



Updated April 2012

Better Start for Children with Disability

What is it?

The Better Start for Children with Disability (Better Start) initiative includes:

- up to \$12,000 in funding for [early intervention services](#) and treatments for eligible children,
- additional assistance for eligible children who live in outer-regional, rural or remote locations to help with the costs of accessing services,
- a [Medicare item](#) for the development of a treatment and management plan for eligible children up to the age of 13
- Medicare items for up to four allied health diagnostic services, the results of which contribute to the development of the treatment and management plan, and
- Medicare items for up to 20 relevant allied health services in total for each eligible child up to the age of 15 provided the treatment and management plan is in place before the age of 13.

Up to 35% of a child's early intervention funding can be used for the purchase of **resources**. This means that up to \$4,200 in total out of the \$12,000 can be used for resources, up to a total of \$2,100 in any one financial year.

Resources that are purchased with Better Start funds must:

- be recommended by the child's Better Start service provider, and
- be directly linked with the early intervention services being delivered to the child, and/or
- provide support for the delivery of interventions at home.

Who is eligible?

Eligible children are those aged under six years who have been diagnosed with:

- Down syndrome
- Cerebral palsy
- Fragile X syndrome, or
- a moderate or greater vision or hearing impairment, including deafblindness.

The categories of disability identified as eligible for Better Start were determined based on evidence that intensive early intervention in the pre-school years is effective in preparing this cohort of children for school.

Children with one of the listed disabilities will also be able to access new Medicare items under the Better Start initiative.

How do I apply?

Parents or carers of eligible children will need to register their child for the Better Start early intervention funding before the child turns six years of age.

Registration of eligible children is managed by the dedicated Registration and Information Service (RIS), which is operated by Carers Australia.

To register a child for the Better Start early intervention funding parents and carers must call the RIS on 1800 242 636.

To successfully register a child for the early intervention funding, parents or carers must be able to provide the RIS with evidence of:

- the child's age (e.g. the child's birth certificate or passport),
- the child's residential address (e.g. a recent utilities bill or rates notice),
- the child's diagnosis (details provided via the link below),
- residential status (if applicable- details provided via the link below), and
- the child's Centrelink generated Customer Reference Number (CRN).

Click on [registration process](#) for more information.

The RIS employs suitably qualified and experienced front line staff to provide assistance to eligible children, their parents and carers, including those living in regional and remote areas and those from Indigenous or culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. The RIS are able to assist with:

- confirming a child's eligibility, including confirming evidence of age, diagnosis and residential address,
- registering each eligible child on the FaHCSIA Online Funding Management System (FOFMS),
- providing information to parents and carers of eligible children about the components of Better Start, including information about the Better Start Early Intervention Service Provider Panel, and
- where appropriate, referring parents and carers to other services or assistance that may be available beyond Better Start.

Who runs it?

The Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

Contact

Better Start Helpline

Ph: **1800 989 530**.

Web: [Better Start for Children with Disability initiative](#)