

Physiotherapy supports in schools

Schools may use specialist allied health services through this scheme to support students and the professional development of their teachers and school staff.

Allied Health professionals are not part of the medical, dental or nursing professions, but are university qualified practitioners with specialised expertise in preventing, diagnosing and treating a range of conditions and illnesses.

What is physiotherapy?

Physiotherapy uses physical techniques to improve movement, reduce pain, speed up healing and generally increase quality of life. Physiotherapists use a range of therapies including massage, manipulation, stretching and exercise.

Physiotherapy services in schools focus on enhancing education programs and learning outcomes for students with disability.

There are two ways in which allied health providers may deliver services on school grounds:

Parent funded

A parent/carer may request permission from the Principal to allow their physiotherapist to deliver services during school hours to their child. In most cases, this service will be funded out of the student's NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) plan. NDIS funding does not fund group programs or services of any kind.

School funded: groups, whole of class/school and staff professional development:

Direct engagement of a physiotherapist by the school, paid for with RAM funding. These services will largely be linked to learning outcomes. Schools can use physiotherapy services to meet the specific and individual needs of students with disability that affect what they need to do at school. They may engage exercise physiology services to support identified groups of students or to provide professional development to their staff.

Schools may also engage providers for the support of individual students if they believe these services are required and are not being funded through the NDIS.

Who does a physiotherapist work with?

Physiotherapy services may be used to support students with:

- Intellectual disability
- Physical impairment
- Delayed neuro-sensory motor development
- Speech and/or language impairment
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Cerebral palsy
- Visual impairment
- Neurological conditions

Physiotherapists may work collaboratively with occupational therapists as part of a student's support team. Physiotherapists may also work with parents, carers, teachers and others in support roles to provide training, professional development and mentoring.

Existing Resources

For school initiated and funded services, schools may use the Department's Specialist Allied Health Scheme to identify and engage pre-qualified allied health providers.

[Externally Funded Service Providers information hub.](#)



What services can a school engage a physiotherapist to deliver?

For students

When working with students, physiotherapists aim to develop their skills and abilities so they can learn and safely and independently access the school environment. This can include:

Assessments and interventions:

- Individual, Classroom and playground-based assessments of students that will review:
 - Virtual/video conferencing
 - Online platforms
 - Phone
 - Email
- Early intervention assessments can help identify potential learning disabilities

Supports

- Support in the provision of adjustments including:
 - the use of assistive technology to facilitate independent mobility, communication, play and recreation at Email
- Work with students to develop visual-perceptual-motor development

Recommendations

- Advise on choice of desks and chairs, specialised seating, mobility and standing equipment
- Advise on posture and positioning to enhance access and participation in classroom activities
- Advise on mobility within the classroom and school grounds
- Recommend adjustments to the school environment to allow the student's involvement in school activities
- Recommend instructional adjustments to existing education programs to meet specific student needs

For teachers and school staff

Physiotherapists can provide training and support to school staff, including:

- Training on manual handling to allow student's participation in school activities

Team teaching and classroom support:

- Physiotherapists in schools may use a team approach to maximise the capacity of school teams and work collaboratively with other therapy teams to deliver co-ordinated services.

How are services delivered?

Depending on the therapist, there are a number of ways in which services can be delivered.

Delivery mode:

- Face to face
- One on one
- Virtual consultations which can be effective for low intensity and ongoing support, or can be used to supplement face to face services. Providers may use:
 - Virtual/video conferencing
 - Online platforms
 - Phone
 - Email
- Small groups
- Classroom and whole of school
- Training workshops and webinars - one off and ongoing
- Collaborative planning and strategic workshops

Delivery frequency:

- One off session
 - Ongoing - for example weekly sessions for the period of a school term or year
 - Educational/professional development programs - series, short and long
- 