Disability and Community Care Services
POLICY

Title: Eligibility

Disability and Community Care Services (DCCS) is committed to a sustainable service system that delivers specialist disability services in an easy to use, responsive and fair way, and achieves improved outcomes for people with a disability, their families and carers, while delivering improved value for government.

Specialist disability services aim to support a person to live as independently as possible. Access to specialist disability services (provided and funded by DCCS) is determined through a comprehensive process that sees a person’s eligibility checked, their assessment completed, their prioritisation conducted, and an indication made about the type and level of funded support that would meet their assessed need. Following this, a person may be offered and then linked to an available service or support.

Part of the way we will support people to achieve and/or retain as much independence as possible, is to also consider appropriate supports beyond the funded disability services system to assist in meeting a person’s needs.

Policy statement:
DCCS is committed to applying a fair, consistent and transparent approach for each person applying for specialist disability services, and managing finite resources effectively and equitably.

Policy detail:
Eligibility criteria are the minimum requirements to be met by a person applying for specialist disability services. DCCS may gather a range of evidence to determine eligibility, the method for gathering and the evidence required will be informed by the person’s circumstances.

Eligibility alone does not entitle a person to receive specialist disability services. Rather, access to specialist disability services will depend on eligibility, the outcome of assessment and prioritisation processes, and available resources.
Eligibility will be confirmed during needs assessment.

**Eligibility criteria**

To be eligible for specialist disability services, a person will meet the following criteria:

1. The person must be one of the following:
   - an Australian citizen or
   - a holder of a visa that gives permanent residency rights or
   - a New Zealand citizen who arrived in Australia prior to 26 February 2001

   The person must also be:
   - a Queensland resident, and
   - under 65 years of age.

   **AND**

2. The person has a disability that is:
   - attributable to an intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive (including both congenital and acquired impairments), neurological, sensory or physical impairment or a combination of impairments, and
   - permanent or likely to be permanent (and may or may not be of a chronic episodic nature)

   **AND**

3. The disability results in the person:
   - having substantial reduction in one or more of the following areas: communication; social interaction; learning; mobility; or self care/management, and
   - needing ongoing specialist disability support.

**Children under six years of age**

A child under six years of age is eligible for specialist disability services where they meet criteria one, and:

- have a significant developmental delay, or
- have a disability that is attributable to an intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive (including both congenital and acquired impairments), neurological, sensory or physical impairment or a combination of impairments.

To be eligible for specialist disability services a child six years of age and over must meet all eligibility criteria, even where they have previously received services while under six years of age. A child is reassessed at six years of age where it is necessary to confirm they have a
disability consistent with criteria 2 and 3 above. In circumstances where this has been confirmed prior to a child turning six years of age the child does not need to have their eligibility reconfirmed.

**Determining eligibility**

A person will be advised of the evidence required by DCCS to determine eligibility. It is a person’s responsibility to source and fund this information.

In instances where DCCS determines that information to verify eligibility is conflicting, DCCS will source any supplementary assessment required.

Once a person has provided all necessary information to determine their eligibility, DCCS will make a determination and advise the person in writing within 10 working days of receipt of this information.

**Conditional eligibility**

A person may be determined as conditionally eligible for specialist services where they:

- require a critical, time-limited response and it appears from available information that they are likely to meet eligibility criteria
- have a disability where early therapeutic interventions would improve long-term functional capacity to a point where the person no longer has a substantial reduction in capacity
- have a disability where the permanency of the disability is not clear but it is likely to be permanent.

Where the permanency of a disability is unclear, a review date of no longer than two years from assessment is set to confirm ongoing eligibility for specialist disability services.

Where a person in receipt of a time-limited response is determined as ineligible, DCCS will support the person to access other appropriate informal supports and mainstream services. Ongoing specialist disability services cannot be offered.

**Review of decisions**

A person can request a review of the eligibility decision once the eligibility decision is confirmed in writing (refer to Review of Decisions Policy).

**Principles:**

The principles underpinning this policy are:

- the process to determine eligibility will place as minimal a burden as possible on the person seeking specialist disability services
- a person’s eligibility for specialist disability services is determined and communicated at the earliest possible point
eligibility confirmation does not by itself confer entitlement to specialist disability services. Allocation of services is based on assessment and prioritisation results and on service availability.

Objectives:
This policy aims to ensure that:

- the decision making process to determine eligibility is simple, clear and transparent
- eligibility decisions are made consistently
- only people determined as eligible are able to access specialist disability services.

Scope:
Reference to ‘a person’ means a person with a disability, and includes the person’s family, carer, guardian or substitute decision maker as and when appropriate.

Reference to a person’s ‘needs’ means a person’s disability support needs.

Specialist disability services are those services defined by the Disability Services Act 2006 and includes: accommodation support services, respite services, community support services, and community access.

This policy applies to a person who is seeking ongoing specialist disability services or a person seeking one-off specialist disability services, such as aids and equipment.

This policy does not apply to community care services or to community mental health services.

Roles and responsibilities:
Service Access Teams

Members of Service Access Teams are responsible for:

- applying and adhering to the Eligibility Policy
- applying a consistent process for people seeking access to specialist disability services.
- ensuring the eligibility information reflects a realistic representation of the person and their circumstances
- advising a person of the process to request a review of the eligibility decision where a person is determined as ineligible
- resolving any concerns as they arise
- responding appropriately to each person seeking assistance, including Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from a culturally or linguistically diverse background, or people with communication difficulties
• recording the information collected so that it can be used to best effect in delivering responsive services; for decision-making purposes by DCCS; and to inform the department’s policy, program and budget advice and development.

**Service Access Team Manager or Service Centre Manager:**

The Service Access Team Manager or Service Centre Manager is responsible for:

• supporting and assisting staff to make consistent decisions about a person’s eligibility

• providing staff with requisite information and assisting to resolve any concerns or complaints that may arise.

**Policy and Performance**

The Policy and Performance Team is responsible for:

• ongoing custodianship of this policy, including its intent

• providing support and guidance as required to apply this policy

• reviewing this policy to ensure its continued accuracy, currency and relevance.

**Authority:**

*Disability Services Act 2006*

Queensland Disability Service Standard – Standard 1: Service access

**Delegations:**

**Regional Directors**

Regional Directors are delegated to implement this policy within the Department of Communities’ regions and are accountable for ensuring that appropriately skilled staff deliver services under this policy.

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**Records File No.:** DDS/09683  
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**Office:** Policy and Performance, DCCS  
**Help Contact:** Director, Policy Development and Coordination, 340 43011  
**Links:**  
**Related policies**  
• Department of Communities (DCCS) Intake Policy (approved July 2011)
• Department of Communities (DCCS) Needs Assessment Policy (approved July 2011)
• Department of Communities (DCCS) Time-Limited Response Policy (approved July 2011)
• Department of Communities (DCCS) Prioritisation Policy (approved July 2011)
• Department of Communities (DCCS) Review of Decisions Policy (approved July 2010)
• Communication Support for People with Complex Communication Needs Policy (approved 10 May 2005)
• Responding to Sensitive or Life Changing Information Communicated by Methods Other than Speech (approved 10 May 2005)
• Preventing and Responding to Abuse Neglect and Exploitation of People with a Disability Policy (approved 5 January 2006)
• Substitute Decision Makers Policy (approved 5 January 2006)
• Critical Incident Reporting Policy (revised 11 November 2008)
• Complaints Management Policy (April 2011)
• Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service (released January 2011)

Strategic context
• Department of Communities 2011-15 Strategic Plan (in particular the strategic objective of Better Services and Pathways for our Customers and Clients)

Related legislation or standard
• Disability Services Act 2006
• Queensland Disability Service Standards November 2005
• Right to Information Act 2009
• Information Privacy Act 2009
• Public Service Act 2008
• Public Sector Ethics Act 1994

Rescinded policies
Disability Services Queensland Eligibility Policy August 2006

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Linda A Apelt
Director-General