

# CHILDREN EDUCATION SERVICES

Early Start Programme Family Handbook





Borne out of love and devotion by a group of parents of children with Down syndrome, Down Syndrome Association (Singapore), is a primarily self-funding, non-profit social service agency established in 1996 to support and educate families, professionals, and the public about the genetic condition. The Association is committed to providing holistic support for families and caregivers; facilitating a person with Down syndrome to attain his or her full potential; and enabling them to contribute back to the society.

### Vision

To be the Centre of Excellence for individuals with Down syndrome, their families and the community.

### Mission

- Develop individuals with Down syndrome through lifelong learning and social integration.
- Support families through specialist services, information, and education.
- Advocate for equal opportunities, quality of life and their contribution to society.

## Preface

This Family Handbook is written to help parents understand more about the processes of the Early Start Programme and your important role as a partner in education. We hope it will help you to become fully involved in the team effort of obtaining the most appropriate educational outcome for your child.

The information contained in this handbook does not create any contractual rights or obligations for staff or families. This handbook is to be used as a guide and is not inclusive of all policies and practices. Changes to specific policies and/or procedures will be distributed to families in writing. Any questions and/or concerns should be directed to the Head, Children Education Services.

## **Contents**

- 3 Introduction**
- 4 Services and Support Available**
- 6 Admission**
- 6 Fees and Payment Methods**
- 7 Service Delivery**
- 8 Attendance**
- 9 Confidentiality**
- 9 Communication**
- 10 Safety Protocol**
- 11 Useful Links**
- 12 Educational Pathways**

## Children Education Services

In line with our vision in promoting a holistic developmental approach to education for young members, the Children Education Services aims to promote a range of support services and programmes for children with Down syndrome.

These services include:

- **Early Start Programme (ESP)**  
Registered Early Intervention Programme with the Early Childhood Development Agency (Baby Bonus Approved).
- **Integration Facilitation Support Programme (IFSP)**  
IFSP offers a continuum of itinerant special education services for preschool and school age children.

### Early Start Programme (ESP)

ESP is an early intervention programme that offers a full range of services catered to the unique development strengths and needs of children with special needs. The programme also provides coaching support and services to families with children, from birth to age three, with Down syndrome, autism and other developmental delays and special needs. ESP builds upon the natural learning opportunities that occur within the daily routines of a child and their family.

ESP provides a warm, nurturing and enriched environment that stimulates the growth and development of each child. We pledge to support all children, helping them to fully realise the potential that resides in each of them. Our aim is to work together with families to discover each child's unique talent and to respond in a way that best aids their efforts toward development and growth.

For children on EIPIC waitlist, ESP offers comprehensive case management for the child, parents and caregivers to help the child develop the skills he or she needs to take part in everyday activities. ESP maximises learning for the child by collaborating with EIPIC ce

## Services and Support Available

Receiving news that your baby has Down syndrome can be a difficult time for a family. Thankfully, DSA has resources to guide and support you on your journey, offering that important component – hope.



### Before Birth

We provide relevant, accurate, balanced and up to date information about Down syndrome and living with Down syndrome.

All expectant couples may contact DSA for a free prenatal counselling session.

DSA Integration Facilitation Support Programme supports children in Early Childhood Development Centre and Primary Schools. Support provided, based on the child's specific learning needs.

### 3 to 6 years—IFSP



IFSP provides school readiness and transition support for children transiting to mainstream primary schools. The programme also provides in-class support for the children to access the curriculum. Parents are provided with talks, workshops and strategies to support the learning needs of their child.

### 6 to 8 years—IFSP





### At Birth

Information is shared with family, including early intervention support and peer parent support. A home visit is done to support parents' and infant's well-being.

### Birth to 3 years –ESP

DSA ESP team provides specialised support for parents, family member and caregivers in raising a child with special needs. This includes therapy services for the child's learning and development. In addition, home visits are conducted for families in our ESP.



### 7 to 14 years IFSP

DSA IFSP team provides support in school for the children to access the curriculum and learn social skills. Transition and integration support provided to secondary school or Special Education School upon completion of PSLE is provided.



## Admission

Enrolment is open to children with Down syndrome, autism and other developmental delays between the ages of birth to 36 months. In the event where two or more children are on ESP waitlist, priority will be given to children diagnosed with Down syndrome.

Children are accepted into the programme on a first come, first served basis. Where necessary, admission can be needs-based.

### Withdrawals and Transitions of Service

Families are required to provide four weeks written notice of their intention to withdraw their child from the program.

Families and children receive services until their third birthday and transit to EIPIC or Early Childhood Development Centre (ECDC). When transferring out to EIPIC or ECDC, we will assist in the process and provide the required information and assistance. A Transition Plan that ensures smooth transfer to other service providers will be provided.

## Fees and Payment Methods

All fees are due within the first five business days of each month.

There is no pro-rating, waivers or discounts in fees due to absence for short-term illness, public holidays, shut-down, family vacations or personal reasons.

Payment for ESP fees can be made via:

1. GIRO (highly encouraged) and required for CDA
2. Cheque
3. PayNow
4. Online Bank Transfers

ESP welcome letter contains DSA's bank account details and fee payment instructions.

*If you require any financial assistance, please reach out to the Head, Children Education Services.*



## Service Delivery

Three session options are available to meet the needs of individual child and family:

OPTION ONE			
<u>Centre-Based Sessions</u>			
1 session/week 1 hour	1 session/week 2 hours	2 sessions/week 1 hour	2 sessions/week 2 hours
4 sessions/month	4 sessions/month	8 sessions/month	8 sessions/month
OPTION TWO			
<u>Centre-Based Sessions and Virtual Home Visit</u>			
1 session/week 1 hour	1 session/week 2 hours	2 sessions/week 1 hour	2 sessions/week 2 hours
4 sessions/month	4 sessions/month	8 sessions/month	8 sessions/month
1 Virtual Home Visit	1 Virtual Home Visit	1 Virtual Home Visit	1 Virtual Home Visit
OPTION THREE			
<u>Virtual Home Visit</u>			
1 session/week 1 hour		2 sessions/week 1 hour	
4 sessions/month		8 sessions/month	

### Scheduled Programme Closure

The programme will be closed for three days during March, Jun, September and November MOE school holidays. Parents will be informed of closure dates two weeks in advance.

Programme closure accommodates staff professional development training and cleaning. No makeup sessions will be offered in place of the scheduled closure days.

## Progress Monitoring

Your child's Early Intervention Teacher will keep you up to date on your child's progress and interests during informal conversations and through text messages. We will schedule home visits or Virtual Intervention Sessions to share information, concerns and to discuss the child's progress.

Parents may inform their Early Intervention Teacher or contact Head, Children Education Services to schedule a discussion if there is a need to discuss other concerns.

## Family Involvement

This is a caregiver accompanied programme where the accompanying parent and other accompanying adults learn how to nurture and develop their child through developmental practice.

## Attendance

Success begins with full participation of caregivers. The dynamic, interactive, and cumulative engagement of caregivers is crucial for consistent and sustained child learning and development.

Parent should notify the ESP Early Intervention Teacher on absence due to occasional appointments and short-term illnesses. If an extended absence is planned, parents should send a note or email to the Early Intervention Teacher indicating the dates the parent and child will be absent and the reason for the absence.

### Make-Up Sessions

ESP offers a 'Make-Up' session to a child when the service is missed or disrupted. No make-up sessions are offered for service disruption for public holidays and programme closure.

*Parent and child who were unable to attend the agreed session due to medical / family reasons may arrange for make-up or replacement sessions.*

## Confidentiality

The individual dignity of children, families, and DSA staff will always be respected and protected in accordance with PDPA. Information about children, families, or DSA staff will not be disclosed to anyone other than persons who are authorised to receive such information.

Our staff is trained about confidentiality. We will do everything to protect your family's right of privacy and ask that you respect the rights of others.

### Photography, Videos and Media

We may take photographs of the students for individual student schedules and personalised portfolios. Photographs may be used for progress evaluation, parent workshops, teacher in-services and media coverage such as DSA Facebook, Instagram and newsletters. The ESP application form provides a space for you to designate your consent. We will respect the wishes of parents who do not want their child photographed.

## Communication

Families are kept informed of ESP session happenings through text messages, emails and session notes. You may communicate with you child's Early Intervention Teachers through the same means and they will respond to your communication at the soonest viable time from 8.30 am to 6.00 pm, Monday through Friday.

You may direct your enquires or concerns to Head, Children Education Services from 8.30 am to 6.00 pm, Monday through Friday by text messages and emails. Your concerns or enquires will be addressed within three business days.

### Grievances

All grievances may be lodged via face-to-face contact, telephone conversations, text messages or emails and a record will be kept of the complaint until resolved. All grievance will be fully discussed between the parents/family member/ caregiver and DSA staff involved and Head, Children Education Services.

In the event that the matter remains unresolved, it can be referred for further mediation to Assistant Director, Services.

### Mutual Respect Policy

Creating the best outcomes for ESP families requires the relationship between parents, family members, caregivers and staff to be based on the principles of care, integrity, trust and mutual respect.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a reminder to all parents, family members and caregivers about our expected conduct towards staff so that we can work together to ensure a safe and positive relationship.

## **Safety Protocol**

We work to ensure the safety and well-being of each child we serve, and by extension, their families, and staff. All our policies and procedures give safety the utmost priority. All programme staff are Basic Cardiac Life Support (BCLS) and AED trained and certified.

Staff members are required to screen all children for illness upon arrival. Your child will not be accepted into the session if he or she has symptoms of a contagious infection or illness. Caregiver's and children's temperatures are monitored as part of the routine health screening procedure.

### Pandemic Response

Children and caregivers who display any symptoms of being unwell will not be admitted into DSA Centre even if they have not sought medical consultation. DSA will advise them to promptly seek medical attention. In addition, children and caregivers who report feeling unwell during the day will be required to leave and seek medical attention. As a precautionary measure, children and caregivers will be advised to stay home if any household member is unwell.

## **Lending Library**

Our programme has a library of toys and resources to loan to families. This has been made possible through donations. You may request an item from the ESP Early Intervention Teachers. To ensure that all families have an opportunity to use the toys and resources, we request you return the loaned item after four weeks.

## Useful Links

### KKH Urgent Paediatric Advice Line (U-PAL)

The KKH Urgent Paediatric Advice Line (U-PAL) is an online service for parents and caregivers to seek advice for common paediatric conditions (for children below the age of 17 years) such as fever, cough, diarrhea, vomiting and common injuries.

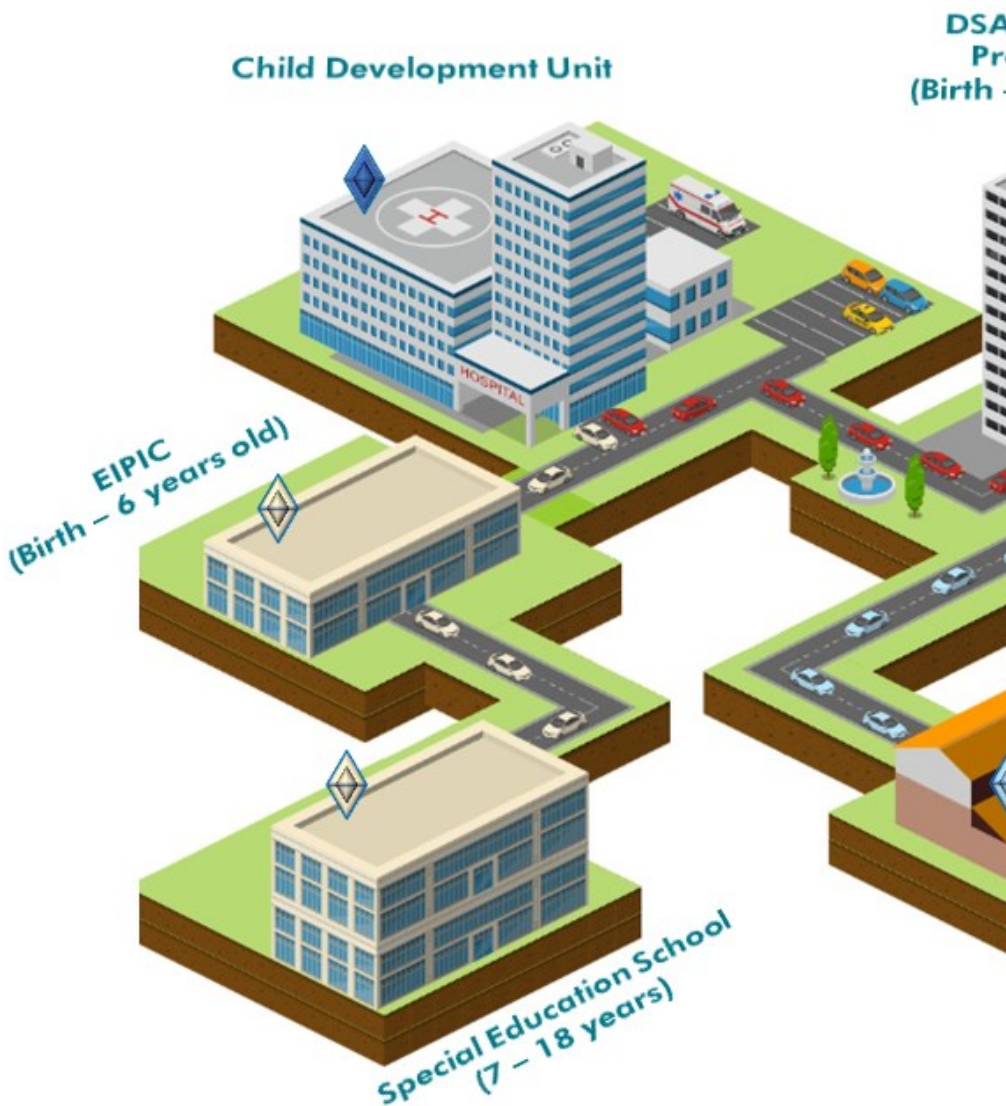
KKH U-PAL is available from 8:00am to 11:00pm daily, at no charge.

Website: <https://www.kkh.com.sg/upal>

# Educational Pathways

Early Intervention Pathway to Success

Information is critical to support children's success all along the way.



Children's pathways to success are increasingly varied. No matter the path, parents must make choices that shape their child's future options and opportunities. Families should be supported with information that can point them down the right pathway to get them where they want to go.

**Early Start Programme**  
(0 - 3 years old)

**Mainstream  
Preschool/Kindergarten**  
(2 - 7 years old)



**Integrated Child Care Programme**  
(2 - 6 years old)



**Mainstream Primary School**  
(7 to 13 years old)



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( S I N G A P O R E )

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