

Exercise physiology in schools

Schools may use specialised 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 exercise physiology?

Exercise physiology addresses short-term responses to physical stress and the adaptability of the body in relation to the repeated exposure to physical activity over time. Exercise physiologists specialise in clinical exercise interventions for people with a wide range of conditions and injuries.

Exercise physiologists prescribe effective exercise programs that help to prevent or manage acute, subacute or chronic disease or injury as well as assisting in rehabilitating people's physical and mental health and wellness. There are two ways in which allied health providers may deliver services on school grounds:

Parental permission

A parent/carer may request permission from the Principal to allow their exercise physiologist 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 services: groups, whole of class/school and staff professional development:

Direct engagement of an exercise physiologist by the school, paid for with RAM funding. These services will largely be linked to learning outcomes. Schools can use exercise physiology 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 an exercise physiologist work with?

Exercise physiologists work with students who would benefit from the positive impacts of exercise on their quality of life, condition, disability or injury. This may include students with:

- Asthma
- ADHD
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Cerebral palsy
- Childhood cancer
- Cystic fibrosis
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Intellectual and developmental delays and disabilities
- Mental health
- Obesity

Exercise physiologists 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 an exercise physiologist to deliver?

Z Exercise physiologists will work with students and schools in a range of ways, including:

Assessments and interventions:

- Assessments of functionality capacity
- Health and physical activity education
- Lifestyle modifications
- Behavioural change
- Exercise prescriptions for strength and function improvement.

Supports

- Development of support plans with school staff and other professionals
- Behavioural coaching
- Exercise counselling
- Physical rehabilitation
- Tailored exercise programs
- Promoting leisure time and incidental activity
- Counselling to reduce sedentary behaviours

Recommendations

- Advice on lifestyle modifications to improve health status including exercise plans
- Recommend group exercise programs

For teachers and school staff

Exercise physiologists 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:

- Health and physical activity education
- Support with planning exercise in the school setting
- Education on obesity and health living
- Developing an understanding of wellness and the positive impacts of exercise

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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