Schoolcare Program

Guidelines 2025

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1. INTRODUCtION

The Schoolcare Program (SCP) is a service provided by the Department of Education (the department) in partnership with the Royal Children’s Hospital (RCH), to equip Victorian government school staff with the skills and knowledge to support students who have complex medical needs.

The SCP provides specialist training to school staff to deliver interventional medical care to students with ongoing complex medical needs, enabling them to have these needs met safely at school.

Schools can choose to arrange and fund specialist training outside of the SCP, for example through local health service providers. The school principal is responsible for ensuring that staff are competent in the provision of daily medical needs and support of their students.

A [Student Health Support Plan](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/health-care-needs/policy) is required for any student with an identified health care need, guided by medical advice from the student’s medical/health practitioner and developed in consultation with the student and their parent /carer. For the purposes of the SCP, current epilepsy plans are also required to be included with the referral form where applicable.

1. Schoolcare Program Eligibility Requirements

The SCP is available for students with complex medical care needs who require regular interventional medical procedures during the school day, and where school staff members require specific training to perform these procedures. The SCP is available where the student would not be able to safely attend school without the procedure being performed.

The majority of health care needs for students are managed by schools through existing resources, and a referral to the SCP is often not required.

Eligibility is based on the student’s medical condition and medical care needs while attending school and is determined by the department in consultation with the Complex Care Hub (CCH) Programs’ Clinical Nurse Consultant (CNC) at the RCH. Students attending early childhood education and care settings within Victorian government specialist schools are also eligible to apply.

The procedures for which SCP training is provided include:

**Tube feeding (nasogastric or gastrostomy feeding)**

* infection control
* recognition of breathing difficulties
* use of correct methods to check position of nasogastric tube
* correct connection method of feeding device
* administering correct volumes of feed at regular intervals, at correct rate and temperature, specific to individual child
* use of feeding pump as required
* ensuring stomach is empty of excess air
* cleaning of equipment

**Tracheostomy care**

* infection control
* recognition of breathing difficulties
* use of correct humidification
* ensuring clear airway and using suction and saline as required
* ability to effect efficient tube change if unable to be cleared of blockage
* implementation of emergency procedures around respiratory needs as required

**Suction**

* infection control
* knowledge of when to suction and why
* recognition of breathing difficulties
* use of correct suctioning technique for specific child
* awareness of specific types of mucus to observe for, and reporting of, abnormalities to relevant people
* prevention of complications of incorrect suction procedure - vomiting, aspiration and damage to mucous membrane

**Oxygen**

* maintenance of oxygen supply and tube patency
* maintaining skin integrity, in the case of nasal cannulas and face masks
* ensuring appropriate humidification
* observation of child’s general health status and adjustment of oxygen level according to set criteria
* awareness of dangers of oxygen therapy and prevention of complications
* change of oxygen cylinders as required.

1. OTHER STUDENT HEALTH SUPPORT

Some conditions either on their own, or together, are not eligible for the SCP*.* These include seizure management, diabetes management, stoma care or catheterisation. These conditions are supported by the SCP as below when they accompany any of the procedures listed in section 2.

See below for information and support for these conditions:

**Stoma care** (if stoma care is the sole medical need of the child, or if it accompanies epilepsy/diabetes management, this will not be deemed eligible for the SCP)

* ileostomy and colostomy management
* regular emptying of pouch
* changing of pouch as required
* adequate protection of the stoma
* appropriate surrounding skin care management
* complete flange changes, as required

Schools seeking training to support students requiring stoma care and catheterisation should contact the student’s own stomal therapist at their treating hospital.

**Seizure management** (if seizure management is the sole medical need of the child, or if it accompanies stoma care/diabetes management, this will not be deemed eligible for the SCP)

* epilepsy introduction
* keeping a child safe during seizure activity
* identifying different seizure activity
* identifying triggers
* child specific management of seizure activity
* how to interpret child specific management plans

Schools seeking professional development or training to support students with epilepsy can contact the [Epilepsy Foundation](https://epilepsyfoundation.org.au/) on 1300 761 487 or [edutra@epilepsyfoundation.org.au](mailto:edutra@epilepsyfoundation.org.au). Curriculum materials and classroom support are also available at [Epilepsy Smart Schools](http://www.epilepsysmartschools.org.au/). Schools are required to have current health and management plans for students with epilepsy. Epilepsy plans and information about [epilepsy and seizures](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/epilepsy-and-seizures/policy) are available from the department’s [Policy and Advisory Library (PAL)](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal)

**Diabetes management** (if diabetes management is the sole medical need of the child, or if it accompanies stoma care/epilepsy management, this will not be deemed eligible for the SCP)

* infection control
* when and how to check blood glucose levels (BGL)
* identifying normal BGL range
* hypoglycaemia vs hyperglycaemia
* management of unstable BGLs
* child specific treatment

Information and advice to support students with Type 1 [Diabetes](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/diabetes/policy) is also available from the PAL.

### First aid

Information and advice relating to [first aid](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/first-aid-students-and-staff/policy) is available from the PAL.

The [PAL](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal) also has detailed advice and condition-specific Student Health Support Plan templates for a range of conditions including epilepsy, asthma, cystic fibrosis, anaphylaxis, and diabetes.

1. SCP TRAINING

### Selecting school staff

Training is provided to the education support (ES) staff, school leaders and teachers responsible for caring for the student. Training is recommended to a small number of staff (i.e. 2 to 4 maximum) with frequent and ongoing responsibility for the student’s medical support needs. ES staff should be considered where possible, as teacher availability may be restricted during the school day.

Schools should ensure that the staff selected have the opportunity to perform the interventions no less than once a week to remain competent and confident in care needs.

**Funding**

SCP training is funded for up to 4 carers per student. This ensures continuity of support if there are unexpected staffing changes. Schools can request a quote to provide training to additional/replacement carers for their school’s consideration.

Large numbers of staff with limited responsibility for student complex medical care should not undertake SCP training, as infrequent practice of the medical procedures raises unacceptable risks. Training of large groups of staff should be sourced from other providers.

SCP training is not available to school nurses. Training for Registered Nurses should be sourced from a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) in accordance with Nurses’ professional standards and registration requirements.

**Training levels**

There are two levels of training provided based on the complexity of the student’s medical needs. The level of training provided is determined by the department in consultation with the RCH.

Level 1 involves the development of a child-specific care plan and training program, an education session, and a training session. It is the appropriate level for students who require close supervision or observation of needs, e.g. PEG in-situ not utilised.

Level 2 has longer training sessions and involves the development of a child-specific care plan including child-specific care pages, theory and practical training, written and practical assessment, and a mid-year review (6-month assessments). It is the appropriate level for students with more complex medical needs.

**Training requirements**

The SCP requires all nominated school carers (new and established) to undertake training with the SCP nurses at the beginning of the year for new and/or refresher training (levels 1 and 2), followed by 6-month assessments in the second half of the year (level 2 only). This is vital to maintain consistency of care for the student and is a requirement of the RCH and the department.

SCP nurses will offer group sessions (e.g. for 2-4 carers), where possible. Schools are asked to prioritise these sessions and ensure all nominated staff are available for the training. All efforts will be made to accommodate staff working on a part-time basis. SCP training is provided onsite at the school and an appropriate room must be provided for the training.

Schools should immediately notify the department’s SCP coordinator if training cannot proceed on the scheduled day due to changed student or staff circumstances, so that SCP nurses can be informed and training can be rescheduled promptly.

A prerequisite for school staff undertaking SCP training is the completion of the ‘Hand Hygiene Standard Theory Online Learning Module’ available at [Hand Hygiene Australia](https://www.hha.org.au/) and any pre-reading and assessment material provided by the RCH. SCP training cannot proceed until these prerequisites are complete.

On occasion the RCH may determine, in consultation with the department, that SCP training will be provided by an approved local health service provider. These providers, including Bendigo Health and Monash Children’s Hospital, are directed by the RCH to ensure the same SCP training standards are met and are bound by the same terms and conditions as the RCH.

The RCH may also determine, in consultation with the department, to include training via Telehealth (not recorded) e.g. for the purposes of short updates/clarification following face-to-face training. This will supplement and not replace face-to-face training with the SCP nurse.

**Child-specific care plan**

Child-specific care plans are individualised and training cannot be transferred to other students. Schools are responsible for notifying the department of any changes required to care plans as informed by the parent/carer and medical practitioner. School staff are trained to only follow the specific instructions included in the care plan. The CCH Programs’ CNC at the RCH is responsible for ensuring care plans are medically approved, and that best practice and safety are maintained. The RCH can be contacted for queries about student care plans on (03) 9345 4664 or by email [schoolcare.program@rch.org.au](mailto:schoolcare.program@rch.org.au).

1. REFERRAL PROCESS

### Student Support Groups

A Student Support Group must be established and maintained to plan and implement the educational support program for the student. A Student Support Group is a partnership between the student, parent/carer, school representatives and relevant professionals including health/medical professionals to ensure coordinated support for the student’s educational needs.

The Student Support Group has a key role in developing the Student Health Support Plan and advising the principal on the nature of the resources required to support the student’s medical needs including referral to the SCP.

For more information, see the following in the PAL:

* [Student Support Groups](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-support-groups/resources)
* [Student Health Support Plan](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/health-care-needs/policy).

### Completing the documentation

SCP referrals must be completed jointly with the student’s parent/carer and medical practitioner, and emailed by a Victorian government school to: [schoolcare.program@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:schoolcare.program@education.vic.gov.au)

SCP referrals must be made using the [referral form](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/schoolcare-program.aspx).

All necessary details must be included in the referral form before it can be assessed. The following checklist sets out the required documentation:

Part A – Parent/carer consent and student details

Part B – School details

Part C – Medical information including current Epilepsy Foundation management and/or emergency medication management plans where applicable.

* **Please ensure all details including signatures and dates are complete before sending**
* **Incomplete referral forms will be returned to the school for completion and resubmission**
* **No SCP training can be provided until a fully completed referral is received**
* **Updated or current epilepsy plans must be submitted for training to be provided to support the student’s epilepsy needs.**

**Helpful tips for a smooth referral process**

1. Include the student’s name on both pages 1 and 3
2. Complete the parent/carer name, signature and date of signing on pages 1 and 4
3. Complete the medical practitioner’s name, signature and date of signing on page 4
4. Complete the principal’s signature on page 2
5. If scanning documents, please check that your scans are complete and clear
6. If scanning multiple referrals, please scan each student’s referral separately.
7. REFERRAL TIMELINES

Parents/carers should be advised of the following timelines in advance to ensure appointments can be arranged for the student’s medical practitioner to complete Part C (Medical information) of the referral form.

**Existing Schoolcare Program students**

For SCP nurses to deliver relevant and appropriate training, the SCP Referral Form must be submitted each year to ensure an accurate profile of a student’s current medical needs is obtained. Referral forms should be submitted by **15 November** to assist the department with program delivery planning.

**New Referrals**

New referrals should be submitted **by 29 November** to assist with program delivery planning for the following year.

**Late Referrals**

Referrals can be received at any time during the year for students with deteriorating conditions or students transferring into or between government schools.  Once all required documentation is received, training to support eligible students will be arranged as soon as possible. Training for referrals received in the second half of the year will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis in order to maintain the training schedule for existing referrals in place for the year.

If referrals are received after **1 July** and SCP training is required again for the following year, then schools must still complete a new referral with updated staffing details and signed parent/carer consent.  Updated medical information is not required under these circumstances unless the student’s medical needs have changed.

The department’s SCP coordinator can be contacted for any queries on 7022 2122 or by email [schoolcare.program@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:schoolcare.program@education.vic.gov.au).

1. REFERRAL Assessment

After an SCP referral has been received by the department it will be assessed in consultation with the RCH to determine eligibility.

Once eligibility has been confirmed, the nominated school contact person will be contacted to arrange a time for the training. Where possible, school flexibility to accommodate these arrangements is requested, to assist the department and RCH to schedule training sessions for all referring schools across Victoria during peak demand periods. If the referral is not considered appropriate for the SCP, advice on other suitable support arrangements will be provided to the school.

1. FURTHER INFORMATION

Schoolcare Program coordinator

Child and Youth Health Branch, Department of Education

Telephone: (03) 7022 2122

Email: [schoolcare.program@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:schoolcare.program@education.vic.gov.au)

RCH Stomal Therapy Clinic

Telephone: (03) 9345 5338

Email: [Stomaltherapy.Continence@rch.org.au](mailto:Stomaltherapy.Continence@rch.org.au)

Policy and Advisory Library (PAL)

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal>

[Epilepsy Foundation](http://epilepsyfoundation.org.au)

Telephone: 1300 761 487 <https://epilepsyfoundation.org.au/>

[Diabetes Victoria](http://www.diabetesvic.org.au)

Telephone: 1300 437 386 <https://www.diabetesvic.org.au/>