

# Specialist behaviour 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 are behaviour supports?

Specialist behaviour supports can help students and teachers reduce behaviours of concern which usually occur when an individual student's needs are not being met by their environment.

Practitioners aim to equip teachers and students with the knowledge and skills to strategically respond to student needs and reduce these behaviours. Services may be delivered by a range of specialists including occupational therapists and psychologists.

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

### Parent f

A parent/carer may request permission from the Principal to allow their behaviour practitioner 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.

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

Direct engagement of a behaviour practitioner by the school, paid for with RAM funding. These services will largely be linked to learning outcomes. Schools can use behaviour therapy services to meet the specific and individual needs of students with disability that affect what they need to do at school. They may engage behaviour therapy 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 behaviour practitioner work with?

Behaviour practitioners work with individuals who have complex needs, who may or may not have a diagnosed disability. Some behaviours that may be displayed that could warrant support are:

- Disruptive behaviour
- Challenges coping with change
- Students who may have experienced trauma
- Signs of withdrawal and anxiety
- Poor social skills and concentration levels

Some students may:

- Have developmental delays
- Have a learning disability
- Have an intellectual disability
- Be on the Autism spectrum

Specialist behaviour practitioners 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 behaviour practitioner to deliver?

**Z** When working with students, behaviour practitioners aim to identify student needs and develop their skills and abilities so they can learn and safely participate in their education. This can include:

### Assessments

- Rigorous and holistic assessment of a student's needs, particularly a functional assessment of behaviour in the school context, in collaboration with students, parents, teacher(s), school counselling staff and other allied health professionals.)

### Supports

- Classroom based sensory activities that are fun, calming and de-escalating for students
- Social skills development
- Increase effective communication skills
- Build skills for managing emotions by teaching replacement behaviours
- Support in the delivery of programs.

### Recommendations

- Advise and assist on the implementation of behaviour support plans and programs that aim to understand why a student exhibits behaviours of concern, and then support the student to acquire new skills to replace those behaviours.
- Advice on assistive technology solutions to support a student staying on task and being organised with their work. For example, digital scaffolds to support them to complete tasks, digital reminders, timetables or schedules.

## For teachers and school staff

Specialist behaviour practitioners work with teachers and school staff to provide expertise and training, and ensure that they are equipped to best support students with specific needs. This can include:

### Training and education:

- Procedures and skills to respond safely to behaviours
- Sensory processing
- The connection between perceptual difficulties and behaviour
- Ideas for calming sensory input
- Suggested activities that can be delivered in the classroom to de-escalate learners through sensory perception
- Development and implementation of positive behaviour support plan

### Team teaching and classroom support:

- While any time in the classroom would be focused on support for the student(s), this form of service delivery can also provide support and upskilling opportunities for the classroom teacher.

## 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
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