



## **ESTABLISHING A FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP**

**BLUE  
PRINT**

Deaf  
Children  
Australia.

# Family Support Groups provide support, information and social interaction for families with deaf children. Learn how they work and how to get involved.

## What is a Family Support Group?

A Family Support Group is a group of families with deaf children who get together regularly to socialise and share information and support. Many families find it helpful to meet other families who face similar situations.

If the group's focus is socialisation, it could provide:

- family fun days
- camps
- BBQs
- fun times for kids
- networking.

If the group focuses on sharing resources, it could provide:

- information and support to one another
- lobbying to improve opportunities for deaf children.

Some Family Support Groups are established by one family wanting to meet other parents who have deaf children. Some are established by a small group of families who want their deaf children to meet other deaf children. Others are established by professionals who work with families of deaf children.

## Family Support Groups and Blueprint

Families with kids who take part in mainstream clubs or group activities (or who would like to) may benefit from forming a support group. This could create opportunities to:

- share information about local clubs
- offer advice for joining them
- provide tips for broaching inclusivity with coaches and instructors
- organise joint activity or sports days
- encourage deaf awareness in the community.

Check out the helpful resources we've developed for you to share with clubs and program leaders.

## Where does a Family Support Group operate?

**Family Support Groups can be local, regional, state-wide or national.**

Local Family Support Groups will organise activities for other families who live close to each other.

Regional Family Support Groups will organise activities for families who live in the same region.

Statewide Family Support Groups, where present, may lobby and inform local/regional groups.

There is currently no national support group for families of deaf children in Australia. Some exist overseas, such as the NZ Federation of Deaf Children Inc.

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## What does a Family Support Group need?

### **A Family Support Group will need some leaders and a co-ordinator.**

The co-ordinator will help run the group.

Co-ordinators can be parents/carers of deaf children, deaf adults, or other people with a genuine interest in deaf children's wellbeing. For example, a coach or club volunteer with a commitment to inclusivity might like to be involved.

The co-ordinator must be willing to take a leading role in organising activities of the group, and leaders must be willing to assist as necessary.

You'll also need newsletters, some financial resources, determination and creativity.

### **How can Deaf Children Australia assist Family Support Groups?**

Deaf Children Australia is keen to help Family Support Groups get established and ensure they have the resources they need to develop further. Deaf Children Australia can also assist with re-establishing Family Support Groups who have not met for a while.

Deaf Children Australia will not organise and control Family Support Groups. Instead, we work with the co-ordinator and leaders, providing support as requested. This may be by providing skills, workshops and resources to advertise activities, assisting with mail-outs, supporting the co-ordinator and leaders, and suggesting activities which may be undertaken.

Deaf Children Australia can also advise on establishing aims and priorities, running a committee and fundraising.

Deaf Children Australia will promote the group through its website and Flying Kites if requested.

At times, Family Support Groups may share common concerns with those in other areas. If this happens, Deaf Children Australia may be able to help families build the skills and resources needed to resolve issues at a higher level.

Deaf Children Australia is able to provide support as needed for families who live outside of Victoria, in Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast via telephone and email.

## How is a Family Support Group established?

If you're interested in starting a Family Support Group in your area, you may like to request support from Deaf Children Australia. This will involve:

- working with a Community Development Worker from Deaf Children Australia to plan an in-formal get together.
- distributing a flyer with the planned activity to families through existing networks, schools, other organisations and the Deaf Children Australia website.
- explaining the group's purpose to those who come along. We record the names of people wishing to be involved in organising further activities.
- deciding on a regular meeting time. Those who are interested meet and make plans for the next activity.
- promoting the next activity as above.

It is important for the group to decide early on whether to be a social or lobbying group, or both. Groups also need to decide what resources they need. The group's aims and priorities must be agreed upon, established and promoted to other people attending the activities.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Around 95% of deaf and hard of hearing children are born into hearing families, who often feel isolated and confused.

We help them navigate their new world.

Blueprint isn't just for sports clubs. If you offer activities or programs for children or young people, we'd love to have you on our side!

For further information about Deaf Children Australia.

**[deafchildrenaustralia.org.au/blueprint](https://deafchildrenaustralia.org.au/blueprint)**

**03 9539 5300**

[blueprint@deafchildren.org.au](mailto:blueprint@deafchildren.org.au)

Deaf Children Australia uses the term 'deaf' to refer to all degrees and types of hearing loss.  
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