

Mental Health Access Snapshot Series

Snapshot 2 – Impairment and Mental Health in the NDIS

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is designed to support people with disability to fully participate in community (social) and work (economic) life.

People who meet the NDIS access criteria are known as NDIS participants and receive individualised support. To become an NDIS participant with a psychosocial disability, you will be someone who experiences disability as a result of impairment caused by your mental health condition.

The questions and answers below explain the access requirements in a mental health context.

What is a disability?

Disability is defined in different ways and for different purposes. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) gave a broad definition:

“People with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

The NDIS is for those people with disability who experience the most significant needs.

Not everyone with a mental health condition will experience disability. For those that do, the disability can be severe and longstanding, and it can really impact on someone’s recovery journey.

What is a mental health condition?

A mental health condition is a broad term that refers to symptoms that may be caused by a range of factors including life events and genetic factors. A mental health condition can be temporary or lifelong and include mood, anxiety, personality, psychotic, and compulsive disorders.

What is an impairment?

An impairment is a loss of, or damage to, physical or mental function. When considering access to the NDIS for a person with a mental health condition, impairments must be specifically about loss or damage to mental function. Mental functions are perception, memory, thinking, and emotions.

Do I need to provide a mental health diagnosis to access the NDIS?

Not necessarily. You need to provide evidence that you have a mental health condition. Diagnosis of a specific and named mental health condition is not required (although extremely helpful if available).



So I need to demonstrate that I have a mental health condition but I don't have to name the specific condition?

Yes. A specific diagnosis may change over time, but the impact it is having on you is constant. Sometimes clinicians may not agree on a diagnosis. Confirmation of the presence of a mental health condition is required. This confirmation may include a specific mental health diagnosis, if available.

What is the focus of the NDIS if it is not diagnosis?

NDIS support is centred on the impairment (the impact of the mental health condition rather than the condition itself).

Both at access and throughout a lifelong relationship with the NDIS, the core of everything the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) does centres around how the impairment functionally impacts on a person's day-to-day life.

What is the difference between a mental health condition and an impairment?

The terms "mental health condition" and "impairment" are distinct but interrelated. In the NDIS context, a mental health condition (which includes a range of diagnoses) can be thought of as the cause of the impairment (loss of or damage to mental function).

So if my impairment resulting from my mental health condition(s) has resulted in my disability could I be eligible for the NDIS?

Yes. If you meet all of the other access criteria which include:

- your impairment is likely to be permanent, and
- your ability to do everyday activities is substantially reduced by your impairment.

Please see snapshots 3 & 4 for more info.

Myth Busters

If a person has been diagnosed with Schizophrenia, which they have lived with for a number of years, they will automatically meet the NDIS access criteria?

False. No specific mental health diagnosis will automatically meet or not meet the NDIS access criteria. Access decisions are made on individual circumstances and not specifically centred on the diagnosis, rather the impact that this mental health condition has on a person's daily life.

If a person has co-existing drug/alcohol dependency they will not be eligible for the NDIS?

False. If you are seeking to access the NDIS with a psychosocial disability, the NDIA needs to know that the impairment is because of a mental health condition. If that is the case, a person can meet the NDIS access requirements, regardless of any co-existing dependency issue(s). A potential participant may be accessing, or planning to access treatment, for co-existing substance dependency at the time of access and throughout any ongoing relationship with the NDIS.



The NDIA does not recognise psychosis as a mental health condition.

False. Psychotic disorders include a range of diagnostic categories, some of which may be brief in nature. People who experience psychosis may be eligible for individualised NDIS support if they meet the access requirements.

Please see snapshots 1, 3, 4 & 5 for more information on access for mental health conditions.

Contact the NDIS

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