



Speech Therapy

Speech Therapists help you communicate well with other people. They can also help you with eating or swallowing.

Speech Therapists (sometimes called Speech Pathologists) work with you to find your most comfortable way to communicate with people. They can work with you to talk and pronounce words more clearly, learn to speak confidently with your stutter, or learn a new communication method such as using technology to communicate if you cannot talk. They also help people who are having trouble eating and swallowing foods as they are experts in the mouth and throat.

You will usually see a Speech Therapist at their clinic, but some will come to your home. You may see them regularly for a short time to correct and work on one issue, or you may see them over a long time if you are learning a new communication method.

Speech Therapy

A Certified Practising Speech Pathologist (CPSP) is a Speech Therapist with an undergraduate or master's degree, and is registered with Speech Pathology Australia (SPA). Not all therapists are CPSPs. To use your NDIA plan your therapist needs to be registered with SPA.

While all Speech Therapists can support you, they all have different personalities, experiences, and expertise. They might specialise in physical disability, intellectual disability, or working with children. It is important to choose a speech therapist that you trust to truly understand you.

Some people find meeting a new therapist or health professional hard. It is important to remember that it can take time to build a relationship where you trust your health therapists.

All Speech Therapists are different. Some may be great for your friends and family but may not be right for you.

What Speech Therapists can (and can't) do for you

- ✓ A Speech Therapist can help you work out the best way for you to communicate
- ✓ A Speech Therapist can help you with eating if you struggle to chew or swallow food
- ✓ A Speech Therapist can recommend equipment or technology that could help you
- ✗ You may not get everything your Speech Therapist recommends if it is not explained well to the NDIA
- ✗ Your Speech Therapist will not recommend equipment you want if you do not need it

What a Speech Therapy report usually includes

A speech therapy report might be helpful in your NDIS planning or review meeting. A good report might mean the right amount of funding and some assistive technology, but but a poor quality report might mean you don't get enough supports to live your life independently.

When it is time for your plan review, make sure your Speech Therapist writes a report of the work you have done together. You may need to remind them as they often have a lot of clients.

Good reports;

- > Make clear recommendations for funding, including expected outcomes
- > Relate the recommendations to your NDIS goals
- > Use language the NDIS uses, such as "reasonable and necessary"
- > Provide evidence for any requested funding of hours, assistive technology, and adapted products
- > Show the progress you have made during your current NDIS plan

Here are some questions that might help you choose your Speech Therapist:

- > Are you registered with SPA?
- > What is your experience working with people with my disability?
- > Will you talk to my other professionals (i.e. doctor) to develop a plan that considers all the different parts of my life?
- > Do you offer home or community visits?
- > How often do you think I will need to see you?
- > Will you set goals with me?
- > Will you consider my NDIS goals in your assessment?

Independent Assessments

The NDIA may ask you to participate in an independent assessment. The assessment will determine how much funding will be in your NDIA plan, based on your support needs. The assessor will be an allied health professional (e.g. OT, Physiotherapist, Social Worker) that has not worked with you before. The assessors are not employees of the NDIA. They work independently. The NDIA has developed this assessment to make sure everyone in the NDIS have an assessment of their needs, even if they cannot afford it themselves. The NDIA pays for the independent assessment.

What is Telehealth?

You can ask your Speech Therapist if you can have your appointment over the phone or on video. This is available for people who live far away, or cannot get to their appointments because of disability, mental health, or self-isolation.

During the Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020, Telehealth became more common and available to more people in Australia.

How your Speech Therapists can help with NDIS planning and review meetings

Your speech therapist can produce a report about your progress toward the goals in your NDIS plan. This might be as a formal assessment or an update report for the NDIA, and can request different or additional equipment that you need.

It is unlikely that you will need your speech therapist to come to your review meeting, however, if you have a lot of equipment needed you can ask them to attend with you to explain these to the planner. You will have to pay for this.

Your rights and entitlements

- > You are entitled to an interpreter to make sure you understand what is being said. There can be a lot of questions, talking, and explaining during a speech therapy assessment. If an interpreter is needed for a family member or carer, explain that this is important so that they can be involved in the conversation, and can support you to follow up on advice.
 - The speech therapist may be able to bring an interpreter with them, but sometimes you may have to organise this yourself.
 - You can ask to have any reports or documents translated for you or your primary carer.
- > You are entitled to the support and care of a trustworthy professional who will work with you to reach your goals.
- > If your speech therapy report is missing key information - such as goals - you have the right to ask the speech therapist to change the report.

I can talk with my friends easily because my Speech Therapist recommended communication technology in my NDIS plan



START HERE →

Steps for using a Speech Therapist

1

Receive speech therapy funding in your plan

2*

Find a Speech Therapist that is confident with your support needs

3*

Share your NDIS plan, goals, preferences, and support needs with your speech therapist

4

Meet your Speech Therapist at their clinic or your home

5

Practice the skills they teach you, and use any equipment they recommend

6*

Make sure the progress report they give you is correct and talks about your progress towards your goals

7*

NDIS review meeting

* If you have a Support Coordinator, they will organise these with you.

How to ask for Speech Therapy in your NDIS plan

Many people ask for a communication assessment in their first or second plans. Some people have never had an assessment before, and some people have not had one for a very long time. If you think you need an assessment, ask the planner to include it - as well as Speech Therapy appointments - in your NDIS plan.

There are many reasons why a person may not use all of the funding in their NDIS plan. These include long waitlists for health therapists, or if you are sick and are not having your regular supports.

This is OK and doesn't mean you will get less money in your next plan. When you have your annual Plan Review, make sure that you tell your planner why you have some unspent money in your NDIS plan.

Making a complaint

If you are not happy with your speech therapist's report, you can discuss this with your speech therapist, or their manager.

If you are not happy with your speech therapist, or how they are behaving, you can make a complaint to their manager, or a specific complaints' manager within the organisation.

If you think that there has been a serious problem, or you are not happy with how the organisation has handled your complaint or concern, you have 3 options for complaints.

1. If you are making a complaint about the charges to your NDIS plan, or you believe they are not acting an NDIS registered organisation should, you can complain to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Quality and Safeguards Commission directly. They exist to support you with your concerns and to help improve services for all people with disability.

You can contact them on:

- ☎ 1800 035 544 TTY 133 677
- ✉ contactcentre@ndiscommission.gov.au
- 💻 www.ndiscommission.gov.au
- ✍ NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission
PO Box 210, Penrith, NSW, 2750



2. If you are making a complaint because you think the speech therapist's behaviour puts other people at risk or is unsafe, you can make a complaint to SPA (Speech Pathology Australia). They can review a therapists registration.

You can contact them on:

- ☎ 1300 368 835
- 💻 www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au
- ✉ office@speechpathologyaustralia.org.au
- ✍ Lvl 1 / 114 William St. Melbourne Victoria 3000



3. If you are making a complaint to get an explanation, apology, refund, or a change in policy/practice, you can make a complaint to the Victorian Health Complaints Commissioner. The VHCC handle all major complaints about health services in Victoria.

You can contact them on:

- ☎ 1300 582 113 TTY: 131 450
- 💻 www.hcc.vic.gov.au
- ✍ In-Person or by Mail: Level 26, 570 Bourke Street, Melbourne Victoria 3000.
To make time for your visit, call 1300 582 113.



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