

# SNNHK PUBLIC SERVICE NAVIGATOR

*For parents of children with special needs or disabilities in Hong Kong*

## Introduction

When a child has special needs or disabilities, often the whole family is affected. While it is not uncommon to feel stressed by the challenges in daily caring of the child, it may be helpful to know that the family is entitled to public support that can make life a bit easier. In Hong Kong, there are subsidies and services the child and his/her family are entitled to, and they do not involve family income assessment. Families should know that using any of the public services do not make them a burden to the society. It is not a sign of weakness or poverty. Also, applications are free to lodge. That being said, the system could be rather complex and confusing at times, especially for non-Chinese speaking families or those new to Hong Kong. This document aims to act as a navigator for the public services in Hong Kong that are available to children with special needs and disabilities as well as their families.

The three major parties involved in obtaining public services for children in Hong Kong are **social workers, doctors and/or healthcare professionals as well as the families**. Therefore, knowledge of basic facts as well as effective communication between the three parties are most crucial for smooth navigation.

This document aims to provide an overview of the entitlements for families of children with special needs and disabilities in Hong Kong. Most of the services covered here are governed by the **Social Welfare Department (SWD)** and the **Hospital Authority (HA)** as well as other government departments. Services governed by the Education Bureau ([integrated and special education](#)) are covered elsewhere. The following services are covered in this document:

- [Public medical care](#)
- [Central referral system for rehabilitation services \(CRSRehab\)](#)
- [Disability allowance](#)
- [Tax allowance](#)
- [Hong Kong ID card](#)
- [Registration card for persons with disabilities](#)
- [Parking certificate for drivers who carry passengers with mobility disabilities](#)
- [Other services](#)

## Public medical care

There are 43 public hospitals and institutions, 49 Specialist Out-patient Clinics and 73 General Out-patient Clinics in Hong Kong, 11 of which have specialist **paediatric** unit and emergency services.

### Hong Kong Island West

- Queen Mary Hospital/The Duchess of Kent Children's Hospital (teaching hospitals linked to HKU)

### New Territories East

- Prince of Wales Hospital (teaching hospital linked to CUHK)

### Hong Kong Island East

- Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital

### Kowloon Central

- Kwong Wah Hospital
- Queen Elizabeth Hospital
- Hong Kong Children's Hospital

### Kowloon East

- Tseung Kwan O Hospital
- United Christian Hospital

### Kowloon West

- Princess Margaret Hospital

### New Territories West

- Tuen Mun Hospital

Source: [www.ha.org.hk](http://www.ha.org.hk)

## Allied health services

Most of the allied health clinics located in hospitals

- **Occupational Therapy** (fine motor, sensory, balance, proprioception, assistive equipment, swallowing problems)
- **Physiotherapy Service** (gross motor)
- **Speech Therapy** (communication, swallowing problems)
- Audiology (hearing)
- Optometry (visual, including cerebral visual impairment)
- Clinical Psychology Service (evaluation and therapy)
- Dietetics (mostly diets designed for specific medical conditions)
- Podiatry (foot ailments related to chronic illnesses such as diabetes. Paediatric foot conditions are usually treated by paediatricians, orthopaedic doctors and P&O below)
- Prosthetic & Orthotic (AFOs, braces, etc.)

## Child Assessment Centres (CAC)

- The [Child Assessment Service](#) provides comprehensive assessment and diagnostic evaluation services for children up to the age of 12
- CAC is often the starting point of service application. Families who do not give birth in Hong Kong public hospitals or do not already use services at the Maternal and Child Health Centres are recommended to obtain referral from private practitioners, kindergarten or school to be assessed at a CAC
- CACs can make referrals for allied health services based on diagnosis
- List of CACs: Central Kowloon CAC / Ha Kwai Chung CAC / Pamela Youde CAC (Kwun Tong) / Pamela Youde CAC (Sha Tin) / Fanling CAC / Tuen Mun CAC / Ngau Tau Kok CAC / The Children's Habilitation Institute (within the Duchess of Kent Children's Hospital and is a part of HKU)

Source: [www.dhcas.gov.hk](http://www.dhcas.gov.hk)

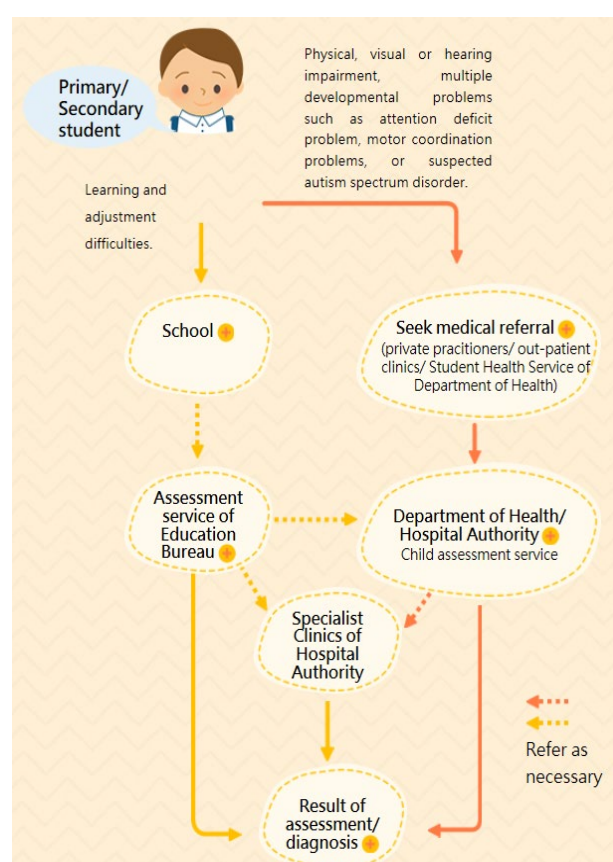
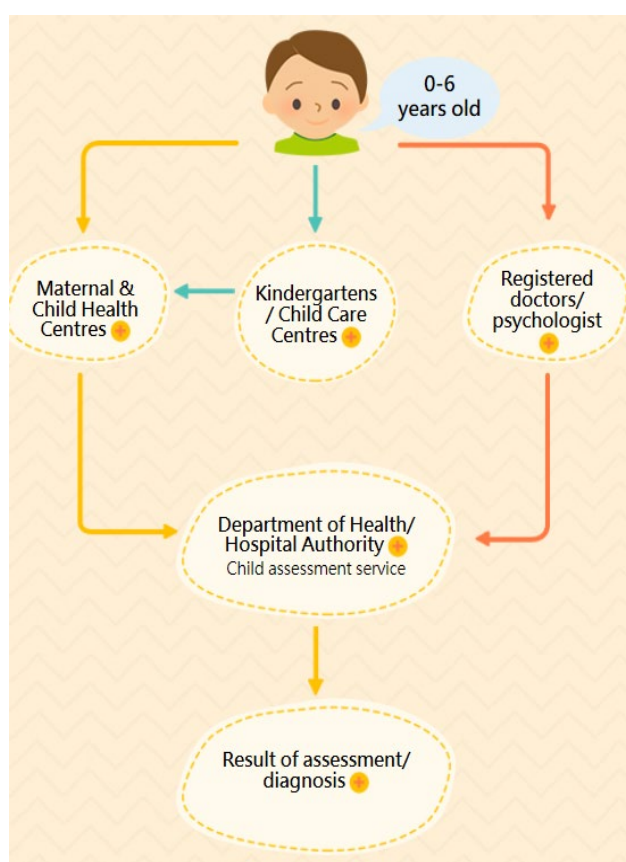
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## Central referral system for rehabilitation services (CRSRehab)

- Central waiting lists of the day and residential services for people with disabilities (including **pre-school services**)
- All applications have to be made by social workers
- Referrals can be made by social workers of medical social services units (medical social worker in public hospitals), integrated family services centres (IFSC), special schools or rehabilitation service units
- The application is free of charge

Source: [www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/](http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/)

### Pathways into the system



Source: [www.sen.org.hk](http://www.sen.org.hk) (decommissioned)

## CRSRehab: Pre-school services

- Early Education and Training Centre (the “e-place”)
- Integrated Programme in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre (IP in KG-cum-CCC) (the “i-place”)
- Special Child Care Centre (the “s-place”)
- Residential Special Child Care Centre provides residential care to children with disabilities (attached to special childcare centres)
- Occasional Child Care Service provides a safe venue for parents or carers to place their children for temporary care so as to enable them to attend to personal or urgent matters (fees are applicable)

## How to get on the waiting list (pre-school)?

- The process can be initiated by the medical social worker if the child was diagnosed prenatally or perinatally
- In cases where parents of young children are told to wait for a CAC appointment when the child is 2.5 years old or the medical social worker of the diagnosing hospital denies request to refer for whatever reasons, parents may request a private practitioner (see point below) to fill out Part A of the application form ([Form 2](#) on the SWD website) then bring the partially completed form to a social worker at an integrated family service centre in the area of residence and request to have the form submitted
- Part A should be completed by a medical officer/clinical psychologist/educational psychologist. Medical officer refers to medical officer of Child Assessment Centre/Paediatric Department in public hospital; or medical officer in private practice who is on the [Specialist Register for Paediatrics](#) under the Medical Council of Hong Kong

## Which childcare centre to choose?

- Families will be invited by the case social worker to choose up to **3** centres for the waiting list
- Lists of [EETC](#), [SCCC](#) or [kindergartens with integrated programmes](#) are available on the SWD website
- Families may create a shortlist, call the centres and go visit. Ask about staffing, curriculum and transportation (school bus?)
- [Waiting list information](#) is regularly updated
- Allocation usually takes place in [April](#)

## Specialist childcare centres

Specific medical diagnosis is required for the following specialist childcare centres

- For visually impaired children:
  - [Ebenezer Child Care Centre](#) (Residential service included)
  - Only applicants who have been diagnosed with moderate to severe visual impairment will be considered
- For hearing impaired children:
  - [Sheung Tak Child Care Centre](#)
  - [Bradbury Child Care Centre](#)
  - Only applicants who have been diagnosed with severe or profound hearing impairment will be considered
- Conductive Learning (developmental paediatricians are likely to refer children with cerebral palsy to this centre):
  - [Jockey Club Marion Fang Conductive Learning Centre](#) (Residential service included)
  - Application should be made to the centre directly

## What to expect apart from classes?

- Mainstream therapies (physical therapy PT, occupational therapy OT and speech therapy ST – the 3Ts)
- Recommendation for supportive equipment ordering and repair ([The Jockey Club Rehabilitation Seating Service Centre; 1st Step Association](#))
- Referral for specialist dental services
- Parent resources centres
- Counselling service for parents and/or caregivers
- Social worker support

## Before a place is available...

These services are available to children who are already in CRSRehab and the process will be initiated by case social workers.

- [On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services \(OPRS\)](#)
  - Therapy services made available at mainstream kindergartens or early education and training centres shall the kindergarten the child goes to does not participate in the programme
  - Occupational therapists (OTs), physiotherapists (PTs), speech therapists (STs), clinical/educational psychologists (EPs/CPs), social workers, and special childcare workers are to provide on-site rehabilitation services with early intervention for children with special needs
  - Free of charge
  - Parent/guardian/caregiver participation in training is expected

- [Training Subsidy Programme for Children on the Waiting List of Subvented Pre-school Rehabilitation Services \(TSP\)](#)
  - For those waiting for an e-place or an i-place (HK\$3,549 per month)
    - four sessions of individual or group training/therapy services in three hours per month; and
    - six hours of individual assessment and/or family support services provided by special childcare worker(s), clinical/educational psychologist(s), occupational therapist(s), physiotherapist(s), speech therapist(s) or registered social worker(s) in a year
  - For those waiting for an s-place (HK\$6,904 per month)
    - six sessions of individual or group training/therapy services in six hours per month with at least 18 hours of therapeutic/training sessions from OTs, PTs and STs every six months; and
    - six hours of individual assessment and/or family support services provided by special childcare worker(s), clinical/educational psychologist(s), occupational therapist(s), physiotherapist(s), speech therapist(s) or registered social worker(s) in a year
  - The subsidies will be paid directly to the service providers
  - Subject to household income assessment
  - Parent/guardian/caregiver participation in training is expected

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## Disability allowance

Disability allowance is a part of the Social Security Allowance (SSA) Scheme. The objective of the SSA Scheme is to provide a monthly allowance to severely disabled HK residents. NO means test is involved.

### Eligibility

- Residents aged below 18 are exempted from the residence requirements
- The child is eligible if he/she is born in Hong Kong even though the parents are not PR
- Even if the child is NOT born in Hong Kong, if he/she is permitted to reside in Hong Kong (dependent of a valid visa holder), an application may still be lodged

### DA bands and Octopus card for disabled persons

- Normal Disability Allowance (HK\$2,095 per month)
  - certified by a public hospital to be severely disabled
  - his/her disabling condition will persist for at least 6 months
- Higher Disability Allowance (HK\$4,190 per month)
  - in addition to meeting the eligibility criteria for Normal Disability Allowance above, he/she must be certified to be in need of constant attendance from others in his/her daily life; and
  - he/she is not receiving care in residential institutions subsidized by the government or all public hospitals and institutions under the Hospital Authority, or boarding in special schools under the Education Bureau
- The recipient of disability allowance will also be eligible for an octopus card for persons with disabilities. The application form is attached to the disability allowance papers. Even though the disabled child may not need to pay fare, the Octopus card may be used for parking discounts at carpark managed by the Link

### The DA application process

- The [application form](#) and [guidance notes](#) are available on the SWD website
- A doctor's judgment is key to the process while the application will mainly be handled by social workers
- A [Medical Assessment Form](#) shall be submitted directly by a public hospital doctor to SWD. Parents may take a look at the form to see if the child has the conditions classified as "severely disabling". Even if the child has been diagnosed by private practitioners, the disabling condition MUST BE certified by **a doctor in the public system**. Parents may provide private diagnostic reports to public hospital or clinic doctors for reference
- The severity of the disabling condition(s) is usually reviewed periodically, e.g. every two to three years. If the child has been certified to be permanently disabled, the Social Security Field Unit under the Social Welfare Department will renew the allowance over phone.



## On top of DA...

1. [Special Care Subsidy Scheme for Persons with Severe Disabilities](#)
  - The Subsidy Scheme aims at providing persons with severe disabilities who are living in the community and not receiving the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance with a special care subsidy for assisting them to purchase care goods, services or for other purposes related to nursing care
2. [Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities](#)
  - Aims at providing carers of persons with disabilities from low-income families with a living allowance to help supplement their living expenses so that persons with disabilities in need of long-term care may, with the help of their carers, receive proper care and remain living in the community
3. [Carer hotline 182 183](#)
4. [Information Gateway for Carers](#)

## Tax allowance

- A parent can claim disabled dependant allowance if he/she or his/her spouse maintains a dependant who is eligible to claim an allowance under the Government's Disability Allowance Scheme (HK\$75,000 for the tax year 2018/19)
- Persons eligible to claim an allowance under the Government's Disability Allowance Scheme will be eligible to claim the newly introduced Personal Disability Allowance (HK\$75,000)
- IRD may require the applicants to submit evidence that a dependent was receiving DA during the tax year
- For dependants who have not claimed DA, a doctor's report is required to substantiate the dependant's eligibility for the claim. IRD will accept this medical assessment report (same format as if to apply for DA) as evidence for the purpose of tax allowance claim
- All allowances should normally be claimed on your Tax Return – Individuals (BIR60) during the year of assessment to which they are related
- Late claims are possible but the written claim should not be later than 6 years after the end of the year of assessment to which the claim relates
- Complete relevant parts of the [claim form \(IR831\)](#) and return it to the Inland Revenue Department. Evidence in support of the claim is not required to be submitted together with the tax return but the evidence should be retained nevertheless

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## Hong Kong Identity Card

- All Hong Kong residents aged 11 or over (including those who have been permitted to stay in Hong Kong for more than 180 days) are required to register for an identity card, except those who are exempted or excluded
- Accessibility arrangements can be made in advance
- For those who cannot go get registered in person, they can instead apply for a [Certificate of Exemption](#), which is issued free of charge. The following documents are required for application of the certificate of exemption
  - [Application letter and collection arrangement form](#)
  - A supporting document on the present health condition of the applicant. Each application will be considered on its own merits
  - A copy of the applicant's identity document (birth certificate for those who are born in Hong Kong)
  - A recent photograph of the applicant
  - A copy of identity document of the representative (if applicable)
  - Relationship proof between the applicant and the representative (if applicable) (birth certificate for those who are born in Hong Kong)

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## Registration card for persons with disabilities

- The Card is issued to persons who have been found to have a disability(ies) which is permanent in nature, or of a temporary nature but the severity of the disability **affects one's major life activities, participation in economic and social activities, and/or mobility, and which takes significantly longer than normal to rehabilitate**
- The purpose of the card is to enable the cardholder to produce, when necessary, as a **documentary proof of his/her disability status**. It is NOT a privilege card or a credit card
- As at June 2025, [Ocean Park](#), [Star Ferry](#) and [Sun Ferry](#) offer concessionary ticket or fare based on the Registration Card for Persons with Disabilities. Other forms of public transport generally require the passenger to be the holder of the personalised Octopus with "Persons with Disabilities Status" which could only be applied with the pre-verified application form issued by the Social Welfare Department upon approval of the Disability Allowance application
- The terms and conditions of major bus companies stated that baby strollers or pushchairs must be collapsed before passengers board the bus unless the stroller is used as a paediatric wheelchair. The Registration Card may be used as documentary proof for the disability status of the user, which necessitates the use of stroller as a paediatric wheelchair ([#9 of Notes to Passengers of KMB](#); [Customer Notice of Citybus](#))

### Eligibility

Any person having one or more of the following disabilities may apply:

- Hearing impairment
- Visual impairment
- Speech impairment
- Physical disability
- Autism
- Mental illness
- Intellectual disability
- Visceral disability/chronic illness
- Attention deficit/ hyperactivity disorder
- Specific learning difficulties

### Application process

- The application form can be downloaded [here](#). The application may also be submitted [online](#)
- The application form (CRR3) should be mailed to the Central Registry for Rehabilitation together with:
  - relevant documentary evidence certifying his/her disability(ies) (blank form is included in the application form for doctors' and/or professionals' input)
  - a copy of his/her document of identity
  - a recent colour photograph

- Proof of disability
  - **Any medical doctors** (public or private) who will sign and stamp with the clinic's or hospital's chop
  - Some of the conditions may be diagnosed by an **allied health professional** instead of a medical doctor, e.g. a child psychologist in a non-government organization like the Heep Hong Society
  - The certificate should be no older than **six months**

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## Parking certificate for drivers who carry people with mobility disabilities

- This is NOT the same as the disabled person's parking permit (don't park in spaces for disabled drivers in non-government car parks!)
- Not for discounted parking
- Only permits the holder to park his/her vehicle at spaces for disabled driver inside government multi-storey car parks managed by the Transport Department and roadside parking space for disabled drivers
- Certain public hospitals will waive parking charges upon presentation of the certificate (subject to availability)
- Certain private establishments may have designated parking spaces for cars carrying such certificate

### Application

- Application form can be downloaded [here](#). The application may also be submitted [online](#)
- The passenger to be carried must be a person with lower limb mobility disabilities certified by qualified professional(s) or organisation(s)
- Both public and private doctors or physiotherapists can sign off on this form. The certification must be very specific about lower limb mobility disabilities. The Transport Department will not process applications stating medical diagnoses such as epileptic and developmental encephalopathies or severe neuromuscular diseases such as spinomuscular atrophy though medical doctors and parents know they might cause lower limb mobility disabilities

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## Other services

Rehabilitation services that can be waitlisted at CRSRehab are summarised as follows:

Age	0 to 6	6 to 18	15 or above		
Target group	Pre-school Children with Disabilities	Persons with Intellectual Disabilities	Persons with Intellectual Disabilities	Persons with Physical Disabilities	Persons in Mental Recovery
Subsystem	CRSRehab-PS	CRSRehab-SGHCMID	CRSRehab-SET		
			CRSRehab-IPD		CRSRehab-PMR
Day Training	Early Education and Training Centre		Supported Employment Training for Persons with Disabilities (SET)/Sheltered Workshop (SW) / Integrated Vocational Rehabilitation Services Centre (IVRSC)		
	Special Child Care Centre		Day Activity Centre (DAC)		
	Integrated Programme in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre				
	On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services				
Residential Care Service	Residential Special Child Care Centre	Small Group Home for Mildly Mentally Handicapped Children (SGHMMHC)	Supported Hostel (SHOS) <sup>ii</sup>		
			Hostel for Moderately Mentally Handicapped Persons <sup>ii</sup> (HMMH)		Halfway House <sup>ii</sup> (HWH)
			Hostel for Severely Mentally Handicapped Persons (HSMH)	Hostel for Severely Physically Handicapped Persons (HSPH)	Halfway House (with Special Provision) (HWH-SP)
			Hostel for Severely Physically and Mentally Handicapped Persons (HSPH/MH)		Long Stay Care Home <sup>ii</sup> (LSCH)
			Care & Attention Home for Severely Disabled Persons (C&A/SD)		

<sup>i</sup> Includes the Factory for the Blind, operated by the Hong Kong Society for the Blind.

<sup>ii</sup> Under the Bought Place Scheme (BPS) for Private Residential Care Home for Persons with Disabilities, service places of Bought Place Providing High Level of Care (Category 1) (BH1) and Bought Place Providing High Level of Care (Category 2) (BH2) are offered to the applicants on the waiting lists for LSCH or HMMH, while service places of Bought Place Providing Medium Level of Care (BM) are offered to the applicants on the waiting lists for HWH or SHOS in accordance to their indication of acceptance of BPS.

Source: [Central Referral System for Rehabilitation Services \(CRSRehab\) Manual of Procedures](#)

- Residential Respite Services – [Vacancy Enquiry System for Residential Respite Service for Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [Free Delivery Service Provided by Supermarkets for People with Disabilities](#)
- [Rehab bus](#)

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## Contact SNNHK

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Special Needs Network Hong Kong (SNNHK) is a networked community supporting families, caregivers and individuals involved in special needs in Hong Kong. We operate as a not-for-profit company registered as Special Needs Network Hong Kong Limited.

Please visit our website at: <https://www.snnhk.org/>.

We hope this document proves useful in outlining the major public services and entitlements available to families of children with neurodiversity, special needs and disabilities. If you would like to discuss further, please feel free to email the SNNHK Committee at [connect@snnhk.org](mailto:connect@snnhk.org). In addition, parents and caregivers of children with special needs and disabilities are welcome to join our closed [Facebook Group](#) and [Google Group](#) to connect with parents and caregivers walking a journey that may be similar to yours.

To **register** as a member of SNNHK (and to access the Facebook and Google Groups) please complete the Request to Join form here: <https://www.snnhk.org/request-to-join-snnhk>

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Prepared by Sarah Tam, former committee member of SNNHK