Positive interactions in the learning environment

The student may benefit from:

- working in a low stress environment
- a high degree of personal space
- avoiding exposure to identified triggers such as flickering computer screens or lights
- provision of LCD monitors, anti-glare screens and audio-format learning materials
- having a scribe and/or tutorial support
- the repeating of missed information
- the opportunity to inform other students about epilepsy.

If the student is comfortable with disclosing such information, it may be useful to endeavour to find out:

- possible effects of medication
- any restrictions on activity
- the possibility and usual length of seizures.

Adjustments may need to be provided to enable a person with a disability to gain equitable access to education. Reasonable adjustments may include:

- modifying or providing equipment
- modifying assessment procedures
- changing course delivery
- modifying educational premises.

Adjustments must be determined in consultation with the student concerned.

For further advice contact your TAFE NSW Teacher Consultant

Other sources of support

Epilepsy Action of Australia
www.epilepsy.org.au

Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission
www.hreoc.gov.au

Disability Discrimination Act 1992
Disability Standards for Education 2005
**What is Epilepsy?**

Epilepsy occurs in 1–2 per cent of the population. The few known causes of epilepsy include birth trauma, head injury, brain infection, lack of oxygen to the brain e.g. from near-drowning.

Temporary physical changes in the brain can cause seizures, which can be convulsive (jerking) or ‘phase-outs’ (staring into space, lack of consciousness).

In people with epilepsy, seizures may be triggered by a range of stimuli including: failure to take medication, flashing or flickering lights or screens, stress or anxiety, fatigue, illness, poor diet, alcohol and drugs, inactivity and boredom.

Generally, participation in the full range of educational activities can occur without major adjustments.

Some epilepsy medication can adversely affect concentration, short term memory, alertness, coordination or mood. Epilepsy can cause frequent small lapses of consciousness which can interfere with learning.

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**Epileptic Seizures**

**First Aid Procedures**

- Note the time when the person started to have a seizure.
- Keep calm. Although the manifestations may be intense they are generally not painful to the individual.
- Help lower the person to the floor and place cushioning under their head.
- Turn the person’s head to the side so that breathing is not obstructed.
- Loosen tight clothing. Do not put anything in the person’s mouth.
- Do not try to restrain bodily movement.
- Make sure someone stays with the person until they recover.

The majority of seizures will resolve within a 5-10 minute period, making ambulance attendance unnecessary.

Sometimes after a seizure, the person may be exhausted and require a deep sleep.

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**Call an ambulance if:**

- food or water is in the mouth
- injury has occurred
- the seizure lasts longer than is usual for that person
- jerking lasts longer than 5 minutes or another seizure follows
- you arrive after the seizure has started
- the person has breathing difficulties after the jerking stops
- the person has diabetes
- the person is pregnant
- it is the person’s first known seizure
- you are in doubt about what to do.

**Epilepsy:**

- can affect anyone at any age
- is wrongly surrounded by fear, prejudice and misunderstanding
- is common and can be managed
- does not necessarily limit expectations or achievements.