

NDIS access for people with psychosocial disability

This resource is an overview of the six NDIS psychosocial disability and access factsheets. It provides information about applying to the NDIS with a psychosocial disability, and mental health.

For more detailed information please visit the [NDIS website](#).

Mental health, psychosocial disability and the NDIS

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is designed to support people with disability to increase their independence and fully participate in community and working life.

People who meet the NDIS eligibility criteria are known as NDIS participants.

The NDIS provides funding to eligible people with disability from a mental health condition to gain:

- more time with family and friends
- greater independence
- access to new skills
- jobs or volunteering in their community
- an improved quality of life.

While the NDIS recognises people with mental health condition/s are impacted by their condition, not everyone who has a mental health condition will experience psychosocial disability.

The NDIS has a role in supporting inclusive communities. This is where everyone can pursue their goals to enhance their community engagement, personal satisfaction, and wellbeing.

Mental health diagnosis

NDIS support is based on the impairment or impact of a mental health condition, not the diagnosis.

When applying to the NDIS, we prefer to know if you have a specific mental health diagnosis, but it is not essential. This means you need to give evidence of a mental health condition to access the NDIS, but you do not have to name the condition.

For example, if you have been diagnosed with schizophrenia, we will base an NDIS access decision on the impact of the condition on your daily life. It will not be based on the schizophrenia diagnosis itself.

It is helpful if you share your schizophrenia diagnosis with the NDIA. But if you prefer not to or do not identify with your diagnosis, it is fine to apply for the NDIS stating you have a mental health condition. However, sharing your diagnosis with the NDIA will make it easier for us to see if you meet the eligibility requirements.

NDIS eligibility

People who experience disability because of a mental health condition/s may be eligible for an NDIS plan.

For a person with psychosocial disability, this might look like:

- You have participated in periods of treatment and support with mental health clinicians and clinical teams.
- You have been undergoing ongoing treatment that attempts to reduce the impacts of a mental health condition/s which has not remedied the impairment.
- You have tried any other treatments that are available and recommended by your treating professional for you and your condition that might help you.
- Despite all the treatment you have undergone and will continue to receive, your mental health condition continues to impact on your ability to function and the impact is likely to be permanent.
- You are likely to require support to increase your social and economic participation.
- You are likely to require lifelong support.

If you do not meet NDIS eligibility criteria you still have access to support from local area coordinators to connect to mainstream and community services.

To become an NDIS participant, you must:

- be an Australian citizen, or have a permanent or Protected Special Category Visa (SCV) AND
- be under 65 years old when you apply to join the NDIS AND
- meet the disability or the early intervention criteria.

If you have a mental health condition and want to access the NDIS under the [disability requirements](#), you must meet the above criteria and provide evidence that:

- your psychosocial disability is attributable to an impairment AND
- the difficulties you experience as a result of your mental health condition/s mean you will likely always require NDIS support AND
- the difficulties you experience as a result of your mental health condition/s have substantially reduced your ability to do everyday activities.

You may also be eligible for the NDIS under the [early intervention requirements](#) if you need some supports now to reduce your future need for support. You can visit the [Am I eligible](#) page on the NDIS website for more information.

The NDIS does not replace community mental health services or treatment services provided through the health system. It funds psychosocial recovery supports that focus on improving a person's functional ability.

This includes supports that enable people with psychosocial disability to:

- increase their capacity
- increase their levels of independence to undertake daily living activities
- be part of their community
- participate in social and economic life.

You can visit the [reimagine today](#) website for information about mental health, recovery and the NDIS. This resource also features community hubs with resources specific for the families and carers, First Nations, CALD, LGBTIQ+, and remote communities.

A mental health toolkit can be downloaded from the [Independent Mental Health Advocacy](#) website. It provides information for people thinking of applying for or accepted onto the NDIS. It was co-designed with people with psychosocial disability.

Recovery and the NDIS

A founding principle of the NDIS is that:

“People with disability should be supported to participate in and contribute to social and economic life to the extent of their ability” *Section 4 NDIS Act 2013*.

Recovery means a person is able to “regain control of their identity and life, have hope for their life, and live a life that has meaning for them whether that be through work, relationships, spirituality, community engagement or some or all of these.” *World Health Organisation*¹. This is also known as personal recovery.

Supporting recovery for lifelong impairments

The NDIS supports a strengths-focused and person-centred approach to developing recovery plans with a participant.

NDIS funding offers support to help the participant pursue both short-term and long-term goals of social and economic participation. These goals may change over time, and the plans and supports can also change as needed.

We recognise that mental health conditions are often episodic and fluctuating. This means they may change over time.

We understand there is a need for flexibility in planning and support to respond to changes in need.

The Psychosocial Disability Recovery-Oriented Framework

The NDIA is committed to improving the experience of participants with psychosocial disability in the Scheme.

In December 2021, the NDIA released the [Psychosocial Disability Recovery-Oriented Framework \(Recovery Framework\)](#).

The aim of the Recovery Framework is to improve the responsiveness to, and experience of, NDIS participants with psychosocial disability.

It will deliver meaningful change and better outcomes for participants living with psychosocial disability.

¹ Guidance on community mental health services: promoting person-centred and rights-based approaches. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021

Psychosocial recovery coach

Psychosocial recovery coaches (recovery coaches) are a support available to participants with psychosocial disability in an NDIS plan.

Recovery coaches help people with psychosocial disability to increase their independence, and social and economic participation.² They help people:

- take more control of their lives
- better manage complex challenges of daily living.

A psychosocial recovery coach also works with a participant to:

- build capacity and resilience
- identify, plan, design and coordinate different supports
- plan and maintain engagement through times of increased support needs
- provide coaching to build on strengths, knowledge, skills, resilience, and decision-making.

Accessing the NDIS when support needs change

Everyone's journey is different. We know the support people need will change over their lifetime.

Early intervention

The NDIS funds early intervention supports for people who are eligible. If you meet the early intervention requirements when you join the NDIS, we know your support needs are more likely to change. We'll regularly check your eligibility when we reassess your plan, and at other times too.

If you benefit from early intervention supports, you might build your skills and increase your capacity so that you may no longer need NDIS supports.

Visit the [early intervention requirements](#) page on the NDIS website for more information.

Mental health condition impacts on everyday life

Lifetime support

To access the NDIS under the disability requirements, it must be likely that you will need support for your lifetime.

The NDIS must be the most appropriate service to provide this support. This means no other service system, such as the health system, could provide it.

You may have times in your life when there is less impact on your daily life. This is because your impairment may be episodic or fluctuate in intensity.

This means your impairment may change over time.

You may still be assessed as likely to require support if you meet the NDIS eligibility criteria.

What the NDIA needs to know about how you carry out everyday activities

To be eligible for the NDIS under the disability requirements, your mental health condition will have a significant impact on your day-to-day life.

The NDIA will think about if you can carry out everyday activities with and without support in the each of these life areas:

- **Communicating** – how you speak, write, or use sign language and gestures, to express yourself compared to other people your age. We look at how well you understand people, and how others understand you.
- **Socialising** – how you make and keep friends or interact with the community. We look at your behaviour, and how you cope with feelings and emotions in social situations. For example, you experience social avoidance and need support from another person to access the community.
- **Learning** – how you learn, understand and remember new things, and practice and use new skills.
- **Mobility, or moving around:** how easily you move around your home and community. We think about how you get out and about. Generally speaking, a person applying for the Scheme for a primary psychosocial disability is not likely to have substantially reduced functional capacity in this life skill area.

- **Self-care:** personal care, hygiene, grooming, eating and drinking, and health. We think about how you get dressed, shower or bathe, eat or go to the toilet. For example, you need ongoing direct interventions to manage your health care needs.
- **Self-management:** how you organise your life. We think about how you plan, make decisions, and look after yourself. This might be daily tasks at home, how you solve problems, or manage your money. We think about how your psychosocial disability affects your ability to manage your life, not your physical ability to do these tasks. For example, you need support from another person to manage the demands of a tenancy and to make decisions and look after yourself.

Demonstrating the impact of mental health conditions on everyday life

A good way to show us how your mental health condition affects you is to ask a mental health professional to complete a [functional assessment](#). This would usually be completed by a qualified and experienced mental health occupational therapist, psychologist or social worker.

The NDIS has created the [Evidence of Psychosocial Disability form](#) to explain the type and frequency of support needed.

You don't have to use this form, but it is the preferred form for people with primary psychosocial disability.

You can ask a carer, family member, mental health professional or practice nurse to help you get evidence.

You can also provide a personal statement and statements written by family, friends and support workers to explain how you carry out everyday tasks on a day-to-day basis.

The [Support Worker template](#) on the NDIS website provides a guide for mental health support workers or peer workers to provide statements.

Other documentation and formal assessments given to Centrelink or other government departments can also be helpful.

NDIS and other services

Mainstream services

Mainstream services means other government services like health, mental health, education, justice, housing, child protection, and employment services. Most individuals use many different mainstream services throughout their lives.

Even after access to the NDIS, mainstream services will keep funding a person's treatment supports. This might include early intervention services for people experiencing mental health issues or psychology sessions under Medicare mental health care plans. Visit the Services Australia [Mental health care and Medicare](#) website for more information.

For people who do not access the NDIS, there is support available for people who experience severe mental health issues and psychosocial needs. This is the Commonwealth Psychosocial Supports, which are commissioned by Primary Health Networks (PHNs).

Contact your local PHN, or visit the Department of Health and Aged Care [Psychosocial support for people with severe mental illness](#) webpage for more information.

We work closely with mainstream and community services to create a strong support system so people with psychosocial disability can get the support they need. You can visit [What are mainstream and community supports](#) on the NDIS website for more information.

How to receive assistance if ineligible for the NDIS

If you are not eligible for NDIS funded support, you can still get assistance from a local area coordinator.

Local area coordinators can help people connect to mainstream services and local and community-based supports. Local area coordinators have strong connections in community. They can help people connect with supports in their local area including:

- community groups
- recreational activities such as sporting clubs and performing arts groups
- other social networks.

You can use the NDIS website or [contact the NDIS to find a local area coordinator](#) in your area. You can visit the [partners in the community](#) page on the NDIS website for more information.

Reviewing access decisions

If you don't agree with a decision that you are not eligible for the NDIS, you can [contact the NDIS](#). The NDIS can help explain the decision and what the options or next steps might be.

You can also ask for an internal review. Another staff member, who wasn't involved in the original decision, will then check if the NDIS made the right decision. You need to ask for an internal review within 3 months after receiving the decision. Learn more about [reviewing our decisions](#) on the NDIS website.

Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT)

You can also ask the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) to review a decision. This is called an external review. There cannot be an external review until after the internal review decision has been made.

You can [contact the NDIS](#) to discuss any concerns you have about the process. You can also [make a complaint](#) if you are not happy with any part of the process.

For more information about asking for an external review of an NDIS decision, visit the Australian Government [Administrative Appeals Tribunal](#) website.

National Disability Insurance Agency

[ndis.gov.au](https://www.ndis.gov.au)

Telephone 1800 800 110

Webchat [ndis.gov.au](https://www.ndis.gov.au)

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