

Referral Database Guidelines - for SPELD NSW Tutor and Other Professional Members

SPELD NSW is an independent, non-profit organisation which provides support to children and adults with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, and their families, teachers, tutors, schools and workplaces.

SPELD NSW is a member of AUSPELD, the Australian Federation of SPELD Associations and, through AUSPELD, a Global Partner of the International Dyslexia Association.

Our vision is that individuals in New South Wales with specific learning difficulties will have every opportunity to achieve their full potential in life. This will be achieved when children and adults with specific learning difficulties receive:

- early identification of their specific learning difficulty and early intervention using evidence-based teaching methods during the critical early years of education;
- instruction with evidence-based methods in key literacy and numeracy skills;
- specialist teaching and appropriate adjustments during their school years;
- support and adjustments in further education and the workplace.

SPELD NSW operates a Referral Database to enable us to connect families and adults to tutors and allied health professionals so they can access literacy and numeracy intervention and support.

SPELD NSW Referral and Information Officers can refer families and adults seeking assistance to tutors and allied health professionals in their area (or to tutors and professionals that operate remotely by tele-tutoring).

The SPELD NSW Tutor and other Professional Members who are placed on the Referral Database by SPELD NSW have expertise and experience in supporting students with specific learning difficulties.

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The SPELD NSW Referral Database

SPELD NSW maintains a database of qualified and experienced tutors and allied health professionals who provide individual tutoring, treatment and support for children, adolescents and adults. Tutors and other Professionals on the Referral Database are trained in evidence-based teaching approaches designed to improve students' literacy and numeracy skills and in supporting students with specific learning difficulties.

Families and adults seeking tutoring, treatment or support from tutors, psychologists, occupational therapists or speech therapists approach the SPELD NSW InfoLine and receive referrals to tutors and other professionals whose skills and experience meet their needs.

In general, the children and adults who are referred by SPELD NSW are experiencing difficulties with literacy and/or numeracy and some have a diagnosed specific learning difficulty (such as dyslexia). However, individuals do not need to have an identified learning difficulty to access a referral through SPELD NSW.

Tutors and allied health professionals on the SPELD NSW Referral Database work across Sydney and throughout New South Wales and the ACT. Some SPELD NSW Tutors and Professionals also provide online tutoring. This is of particular value to families living in remote and regional areas as there are less tutors and other professionals on the Referral Database in these areas.

SPELD NSW is continually working to support the tutors and other professionals on the SPELD NSW Referral Database and to ensure that the members of the Referral Database have sufficient expertise and experience to provide instruction and support of the highest quality and standard.

This is achieved through:

- the application process for new tutors and other professionals,
- the implementation of the Referral Database Code of Conduct,
- the requirement that members of the Referral Database undertake ongoing professional development and supporting them to do so through discounts to professional learning, and
- regular Tutor and Professional Member catch-ups.

Referral Database Guidelines

These Referral Database Guidelines provide guidance to prospective and current Referral Database Members about the provision of effective, high-quality service for families and adults who are seeking tutoring and support.

The benefits of joining the SPELD NSW Referral Database

There are a range of benefits for Tutor and Professional members of the SPELD NSW Referral Database. These include:

- Direct referral of students and clients;
- Substantial discounts on SPELD NSW professional learning;
- Advice and support from the SPELD NSW office;
- Discounts at the SPELD NSW bookstore;
- Collegial support from other Tutors and Allied Health Professionals; and
- Making a significant difference in the lives of children and adults.

The role of tutors and professionals on the SPELD NSW Referral Database

The role of tutors and other professionals on the SPELD NSW Referral Database is to provide high-quality tutoring or other professional support.

Referral database members may also be involved with liaising with parents, schools, and teachers to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for students. Ultimately, tutors and other professionals make a difference in the lives of students with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The students and clients

Members of the SPELD NSW Referral Database work with school-aged children, from infants through to high school (including HSC students and students undertaking alternative education pathways), as well as adults (e.g. people in the workforce, university students and parents) who wish to further develop their literacy and/or numeracy skills.

Where tutors and other professionals on the SPELD NSW Referral Database work

Tutors and Professionals on the SPELD NSW Referral Database are not employees or contractors of SPELD NSW but rather operate their own independent businesses. A number of tutors and other professionals are part of literacy or professional services clinics.

Tutors and other professionals can choose to work from their business premises, their own home, at the student's home, or there may be an opportunity to work at the student's school (with permission from the school).

It is essential that tutors and other professionals have a designated, distraction-free space available for them and their students / clients.

Referring to Members of the Referral Database

SPELD NSW provides families and individuals who contact our InfoLine seeking support from a tutor or allied health professional with a list of up to 4 Tutors or other Professionals who are based in their local area (or who provide services online) and who have the specific skills that the family or individual is seeking. Families and individuals are encouraged to contact all the Tutors or other Professionals to discuss the services that they can provide. However, it may be that families or individuals do not contact all of the names provided by SPELD NSW.

Selection of Programs and Approaches

It is a requirement for members of the SPELD NSW Referral Database that they have undertaken professional learning in evidence-based approaches to literacy and numeracy instruction. It is expected that SPELD NSW Tutors will use programs and approaches that have been specifically identified as appropriate because they fit within a research-based approach to literacy/numeracy remediation. This provides assurance to students and families that they are receiving intervention that is high-quality, evidence-based, structured and systematic.

Effective instruction in literacy and numeracy skills should be:

- explicit with instruction that is direct and provides plenty of opportunities for practice;
- systematic and cumulative with a planned scope and sequence of skills that progresses from easier to more complex skills; and
- diagnostic and responsive where the teacher uses a student's responses to adjust pacing, presentation and amount of practice.

Research into the Science of Reading

There has been a wealth of research, as well as national and international reviews, that have identified the components of successful literacy instruction/intervention. This has been supported by evidence collected from classrooms, individual students, and whole-school literacy programs.

Students make significantly more progress, and achieve consistently better results, when they participate in structured, synthetic phonics programs or approaches.

Structured, synthetic phonics helps students learn how to read and spell by teaching:

- the ability to identify, isolate, blend and manipulate the sounds in speech (phonological and phonemic awareness); and

- the relationship between sounds in speech (phonemes) and how we write them down (graphemes), how to blend sounds together to read and how to segment words into sounds to spell, and the spelling patterns and conventions in English (phonics and morphology).

Good structured literacy programs will also teach vocabulary including morphology, reading fluency, reading comprehension and written expression including grammar.

(See for more information: <https://dyslexiaida.org/structured-literacy-effective-instruction-for-students-with-dyslexia-and-related-reading-difficulties/>)

The AUSPELD 'Understanding Learning Difficulties – A Guide for Parents' has a section devoted to assessing the evidence base for a range of intervention programs in order to assist families and professionals in identifying the most appropriate approaches and programs for literacy learning. The 'Selecting a successful intervention' section from the Guide can be found in Appendix A, with the full guide accessible via the link <https://uldforparents.com>.

Examples of programs and approaches that are recommended by SPELD NSW include Sounds-Write, Letters and Sounds, OG/MSL, MultiLit programs, LETRS and Spelling Mastery. These programs may be supplemented by resources such as Phonics Books' Dandelion Launchers, Readers, and Catch-Up Readers, Little Learners Love Literacy resources or other decodable books.

Requirement to use evidence-based programs and approaches

SPELD NSW does not accept onto its Referral Database tutors or other professionals who use programs or approaches that have no or very limited research evidence to support their use in improving outcomes for individuals with learning difficulties. For example, the Arrowsmith program is purported to improve academic skills, memory, motor skills, speech and language, and reasoning abilities, yet there is no independent research evidence available to support the claims that the exercises – designed to improve neuroplasticity – improve academic skills or remediate learning difficulties.

In the event that a member of the SPELD NSW Referral Database offers a service or product designed to improve outcomes for individuals with learning difficulties/disorders that is not viewed as evidence based (and in line with the AUSPELD Understanding Learning Difficulties Guide), consideration will need to be given to their ongoing membership of the SPELD NSW Referral Database.

Planning, Reporting and Resources

Members of the SPELD NSW Referral Database are expected to:

- Form an initial understanding of the student's level of skill and knowledge, either by making their own assessment, or by reviewing any recent, relevant assessment made by SPELD NSW or another professional.

If the student has been recently assessed by SPELD NSW, a SPELD NSW assessment report will be available which is intended to provide results and recommendations that will greatly assist tutors and other professionals in their planning. In such a case, only a simple 'placement' assessment may be needed.

If the student has not been previously assessed, or the report is older, a brief assessment of the student's literacy or numeracy skills may be necessary to provide a clear picture of their strengths and weaknesses.

- Develop an individual tutoring or treatment plan for each student detailing anticipated goals, strategies/programs to be used, and a summary of any assessments undertaken.
- Regularly monitor student progress and provide feedback to families/individuals. This may take the form of a 5-minute chat at the end of tutoring sessions to discuss the progress that has been made and home practice for the week and/or a regular (e.g. termly) written reports.
- Have sufficient tools and resources to allow them to assess their student's needs, develop a treatment or tutoring plan and deliver the treatment or tutoring accordingly.

Business Practices

Tutors and other Professionals on the SPELD NSW Referral Database are not employees or contractors of SPELD NSW but rather operate their own independent businesses. It is the responsibility of the Tutor or Professional to manage the financial relationship between themselves and the student's family.

It is the responsibility of each Tutor and Professional Member to maintain sound accounting, risk management and business practices including:

- appropriate public liability and professional indemnity insurance policies; and
- appropriate bookkeeping/accounting practice, including keeping appropriate records (including copies of invoices and receipts) and having a clear cancellation policy.

Do I need an ABN?

All members of the SPELD NSW Referral Database should apply for an ABN if they are operating a business and they should register for GST if their turnover is over \$75,000 per annum.

Further information regarding this can be found via the following links:

- <https://www.ato.gov.au/Business/Starting-your-own-business/Before-you-get-started/Choosing-your-business-structure/Sole-trader/>
- <https://www.nsw.gov.au/services/services-by-need/small-business/start-a-small-business/>
- <https://www.ato.gov.au/business/registration/work-out-which-registrations-you-need/business-or-company-registrations/#Australianbusinessnumber>
- <https://www.ato.gov.au/Business/GST/Registering-for-GST/>

Tutor Catch-Ups

SPELD NSW will run a Tutor and other Professional Member Catch-Up each school holidays (other than the end of year holidays) to provide Tutors and other Professionals with an opportunity to discuss current issues, share information about strategies and programs, be informed of new programs and issues, share success stories, and/or brainstorm solutions to problems encountered.

As a part of these Tutor and Professional Member Catch-Ups, a mini workshop or presentation is often run that can count towards Referral Database Members' professional learning hours with SPELD NSW.

SPELD NSW Tutors are encouraged to attend Tutor and other Professional Member Catch-Ups at least once per year. Tutor and other Professional Member Catch-Ups will be streamed through Zoom in order that members can access the Catch-Ups if they are not able to make it into the SPELD NSW office in Parramatta.

In order that SPELD NSW caters to the needs of Tutors and other Professionals, suggestions for professional learning topics and the timing of workshops are welcomed.

SPELD NSW Tutor and other Professional Members are also encouraged to contact the Information and Referral Team should they have queries relating to any aspect of their practice, or wish to discuss SPELD NSW referred students.

There is also a SPELD NSW Tutors and other Professional Members Facebook group that has been set up to provide tutors and other professionals with a forum in which questions can be posed and answered, valuable discussions can be generated, and experiences can be shared.

Associated Business Interests and referring to SPELD NSW membership

Frequently, tutoring is only one aspect of a Referral Database Member's professional life. Some SPELD NSW Referral Database Members teach in schools, work in other businesses and sell products (sometimes associated with literacy acquisition). Whilst Referral Database Members are obviously free to participate in other professional activities, it is important to keep these separate from their membership with SPELD NSW. Referral Database Members must not use the SPELD NSW name or logo in relation to the promotion of an associated or other business interest.

Membership of the SPELD NSW Referral Database should not be linked to product sales or activity promotion of any kind (e.g. promotion and presentation of professional learning, opinions expressed as part of website testimonials, and resource development) as it has the potential to suggest SPELD NSW endorsement of the particular product or activity.

SPELD NSW understands that Referral Database Members may wish to mention training attended and qualifications gained through SPELD NSW, their years of SPELD NSW Tutor or Professional membership, or include an email signature that they are a SPELD NSW Tutor or Professional Member. This is acceptable, so long as the SPELD NSW name is not linked to product sales or activity promotion that is not endorsed by SPELD NSW. If in doubt, please contact SPELD NSW for further clarification about the use of the SPELD NSW name.

What is the process of becoming a member of the SPELD NSW Referral Database?

1. Join SPELD NSW

Teachers and Allied Health Professionals who have expertise and experience in supporting children and adults with specific learning difficulties can join SPELD NSW as a Tutor or Professional Member in order to be considered for inclusion on our Referral Database.

2. Complete Referral Database application

Applicants for membership of the Referral Database will be asked to complete a Referral Database application by:

- completing the Referral Database Application form with information about your expertise and experience working with students with specific learning difficulties and prior professional learning;
- providing copies of your qualifications;

- (for allied health professionals) provide a sample, anonymised assessment report which is representative of your work with children or adults who have specific learning difficulties;
- providing your Working with Children Check number and date of birth;
- providing the names and contact details of two referees who can attest to the applicant's credentials, professionalism and aptitude (at least one of which must be a professional referee);
- confirming you are willing and able to comply with the SPELD NSW Referral Database Code of Conduct.

Qualifications and Experience

All Tutor and Professional Members of SPELD NSW must have:

- an appropriate qualification from a recognised tertiary institution (e.g. Education or Teaching, Special Education, Speech Pathology, Linguistics, Occupational Therapy and/or Psychology) ¹;
- a minimum of two years' practical experience or equivalent (e.g. in a classroom, as a therapist, or through individual or small group tutoring);
- a current Working with Children Check and a commitment to renewing the Working with Children Check as required; and
- an Australian Business Number.

Prior Professional Learning

Before they are accepted as members of the Referral Database, all Tutor and Professional Members of SPELD NSW must have completed sufficient professional learning to have developed expertise about:

- high quality, evidence-based literacy and/or numeracy programs, strategies and approaches; and
- supporting individuals with specific learning difficulties and disorders.

Please refer to the AUSPELD Understanding Learning Difficulties Guide for some examples of evidence-based programs and approaches. SPELD NSW offers a range of professional learning (e.g. SPELD NSW Teachers' Certificate Course, Sounds-Write, Understanding Learning Difficulties and Talk for Writing) which would assist a potential Tutor or Professional Member meet these requirements.

Please contact the Information and Referral Team if you would like to discuss your professional learning.

¹ Applicants without sufficient qualifications will be considered in limited circumstances

In instances where a SPELD NSW Tutor or Professional Member operates a business that employs or sub-contracts other tutors, teachers and/or allied health professionals, SPELD NSW membership can apply to the individual Tutor or Professional or to the whole practice. If applicants would like membership to apply to the whole practice, SPELD NSW will ask them for some additional information about the tutors and/or professionals in their business or practice.

3. Reference Check

On receipt of the completed Referral Database application, the referees of the applicant will be contacted and asked to complete a referee information form. The completed references will be reviewed to confirm the applicant's suitability for Tutor or Professional Membership with SPELD NSW.

4. Interview with a member of the Information and Referral Team

The applicant will then be asked to attend an interview with a member of the Information and Referral Team and demonstrate aptitude and suitability on the following criteria:

- prior professional learning
- prior experience working with students with specific learning difficulties
- programming, reporting, assessing, resources and tools and
- business practices.

Ongoing Requirements to Maintain Tutor or Professional Membership with SPELD NSW

SPELD NSW Referral Database Code of Conduct

It is part of the ongoing requirements for SPELD NSW Tutor and Professional Members that they agree to comply with the SPELD NSW Referral Database Code of Conduct in the way they run their businesses and provide tutoring and support to students and clients.

Professional Standards

As set out in the Code of Conduct, SPELD NSW Tutor and Professional Members are expected to act in a professional, courteous, positive and respectful manner, as well as maintain a clean, distraction-free environment for tutoring and service provision.

It is also expected that students and students' families act in a courteous and respectful manner.

SPELD NSW Tutor and Professional Members are expected to maintain a high degree of confidentiality and discretion in relation to information about their students.

It is expected that SPELD NSW Referral Database Members will use programs and approaches that adhere to the research and evidence surrounding high-quality literacy and numeracy instruction and best practice approaches for supporting students with specific learning difficulties.

As the primary means of communication between SPELD NSW and Referral Database Members is via email all members must have an up-to-date and working email address.

Working with Children Check (WWCC)

A Working with Children Check is essential when providing services to children. All SPELD NSW Tutor and Professional Members must have a current WWCC in order to be referred to families through the Information and Referral Service.

SPELD NSW asks all Tutor and Professional Members to provide both their WWCC number and date of birth in order that it can verify that the WWCC is current. If the WWCC number is not kept current, SPELD NSW will temporarily suspend the Tutor or Professional Member from the Referral Database until it is renewed.

Ongoing Professional Learning

Ongoing professional learning is an essential part of developing good practice. As such, SPELD NSW Tutor and Professional Members are expected to regularly consolidate and improve their expert knowledge of literacy and numeracy acquisition, remedial approaches to teaching and supporting students with specific learning difficulties.

New Referral Database Members are expected to have completed sufficient professional learning before they are admitted to the Referral Database such that they have the skills and knowledge to effectively provide remedial literacy and/or numeracy instruction and support to students with specific learning difficulties. Referral Database Members are thereafter expected to complete at least 6 hours of relevant professional learning per year to remain on the Referral Database.

To ensure professional learning is accessible for members of the Referral Database, SPELD NSW offers professional learning opportunities to SPELD NSW Tutor and Professional members with substantial discounts. Please see the SPELD NSW website for available professional learning provided by SPELD NSW and by other organisations that SPELD NSW has a relationship with.

SPELD NSW Referral Database members will be asked each year to provide SPELD NSW with information about professional learning undertaken in the prior 12 months and to update their details with SPELD NSW.

Resolution of Disputes

Any dispute between Referral Database Members and/or between a Referral Database Member and SPELD NSW, will be dealt with in accordance with Clause 13 of SPELD NSW's Constitution. The administrative procedure for implementing that clause are set out in the SPELD NSW Dispute Resolution Policy.

Thank you for your support of students with specific learning difficulties

Thank you for the support you provide to students with specific learning difficulties and their families.

Being a member of the SPELD NSW Referral Database gives teachers and other professionals the chance to work closely with students who need support. There are many rewards that come from this work, the most important of which is the chance to make a difference in the lives of students who struggle with literacy and learning.

SPELD NSW would like to thank and acknowledge the work of the very many dedicated members of our Referral Database.

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