

# **NDIS Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information Pack**

## **Psychosocial Disability**

**November 2020**

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## Introduction

This pack is designed to help people with psychosocial disability and their carers get the most out of their NDIS plan during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

We understand there is a lot of information, and some changes to the way the NDIS is being delivered during the pandemic, so we have created information packs like this one on specific topics.

In order to reach NDIS participants, their families and carers throughout the pandemic, please share the information and resources in this pack with parents and families.

We are regularly updating the NDIS website with information for participants, and will be complementing this by sharing information packs such as this on specific topics.

You can support our communications throughout the pandemic by using the following links to the NDIS website:

- [NDIS Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information and support](#)

Please let us know which topics you would like information on in the future as well as any other feedback you have to [communications@ndis.gov.au](mailto:communications@ndis.gov.au).

## Eligibility

To be [eligible for the NDIS](#), a person must meet the age, residence, and disability or early intervention requirements detailed in the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013.

To access the NDIS, you need to have a permanent and significant disability that stops you from doing everyday things by yourself. This includes disabilities that are episodic, such as people who have a significant and lifelong psychosocial disability.

You can read more about applying for the NDIS in an information pack on our [website](#).

## The planning process

### First planning meeting

Your first planning meeting will be held over the phone. You can talk to your Local Area Coordinator (LAC) or NDIS planner about ways you can share information about your disability.

For more information about phone planning meetings, visit [preparing for your planning meeting on the NDIS website](#).

### What happens if I have a scheduled plan review?

Your plan will not expire, it will be automatically extended by 12 months to make sure you have the funding you need.

Your plan review meeting will be held over the phone. You can let us know if you would prefer the meeting to take place by email.

As part of this plan review process, we will discuss with you the option of having a plan in place for up to 24 months.

Once your new plan is finalised, it will replace this extended plan and you will receive a copy of your new plan in the mail.

## Using your plan flexibly

The funding in your core support budget is flexible, so you can use the overall funding in this budget to purchase the supports you need. You can decide how to use this funding for day-to-day disability-related assistance.

Participants are encouraged to get in touch with their LAC or NDIS Planner who can provide information and assistance with adjusting plans.

## Changing your plan

Before considering a plan review, talk to your LAC or NDIS planner about how you can use your supports flexibly to get the support you need.

If you don't know how to contact your LAC or NDIS planner, you can look on your plan under My NDIS Contact, or look at our website for offices and [contacts in your area](#).

We can make changes to how you manage your plan. You can request that part or all of your NDIS plan be self-managed, so that you can use your funding more flexibly.

A plan review over the phone needs to be completed to make changes and there might be circumstances where it is not possible to self-manage your plan.

If your circumstances have changed, you may want to consider a plan review. Special teams of planners in the NDIA are available to help make urgent changes to plans. Call us on 1800 800 110 if you need urgent assistance.

## Can your service provider deliver by telepractice?

Some providers are using telepractice to deliver psychosocial disability related supports. Tele-practice or telehealth can include:

- videoconferencing
- emails
- text messages
- telephone calls
- group chats
- sending video or photos.

Telepractice encourages the use of capacity building practices, like coaching. Working with your provider, you can problem solve together, and find practical and effective solutions for your everyday routine.

It's important that you talk to your provider about the telepractice solutions that will best support you.

## Supports that can't be delivered by telepractice

### Specialised supports

Some specialised therapy supports may need to be completed in person. To maintain social distancing, this should only be in cases where it is an immediate priority.

## In home supports

Some participants may have carers coming into their homes to support complex support needs. These supports will most likely need to continue.

If your support workers cannot work with you, your provider should be in touch with you to organise a replacement worker or carer to help you. It's important that you discuss what your essential needs are with your provider.

Wherever possible, we encourage you to maintain physical distancing and good hygiene practices and to follow the advice of the [Department of Health](#).

## Low cost Assistive Technology

### Smart devices

Many face-to-face services have been suspended due to physical distancing regulations, with providers now delivering services online.

To help participants continue to receive their NDIS funded supports during this period, the NDIA has introduced a [new low cost Assistive Technology \(AT\) policy](#).

This will allow participants to use their existing NDIS funding to buy low cost AT items, such as smart devices. Participants can purchase an item if:

- it will maintain funded NDIS supports via telepractice
- it is the lowest specification that will maintain funded supports
- they do not already have the item, another suitable item or access to the item
- the item has not been funded by another service system (such as education)
- the item or circumstances are not specifically excluded.

This is a time limited policy which will be in place until 28 February 2021.

### How do I purchase a smart device?

Your provider will help you to purchase the right smart device to connect with them via telepractice.

We encourage you to work with your provider to discuss options and find solutions that are practical and effective to meet yours and your family's needs.

You can only purchase a smart device if you have funds available in your plan.

In the case of computer tablets or iPads for tele-practice, advice from AT specialists is that most NDIS participants will not need more than a standard tablet, which costs no more than \$600.

NDIS funding cannot be used for:

- Any item that does not relate to the participant's disability or that doesn't help to maintain NDIS funded supports and services.
- Devices with specifications beyond the minimum needed.
- Smart phones or tablets with mobile connections.
- Multiple devices.
- Replacements for loss or damage.
- Utility costs (internet connection).
- Software.
- Additional hardware or accessories.
- Purchase of items when rental options may be appropriate.

## Supported Independent Living

To support participants living in Supported Independent Living (SIL) arrangements during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we have introduced two new support items for cleaning services and higher intensity support.

These new support items cover three situations when a participant is diagnosed with coronavirus (COVID-19):

- they continue to reside in the normal SIL accommodation
- they are admitted to hospital
- they are relocated to alternative housing for isolation purposed or while transitioning into or out of hospital.

## Higher intensity support

SIL participants have access to \$1,200 maximum daily rate to cover the cost of higher intensity support including staffing increase, personal protective equipment (PPE), professional laundering, and any ancillary costs directly related to the participant's diagnosis.

This item may be claimed throughout a participant's period of infection (based on number of days from diagnosis to negative test result), whether they are located in their normal accommodation, in hospital, or isolated in alternative accommodation.

For more information about SIL and the new supports, visit [Supported Independent Living on the NDIS website](#)

## Cleaning services

A one-off professional deep clean of your SIL residence for SIL participants with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis.

A one-off professional deep clean of your residence for support worker related COVID-19 diagnosis.

Cleaning service for positive COVID-19 diagnosis is available nationally until 28 February 2021.

## Finding support workers

We know that participants, families and carers may be looking for workers to deliver much needed disability supports, and provide extra cover in these times.

There are a number of matching platforms that can help you quickly and easily connect you to support workers.

If the delivery of your supports have been disrupted or you are just looking for new support workers, or backup coverage – these businesses are ready to help you out.

Disability support matching platforms:

[Like Family](#) 1800 545 332

[Boosted](#) 0408 137 306

[Hireup](#) 02 9113 5933

[Clickability](#) 1800 414 616

[Mable](#) 1300 736 573

[Assistnow](#) 02 9230 1904

[Careseekers](#) 1300 765 465

[TappOn](#) 02 9158 6163

[Find a Carer](#) 1300 177 877

[MyCareSpace](#) 1800 670 014

[Mobility](#) 1300 438 227

[Australian Carers](#) 1800 330 900

[Karista](#) 1300 274 782

[You First](#) 1300 525 656

[Kynd](#) 07 5559 6532

You might want to register now even if you don't need support workers immediately. Remember you can use your NDIS funding flexibly to meet your plan goals.

Please note that some platforms do not provide staff experienced in working with people with mental health issues.

For more information about how the NDIA can help you find a support worker during the coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic, visit [Finding support workers on the NDIS website](#)

## Mental health support

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and practising self-isolation can be stressful and it may impact your mental health and wellbeing.



It's natural to feel a range of emotions, like stress and worry, particularly if your regular activities aren't occurring, or if you are caring for someone else.

In response to the coronavirus, the Australian Government has released a digital mental health portal. [Head to Health](#) is a single source of information and guidance on how to:

- maintain good mental health during the coronavirus pandemic and in self-isolation
- support children and loved ones
- access further mental health services and care.

For participants who are not currently receiving support from the NDIS for a psychosocial disability, there are a range of online mental health resources available on the [Department of Health website](#).

If you feel you need help and it's not an emergency, it's best to contact your doctor.

When you speak to your doctor, they'll assess what help you need. If eligible, this could include:

- making a mental health assessment
- creating a mental health care plan
- referring you to a psychiatrist or other mental health professional
- giving you a prescription for medicine to treat depression or anxiety.

A care plan lets you claim for up to 10 sessions with a mental health professional each calendar year.

Visit the [Services Australia website](#) for further information.

If you require support, please contact:

- Lifeline on [13 11 14](#)
- Kids Helpline on [1800 551 800](#)
- Beyond Blue [1300 224 636](#)
- Headspace [1800 650 890](#)
- SANE Australia [1800 187 263](#)
- Suicide Call Back Service [1300 659 467](#)
- Australian Government Department of Health 24 hour Coronavirus hotline [1800 020 080](#)