



Association for
Children with a
Disability

Not just five days

Impact of the snap lockdown on children with disability and their families

18 February 2021

The snap lockdown in Victoria and the closure of schools across the state had a significant impact on children with disability and their families.

The Association for Children with Disability heard from families whose children were so distressed by the changes that their behaviour was severely impacted.

One parent reported their child just lost it over the weekend, “they were behaving in a way we hadn’t seen for years.” Distressing behaviour impacts the whole family; the child, parents and siblings. It doesn’t just go away as lockdown ends. Many children will find the return to school stressful.

Children with disability can find change harder to deal with. For children with intellectual disability they can struggle to understand the reasons for changes or how long they are going to last.

A major concern is that the rules around school attendance keep changing. For students with disability in regional Victoria this snap lockdown was the first time they couldn’t go to school since May 2020. In Metropolitan Melbourne during the restrictions in July students with disability continued to attend school.

While school closures created significant challenges, early childhood settings, including child care and kinder remained open. This was incredibly helpful. Playgrounds and skateparks were also open and this was beneficial for children.

What we have heard from families is mirrored by the significant increase in calls to Parentline and other helplines during the snap lockdown.

We call on the Victorian Government to:

- Ensure school closures are a last resort
- Create a consistent and transparent approach to school attendance during lockdown with specific consideration of students with disability
- Ensure that when lockdowns occur families know what support is available

All early childhood services and schools to provide all families with information about what is permitted during the restrictions such as child minding. The information to include the specific support that is available for families with children with disability. Information to be available in Easy English and translated versions.

The Association for Children with Disability (ACD) is the leading advocacy service for children with a disability and their families in Victoria. We are a not-for-profit organisation led by, and for, families of children with disability.

Our vision is that children with a disability and their families have the same rights and opportunities as all children and families.

During the snap lockdown hundreds of Victorian families with children with disability connected with ACD to get the most up-to-date information and support for their child and family. Their experiences inform this statement.

For more information contact

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