

FACT SHEET

Primary and secondary school years

The primary and secondary school education years are a significant period in the life of children, young people and their parents. During this time parents select the school/s their child will attend, learn about additional support available to their child, build connections with educators, establish relationships with other parents, watch their child develop independence and engage in their child's learning. During these years your child may experience some challenges, that may or may not be directly related to their limb difference, and they may seek your support to overcome any difficult issues. Equally, your child may also be keen to share in their achievements and successes along the way.

If your child is returning to school after an acquired amputation your child, their educators and peers may need your support and guidance. A separate Fact Sheet addresses that specific issue.

This Fact Sheet contains information to assist you during your child's primary and secondary education years, including: selecting a school, enrolling your child, coordinating a school meeting; and , preparing for a school meeting.

Choosing a primary or secondary school

Choosing a primary school and secondary school for your child is one of the most important education decisions your family will make. Choosing a school often involves school visits, meeting with educators and attending orientation sessions. Factors such as travel, finances, and before / after school care also need consideration.

Some children with a limb difference may be eligible for additional funding, equipment and support at school. Eligibility for support differs between states and territories (as well as education sectors) and it's best to discuss your child's needs with the school. You may also want to discuss your child's situation with the relevant Government Education Department, Catholic School Association or Independent School Association in your state or territory.

Enrolling your child

When meeting with potential schools, or enrolling your child, it is important to discuss their needs with all relevant staff. Discussing your child's individual needs is important so that their schooling can be stress-free and positive for everyone. You may find that your child's school has never educated a child with a limb difference so you may need to explain this in detail with school management, teachers and other key staff.

We understand that discussing your child's limb difference can be emotional, however educators are professionals who care for their student and parent community and will want to support you as best as they can. Coordinating and preparing for a school meeting to discuss your child is one way of ensuring that all staff understand your child's needs.

Organising a school meeting

When speaking with your child's school ask to have all relevant staff present at the meeting. You may want to bring your own support person to that meeting for emotional or practical assistance.

The school will likely want to put into place an Individual Plan for your child. These plans generally cover: funding eligibility; required accessibility

modifications; classroom assistance; curriculum; and, any other specific needs your child may have. Depending on needs, school location or education sector your child may also be allocated with one-on-one support.

All schools must comply with the 'Disability Standards for Education 2005' (Commonwealth of Australia) which clarifies education providers responsibilities under the 'Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth of Australia).

Over the years you may be asked to provide information related to your child's limb difference with new teachers or at the beginning of each school year. This may, at times, feel intrusive or frustrating. But, remember the school is asking this so that they can best support your child throughout the year.

Preparing for a school meeting

- **Limb difference information.** What type of limb difference does your child have? How does your child feel about it? What medical and health professionals are working with your child and family?
- **Amputation information.** How did the amputation occur? How is your child coping since the amputation? What medical and health professionals are working with your child and family?
- **School attendance.** Will it be full or part-time? If it is part-time when do you expect your child will move into full-time schooling?
- **Rests and breaks.** Will your child require additional rest periods during school hours? How will the school monitor and manage rest periods?
- **School modifications.** Does the school need to make any modifications to accommodate your child's accessibility needs and equipment use (e.g. wheelchair, crutches, prosthetic limb)? Are the classrooms and toilets accessible? Are there any steps/stairs that may affect your child's ability to access parts of the school? Will the computers accommodate a single-handed keyboard or specific programs if your child has an upper limb difference?

- **Pain management.** Does your child take any pain medication and, if so, what dosage? How often do medications need to be administered and how will this be managed at school? How do you give consent to the school to administer medication?
- **Assistance.** Will your child require assistance moving from one classroom to another? Does your child need assistance carrying bags, books or technology? Does your child require assistance with eating? Does your child require assistance with toileting?
- **Transport.** If your child has limited mobility, are there special school drop-off and pick-up zones?
- **Absences and curriculum.** How will any absence from school (e.g. to attend medical appointments) affect your child's learning? How can your child 'catch-up' when away from the classroom?
- **Communicating with peers.** How would you like your child to discuss their limb difference/s with other students? How can students be assisted to positively understand your child's limb difference?
- **Individual Plan.** Does the school need to develop an Individual Plan for your child, reflecting that they live with a limb difference?

Accessing support

The primary and secondary school years can be a time of great achievement for your family. However, it may also lead to some concerns or questions along the way. You may want to speak to a Limbs 4 Life team member who can assist you. You may also want to speak to another parent who has experienced what you are going through. If so, Limbs 4 Life can connect you to a trained Peer Support Volunteer who you can speak to. Visit our website or call us for more information and links to our online support.

www.limbs4kids.org.au | T: 1300 782 231 | E: kids@limbs4life.org.au

The Limbs 4 Kids program is an initiative of Limbs 4 Life, Australia's peak organisation for amputees and those living with limb difference. Limbs 4 Kids ensures that all Australian children and young people with limb difference, as well as all of those who care for them, receive access to information and support.