

# Establishing a Family Support Group

## What is a Family Support Group?

A Family Support Group is a group of families with deaf children who get together regularly to provide social opportunities for themselves and other families and/or to provide information and support to each other.

A Family Support Group can provide families with the support and encouragement of other families who face similar situations.

If the aim of the group is to provide social activities, the group can provide:

- family fun days
- camps
- BBQs
- kid's fun times
- networking.

If the aim of the group is to provide information and support, the group can provide:

- information and support to each other
- lobbying to improve opportunities for deaf children.

Some Family Support Groups are established by one family who wishes 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 and other groups are established by professionals who work with families of deaf children.

## 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 very close to each other.

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

For further information about Deaf Children Australia visit our website,

[www.deafchildrenaustralia.org.au](http://www.deafchildrenaustralia.org.au)

Helpline 1800 645 916 Email [helpline@deafchildren.org.au](mailto:helpline@deafchildren.org.au)

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

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State-wide Family Support Groups where present; may lobby and inform local/regional groups.

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

## **What does a Family Support Group need?**

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

The co-ordinator will help to run the group. Co-ordinators can be parents/carers of deaf children, deaf adults, or other people with a strong interest in the well-being of deaf children.

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

Other things needed are newsletters, some financial resources, determination and creativity.

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

Deaf Children Australia is keen to support the establishment of Family Support Groups and to make sure they have the resources that they need to develop further. Deaf Children Australia can also assist with the re-establishment of Family Support Groups if they have not met for a while.

Deaf Children Australia will not organise and control Family Support Groups. Instead, Deaf Children Australia works 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, priorities, how to run a committee and fundraising.

Deaf Children Australia will promote the group through its web site and Flying kites if requested.

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

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

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## How is a Family Support Group established?

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

1. Working with a Community Development Worker from Deaf Children Australia to plan an in-formal get together.
2. Distributing a flyer with the planned activity to families through existing networks, schools, other organisations and the Deaf Children Australia website.
3. Explaining the purpose of the group to those present. Names of those wishing to be involved in organising further activities are recorded.
4. Deciding on a regular meeting time and those who are interested meet and make plans for the next activity.
5. Promoting the next activity as above.

It is important that the group decides early if the group is to be a social or lobbying group, or both, and that it decides on what resources are needed. Aims and priorities of the group need to be agreed on, established and promoted to other people attending the activities.

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