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What assistance animals are

Assistance animals are animals specially trained by accredited providers. They help you do things you can’t do because of your disability.

To be an assistance animal, the animal needs to be trained to:

- a high level of obedience in community and public spaces, like train stations or shopping centres
- perform at least 3 tasks or behaviours that you can’t do because of your disability.

For example, a common assistance animal is a dog guide.

Not all trained animals are assistance animals

Other trained animals can be helpful in your life, but don’t meet the definition of an assistance animal. This includes animals that:

- are kept for company or fun, including pets
- provide emotional and informal support
- take part in therapy activities led by a therapist
- may or may not live on site and trained to work in a specific facility or type of facility, such as a residential aged care home
- belong to a volunteer or provider and trained to visit residential, health or educational facilities.

> **Tip: Animals included in animal-assisted therapy aren’t assistance animals.**
>
> An animal included in animal-assisted therapy is a tool an appropriately qualified person, like a clinical psychologist, includes as part of delivering goal-directed, structured therapy.
>
> Learn more about animal-assisted therapy.

What assistance animals are for

Assistance animals are trained to do things to help you in your everyday life that an animal wouldn't naturally do.

Assistance animals can help with things like:

- opening and closing doors or fridges
- opening and closing drawers or cupboards
- picking up dropped items
- reassuring you in times of extreme anxiety, such as helping you to leave your home when you're not comfortable to go out
- pressing the button at traffic lights
- taking clothes out of the washing machine
- helping you find your way around safely, including stopping at kerbs and stairs
- guiding you through crowds
- finding a spare seat on a bus
- helping you find doors on cars and trains
- blocking or being a barrier to other people if needed.

What having assistance animal supports is like

Some assistance animals can be funded by the NDIS

To be funded by the NDIS, an assistance animal must be a reasonable and necessary support that'll meet your needs and help you work towards your goals.

To work out if we can fund an assistance animal, we also consider:

- the welfare of the assistance animal
- if the animal is likely to harm you or be a risk to others
- if you already have an assistance animal.

Learn about how to ask for funding for assistance animals.

We need evidence to decide on assistance animal funding

We need evidence from a qualified assessor that an assistance animal will help you work towards your goals to consider if we can fund this support.

An assistive technology assessor of assistance animals can complete an assistance animal assessment to provide the evidence we need.

We also need a quote on the cost of your assistance animal. The quote needs to include costs for caring for your animal and making sure it stays accredited.

When you have assistance animal funding included in your NDIS plan

Your plan will include details about the assistance animal supports and what the funding can be used for.

This may include funding for:

- an assessment to match an animal with you
- buying or leasing an assistance animal
- training the assistance animal by a qualified provider
- ongoing maintenance costs, such as vet fees, food and grooming.

There are some costs related to assistance animals that our rules say we can't fund.

This includes:

- pet insurance
- taxidermy and pet cremations, burials or funeral.

Our Guideline

Download the assistance animals including dog guides guideline:

- Assistance animals including dog guides guideline (PDF 307KB)
- Assistance animals including dog guides guideline (DOCX 92KB)

Related information

What is animal-assisted therapy

How to ask for funding for assistance animals

What is reasonable and necessary

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