

Guideline

Autism spectrum

Summary

This document is an introductory guide to the autism spectrum for Department for Education and Child Development staff. It is designed to enable staff to gain an insight into the implications for teaching and learning of the autism spectrum as well as describe the frameworks for getting to know and understand an individual child or children and young people's autism and develop strengths based support strategies.

Table 1 - Document details

Publication date	November 2016
File number	DECD16/03769
Related legislation	Disability Discrimination Act 1992 , Equal Opportunity Act 1984, South Australia and Education Act 1972, South Australia
Related policies, procedures, guidelines, standards, frameworks	Disability Standards for Education 2005 On the Same Basis School Discipline Policy Education support for children and young people under guardianship of the Minister Mental health of children and young people Children and students with Disability Policy Negotiated and individual education plans
Version	2
Replaces	Guide to the autism spectrum - The previous guidelines were out of date and required rewriting to reflect current understandings and terminology.
Policy officer (position)	Senior Autism Adviser, Disability Policy and Programs
Policy officer (phone)	8226 9907
Policy sponsor (position)	Director, Disability Policy and Programs
Executive director responsible (position and office)	Executive Director, Statewide Services and Child Development Division, Office for Education and Early Childhood
Applies to	All DECD staff in particular teachers, support staff, volunteers, policy officers

Key words	Guidelines, autistic, spectrum, guide, autism, sensory overview, support plan, SMARTAR
Status	
Approved by	Senior Executive Group
Approval date	
Review date	November 2019

Table 2 - Revision record

Date	Version	Revision description
November 2016	2.0	The Autism Spectrum Guide for DECD Staff – major edit

Table of Contents

Guideline.....	1
Autism spectrum.....	1
Summary.....	1
Table of Contents.....	4
1. Title	5
2. Purpose.....	5
3. Scope.....	5
4. Guideline detail.....	5
4.1 What is the autism spectrum?	5
4.2 Support plans.....	5
5. Roles and responsibilities.....	8
6. Monitoring, evaluation and review	8
7. Definitions and abbreviations.....	9
8. Supporting documents.....	9
9. References.....	9
Appendices	10

1. Title

Autism Spectrum Guideline

2. Purpose

To update the Guidelines: Autism Spectrum – A DECD guide, The Autism Spectrum – A DECD introduction, including sensory overview proforma and the autism spectrum support plan.

The updated autism support plan will be required to be used by sites prior to applying for RAAP funding to demonstrate how the site has tried to meet the children and young people's needs and provide more accurate information for RAAP funding.

3. Scope

This guideline provides DECD staff an understanding of the diversity of skills, strengths and support needs of children and young people on the autism spectrum.

4. Guideline detail

4.1 What is the autism spectrum?

Since May 2013, the terms; Aspergers, Autism, Classic autism, HFA, LFA, Autistic Disorder and PDD-NOS were replaced by one overarching diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. This is also known as the autistic or autism spectrum. Diagnosis is based on behavioural observations and behavioural characteristics. However, individuals on the autistic spectrum can appear to be quite different to each other as the way their autistic characteristics interact with each other and the environment varies from person to person. In addition, the strengths and support needs of people on the autistic spectrum vary across time and contexts.

The strengths and abilities of children and young people on the autistic spectrum are not always obvious. Some children and young people on the autistic spectrum appear to cope well for some of their educational journey and if they start to experience more difficulties in adolescence, only then start on the diagnostic journey. Additionally, due to difficulties in accessing the diagnostic process in some geographical areas, not all children and young people will have a diagnosis by the time they start school. Autism spectrum children and young people may excel in one or more curriculum areas and have difficulties in others.

The autistic spectrum encompasses a wide range of strengths and difficulties. Just as all children and young people have strengths and support needs, it is important for preschools, schools and families to work collaboratively to explore strengths based support for children and young people on the autistic spectrum. Like all children and young people, those on the autism spectrum are able to achieve more easily when they feel valued, liked, cared about and are able to share their interests with others. Specific support strategies need to be tailored for each individual and may need to be changed over time.

4.2 Support plans

To assist you in meeting the individual needs of a particular child, the use of an [autism spectrum support plan](#) should be reviewed. These plans organise relevant information and identify key areas for consideration in their education, including:

- required communication strategies
- the impact of sensory sensitivities and required strategies
- skills, strengths and interests
- learning preference (not all children and young people on the autism spectrum are visual thinkers)
- support needs and types.

A [sensory overview](#) should also be completed. These should be reviewed every six months in preschools and primary schools, and annually in high schools. Educators, family and where possible the child or young person collaborates with other members of the support team in updating the sensory overview.

What to do – a summary

- Complete the [sensory overview](#) (Appendix A) and the [autism spectrum support plan](#) (Appendix B) collaboratively with the family, school and children and young people can provide input prior to the meeting if they would prefer not to attend), support service staff can assist if needed. Training videos for these can be found on the SERU website.
- Ensure first contact between a child/young person on the autism spectrum and a new teacher/SSO is positive by being genuinely pleased to meet the child/young person and talking about something they are interested in or sharing a picture/object of something they are interested in. To do this, you need to find out what the child/young person's special interest is prior to first meeting them.
- Be patient and spend time getting to know the child/young person – small details can be big signposts to their emotional state even when children and young people themselves are unaware of their emotional state. For example, does the child/young person's tone/pitch/volume of vocalisations change according to their emotional state?
- Use strategies that are designed to respond to the individuals strengths and support needs. These will become apparent as the sensory overview (Appendix A) and the autism spectrum support plan (Appendix B) are completed.
- Teach new skills/knowledge through areas of current interest. For example, teaching counting using dinosaurs.
- Celebrate progress with the child/young person, class and family.
- Provide positive role models that reflect the variety of positions that autistic spectrum adults have, including; parent, artist, musician, teacher, nurse, surgeon, university lecturer etc.
- Explicitly teach the whole class how to interact positively and respectfully.
- Help the child/ young person to use visual/written supports and reminders.
- Use positive behaviour supports.

4.3 Information and support services

DECD Disability Support Program

The [Children and students with disability policy](#) ensures that all children and young people with disability who are attending a DECD site, program or service are provided access to an appropriate learning program that meets the needs and requirements of the Early Years Learning Framework and the Australian Curriculum as well as clearly setting out the legal responsibilities of DECD personnel in providing appropriate learning programs and/or services to children and children and young peoples with disability.

DECD children and young people support services include a broad range of provisions for children and young people with disabilities, including psychology, speech pathology, behaviour coaches and consultative advice. Most services are available upon request. Disability support can be accessed for children and young people who have been described as having a disability within the [Children and students with disability policy](#) and for children and young people with high support needs who may not yet be verified under the policy during their transition from preschool. Written referral to any support service requires signed consent from families.

Other key services

There are a number of other organisations who provide professional learning, training and development or funding for schools and educators and/or support for individual children and young people apart from DECD including the Ministerial Committee for Students with Disabilities (MCSWD) or the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Special Education Resource Unit (SERU) <http://web.seru.sa.edu.au/>

Positive Partnerships – provide supports for schools/teachers and families through targeted professional learning <http://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/>

[Autism SA](#) provides a range of free and fee for service supports for individual children and young people in schools as well as fee for training opportunities.

[Novita Children's Services](#) provides a range of free and fee for service supports for individual children and young people.

[Autism Spectrum Australia](#) (Aspect) runs autism specific schools

[Special Education Resource Unit](#) provides a range of learning and teaching materials and specialised services which support children and students with disabilities and learning difficulties. Information on Highly Structured Teaching is available on this website such as visual timetables and visual (icon/picture and/or written) supports for classroom routines and tasks.

Starting resources

A completed sensory overview and a completed autism spectrum support plan will guide the resources needed for individual children and young people.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Authority/responsibility for
All staff Mandatory Training On-line Training	Compliance with the Guideline Understanding of and compliance with all relevant policy as identified by their line manager/Director. RAN-EC <i>Online autism training available at Special Education Resource Unit</i>
Policy Sponsor, ie Director/Manager	Liaising with CPU for advice and preliminary consultation. Providing oversight, advice and line management to the policy officer during development. Ensuring all staff for whom they are responsible are informed of and comply with all policy that applies to them. Establishing the monitoring, review and evaluation of all policy documents under their responsibility.
Executive Director	Approval of guideline that have been revised with minor edits.
Policy, Planning and Performance Committee	Ensuring all policy review and development complies with the policy framework. Approval of registration forms, implementation and communication plans and final draft documents. Provide assurance to SEG of document quality and compliance with the framework.
Senior Executive Group (SEG)	Approval of the final version of guideline for publication as advised by the Policy, Planning and Performance Committee.

6. Monitoring, evaluation and review

The effectiveness of the Autism Spectrum Guideline will be monitored by the Disability Policy and Programs Directorate.

The guideline will be reviewed in three years.

7. Definitions and abbreviations

Term	Meaning
Policy sponsor	Person responsible for overseeing the development and review of guideline document
Policy officer	Person responsible for development and review of guideline document
DECD Staff	Corporate and sites

8. Supporting documents

[School Discipline Policy](#)

[Planning transition from preschool to school](#)

[Year 7/8 Transition Process](#)

[Children and students with disability policy](#)

[Disability support program](#)

[Educational support matrix](#)

[One the Same Basis Resources](#)

[Individual Education Plans](#)

[Education support for children and young people under GOM](#)

[Mental Health of Children and Young People](#)

[Understanding the autism spectrum](#)

9. References

Refer to [Understanding the autism spectrum](#)

Appendices

1. [Autism and teaching and learning table](#)
2. [The Autism Spectrum Guide summary](#)
3. [Sensory Overview](#)
4. [Autism Spectrum Support Plan](#)
5. [SMARTAR Goal](#)