

Allied Health Therapists in Canberra Public Schools

Update 1 August, 2016

From July 2016, the Education Directorate has expanded their **Network Student Engagement Teams (NSETs)** to include allied health therapists. **Speech language pathology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and allied health assistants** will join the NSET teams, which currently include senior psychologists, specialist teachers and social workers. All NSET staff will work together in multidisciplinary NSET teams to support students and to assist schools make adjustments for students who require support to successfully engage with education.

In contrast to the traditional individual therapy model, NSET therapists will work in a contemporary model in partnership with schools, aiming to improve educational outcomes for all students. Most of this work will occur in the classroom to enable therapy strategies to be integrated into class programs.

Will allied health assessment be provided by the NSET team?

When a referral is received by the NSET team from the school principal, the information in the referral will be considered and the appropriate team member will contact the school to plan information gathering and support. Sometimes, more than one NSET team member will work with schools to address the needs of a referral. The response may include assessment if this is necessary to determine a student's needs. Assessment takes many forms, including discussion with the people most familiar with the student, observing students within curricular activities and in some cases (with parental consent) withdrawing the student for individual assessment.

How will schools make a referral to the NSET therapists?

Schools will use the **NSET referral form** (available on the Index Employee Intranet), to request support from NSET. An NSET team member will contact the school to establish how the team may provide support. Referral for NSET Therapy will use the NSET referral reason, "Build School Capacity".

How will the work of NSET therapists differ from that of private therapists who may provide therapy at school to students with National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plans?

NSET therapists (speech language pathology, occupational therapy and physiotherapy) will have a different role to the therapists who providing NDIS funded therapy. Therapists working with children both outside of school and in schools as part of an NDIS plan are working on individualised goals listed in the students NDIS plan and broadly relevant to all aspects of the student's life. NSET therapists working in schools will assist schools to make sure the school environment and curriculum is accessible for students who require adjustments.

The therapists in the NSET teams will therefore provide school based services, which may involve planning and implementing student support in collaboration with school staff. This may include identifying strategies to embed into the class program, planning school support for individual students or prescribing school based specialist equipment for individuals. This work will *not* replace the support provided both within and outside school by private therapists. Schools will be able to guide the NSET team by informing them when other therapists are working with a student. Sometimes the NSET therapist will need to contact the outside therapist to ensure approaches are consistent or complementary.

Is NSET therapy similar to the service previously provided at Therapy ACT?

Therapy ACT provided a broad range of services, some of which included in-school services, to assist clients to access the school environment/ curriculum. This aspect will be similar, however the Education NSET therapists will not provide the same range of services e.g. direct ongoing therapy, clinic/ home based services. Their focus will be classroom based work, with a focus on curriculum and assistance with educational outcomes.

What if a student has significant needs and requires ongoing individual therapy, where can they access this?

Individual therapy will generally not be provided by NSET therapists. The majority of their work will be in partnership with teachers to ensure their input is brought into the classroom and embedded in the class program to benefit students throughout the school day. However, at certain times, students require specific skill development, which in some cases can only be provided initially by a skilled therapist in a one to one situation. In this situation, schools have the option to seek support from NSET to discuss the best pathway for accessing this type of support for the student. Options to provide this may include:

- Child Development Service young children who have not had a previous assessment and may need entry into the NDIS may access the *Child Development Service (CDS)*. CDS is a free government service which provides speech pathology and physiotherapy drop-in clinics, assessment, referral, information and linkages for young children 0-6 years where there are concerns relating to their development. This service does not accept referrals requesting curriculum adjustments. See website for further information: www.communityservices.act.gov.au/childdevelopmentservice or call 6205 1277.
- Private/ Non-Government Therapists Families may choose to self fund, use a health fund or possibly use NDIS funding to access this option. Schools may also choose to use their Disability resourcing if they choose to fund assessment or intervention for a student. Some students may be eligible for Medicare subsidised therapy, their GP is the best contact to discuss this option with the family.

For further information, please contact Teresa Carr, NSET Clinical Leader: 62075197