



VISION FOR DISABILITY INCLUSION: PATHWAYS FOR BETTER PROTECTION

COMPREHENSIVE INTEGRATED SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH SCHOOLS IN PORTUGAL

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Our Vision

- **One system** (track) with schools being the place where children learn and get all services and MoE leading and organizing all services with other sectors.
- Equity and inclusion for a progressive high performing education system.
- Achieving equity and inclusion focusing on :
 - **Educational achievement**
 - **Wellbeing and engagement**
 - **Inclusion**

Our commitment means that all children with disabilities:

- **attend** their local regular school and be welcomed
- **access and participate** fully engaged in the curriculum along-side their similar-aged peers.
- **learn and get** all services at school in a safe and supportive environment, free from bullying, discrimination.
- **achieve** academically and socially with reasonable adjustments and supports tailored to meet their learning needs.

Legislative Framework

- The legislation on inclusive education policy establishes that **all children have the right to attend mainstream schools**, regardless of their abilities, and that schools must adapt to meet the needs of each student.
- The approach to providing support for children with disabilities is needs-based rather than categorized by specific disabilities.
- The law promotes individualized support for all learners, with a focus on removing barriers to learning and participation, rather than focusing on specific disability labels.

Cross sectoral approach

- A **cross-sectoral approach** to providing support in a community school setting involves coordinating multiple sectors, such as **education, health, social services, and community organizations**, to meet the diverse needs, ensuring that children receive comprehensive services that address not just their academic needs, but also their health, social, and emotional well-being.
- This integrated strategy not only improves educational outcomes but also promotes the overall well-being of the child and their family, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

Example: Cross-Sectoral Support for a Child with Disabilities

Maria, a 10-year-old child with cerebral palsy, attends the community school. Her condition affects her mobility, communication, and learning. A **multidisciplinary team** is formed, including her classroom teacher, a special education teacher, a nurse from the health local center, a speech therapist, a social worker, and her parents. Through a **cross-sectoral approach**, the team develops both an **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** and an **Individual Health Plan (PIS)** for Maria. Her IEP focuses on learning accommodations like assistive technology, schoolbooks, while the PIS addresses her medical needs, including regular physical therapy and administration of medication during school hours. The social worker ensures the family receives appropriate support, such as financial subsidies and respite care for her parents. A local NGO provides afterschool care where Maria participates in arts and sport activities with peers, promoting social inclusion.

Example: Cross-Sectoral Support for a Child with Behavior and Communication Difficulties

Lucas, a 13 years old boy attends the community mainstream school. He struggles with social interactions, sensory sensitivities, and transitions between activities. These challenges affect his ability to engage in class and socialize with peers. **A cross-sectoral support plan** is put in place to address his needs holistically. The team develops an **IEP** including specific goals for communication, social skills, and academic learning. **Special Education Teacher** supports him during challenging subjects and assists in implementing strategies to help him focus and manage sensory overload. **Visual schedules and clear structured routines are used in the classroom.** Lucas receives speech and occupational therapy at school to improve his communication skills, sensory sensitivities and engage in social interactions with peers. The psychologist provides counselling for Lucas to develop coping strategies for managing social stress. The psychologist also advises the school on how to support Lucas's emotional well-being. The social worker connects Lucas's family with a local NGO that provides afterschool care where Lucas participates in arts activities to enhance communication and social interaction with peers, promoting social inclusion. **School multidisciplinary team, healthcare professionals , social services, and Lucas's family** meet regularly to assess his progress. Adjustments to his IEP and therapy plans are made based on feedback from all parties. **A communication book** is used between the school and Lucas's parents to track his daily progress, challenges, and any emerging needs, ensuring consistent support across all areas of his life.

Children with very severe disabilities

- Children with very severe disabilities are included in mainstream schools, reflecting the country's strong commitment to inclusive education. The approach is designed to ensure that these learners can participate in mainstream education while receiving intensive and personalized support that meets their unique needs
- For learners with very severe disabilities, schools organize specialized support settings to provide:
 - Intensive, tailored interventions in areas such as communication, mobility, or self-care.
 - A structured environment that meets their medical needs while still promoting inclusion.
 - Children may spend part of their time in mainstream classrooms and part of their time in these specialized settings, depending on their individual needs.

Blindness and Low Vision

- Braille literacy
- Orientation and mobility
- Braille school manuals and other materials in Braille, reliefs, Activities of daily living and social skills.
- Assistive technologies: screen readers, braille line, computer; graphing calculator walking stick, ...
- Transportation
- Meals
- Assist students and their families to regular hospital appointments
- Transition from school to adult life: university, VET, ...



Bilingual Curriculum PL1 + PL2

Resources available: specialized teacher, deaf teachers, Portuguese Sign Language interpreters, speech therapists, psychologists.

- Portuguese sign language as a first language;
- Written Portuguese as second language.
- Speech therapy
- School manuals and other school materials.
- Assistive technologies/assistive products.
- Transportation
- Meals
- Assist students and their families to regular hospital appointments.



Network of School Resource Centers for Assistive Technologies/Assistive Products

- Provide assessment of child needs for AT/AP to minimize or overcome their limitations to access the curriculum and participate in school activities;
- Prescribe AT/AP, financed by MoE and recommend other free resources, software/APPS;
- Provide training in the use of AT/AP to teachers, other professionals, parents and students;
- Establish partnerships with different stakeholders, mainly universities and rehabilitation centers, to develop expertise in the field of AT.
- Acting as hub for all other support services: early intervention, health and social protection services, rehabilitation.



National Early Intervention System - MoE/Health/Social Protection

0 to 6 years old



Early Childhood
Intervention
(PIIP)



Child Care Services

ACTION TO TAKE
Plan for Educational
Pathway

6 to 18 years old



Education
IEP and/or IHP



Education
Individual Transition Plan (ITP)

ACTIONS TO TAKE
Prepare for Work
(E.g. Work Skills Training,
Transition-to-Work Services)

- Healthcare is the “gateway”: screening, detection and referral of children eligible
- Early Intervention Local Team:
 - Development and implementation of the individualized family support plan (PIIP) prepared and carried out with family involvement;
 - Case management;
 - Identification of needs and resources available in the geographic area;
 - Collaboration with other community entities involved in the support of children and families;
 - Provide assistive technologies/AAC;
 - Speech therapy, physiotherapy; occupational therapy, psychology
 - Nutritional support;
 - Mental health care;
 - Preparation of the transition process to primary education.

Compulsory Schooling | MoE

- School based multidisciplinary team: Cycle APDR - Assess, Plan, Do, Review
- IEP and ITP (focus on access, participation, progress/achievement):
 - Assistive technologies/AAC;
 - Braille, digital, audio format materials;
 - Case management;
 - Specialized support (special education teachers);
 - Personal assistance;
 - Speech therapists, physiotherapists; occupational therapists; psychologist
 - Social support: transportation, schoolbooks, meals; extra curricular activities
 - Nutritional support;
 - Mental health care;
 - Health care defined in an Individual Health Plan (IHP)

Benefits of a Cross-Sectoral Approach

Comprehensive Support for Learners

- Children with disabilities, benefit from having their academic, social, emotional, and health needs addressed through a coordinated plan, increasing their chances of success in school and beyond.

Improved Access to Services

- By bringing services to the school, such as healthcare and social services, students and families can access the help they need in a convenient environment.

Strengthened Family Engagement

- Collaboration between sectors often leads to stronger relationships between schools and families, as parents feel more supported and involved in their child's education and well-being..

Better Resource Utilization

- Cross-sectoral approaches ensure that resources from different sectors are **used efficiently**.

Promotes Inclusion

- The cross-sectoral approach aligns with country **inclusive education model**, ensuring that all students, regardless of their abilities, have access to an education that accommodates their unique needs, and they are supported in their community.