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An online information, sharing and community resource for individuals with disabilities, parents, carers and professionals

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Preparing a child with a disability for school

Successful inclusion in the classroom starts with preparations that begin before a child enters school. Here is a short guide to understanding some of the factors which need to be considered when preparing a child to participate in school.

Supporting a child with a disability to make the transition to school requires planning to ensure it is smooth, positive and responds to the needs of the child.

It is essential from when a child is enrolled at school that the school and parents/ carers are working closely together. Without this, the child's happiness, safety and ability to learn are at risk.

To find out how to establish good working relationships with parents/ carers, [please click here](#).

There are quite a few things to organise before a child with a disability starts school. This planning guide can help you keep track of what you need to do.

Term 1 in the year before starting school

- **Enrolling**

If it is possible to accept enrolment from a child with a disability at this point it will give the child, their family/ carers and the school time to plan and prepare for the child's successful transition into school.

- **Understanding the student's needs**

Working alongside the family/ carers it is helpful to request copies of any assessments at this point. It will help you consider how to plan for the inclusion of the child in school and what support and resources they may need. It will also identify any skills that it would be beneficial for the family/ carer to support their child with over the next year such as toilet training, getting dressed, communication and social skills.

- **Requesting support**

NaRCIE and BCVI offer support to children with disabilities to achieve their potential in school. Working alongside the parents/ carers get in touch with the appropriate organisation to start the process so you have support in place for the child starting the next September.

- **BCVI**

The Belize Council for the Visually Impaired (BCVI) is a non-profit organization that aims to improve the quality of life for individuals with visual impairments and reduce the prevalence of blindness through appropriate eye care. BCVI was established in 1981 and in its over 35 years of existence has developed a truly comprehensive eye service. It has successfully developed a range of services that support the needs of blind and visually impaired people whilst also actively working to prevent eye problems that can lead to blindness.

Contact:

BCVIBZE@GMAIL.COM
(501) 223-2636

- **NaRCIE**

NaRCIE works with students with exceptional learning needs, those with or without a disability to have access to the support, resources, modifications and/or accommodations within the school environment to enable them to fulfill their potential.

Referrals can be made by:

- Teacher(s) in charge of the student
- Support Teachers or Teacher Aides
- Staff members of NaRCIE

Referrals must be made in partnership with the parents/ carers who are also required to sign the forms.

To access more information and referral forms, please visit: <http://cayodec.weebly.com/special-education.html>

- **Discuss building modifications**

This should be discussed with the parents/ carers as early as possible so the school can identify what modifications it will require and undertake the work ahead of the child starting.

Term 2 in the year before starting school

- **Assessments**

Meet with the child's family/ carers to ensure you have all medical or specialist reports. If the child has not been diagnosed or requires further assessments, politely request you have a copy when available explaining that it will enable you to give the best support to their child whilst in school. Ensure the parents/ carers feel that it is a partnership.

- **The Inspiration Center**

The Inspiration Center can offer assessments and diagnosis to many disabilities and learning difficulties for school age children.

- **Contact:**

1.5 Miles George Price Highway
P. O. Box 2109
Belize City, Belize
Telephone +(501) 223-5986
Email: info@inspirationcenter.bz

- **BCVI**

BCVI offers assessments and tests for children who experience a visual impairment

- **Contact:**

BCVIBZE@GMAIL.COM
(501) 223-2636

Term 3 in the year before starting school

- **Additional Support**

Follow up your request for additional support with your school and BCVI/ NaRCIE, as appropriate. Ensure you keep the child's family/ carer informed.

Term 4 in the year before starting school

- **Develop a transition plan**

Work alongside the child and their family/ carers to develop a Transitions plan. Initially arrange a meeting with the child, their family/ carers, any additional professionals involved such as an occupational Therapist and their pre-school teacher.

What to think about in the meeting:

- Developing an extended orientation program to help your student get to know the school – this would be on top of the orientation program most schools run for children enrolled for the following year
- Support your student to meet teachers and support staff before school starts
- Offer the opportunity for the child and their parents/ carers to visit the school a few days before the start of term so your student can spend time in the playground and look around the school. It would be valuable if they could visit their classroom, sort out where he/she going to sit, see where his/her bag will go and so on
- When the child and their parent/ carer visits give them the opportunity to take photos and provide them with an album so they can make a photo album with pictures of the school, their child's classroom and teachers.

- **Develop an individual learning plan**

This should be developed alongside the child's parent's and carers, and where possible with input from the child. However, where this is not possible, it should be explained in an exciting and accessible way to the child when they start school e.g. "These are things we are going to learn." You could use pictures, objects and other visual aids to support your student to understand. You will need to assess based on your student's needs to what level you explain.

An individual learning plan is a document that sets out:

- your student's existing skills
- your child's learning needs, and specific goals expressed in a way that allows progress to be accurately measured – for example, 'Zac will be able to use full stops accurately'
- any adjustments or curriculum modifications your student needs
- personalised strategies and resources to develop your student's skills and goals
- targeted strategies to develop your student's resilience and, if necessary, social skills.

The plan should cover what learning areas the student needs extra support. It can also include information from other professionals that are supporting your student. It should cover the student's strengths and difficulties so there is an understanding of what the student can realistically achieve and where to set expectations.

[Click here for more information and a template of an IEP](#)

- **Develop other support plans**

If your student has additional needs such as behaviour support, or has complex medical or personal care needs, plans should be developed for them at this point.

[Click here for more information on Behaviour Management and Behaviour Plans](#)

- **Look at car parking**

If the student requires accessible parking, look to see if you can make a provision for them in the car park.

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