



## Fact Sheet on the DSM-5 and eligibility to HCWA and Better Start

The Department of Social Services (DSS) provides early intervention funding and support under the Helping Children with Autism package (HCWA) and the Better Start for Children with Disability initiative (Better Start). In order to be eligible, children need to have met diagnostic, age and residential criteria.

Changes to the diagnostic criteria for autism in the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), introduced in May 2013, have had implications for the eligibility for HCWA. Previously, diagnostic eligibility to HCWA was based on the DSM-IV.

Following national consultations on the impact of these changes, the Australian Government has endorsed the following:

- revised criteria for diagnostic eligibility for HCWA;
- moving support for Rett's Disorder from HCWA to Better Start; and
- conducting a review to determine the most appropriate policy response to Social Communication Disorder once more information and data is available.

### HCWA Diagnostic Criteria

As of 1 February 2014, the following criteria will apply to diagnostic eligibility to HCWA early intervention services:

***“Diagnosis*** - *The Autism Advisor must sight a written conclusive diagnosis made in Australia by or through any one of the following:*

- *a State/Territory Government or equivalent multidisciplinary assessment service; or*
- *a private multidisciplinary team; or*
- *Paediatrician; or*
- *Psychiatrist.*

*A multidisciplinary assessment team must consist of a psychologist and speech pathologist but may also include an occupational therapist.*

*An acceptable diagnosis is one of the following conditions, as diagnosed by one of the professionals listed above:*

- *Autism;*
- *Autism Spectrum Disorder;*
- *Autistic Disorder;*
- *Asperger's Disorder/Syndrome;*
- *Childhood Disintegrative Disorder; or*
- *Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS).”*



## **Rett's Disorder**

Rett's Disorder, which was previously considered a Pervasive Developmental Disorder and eligible under HCWA, is no longer a diagnosis under the DSM-5. As of 1 February 2014, Rett's Disorder will become an eligible diagnosis for funding and support under Better Start.

Children with Rett's Disorder who are already accessing support through HCWA will continue to do so. In addition, these children will be eligible to access physiotherapy as part of their HCWA support.

Parents of children with Rett's Disorder currently on HCWA should contact the Early Intervention Helpdesk on 1800 778 581 or [asd.support@dss.gov.au](mailto:asd.support@dss.gov.au) if they would like to access physiotherapy for their child.

## **Social Communication Disorder**

Social Communication Disorder (SCD) is a new diagnosis under the DSM-5. DSS will conduct a review in 12 months to determine the appropriate early intervention policy response in relation to Social Communication Disorder, when more information and data is available on the children who will receive this diagnosis.

HCWA and Better Start guidelines will be updated to reflect these changes and will be posted on the Department's website at [www.dss.gov.au/autism](http://www.dss.gov.au/autism)

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