Service Advisor as soon as possible. If you have any questions contact your local Carers Association on 1800 242 636.

Forms and documentation can be submitted by:



FAX

OR



POST

OR



EMAIL

Application forms can also be downloaded at [www.betterstart.net.au](http://www.betterstart.net.au)





# APPLICATION FORM BETTER START FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY REGISTRATION

CUT HERE

## Child Details

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Centrelink Customer Reference Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:  Male  Female Country of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

## Residency Status

Australian citizen  Permanent resident

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

## Does the child have an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background?

No  Yes - Aboriginal  Yes - Torres Strait Islander  Yes - Both  Prefer not to answer

## Parent/Carer Details

### Parent/Carer 1

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to child: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Suburb/town: \_\_\_\_\_

State & Post Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Other phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### Parent/Carer 2

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to child: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Suburb/town: \_\_\_\_\_

State & Post Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Other phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## Child has been diagnosed with (please select where appropriate)

- Angelman syndrome  Deafblindness  Microcephaly
- Cerebral palsy  Down syndrome, including mosaic Down syndrome  Prader-Willi syndrome
- CHARGE syndrome  Fragile X syndrome with full mutation, includes mosaicism  Smith-Magenis syndrome
- Cornelia de Lange syndrome  Hearing impairment  Vision impairment
- Cri du Chat syndrome  Kabuki syndrome  Williams syndrome

## Do you speak English as your preferred language at home?

No  Yes

# APPLICATION FORM BETTER START FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY REGISTRATION



**Do you require interpreter or translation services?**

No  Yes, which language do you speak? \_\_\_\_\_

**Is the child from a culturally and linguistically diverse background?**

No  Yes, what is the child's background? \_\_\_\_\_

**Where did you hear about the Better Start program?**

- |   |  |                                    |
|---|--|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carers Association       | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Practitioner (GP, paediatrician etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Internet  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local Government service | <input type="checkbox"/> Allied health professional                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAHCSIA                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend/relative/other parent                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disability organisation  | <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare/preschool                           |                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____              |  |                                    |

**Privacy Information**

I have read the Privacy Statement and understand that my information will be recorded in FAHCSIA's Online Financial Management system. I also understand that the Carers Association that registers my child for the Better Start program will enter my details into their own database as a caring family.

*(Please sign below to indicate that you consent to your information being collected by FAHCSIA and the Carers Association)*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

If you are unable to attend a face to face appointment with a Registration and Information Service Advisor please ensure that you attach copies of the required documents to your completed Application Form. If you are attending a face to face appointment please ensure that you bring copies of these documents.

Application Checklist					
Have you completed:	Yes	No	Have you provided copies of:	Yes	No
Application form?			Proof of child's age?		
Client Consent form?			Proof of address?		
(FAHCSIA Consent form sent with this pack)			Child's Diagnosis?		
Child's CRN?			Proof of residency? (where applicable)		

**APPLICATIONS CANNOT BE PROCESSED WITHOUT ALL SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION.**

# PRIVACY STATEMENT

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## Parent/Guardian Consent Information

To provide access for your child to the early intervention funding we are required to collect personal information about you and your child and share these details with the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

## What information is shared?

All the information on this application form is shared with FaHCSIA. This includes your child's name, date of birth, address, gender, Centrelink Reference Number, diagnosis and parent/guardian contact details.

## Protection of information

The Better Start program is obliged to observe the Information Privacy Principles contained in the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988. The information that is forwarded to FaHCSIA is stored in a secure manner and only a limited number of FaHCSIA staff have access to your personal information.

From time to time FaHCSIA may provide information about individuals who are accessing Australian Government funded services to other government departments and researchers. If this happens limited and de identified information is made available.

The Federal Privacy Commissioner can investigate complaints of improper collection, use and disclosure of personal information by federal government agencies and the Carers Associations.

## Contacts for State and Territory Carers Associations

### CARERS ACT

80 Beaurepaire Crescent  
Holt ACT 2615  
Ph (02) 6296 9900  
betterstart@carersact.asn.au  
www.carersact.asn.au

### CARERS NT

59 Bayview Boulevard  
Bayview NT 0800  
Ph (08) 8944 4888  
carersnt@carersnt.asn.au  
www.carersnt.asn.au

### CARERS SA

66 Greenhill Road  
Wayville SA 5034  
Ph 1800 242 636  
betterstart@carers-sa.asn.au  
www.carers-sa.asn.au

### CARERS VICTORIA

Level 1, 37 Albert Street  
Footscray VIC 3011  
Ph 1800 242 636  
betterstart@carersvictoria.org.au  
www.carersvictoria.org.au

### CARERS NSW

Roden Cutler House  
Level 18, 24 Campbell Street  
Sydney NSW 2000  
Ph (02) 9280 4744  
betterstart@carersnsw.asn.au  
www.carersnsw.asn.au

### CARERS QUEENSLAND

15 Abbott Street  
Camp Hill QLD 4152  
Ph (07) 3900 8100  
betterstart@carersqld.asn.au  
www.carersqld.asn.au

### CARERS TASMANIA

64 Burnett Street  
North Hobart TAS 7000  
Ph (03) 6231 5507  
betterstart@carerstas.org  
www.carerstas.org

### CARERS WA

182 Lord Street  
Perth WA 6000  
Ph (08) 9228 7400  
betterstart@carerswa.asn.au  
www.carerswa.asn.au



To contact and register for Better Start call the  
Carers Association in your state or territory on

**1800 242 636**

For more information go to

**[www.betterstart.net.au](http://www.betterstart.net.au)**