Students with Disability

**Roles and responsibilities in the assessment process**

Updated October 2021

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# PURPOSE

These guidelines have been prepared to:

* describe the respective roles of schools, the assessment service (Assessments Australia), and Student Support Services (SSS), in supporting applications under the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD).
* describe the role of the assessment service (Assessments Australia) in supporting profiles under the new Disability Inclusion process.
* outline the four stages of assessment for students referred to Assessments Australia.

A detailed flowchart indicating the respective roles of schools, Assessments Australia and SSS through each stage of the assessment process is included (see Appendix 1).

# BACKGROUND

The Department of Education and Training (the Department) is committed to delivering an inclusive education system that ensures all students have access to a quality education that meets their diverse needs. The Department provides a range of policies, programs and resources for schools to support the delivery of high quality schooling for all students, including students with a disability. These resources may be provided in the Student Resource Package, through student support services including psychologists, social workers, youth workers, speech pathologists and visiting teachers or through specific early identification and intervention programs. The Program for Students with Disabilities is one such form of provision available to schools.

Program for Students with Disabilities

The Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) is a targeted supplementary program that provides resources to Victorian government schools to support the education of a defined student population with disabilities and high needs. The program has eligibility criteria under the following categories:

* physical disability
* visual impairment
* severe behaviour disorder
* hearing impairment
* intellectual disability
* autism spectrum disorder
* severe language disorder with critical educational needs.

Further information regarding timelines and eligibility for the PSD is available online in the Program for Students with Disabilities - operational guidelines for schools at:

[www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/psdhandbook.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/psdhandbook.aspx)

In addition, professionals may access the *Program for Students with Disabilities Professional Guidelines* from regional disabilities coordinators for detailed assessment guidelines and reporting templates under each disability category.

Program for Students with Disabilities Assessment Service

The Department provides an assessment service to support applications for the PSD on behalf of students in Victorian government schools in the categories of intellectual disability (ID) and severe language disorder with critical educational needs (SLD-CEN).

Assessments Australia is contracted by the Department to manage and administer the assessment service. All assessments are conducted by qualified and registered psychologists and speech pathologists.

Disability Inclusion

Disability Inclusion will change the way students with disability are supported in Victorian government schools, to ensure every student at every ability can thrive at school and in life.

For further advice about the implementation of Disability Inclusion see:

[www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/disability-inclusion-profile/policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/disability-inclusion-profile/policy)

Schools that have transitioned to Disability Inclusion may continue to refer students to the **assessment service** in order to establish whether a student has an intellectual disability or severe language disorder with high functional needs. Whilst cognitive and language assessments will not be required to determine eligibility for a Disability Inclusion Profile, these assessments will continue to assist schools and families to better understand a student’s educational support needs, and may inform the Disability Inclusion Profile.

Assessments Australia provides cognitive assessments to support specialist school enrolment processes for students with intellectual disability. The assessment service is also available to provide cognitive assessments to support enrolment processes in specialist schools (intellectual disability) that have transitioned to Disability Inclusion.

Disability Inclusion schools seeking assessments through Assessments Australia should follow the processes and requirements as outlined for the PSD in this guidance.

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## The role of the school

Establishing the Student Support Group

Every Victorian government school is encouraged to establish a Student Support Group for any student with additional learning needs.  A Student Support Group, a cooperative partnership of parent/carer(s), school representatives and professionals, ensures coordinated support for each student's educational needs. The Student Support Group is central in making an application under the PSD or undertaking a Disability Inclusion Profile.

Guidelines for the Student Support Group are available at:

[www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-support-groups/policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-support-groups/policy)

Gathering evidence

The Student Support Group is responsible for gathering the documentation providing evidence of the student’s eligibility and educational needs, and for submitting applications within the Department’s timelines.

The assessments and reports should seek to provide a profile of a student’s specific strengths and educational needs. This documentation provides a rich source of information to assist teachers with planning for effective teaching and learning, and enables schools to provide ongoing support to ensure the needs of students are met, regardless of the outcome of applications for additional resources.

Coordinating support from professionals

Documentation to support PSD applications may be sourced by schools from various professionals including:

* Student Support Services (SSS) staff
* Assessments Australia
* National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funded providers
* External specialists.

It is recommended that all students identified with disabilities and additional learning needs should be brought to the attention of SSS staff for advice and support where required. In particular, SSS staff may assist schools in the preparation of reports to support applications under the autism spectrum disorder and severe behaviour disorder categories of the PSD.

Access to SSS is managed through a referral process by a student’s school through the school’s SSS or Health and Wellbeing Key Contact. The school should seek confirmation from SSS that the referral is relevant for the SSS service prior to submitting. The school must then obtain informed consent from the student’s parent/carer where the referral is for direct support to a student or group of students prior to initiating a referral to the SSS. The school must record the referral in the [Student Online Case System](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/Pages/socs.aspx) before the referral is assigned to SSS.

The SSS team will allocate the request and work with the school to establish objectives and to provide the service. The SSS referral process prioritises children and young people with the greatest need, and matches student/school needs with the expertise of SSS team members.

Creating an Individual Student Case in the Student Online Case System

The Student Online Case System (SOCS) assists schools and SSS and Visiting Teachers to support students by providing a data management system for all SSS cases, assessments and interventions. SOCS promotes accountability and role clarity, assists with workload management, facilitates more effective interventions through comprehensive student information, and reduces duplication through accurate record keeping.

The system includes the following features:

* online case preparation, assignment and management processes
* mechanism supporting service allocation and case management
* standardised service reporting
* service review involving teams and schools.

In relation to students who may be eligible for the PSD under the categories of ID and SLD-CEN, it is the responsibility of schools to identify these students, and collect sufficient information to support a referral to Assessments Australia.

In order to achieve a coordinated approach to student wellbeing, the school should ensure that SSS staff are notified of referrals to Assessments Australia, including when the assessment is completed, to enable ongoing support as required and to prevent duplication of work. This could occur through regular communication with the school’s SSS Key Contact. Schools should aim to involve SSS staff and allow adequate time for support and advice to be provided. This may be particularly important to ensure timelines for PSD submissions are met.

## The role of the assessment service

Assessments Australia is required to work closely with the Department’s Inclusive Education Division, regions, areas and schools to manage and administer the assessment service for students who may be eligible under the categories of ID and SLD-CEN of the PSD. Although not required for Disability Inclusion, these assessments may inform the Disability Inclusion Profile and provide useful information for schools to better understand and support students.

Further clarification regarding the role of Assessments Australia:

PSD eligibility

Assessments Australia makes recommendations to schools about whether assessment results would support an application under the categories of ID or SLD-CEN, however the eligibility of a PSD application is determined by the Department’s Resources Coordination Group.

Types of PSD applications

Assessments Australia provides assessments to support new applications to the program, Year 6-7 Reviews and applications for students with short-term funding. They do not provide assessments for reappraisals.

Disability categories

Assessments Australia provides assessments to support applications in the categories of ID and SLD-CEN. Assessments Australia do not accept referrals or administer assessments for applications under other disability categories such as autism spectrum disorder and severe behaviour disorder.

Change of category

Schools seeking to change the disability category for a student to ID or SLD-CEN may refer to Assessments Australia.

Specialist school enrolment approval

Assessments Australia provides cognitive assessments to support specialist school enrolment processes for students with intellectual disability. The assessment service is also available to provide cognitive assessments to support enrolment processes in specialist schools (intellectual disability) that have transitioned to Disability Inclusion.

Educational Needs Questionnaire for PSD applications

It is the responsibility of the school and Student Support Group to gather evidence to substantiate Educational Needs Questionnaire (ENQ) indicators. For applications under ID and SLD-CEN, Assessments Australia endeavours to present a complete profile of a student’s educational needs. However for some students, additional supporting evidence will be required from local service providers, including relevant health professionals and SSS to substantiate ENQ indicators. It is important that schools provide comprehensive referral information, including the current presenting issues, to inform the Assessments Australia report.

Students already assessed

Referrals to Assessments Australia are not recommended for students already fully assessed by external professionals or SSS staff. For applications under the ID category, a full assessment includes a cognitive assessment, Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales (Vineland) and detailed case history. The Resource Coordination Group will accept applications that include external assessment reports, provided that the recommended assessments have been administered within published timelines, and all relevant eligibility criteria have been addressed.

Assessments Australia will provide a ‘Vineland only’ report in instances where the external assessment report that diagnoses an intellectual disability does not include a current Vineland report. In some circumstances where a diagnosis of intellectual disability has not been made by the external professional, Assessments Australia will undertake additional assessment to ensure the relevant eligibility criteria have been addressed. Schools should contact either their regional disabilities coordinator or Assessments Australia for advice as required.

Acceptance of referrals

Assessments Australia accept referrals for students with sufficient evidence to support the likelihood of eligibility under the categories of ID and SLD-CEN for the PSD. Assessments Australia will continue to accept referrals for students undergoing a Disability Inclusion Profile where evidence suggests they are likely to have an intellectual disability or severe language disorder with critical educational needs/high functional needs. If a referral does not contain sufficient evidence to indicate the likelihood of a student meeting the relevant criteria, then Assessments Australia will provide feedback to the school about the reasons the referral was not accepted and appropriate actions the school may take. This may include the establishment of an ongoing Student Support Group, development of an individual education plan, or referral to SSS for further assessment and advice.

Referrals can be discussed by contacting Assessments Australia on 03 9678 5100.

## The role of Student Support Services

Student Support Services (SSS) assist children and young people facing a range of barriers to learning to achieve their educational and developmental potential through the provision of a range of strategies and specialised support at individual, group, school and area levels.

SSS comprise a range of professionals including psychologists, speech pathologists, and social workers. SSS staff work as part of a multidisciplinary health and wellbeing team within areas of schools, focusing on providing group based and individual support, workforce capacity building, and the provision of specialised services.

SSS are embedded in area-based multi-disciplinary teams to:

* support the delivery of quality universal services for all students, with extra effort directed to ensuring education and health and wellbeing services are accessible to, and inclusive of, the most vulnerable and disadvantaged
* target the delivery of individual support services to those who require specialised expertise, assessment and intervention in order to overcome barriers to learning
* develop the capability of schools to design health, learning, development and wellbeing strategies that focus on improving education and health and wellbeing outcomes
* collaborate with multidisciplinary professional practice teams and build partnerships with community services to meet the needs of schools and students and their health, wellbeing and learning goals
* respond to critical incidents involving students, staff and school communities that have an impact on students.

SSS staff contribute significantly to the PSD by:

* consulting with schools in relation to application processes and the ongoing support needs of students with disabilities
* assessing students and producing written reports as required
* screening students and recommending referrals to Assessments Australia where information supports the likelihood of eligibility under the categories of ID and SLD-CEN for the PSD.
* attending Student Support Group meetings
* contributing to the development of individual education plans and behaviour management plans
* assisting in the development of teaching and learning strategies to be implemented by teachers
* meeting with and supporting teachers and parents
* coordinating and liaising with external support agencies.

Further clarification regarding the role of SSS in PSD assessment processes:

Assessment of students with ID or SLD-CEN for the PSD

All assessments to support applications under ID and SLD-CEN should be referred to Assessments Australia in the first instance. In some circumstances, SSS may be asked by schools for advice, or to undertake a formal assessment of a student where the referral has not been accepted by Assessments Australia. It is advised that SSS staff discuss the specific circumstances with the school principal, and if necessary, Assessments Australia, to determine the most appropriate course of action. This may include gathering further information to support a referral to the assessment service, or undertaking formal assessment of the student.

Educational Needs Questionnaire for PSD applications

It is the responsibility of the school and Student Support Group to gather evidence to substantiate ENQ indicators. For some applications, including those submitted under ID and SLD-CEN, evidence may be required from SSS to substantiate relevant ENQ indicators. Requests to undertake any necessary further assessments would be made through the usual SSS referral process.

Reappraisals

Reappraisals require schools to submit additional evidence in support of increased ENQ indicators for students already eligible for PSD funding. The substantiation of increased ENQ indicators should be addressed by the school or local service providers, including relevant health professionals and SSS.

Further information regarding SSS is available at:

[www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-support-services/policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-support-services/policy)

## The role of Visiting Teachers

Visiting Teachers are specialist teachers with expertise and experience in specific disabilities and impairments. They give schools and teachers guidance in supporting engagement and participation of students with disabilities and additional needs. They work in the areas of:

* physical disability
* health impairment
* hearing loss
* vision impairment
* autism.

Visiting teachers may give advice and reports for PSD applications related to these areas, if necessary. Referrals to the service are made by the school, through the Student Online Cases System (SOCS).

Further information regarding the Visiting Teacher Service is available at:

[www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/visiting-teachers.aspx](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/visiting-teachers.aspx)

# THE FOUR STAGE ASSESSMENT SERVICE PROCESS

## STAGE 1: Pre Referral

**The school, in conjunction with the parent/guardian/carer(s) and SSS staff, identify the need for additional information about a student and discuss the appropriateness of referral.**

The school should create an individual student case in SOCS in order to document the support provided. At this stage, the case may simply be saved as ‘draft’ and not submitted to SSS.

The principal should ensure that the parent/guardian/carer(s) provide fully informed consent as to the nature of the referral to Assessments Australia.

Schools should be sensitive to the impact on parents of referring a student to the assessment service, in particular, for the potential identification of an intellectual disability or severe language disorder with critical educational needs. For this reason, it is recommended that these referrals be targeted only to students with a significant and ongoing history of moderate to severe cognitive and/or developmental difficulties. Schools should also ensure that all local supports are already in place and that other possible reasons for the student’s presenting issues have been fully considered and investigated.

SSS staff may assist the school to identify students who may be eligible for additional support under the PSD or Disability Inclusion. In consultation with the school, they will be able to help determine whether a referral to Assessments Australia is appropriate. The Assessments Australia website provides information about the referral process as well as Frequently Asked Questions. See: [www.maxsolutions.com.au/program-for-students-with-disability](http://www.maxsolutions.com.au/program-for-students-with-disability)

Information that should be collected to substantiate the referral includes:

* previous cognitive or language assessment results
* relevant background information (e.g. medical reports, family history, hearing assessment)
* consideration of the impact that other factors (such as trauma, English as an additional language, and behavioural issues for example) may have on the student’s presentation and the likelihood of eligibility under the categories of ID and SLD-CEN
* details of interventions and adjustments that have been made which have been aimed at assisting the student’s learning.

Schools may refer to Appendix 2 for further information regarding the collection of evidence to support referrals to Assessments Australia.

In the case of students with a suspected SLD-CEN, including complex communication needs, the information should describe the nature of the student’s communication difficulties, and the student’s broader educational needs.

SSS staff may assist the school in collecting relevant information to complete the referral process and provide information or reports if they have had prior involvement with the student.

**The school contacts Assessments Australia**

The initial contact requesting a referral should be made by telephone by the principal (or designated nominee). Their discussion with Assessments Australia will focus on the information/evidence which indicates the potential existence of an ID or a SLD-CEN.

Assessments Australia will confirm that the referral has been discussed with the student’s parent/carer(s), and will then discuss the student’s difficulties with the school contact person and determine if a referral is appropriate. An Assessments Australia professional will be available to discuss more complex referrals with schools or consult with SSS staff if required.

**If the referral does proceed**

If the discussion results in a referral, Assessments Australia will create a record and a referral pack will be emailed to the school. This pack includes a Teacher Referral Form, Parent Referral Form, and Parent/Carer Consent Form. If the referral is for ID, a Vineland will be provided either in a paper form posted to the school or online via a link emailed to the school.

It is then the responsibility of the school to complete the referral pack. The school should provide sufficient information to Assessments Australia to support the referral. SSS staff may assist with completion of the referral and provide available information and evidence as requested by Assessments Australia. The consent form must be signed by the parent/carer.

**If the referral does not proceed**

In the situation where the referral is not accepted by Assessments Australia, feedback will be provided to the school regarding further actions the school may take. The school will continue to provide ongoing support to the student, with support from SSS if required.

This may include the establishment of an ongoing Student Support Group, development of an individual education plan and ongoing case management. This may also include further assessment, for example, where it is thought the student may have a learning difficulty.

Abilities Based Learning and Education Support (ABLES) is a resource available to teachers to support the teaching and learning of students with disabilities and additional needs.  The ABLES Assessment Tool provides a learning profile across five foundational learning areas, and a range of recommended learning and teaching strategies. Further information is available at:

[www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/diversity/Pages/ables.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/diversity/Pages/ables.aspx)

## STAGE 2: Referral to Assessments Australia

Based on the referral information collected, the school, in conjunction with the parent/carer(s), and SSS staff where appropriate, decide whether to proceed with the referral to Assessments Australia.

If the school decides not to proceed with the referral (for example if, through the process of collecting background information, it becomes apparent that the student would not meet the eligibility criteria under ID or SLD-CEN categories), Assessments Australia should be notified, and the school should continue to provide ongoing support, with the SSS staff if required. This may include the establishment of an ongoing Student Support Group, development of an individual education plan and ongoing case management. If the Vineland was provided in paper form it should be posted back to Assessments Australia.

If a decision is made to continue with the referral, the relevant documentation is forwarded to Assessments Australia by email or post. Where a completed Vineland form is scanned and returned to Assessments Australia via email, the original Vineland form should be securely destroyed by the school to maintain privacy of student assessment records.

**Assessments Australia reviews the referral**

Assessments Australia will review the information contained in the referral pack to determine if further assessment is appropriate.

If the referral does not proceed to assessment, Assessments Australia will provide feedback to the school about the reasons for this and appropriate actions the school may take. The school will communicate this to the student’s parent /carer(s) and continue to provide ongoing support, with support from SSS if required. This may include the establishment of an ongoing Student Support Group, development of an individual education plan and ongoing case management. If a Vineland form was completed as part of the referral, Assessments Australia will provide a summary of the scores which may assist further investigations by SSS or other professionals.

If the completed Referral Forms and scored Vineland (for ID) indicate further assessment is appropriate, and once the Parent Consent Form is completed, Assessments Australia will accept the referral and the appropriate assessment will be arranged.

## STAGE 3: Assessment

The assessment will usually occur shortly after Assessments Australia receives the completed referral information from the school.

Based on information obtained through the referral process and a pre-assessment interview with the parent /carer(s) and school staff, Assessments Australia will compile an initial case history.

Assessments Australia conducts formal testing/interviews with the student using standardised testing materials as specified in the relevant *Program for Students with Disabilities Professional Guidelines,* which are provided by the Inclusive Education Division and are available from regional disability coordinators. This assessment is usually carried out at the student’s school.

The school should provide a suitable assessment space that is quiet and free from interruption to ensure that test administration guidelines can be adhered to. If an interpreter is required to facilitate assessment of a student who is a refugee, has recently arrived in Australia and where English is not their first language, it is the responsibility of the school to book and arrange a professional interpreter. Information on how to book an interpreter is available at:

[www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/interpreting-and-translation-services/policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/interpreting-and-translation-services/policy)

Feedback is provided to the school and the parent immediately after the assessment. At this time further information regarding the student’s history may also be collected if required. If parent /carer(s) are unavailable for face to face feedback on the day, Assessments Australia will arrange a follow-up meeting. In cases where parent/carer(s) are not available for follow-up meetings, or where government health measures limit face to face meetings, Assessments Australia will provide feedback via telephone. In some circumstances parents do not wish to receive feedback, or attempts to contact them are unsuccessful. Details of attempts made to provide this feedback are kept on the student’s electronic file at Assessments Australia. If, at any time, schools have concerns that feedback has not occurred, or a family would like further feedback, Assessments Australia may be contacted by phone or email.

Assessments Australia may consult with and seek further information from schools and/or SSS staff in some cases to ensure an accurate assessment has been completed.

## STAGE 4: Report and Post Assessment

Assessments Australia will provide written reports and feedback to the school and parent/carer following the assessment process. The report(s) will outline the findings of the assessment, and make recommendations on whether the results would support an application under the PSD categories of ID or SLD-CEN. The report(s) will be provided regardless of the outcome of the assessment.

The school can upload the provided report into SOCS. The case can then be closed or submitted to SSS for further action, as agreed.

**If the assessment results do not support a PSD application under the categories of ID or SLD-CEN**

If Assessments Australia indicate that the assessment results would not support an application under the categories of ID or SLD-CEN, a **Report for Schools and Parents** (narrative report) will be forwarded to the school via a secure link sent in an email to the principal (or designated nominee).

This report will outline the results of the tests undertaken and provide educational and programming recommendations for the student. The school should print out three copies of the narrative report – one for the school’s student file, one for the parent /carer(s), and the other to be kept in the student’s Department Confidential Student (DCS) file.

Schools may request that copies of reports be posted in hard copy.

The involvement of Assessments Australia ceases at this point. The school will continue to provide ongoing support as required, with support from SSS if necessary. This may include the establishment of an ongoing Student Support Group, development of an individual education plan and ongoing case management.

If the parent/carer(s), school, SSS staff, or other relevant personnel require further information about the report or the assessment process, they may contact Assessments Australia for additional feedback. It is advised such requests be made within reasonable timelines (i.e. within 3 months of the assessment) to ensure detailed feedback from Assessments Australia personnel.

**If the assessment results support a PSD application** **under the categories of ID or SLD-CEN**

If Assessments Australia indicate the assessment results would support an application under the categories of ID or SLD-CEN, two reports will be provided to the school via a secure link sent in an email to the principal (or designated nominee): the **PSD Summary Report** (attachment report) and the **Report for Schools and Parents** (narrative report).

Three copies of the **PSD Summary Report** should be printed – one for the school’s student file, one for the PSD application, and the other to be kept in the student’s Department Confidential Student (DCS) file. This report will contain test results, and information that provides a history of the student’s problems and other evidence to support the ENQ, where available. This report *should be* included to support the PSD application.

Three copies of the **Report for Schools and Parents** should be printed – one for the school’s student file, one for the parent/carer(s) and the other to be kept in the student’s Department Confidential Student (DCS) file. This report will examine the results of the tests undertaken and provide educational and programming recommendations relating to the student. This report is not required to support the PSD application. Schools may request that copies of reports be posted in hard copy.

After the assessment process is completed, Assessments Australia returns all materials and student records created for assessment purposes to the relevant SSS Area office.

**Vineland Summary Reports for PSD applications under the category of ID**

Assessments Australia will provide a ‘Vineland only’ report in instances where the student has an external assessment report that diagnoses an intellectual disability but does not have a current Vineland report. Following completion of the Vineland form by the school, Assessments Australia will score the form and prepare a summary report for the school which includes the domain standard scores and adaptive behaviour composite score*.*

**School compiles and sends completed PSD application**

The school convenes a Student Support Group meeting and completes the application as outlined in the *Program for Students with Disabilities - operational guidelines for schools*.

**PSD application is processed**

The application is processed by the Resources Coordination Group who will determine whether the application meets the eligibility criteria for one of the seven PSD categories.

**Outcome of the PSD application**

The principal will be notified of the outcome of the application via the Program for Students with Disabilities Management System (PSDMS). It is the principal’s responsibility to notify the parent/guardian/carer(s) of the outcome of the application, eligibility, and level of support allocated to the school.

Regardless of the outcome of the application to the PSD, the principal should reconvene the Student Support Group, discuss the support needs of the student, and set and prioritise educational goals.

**If the assessment has been requested by a school that has transitioned to Disability Inclusion**

Assessments Australia will provide a **Report for Schools and Parents** (narrative report) which will outline the results of the tests undertaken and provide educational and programming recommendations for the student.

The school should print out four copies of the narrative report – one for the school’s student file, one for the parent /carer(s), one to be kept in the student’s Department Confidential Student (DCS) file, and one for the Disability Inclusion Profile.

Further information on the new Disability Inclusion Profile process is available at:

[www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/disability-inclusion-profile/policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/disability-inclusion-profile/policy)

# FURTHER INFORMATION

## Privacy and Confidentiality

Department of Education and Training staff are required by law to protect the personal and health information a school collects and holds. The Victorian privacy laws, the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and *Health Records Act 2001*, provide for the protection of personal and health information.

SSS files are known as Department Confidential Student (DCS) files, to make a clear distinction between files that are established as a result of intervention by SSS staff, and those a school might ordinarily keep about a student enrolled at the school.

DCS files can contain information which may be highly confidential in nature, including family details, records of interventions and reports from SSS working with the student and/or family. A DCS file, created by Student Support Services and the personal information contained within, is considered to be “health information” and subject to the Health Privacy Principles of the *Health Records Act 2001*. These principles restrict the use, access, dissemination and other associated record management issues associated with these files.

The SSS Team Leader is responsible for ensuring that the confidentiality of Student Support Services DCS files is maintained and for determining access by the appropriately qualified SSS staff.

Inappropriate disclosure of confidential information has the potential to cause harm to individual students and their families and may constitute a breach of privacy legislation given the sensitive nature of the confidential information contained in the DCS file.

Schools and principals are responsible for ensuring that all school staff, including teachers and other education support staff are aware of their obligations with regards to privacy and confidentiality of students’ personal and health information.

Department Resources

The Policy and Advisory Library (PAL) for schools is a comprehensive one-stop-shop for all Department policy and related operational guidance and resources that apply to Victorian government schools. It details obligations of schools in regards to privacy policy, legislative requirements, compliance strategies and privacy exemptions. It also provides information about how schools should respond to requests for information from a variety of sources, from parents and other government departments, to lawyers and the police. For further information see:

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal

## PSD Guidelines

Further information regarding timelines and eligibility for the PSD is available online in the *Program for Students with Disabilities - operational guidelines for schools* at:

[www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/psdhandbook.aspx](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/psdhandbook.aspx)

## Professional Guidelines

The *Program for Students with Disabilities Professional Guidelines* for assessment and reporting under each disability category are available from regional disability coordinators.

[www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/regions.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/regions.aspx)

## Disability Inclusion

Further information on the new Disability Inclusion Profile process is available at:

[www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/disability-inclusion-profile/policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/disability-inclusion-profile/policy)

## Student Support Groups

The *Student Support Group* policy and guidance are available at:

[www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-support-groups/policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-support-groups/policy)

## Assessments Australia

Referrals can be made by contacting Assessments Australia on 03 9678 5100. Further information is available at:

[www.maxsolutions.com.au/program-for-students-with-disability](http://www.maxsolutions.com.au/program-for-students-with-disability)

## Student Support Services

General information about Student Support Services is available at:

[www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-support-services/policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-support-services/policy)

## Regional Offices

Schools may contact their regional disability coordinator for support and advice regarding inclusive practice in schools.

[www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/regions.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/regions.aspx)

## Interpreting and translating services

Information on accessing interpreting and translating services for government schools is available at:

[www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/interpreting-and-translation-services/policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/interpreting-and-translation-services/policy)

## PSD Applications Helpline

The PSD Applications Helpline provides assistance and advice to schools about general matters relating to the Program for Students with Disabilities application process, such as:

* the Program for Students with Disabilities - operational guidelines for schools
* Program for Students with Disabilities application timelines
* the Program for Students with Disabilities application process
* requirements for different types of applications
* relevant Department of Education and Training circulars.

Schools can contact the PSD Applications Helpline on **1300 308 964.**

# APPENDIX 1



# APPENDIX 2

**Collecting evidence to support referrals to Assessments Australia**

Schools should endeavour to provide Assessments Australia with detailed information regarding the student’s presenting difficulties, and evidence of significant and ongoing cognitive and/or developmental difficulties.

Prior to disclosing a student’s personal and/or health information with Assessments Australia, schools should ensure parent consent is attained in accordance with Victorian privacy laws: *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*, *Health Records Act 2001* and other relevant Acts.

Principals must ensure that:

* respectful and confidential communication between family, health professionals and the school occurs
* the family provide informed consent, with knowledge of the specific nature of the referral i.e. the school feels there is evidence to support a likely intellectual disability or severe language disorder
* staff who receive or have access to confidential information, both verbal or written, understand their responsibility to keep this information confidential.

Once parent consent is attained, the following questions may assist schools when collecting information to support a referral to Assessments Australia:

* Are the student’s parents aware of any delayed developmental milestones, such as crawling, walking, talking, and toilet training?
* Has there been any involvement of early intervention services, external specialists and/or Student Support Services?
* Have there been any previous formal assessments administered, and if so, what were the results?
* Does the student have any history of birth difficulties, medical conditions, or receive prescribed medication?
* Is there a family history of similar problems?
* Is the student delayed across a range of academic and/or developmental areas (i.e. not just literacy)?
* Are there any specific measures of academic performance that may indicate significant delay in comparison with age peers?
* Have observations of the student been made in order to make comparisons of his/her daily functioning and social maturity, in comparison with age peers?
* Have there been any school interventions, targeted supports, or repeated years?