

# Student Support Group meetings and reasonable adjustments during COVID-19



Schools and families must work together to find new and creative ways to support students with disability during COVID-19.

## Reasonable adjustments

Schools have a legal obligation to support your child's access and participation at school by making what are called 'reasonable adjustments'. This obligation continues while students are learning from home and during the return to school.

Under the **Disability Standards for Education 2005**, schools and education providers must make reasonable adjustments so that students with disability can participate on the same basis as other students. This can include making changes to the curriculum and programs, teaching approaches, the classroom, or accessing support services.

## Student Support Group meetings

Student Support Group (SSG) meetings allow you to talk with the school about what reasonable adjustments your child needs while learning from home and to support their return to school.

SSG meetings will go ahead in Term 2 using either video or call conferencing. To get the best out of the meeting, plan ahead and prepare as much as possible.

### 1. Make sure the right people are at the meeting

- Confirm the meeting date so that you can make sure the right people are at the meeting. Having a meeting before your child returns to school might be the key to a positive return.
- The SSG should include: you as your child's parent or carer, your child's class teacher, the school principal or their nominee. It can also include your child (if appropriate) and anyone else as agreed by the group. This may include therapists.
- You have the right to bring an advocate or support person with you to SSG meetings as long as they are not being paid. An advocate or support person can't make decisions for you, but they can give you emotional and other support before, during and after the meeting.

### 2. Ask for a copy of the meeting agenda in advance and think about what you want to say

- Ask for the meeting agenda a few days before the meeting. This will give everyone time to add items for discussion and help you to gather your thoughts around each item.
- If something you want to discuss isn't on the agenda, ask for it to be added.
- Use the agenda to help you frame your concerns and ask questions. Make notes on your copy so that you can refer to them during the meeting.

### 3. Make sure that minutes are taken and shared with you

- The minutes of the meeting should summarise key points of what was discussed, decisions made and actions to be taken. Ask for the minutes to be sent to you within a set timeframe, such as within one week.
- Take your own notes as well so that you can check them against the minutes when they are sent to you, or ask your advocate or support person to take notes for you. If your understanding of a decision is different from what is in the minutes, you can raise this with the school.

### 4. Share your knowledge and ask for reasonable adjustments

- You know your child best. When you share your insight and knowledge it helps the school to better understand and meet the needs of your child.
- During COVID-19 it's important to share what is and isn't working with learning from home, as the teachers can't see everything that is happening with your child's learning. Write down some of the positives and the challenges.
- Also share what else your child has been doing, including areas of growth or new skills they have picked up during this time. Have they been cooking, helping around the house, looking after their belongings or getting dressed independently? Are they interacting well with their siblings? All of these everyday skills are very important and the school will benefit from this information.
- Have reasonable adjustments that you want to ask for and be able to explain why they are needed.

### 5. Expect to feel emotional

- Talking about your child's progress and education can be very emotional. With COVID-19 we are all under extra stress and this may affect your emotions more than usual.
- Plan ahead by making notes about what you want to say. This can help with managing strong emotions because it can help you to anchor your thoughts and focus on what you are asking for.
- Expect to feel tired after the meeting and try not to plan anything for the rest of the day.

## Examples of reasonable adjustments for the return to school

Things to consider	Reasonable adjustment
If your child is anxious about returning to school	Clear information about what the school day will look like. For example, a social story or visual plan for the day.
If your child will be fatigued with the return to school	Planned shorter days for the first few weeks.
If your child needs social support	Structured activities for recess and lunch.
If your child is assessed as being medically vulnerable	Continue with learning from home.
Infection control procedures if your child needs close physical support or personal care	Infection control training, clear protocols, personal protective equipment (PPE) and hand washing protocols for ALL staff who support and teach your child.
If your child has benefited from learning from home	Incorporate elements of what has worked well into the classroom.
If your child refuses to go to school	Strategies for how the school will deal with this and how you can support your child's return to school.

## Examples of reasonable adjustments for learning from home

Things to consider	Reasonable adjustment
If the amount of work isn't suitable	Increase or decrease the amount of work, depending on your child's needs.
If your child isn't given enough time to complete tasks	Make the tasks shorter and more achievable.
If your child has difficulty doing a task	Complete the task in a different format such as video, audio recording or image.
If your child finds a task too hard or too easy	Modify or adapt the task to suit your child's learning.
If there are physical resources that your child needs to learn from home	School provides tablet, laptop, data and stationery.
If your child has difficulty following class video conferencing sessions	Ask the teacher or Education Support Officer to contact your child individually to clarify tasks and answer questions.
If your child needs help during a video class or with set tasks	Have an agreed action for how your child can show the teacher they need help with a task.
If your child needs supervision to complete a task	Ask the teacher or Education Support Officer to contact your child individually to supervise a task.