

FACT SHEET FOR PARENTS

BETTER START FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY INITIATIVE

As part of the 2010 election commitment, the Prime Minister announced the Better Start for Children with Disability initiative. This initiative will provide \$122 million over four years to ensure children with an eligible disability which affects their development, have access to intensive early intervention therapies and treatment from expert health professionals.

The Better Start for Children with Disability initiative was implemented on 1 July 2011 across the Department of Health and Ageing, and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. The initiative assists children with sight and hearing impairment, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and Fragile X syndrome.

Medicare services provided under the Better Start for Children with Disability initiative

Medicare rebates are available for services provided by a specialist, consultant physician, general practitioner or eligible allied health professional for children with an eligible disability as follows:

- Item 137 and item 139 – for a specialist, consultant physician or general practitioner to diagnose and develop a treatment and management plan for a child aged under 13 years; and
- Items 82000, 82005, 82010 and 82030 – for eligible audiologists, occupational therapists, optometrists, orthoptists, physiotherapists, psychologists or speech pathologists to provide up to 4 assessment services per child per lifetime, to assist the referring medical practitioner with the diagnosis and development of a treatment and management plan, for a child aged under 13 years; and
- Items 82015, 82020, 82025 and 82035 - eligible audiologists, occupational therapists, optometrists, orthoptists, physiotherapists, psychologists or speech pathologists to provide up to 20 early intervention treatment services per child per lifetime, following diagnosis and consistent with the treatment and management plan provided by the referring medical practitioner, for a child aged under 15 years.

What is considered an eligible disability?

For the purposes of item 137, item 139 and items 82000 to 82035 eligible disability means any of the following:

- sight impairment that results in vision of less than or equal to 6/18 vision or equivalent field loss in the better eye, with correction;
- hearing impairment that results in:
 - (i) a hearing loss of 40 decibels or greater in the better ear, across four frequencies; or
 - (ii) permanent conductive hearing loss and auditory neuropathy;
- cerebral palsy;
- Down syndrome; and
- Fragile X syndrome.

I think my child may have an eligible disability. How can he/she access these services under Medicare?

Step 1:

It is important that you take your child to see either a specialist, consultant physician or your general practitioner (if you do not already have a referral for a specialist or consultant physician, you will need to obtain one from your general practitioner). The specialist, consultant physician or general practitioner will consider your child's condition and decide whether to refer your child to allied health services provided for children with an eligible disability.

Step 2:

The specialist, consultant physician or general practitioner will assess your child's condition, develop an accurate diagnosis, and create a treatment and management plan. Only one disability treatment and management plan can be rebated by Medicare per lifetime. The treatment and management plan must be in place before your child's 13th birthday.

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Step 3:

The specialist, consultant physician or general practitioner may need to see your child more than once, and may seek the assistance of one or more eligible allied health professional/s (audiologists, occupational therapists, optometrists, orthoptists, physiotherapists, psychologists or speech pathologists) to contribute to the diagnosis and development of a treatment and management plan. Medicare provides rebates for up to 4 of these allied health assessment services per child. These services must be completed before your child's 13th birthday.

Step 4:

After completion of the allied health assessment services, return to the referring specialist, consultant physician or general practitioner, who will finalise the treatment and management plan, taking into consideration recommendations from the allied health professional/s. The specialist, consultant physician or general practitioner will invoice your child using Medicare item 137 or item 139. Medicare provides a rebate for this service, and keeps a record indicating that a treatment and management plan is in place. You will not be able to collect a rebate for the treatment services (outlined in step 5 below) until this item has been claimed at Medicare.

Step 5:

Based on the treatment and management plan developed by the specialist, consultant physician or general practitioner, your child is entitled to up to 20 treatment services from an eligible allied health professional/s (audiologist, occupational therapist, optometrist, orthoptist, physiotherapist, psychologist or speech pathologist). Medicare provides rebates for up to 20 of these allied health treatment services per child. These services must be completed before your child's 15th birthday.

NB: If your child has already been provided with services under the *Helping Children with Autism* program, he/she cannot access the *Better Start for Children with Disability* initiative.

How can my child access non-Medicare early intervention services?

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) offers a number of programs to assist children and families of children with a disability.

Information on FaHCSIA programs is available at www.fahcsia.gov.au/betterstart, from the Better Start for Children with Disability Support Helpdesk on 1800 778 581 or via email at better.start@facsia.gov.au.

Further information

Further information on the disability items can be obtained by visiting the MBS Online website:
<http://www.mbsonline.gov.au/>

Inquiries can be directed to mbsonline@health.gov.au or by telephoning (02) 6289 1555.
Further information on the *Better Start for Children with Disability* is available at www.health.gov.au/children-disability.