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How an early childhood partner will evidence developmental delay for children younger than 6

This page explains how an early childhood partner will gather information to work out if your child is likely to meet the criteria for developmental delay.

What is developmental delay?

Developmental delay is a term used to describe a delay in a child's development. It means that a child finds it much harder to do everyday things that other children their age can do, for example dress themselves, talk or walk.

A child with developmental delay needs lots of extra help to do everyday things compared to children of the same age. Learn more about the definition of developmental delay in our [guideline – applying to the NDIS](#).

How will an early childhood partner determine if my child has developmental delay?

Early childhood partners are teams of early childhood professionals, such as occupational therapists, speech pathologists and early childhood educators. Your early childhood partner will work with you to gather information about your child and use it to evidence if your child meets the criteria for developmental delay.

Your early childhood partner will gather information in different ways.

Talking with you

Your early childhood partner will ask you about your child's day-to-day life to understand any concerns you may have, such as how they:

- play
- talk with other children
- help take care of themselves
- tell you what they need and want.

Reports about your child

Your early childhood partner will review any available information from people who know your child well, like doctors, therapists and teachers.

Observations

Your early childhood partner will observe your child in places where they spend lots of time, such as your home or at their childcare centre. This shows us what your child is good at, what they like to do and the areas where they may need more help than other children the same age.

Assessment and Screening Tools

Your early childhood partner will use assessment and screening tools to understand your child's development. These tools will show if your child's development differs from other children of the same age. Your early childhood partner will choose the tools. You can choose where your early childhood partner does these assessments with you and your child, such as at your home or at child care.

What are the next steps?

Your early childhood partner will use all the information to recommend and connect you to the right supports for your child. If your child is likely to meet the criteria for developmental delay, your early childhood partner may recommend that you consider applying to the NDIS on your child's behalf.

Learn more about [applying to the NDIS](#) .

If your child is unlikely to meet the criteria for developmental delay and developmental concerns have been identified, your early childhood partner may recommend other [early connections](#) including early supports.

Learn more about early supports in [our guideline - early connections](#) .

What if there are no early childhood partners in my area?

If you live in an area with no early childhood partner, someone from the NDIA will work directly with you, to connect you to supports and services that best meet the needs of your child. [Contact us](#) or call 1800 800 110.

You can continue to work with your child's doctor, child health nurse or early childhood educator to:

- understand your child's needs
- provide reports, observations and assessments to evidence your child's disability or developmental delay
- support you to submit an [Access request](#) to the NDIA

If you do not have access to a partner, you can also download and complete the NDIS Access Request Form and email it to enquiries@ndis.gov.au with supporting information.

For more information

You can always contact your doctor, child health nurse, health service or early childhood educator if you have any concerns about your child's development.

Our [early childhood partners](#) can also help you find the right supports for your child.

If you live in an area that does not have an early childhood partner, [contact us](#) or call 1800 800 110

This page current as of
28 March 2024