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The Physical Disability Service

The Ministry of Education, Special Education's Physical Disability Service provides physiotherapy and occupational therapy services at school/kura to support students with a physical disability to participate and learn.

Who can receive this support

Students can receive this service if they have a physical disability that prevents them from participating and learning. Students might have difficulties with mobility and/or hand movement. They might have specialised equipment to help them walk, write and perform tasks requiring fine-motor skills. Their physical disability is the primary reason why they need extra support.

How to apply

Your school can apply in consultation with the student's parent/s. Your school will have application forms. You can also download these from the Ministry of Education website www.minedu.govt.nz (put 'physical disability service' in the search) or contact the Special Education team. Your school will usually have someone who works with parent/s, such as a Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) or the deputy principal.

You will need to send the application to either the local Special Education team or a Specialist School Provider (SSP), depending on your location.

In some parts of the country the Physical Disability Service is managed by Special Education and in others it's managed by specialist service provider schools. You can check who your local provider is through the Ministry website.

What the Physical Disability Service does not cover:

- ▶ support for students who are under six and are not at school. In this case students might be able to get occupational and/or physiotherapy services through the health service
- ▶ support for students already getting help through the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS)
- ▶ funding for a teacher's aide or 'consumables' (small equipment items)

- ▶ speech-language therapy. Other funding is available for this – see our information sheet *The Communication Service*.

If your student's disability is the result of an accident they might be able to get support from the Physical Disability Service if they're not already getting occupational therapy or physiotherapy through the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC). ACC and the Ministry of Education might work together to provide support.

What happens next

A therapist from the Physical Disability Service will arrange to visit your school to see your student and to meet their teacher and the parent/s. They will carry out a thorough assessment based on the information provided in the application and on information provided by you and the family/whānau. They will negotiate a Service Agreement

that identifies goals and priorities for intervention, any resources needed, timeframes and the responsibilities of those involved.

Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

All students receiving the Physical Disability Service will have an IEP.

Your school will work together with the family/whānau and Special Education to develop, implement and monitor your student's IEP.

You can find a copy of the *IEP Guidelines* on the Ministry of Education website: www.minedu.govt.nz including examples of several students with different needs and what their IEPs look like.

Support available through the service

Depending on your student's needs, they might receive support from an occupational therapist and/or a physiotherapist. Therapists will work with everyone involved to decide what approach will best meet the needs of your student and develop strategies to support them. This might include training and ideas about how to make learning more accessible.

The therapist might also make recommendations if equipment or areas of your school need to be changed so that your student can join in and learn alongside the rest of their class and take part in school events.

Education/health services

The work of education and health specialists often overlaps. Your student might be able to receive support from both services as they have a different focus. Therapists will work together to meet your student's needs.

The Physical Disability Service and teacher's aide support

The Physical Disability Service does not pay for teacher's aide support. However, when your school applies for this service you agree to support the programme the therapist/s suggests. This might see your school using its Special Education Grant to pay for teacher's aide support if this is considered appropriate. You might also be able to apply for teacher's aide support through the Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) cluster.

Other support if your student isn't accepted for the service

You can consider other options through your school, such as your Special Education Grant that you can use to support children with special education needs. You can spend this in a variety of ways, including on resources, teacher training and teacher's aide time, and on individual students or groups of students.

You might also make a referral to Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) who are employed by groups of schools. RTLB are trained teachers who work with children experiencing learning or behaviour difficulties. They can work with teachers, giving them special training, or they can work with individual children or groups of children.

If your student has a severe physical disability, or several disabilities, it might be better to apply to the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (see our information sheet *The Ongoing Resourcing Scheme*).

How long the support continues

Your student will be given support from the Physical Disability Service for an agreed time. This will have been negotiated with the parent/s and the school and recorded in the Service Agreement.

The therapist will review your student's progress and will discuss this with you and their parent/s to decide if their support needs to continue.

Your school can re-apply for support if the parent/s and teachers feel your student needs further support or if their situation changes, for example, if they move classes or schools, or if they have a significant physical change.

When re-applying you will only need to provide information about what has changed or is new since the last application.

For more information

If you're unclear about any part of our service or have questions about the help your student receives, please talk with staff at your local Special Education office, or call the Special Education information line on **0800 622 222**.

You can get more detailed special education information, including *A Quick Guide to extra support*, under the educator section of our website: www.minedu.govt.nz, or on Te Kete Ipurangi a website that provides educational material for teachers and schools: www.tki.org.nz.

New Zealand Government

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