

# **A parent's guide: Preparing for your child to start school**

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## **Your child is going to school!**

As parents and guardians, there are a lot of things to learn and do before your child goes to school. This can be a busy and stressful time. We have put together some of the information you will need in this booklet. We hope that this information will help you get ready, and guide you through this change.

Children's Developmental Rehabilitation Programme  
Ron Joyce Children's Health Centre  
325 Wellington Street North  
Hamilton, Ontario

Our mailing address is:

237 Barton Street East  
Hamilton, Ontario  
L8L 2X2

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## Preparing for your child's school entry: A checklist

- Have you attended** a parent information session with the local Boards of Education held in January? At this session you will be given information about services and contact names. You may want to ask some of the questions in the "Questions about the school" section (page 5).
- Have you completed** the "Tell Us About Your Child" sheet? You need to fill out the sheets, sign the last pages and return them to the school board representatives as indicated on the sheet. The school board uses this information to organize a spring school meeting.
- Have you registered** your child at his/her home school? Registration starts in January or February depending on the school board. Phone your local school for the date and other information you need to register your child. You will register your child at the local school even if you think he or she should be or will be attending another school. The school boards like to have the children registered as early as possible. Be sure to tell your principal about your child's special needs.
- Have you prepared** information for the school meeting? The CDRP therapists, early childhood resource specialists and community child care staff will provide you with reports to help you to be prepared. The information gathered from the page entitled "Questions about the school administration" (page 5) may also help you.
- Have you heard** about the School Based Rehabilitation Services (SBRS)? Your CDRP therapist can tell you more about this program. It is administered by the Ron Joyce Children's Health Centre (RJCHC), and provides funding for school based rehabilitation services including occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech therapy. The RJCHC contracts with agencies to provide services in the school setting.
- Have you heard** about the School Health Support Services Program (SHSSP)? It is administered by the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN), and provides case management and funding for school health support services including nursing and nutrition.
- Have you and your CDRP therapists** decided your child will need therapy at school? If your answer is yes: Ask your principal to contact the RJCHC. A referral from the school is usually completed at this meeting. If the referral is not completed at the meeting, ask the principal to send the referral to the RJCHC.
- Have you attended** the spring school entry school meeting to share information you have prepared about your child's needs and abilities?
- Have you visited** the school to observe the class and program? If you choose to visit the school take the "School entry accessibility guide" in this package with you (page 4).

## School entry accessibility guide

(Please consider any questions that apply to your child)

Information to consider	Comments
<p><b>Stairs:</b>            Are there any stairs in the school?                _____ going into the school.                _____ to the first floor.                _____ to the second floor.            What height is the handrail on the stairs? _____</p>	
<p><b>Accessibility:</b>            Is the school ramped if my child is in a wheelchair? _____            How many doors are ramped? _____            Are the following areas accessible for my child:                gym__ library__ classroom__ auditorium__ playground__            Is the physical set-up of the classroom and library accessible for            a wheelchair or a walker? _____</p>	
<p><b>Toileting:</b>            What proximity is the washroom to the classroom? _____            What is the height of the toilet? _____            What is the height of the sink? _____            Is the washroom accessible for my child? _____            Do the toilets have toilet bars? _____            Is there a change table in washroom, if necessary? _____</p>	
<p><b>Cloakroom:</b>            What height are the hooks in the cloakroom? _____</p>	
<p><b>Transportation:</b>            Will transportation be provided for my child? _____            May I travel with my child on the first day of school? _____</p>	
<p><b>Fire drill:</b>            Who will be responsible for my child during a fire drill?            _____            Will there be a fire drill plan in place for my child? _____</p>	
<p><b>Equipment:</b>            If your child requires special equipment such as a stander or            special chairs, does the school have them or are they willing to            purchase them? _____            Are you prepared to have your child's personal equipment            used at the school? _____            Is there adequate space for the equipment? _____</p>	

## Questions about the school administration

Does the school have support staff who have experience with children whose needs are similar to my child's?

How many children will there be in my child's class?

Will my child receive assistance from a special education teacher/learning resource teacher and educational assistant?

Will my child be able to receive the help he/she needs in this school?

Is the principal familiar with the School Based Rehabilitation Services for therapy and SHSSP for nursing and dietician services?

## Questions about the school

Does the classroom teacher have experience with children whose needs are similar to my child's needs?

What resources are available for a child with special needs?

How will my child's progress be shared with me?

If needed, what system would be used for day to day communication?

How are the different needs of children met in the classroom?

Will the school provide assistance/supervision on the playground?

Are there opportunities for me to visit the classroom?

Will there be resources and supports available to staff working with children who have special needs?

## **School Based Rehabilitation Services (SBRS)**

Children with special rehabilitation needs can receive a variety of services including physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech language therapy at school. The program through which these services are co-ordinated is called School Based Rehabilitation Services (SBRS). It is managed and funded by the RJCHC. The RJCHC contracts services from various agencies in the community.

Children who are clients of CDRP can receive physiotherapy (PT) and occupational therapy (OT) in the school from these agencies for school related issues. The school principal has the necessary forms to refer your child to the SBRS. Referrals for speech language services at school must be made by the school board speech language pathologist.

## **School Health Support Services Program (SHSSP)**

Children with special health needs can receive nursing and nutrition consultation at school through SHSSP.

## **The CDRP Therapy Services**

For other therapy needs that are not school related your child can receive PT and OT from the therapists at CDRP. When your child starts school, he/she is not being discharged from OT or PT services at the CDRP unless this has been specifically discussed with you. If you have any questions about service through the CDRP, talk to your therapist.

### **Who are the CDRP team members?**

Your child's team members may include an occupational therapist, a physiotherapist, a developmental pediatrician and a therapy assistant.

A social worker is available to assist families faced with the challenges of raising a child with special needs, if you want this support.

The school boards provide most speech and language services for school age children. Therefore, at school entry your child will be discharged from speech language pathology services at the CDRP. Your present speech and language pathologist can assist you with this change.

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If your child is being seen at the Technology Access Clinic (TAC) this service will continue. The therapists from this clinic are available to consult with the school staff regarding augmentative communication.

The CDRP Therapeutic Recreationist is available to help your child become as active and independent as possible in leisure activities. Together with you and your child, needs can be assessed, goals set, and a plan of action made. Leisure testing is available at ten years of age. Up-to-date information on community recreational opportunities for children of all ages is available. CDRP therapists, physicians, or parents can make a referral to the Therapeutic Recreationist, Denise McArthur, by calling 905-521-2100, ext. 74482.

### **Where will the CDRP physiotherapist and occupational therapist see your child?**

This will depend on the needs of your child. Treatment sessions are usually held at the CDRP. Your therapist may also see your child at other hospital clinics and appointments. In some situations your therapist may see your child in the home to deal with self-care and equipment issues or to assist you with changes you need to make in your home. The CDRP physiotherapist or occupational therapist do not address needs in the home that are related to illness or surgery and needs identified in the school.

### **When will your child be seen?**

How often your child will be seen will depend on his or her needs. The frequency varies from child to child, from short periods of regular treatment to yearly visits.

## Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

Every Board of Education has a Special Education Advisory Committee. These committees are made up of parents who represent groups with special needs (e.g. children with physical disabilities or developmental delays). You may wish to contact your "SEAC" for further information or to become an active member. Please contact your local school board for further information.

## Helpful community resources

### Boards of Education

Hamilton District Board of Education  
Dianne Parr 905-527-5092  
ext. 2435

Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board  
Danila Aref 905-525-2930  
ext. 2854

### Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integrated Network, HNHB LHIN (formerly CCAC)

Hamilton-Wentworth 905-523-8600

### Ron Joyce Children's Health Centre

School Based Rehabilitation Services Intake 905-521-7950