

Secondary School Support Recommendations for Families

Please refer to the RCH Education Institute website <https://www.rch.org.au/education/> for more detailed information on school supports and recommendations.

Staying connected to Secondary School and learning

Teach your teachers

Share information that you have been given about your child's health condition with teachers and staff at school.

Meetings

Arrange regular meetings at school with your child's teacher or coordinator. Schools will be better able to plan ahead and offer support when they are kept informed and updated throughout your child's illness and treatment.

Key Contacts

Establish key contacts at the school to engage with. Contacts at school may include: VCE/VCAL Coordinator, Senior School Coordinator or Year Level Coordinator, Careers/Pathway Counsellors, Inclusive Education Coordinator, Student Wellbeing Coordinators, Student Support Staff including Psychologists or Counsellors and Subject Teachers.

There are also many contacts and resources within the Department of Education & Training (DET) e.g. Regional Disability Coordinators, Visiting Teacher Service, Student Support Services Officer, Inclusion Access Coordinators, Parent Complaints Resolution – Community Liaison Officer, Parentline. Discuss these DET supports with your child's school.

Learning at home

Speak to your child's school for learning supports and resources, if your child has an extended absence from school.

Supports available at secondary school

School can help you access extra support if your child has a health condition.

Student Support Services

Student Support Services (SSS) teams are comprised of professionals who work in Government schools to offer additional services to students who need them. SSS staff comprise of Visiting Teachers, Education Support Officers, Psychologists, Guidance Officers, Speech Pathologists, Social Workers and other Allied Health Professionals.

Visiting Teachers

Visiting Teachers provide additional educational assistance, advice and support to school-aged children and young people, parents, teaching staff and school communities when a student is experiencing a chronic health problem.

State Schools' Relief Fund

If your child attends a public school and you are struggling to meet the costs of school uniforms, shoes and books, you may be able to receive these for free or at a discount through the State Schools' Relief Fund.

Students with disabilities and additional learning needs

Your child has the right to take part in all education courses or programs as their peers. Your child may need some reasonable adjustments, funding or extra supports to make sure they can take part.

Reasonable Adjustments

To make sure your child has the same learning opportunities as children without a disability, an education provider must make reasonable adjustments. [Reasonable adjustments](#) may include changes to the way your child is supported in their learning, changes to the school environment and providing additional supports.

Student Support Groups

A [student support group](#) (SSG) gives you the opportunity to work with your child's school to make decisions about their education and check their progress. SSG's ensure that those with the most knowledge of, and responsibilities for the student, work together to establish shared goals (Individual Learning Plan), plan reasonable adjustments and monitor progress.

Funding – Program for Students with Disabilities

The Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) provides Government schools extra funding to help them support students with disability and high needs. Schools use the funding in different ways, depending on the needs of each child. If you think your child's school could apply for one of the seven categories of the PSD, talk to your child's key contact.

VCE, VCAL and Senior Pathways

There are many ways students can undertake their final years of study. Consider your child's goals for the future, interests, usual academic performance and the impact your child's health condition may have on their studies and attendance. Discuss and research alternatives, if you think full-time study may not be possible while managing illness, treatment and recovery.

Make an appointment to meet with the VCE/VCAL or Pathways Coordinator at your school to ensure that relevant applications and course adjustments are made. Some examples of supports include:

Extend your VCE: It is possible to complete VCE over a period of 3 years to accommodate medical needs.

Special Provisions:

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) may approve special provisions and arrangements for both classroom learning and school-based assessments for VCE students who are disadvantaged by serious illness, injury or disability.

Special Entry Access Scheme (SEAS) is for applicants who have experienced educational disadvantage. SEAS is designed to make sure universities and institutions get a sense of your child's full potential.

Returning to Secondary School

Return to School Plan

The plan can outline agreed expectations about attendance and schoolwork, any additional support your child may require, and what supports the school can provide. When developing the return to school plan consider modifications and reasonable adjustments such as changes to the curriculum, timetable or school environment.

Gradual Return

Full-time attendance may be hard to cope with after an illness or extended absence. Negotiate a timetable that works for your child and their school and ensure everyone has a copy. Some suggestions could include:

- Start with half-days or reduced hours in the first few weeks;
- Monitor your child's fatigue (physical and cognitive) and discuss coping strategies with school staff;
- Ensure your child's modified timetable allows time for socialising as well as classes; and
- Investigate transport options.

Student Health Support Plans

Before returning to school, provide teaching and wellbeing staff with recent information about your child's health condition and medications. Ensure that emergency contact details are up to date. Work with your child's education setting and medical team to complete a student health support plan. [Health support planning forms](#) can be accessed via the DET website or directly from wellbeing staff at your child's school.

Ongoing appointments

Tell your child's teachers about upcoming appointments and treatments that may continue to cause interruptions after they return to school.

Fitting in

Many young people face fears and worries about returning to their usual learning environment after an illness or extended absence. It is important for teaching staff and parents to be aware of these anxieties and challenges and check-in regularly with the student to see how they are coping, as well as provide strategies and supports that make the transition less overwhelming.

Other contacts and links

[Department of Education and Training Victoria](#)

Information, advice and policies for families enrolled in government schools.

[Catholic Education Melbourne](#)

Information for families and students enrolled in Catholic Schools.

[Independent Schools Council Australia \(ISCA\) - Students with Disability](#)

Information about funding and support in private and independent education settings.

[Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority](#)

Curriculum frameworks and information for VCE/VCAL students.

[VTAC Special Entry Access Scheme \(SEAS\)](#)

Information about support when applying for tertiary settings with a chronic health condition.

[Association for Children with a Disability \(ACD\) Australia](#)

Information, support and resources for parents and carers of children with a disability.

[Ronald McDonald Learning Program](#)

A national program that assists school-aged children with serious illnesses and injuries to catch up on missed education following treatment and recovery.

[RCH Kids Health Info](#)

Fact sheets to share with your school.

[Better Health Channel – Coping at School](#)

Advice for managing a chronic illness at school.

[Courses – Job Starter](#)

Government funded courses