

Facts Sheet: Selecting a Specialist Tutor or Allied Health Professional for Specific Learning Difficulties (SLD)

This fact sheet is written on behalf of the Dyslexia Victoria Support Team.

Introduction

When selecting a specialist tutor or allied health professional to support children with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) or any other disability, it is crucial to ensure that the individual or organisation is appropriately qualified, transparent in their practices, and accountable for their professional conduct. This fact sheet provides clear guidance on how to select qualified and reputable professionals and outlines steps to take if concerns arise about misleading or unqualified service providers.

Key Considerations for Selecting a Specialist

Verification of Qualifications, Registrations, and Safety Requirements

- Specialist tutors who are registered teachers should have a current teacher registration number for their respective state or territory. You can verify registration through the relevant state or territory teacher registration board.
- Allied health professionals (e.g., psychologists) must be registered with the AHPRA (Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency). Check their registration status on the AHPRA website.
- Speech pathologists should also be members of Speech Pathology Australia (SPA). Verify their membership through the SPA website.
- Organisations such as Learning Difficulties Australia maintain a register of tutors who meet specific professional and academic criteria. Always verify that listed tutors meet these standards.
- All professionals should hold a valid Australian Business Number (ABN) and display it on their website or professional social media pages.
- Professional tutors must have public liability insurance and a current Working with Children Check (WWCC) relevant to their state or territory. Always request to see proof of these before engaging their services.

Transparency in Fees and Online Presence

- Providers must display clear and transparent fee structures on their website or professional social media pages. Fees should be easy to understand, with no hidden charges or unexpected costs.
- Be cautious of providers who are vague about their fee structures or who insist on private messaging to discuss pricing.
- Always request a written agreement or service contract that outlines fees, cancellation policies, and payment terms.
- A reputable provider should have a website or professional Facebook page with clear information about their qualifications, services, fees, and contact details.
- Be cautious if they only offer services through private messaging or direct messaging without public information.
- Avoid providers who refuse to share their credentials, professional affiliations, or fee structures.

Identification of Red Flags

- Providers who respond to queries with "PM me" instead of openly sharing their qualifications or online presence.
- Claims of guaranteed results without evidence-based practices.
- Lack of regular benchmark reporting
- Lack of transparency about training, registration, insurance, professional oversight, or philosophy, ie the Science of Learning
- No publicly advertised information about qualifications or affiliations on platforms such as LinkedIn

Essential Questions to Ask Before Engaging a Specialist

- What are your qualifications and professional registrations? Can I verify them?
- Are you a registered teacher (i.e. teacher registration number) or an allied health professional (AHPRA registration)?
- Are you affiliated with any professional bodies?
- Can you provide references or testimonials from other families? Can I contact them?
- What evidence-based approaches do you use?

Reporting Concerns and Unprofessional Conduct

If you suspect a professional is unqualified, misleading, or behaving unethically, report them to the appropriate regulatory body:

- Teacher Registration Boards in each state and territory
- Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) - <https://www.ahpra.gov.au>
- Speech Pathology Australia (SPA) - <https://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au>

You can also alert the DVS Administration team if someone is promoting services without transparency or professional standards our email is DVSAustralia@gmail.com

Ensuring Community Safety and Integrity

Maintaining a safe and supportive environment for parents and carers is of paramount importance. We urge all community members to remain vigilant and promptly report any instances of misleading, unqualified, or unethical practices to the relevant regulatory authorities. Through collective diligence and adherence to professional standards, we can ensure that only qualified and reputable services are promoted and accessed.