



Defence families with special needs

Defence Community Organisation

Support for dependants with special needs

Defence Community Organisation provides practical assistance to Defence families who have dependants with special needs, to reduce the impact of relocation and minimise any interruption to specialist services the dependant requires.

To access any of these support services, or to find out more information, contact the Defence Family Helpline on **1800 624 608**.

All the forms to apply for these services are available on the DCO website.

Formal recognition of dependants

In order to receive any of the assistance and support services available, you will first need to have your dependant with special needs formally recognised by Defence.

The definition of special needs includes children and adults, and covers a wide spectrum of cases including physical, intellectual, sensory, learning or behavioural difficulties, or psychiatric illnesses or disorders. It also includes academically gifted or talented children.

All special needs must be assessed or recognised by a specialised medical practitioner or psychologist.

You can have your dependant with special needs formally recognised by Defence at any time.

Assessment of assistance

Once your dependant is recognised by Defence, you may be eligible to receive assistance in the event of a posting.

You will need to apply for an assessment of assistance to determine what the dependant requires and what support Defence may provide.

Pre-posting visit

Where it's necessary for the dependant to visit the new location before posting, we can cover accommodation and travel costs for the dependant and one family member. This is only granted in instances where it's not possible to make arrangements for support from the old location or there's a definite requirement for face-to-face contact with a department or institution in the new location.

Assistance for removals

During the move to your new posting location, you may apply for special accommodation and travel arrangements, or a valet unpacking service on your arrival if required.

Once you have been approved for this assistance, you can make arrangements through your Toll Transitions case manager before the move.

Accessing services and equipment in your new location

When families are posted they may have difficulties accessing the services they need immediately in the new location, as waiting periods may apply.

We provide assistance toward costs for interim services or equipment until the state or territory government agencies can deliver the service.





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We can assist with respite care, personal care, therapy services, special equipment hire, and early intervention programs.

Special housing needs

Where the dependant has special housing needs, Defence Housing Australia can provide assistance with allocation or modification of housing in the new location, and accommodation while in transit. Visit www.dha.gov.au for more information.

Education assistance

Special needs students may receive assistance with access to programs or services they require which are not available from the new school or other government agencies.

Assistance may include:

- funding for a therapy service or tuition not provided at the school but critical to educational progress,
- assessment of needs, toward development of an educational program, or
- reimbursement of private schooling costs, where a necessary special program is only available at a private school.

Specialised staff including Regional Education Liaison Officers and in-school Aides and Mentors can also assist you with education advice and support.

Defence Special Needs Support Group

We work closely with the Defence Special Needs Support Group, which provides a national network of peer support to Defence families with a special needs dependant. The Group delivers information, assistance and advocacy for these families.

Visit www.dsnsq.org.au to find out more about the Defence Special Needs Support Group.

Respite programs

We fund the Group's Circle of Friends Respite Program, which facilitates respite services to give families time out from daily care, as well as increasing social and experiential opportunities for the person with special needs.

You can access the Circle of Friends respite services by calling the Defence Special Needs Support Group on 1800 037 674, or find our more by contacting the Defence Family Helpline on **1800 624 608**.

For more information on this factsheet and other Defence Community Organisation support services visit www.defence.gov.au/dco or call the all-hours Defence Family Helpline on 1800 624 608.

The Defence Community Organisation offers a wide range of support services for the families of ADF members.

The best way to access these services is to call **1800 624 608**. The all-hours Defence Family Helpline is staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists.

