



# Support Workers

Support workers help you with everyday tasks and activities

Support Workers can be called different things. You might hear or see them called Support Professionals, Support Staff, or another term that the person with disability, or the organisation prefers.

Support Workers help you to complete your everyday tasks and activities. They are there to support you to reach your goal and do what you want to do each day. They help people to go out into the community and make friends, join hobby clubs, play sport, and a lot more. Some people have Support Workers to help them with study at TAFE or University, particularly if their disability means they have difficulty physically at their place of study.

You will probably see your support workers often. A lot of places will organise that the same Support Worker comes each week, but sometimes there might be a new person when they are sick or cannot work with you that day.

## Getting along with your Support Workers

All Support Workers are different. They come from a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, and can be any age. Some might have more experience supporting people in the community and at events, while others might be more comfortable with self-care and hygiene, or helping you improve particular skills. Your support workers might work with you to practice skills that a Speech Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, or other professional has suggested.

When you meet your new support worker you might get along well straight away. This happens a lot when we meet new people. Ask your support worker questions and see what you have in common. You might find that you both have the same hobbies or go for the same sports team. You can use this information to help build a good relationship.

If you have some preferences for your support workers it is important to tell the organisation that they are coming from, and your Support Coordinator if you have one. For example, people usually prefer to go to some events and activities with a worker the same age. A 25-year-old person might ask for a support worker under 35. Having things in common with your Support Workers can help to build a good working relationship.

### What your Support workers can (and can't) do for you

- ✓ Support you to engage with other people and groups
  - ✓ Encourage you to reach your goals
  - ✓ Support you to clean your house
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- ✗ Make friends for you
  - ✗ Force you to do anything you do not want to do
  - ✗ Clean your house for you

Sometimes the most important part of my job is to stay back and encourage independence.



### START HERE

#### Steps for using a Support Worker

- 1** Receive Support Worker funding in your plan
- 2\*** Find a support organisation that is confident with you and your support needs
- 3\*** Share your NDIS plan, goals, preferences, and support needs with your support organisation
- 4\*** Meet your Support Worker at your home, workplace, or school
- 5** Live your life as independently as you can
- 6** Work with your Support Workers on your NDIS goals
- 7\*** NDIS review meeting

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

## Your rights and entitlements

- > You are entitled to choose your support workers.
  - You can give your preferences for a support worker to your organisation or Support Coordinator, and they can look for people who might fit this. However, it is important to remember that there may not always be someone who fits all of your preferences.
- > You are entitled to the support and care of a professional that you can trust is working with you to reach your goals.
- > You have the right to live your life how you want to.
  - Your Support Workers should support your lifestyle and identity at all times. This could be your religion, your cultural traditions, or how you choose to dress and speak.
- > You are entitled to be supported well.
  - Your Support Workers should be experienced, and have regular professional development where they learn new ways of supporting people. Your Support Workers should pay attention to you, and not be distracted by their personal life.

## How to choose a service provider

There are a lot of service providers that have Support Workers for people with disability. You can choose to stay with one provider or use a few different providers depending on your support needs. Here are a few things to think about or ask the organisation when you are choosing:

- > **Are they a person-centred organisation?**
  - ▶ Will I get individualised supports?
  - ▶ Are they flexible as my needs change?
  - ▶ Do they listen to me?
  - ▶ Can they support me to reach my goals?
- > **Do I agree with their service philosophy and practice?**
  - ▶ Is their vision and mission in line with my beliefs?
  - ▶ How do they communicate with people? Do they communicate regularly?
  - ▶ Do you have someone you can contact easily?
  - ▶ Do they use volunteers?
- > **Are the staff trained well and respectful?**
- > **Is the organisation in a good location for me?**
- > **Can I afford this organisation in my NDIS plan?**
- > **What do other people say about the organisation?**
- > **How does the organisation monitor their performance?**
- > **Are they NDIS registered?\***

\* Turn over for more details about NDIS registration. →

## How Support Workers can help with NDIS planning

Support Workers do not often go to planning meetings, but they can help in other ways. Your Support Workers are the people you see the most often, and they may have noticed something that you could use some more help with. Support Workers write notes after each time they see you. These notes are about what you did in that time and how you are working towards your goals. These notes help to prove to the NDIS that you are working on your goals if they ask for them.



## NDIS Registration

Using registered providers might give you stability in what to expect. However unregistered providers might give you more flexibility. One is not better than the other, but it is important to think about what is important to you.

NDIS registration is when a service provider agrees to follow all of the rules set by the NDIA in how to act. These rules include how much they can charge a participant, as well as quality standards like minimum standards of care, how to act when someone makes a complaint, and how to ensure that participants are respected.

Some organisations have chosen not to become registered. This may be because they choose to charge more, or they have another agency that ensures they have high standards (i.e. allied health have other agencies who ensure their standards). Organisations might feel like they are too small to go through the process of registration as it takes time to do.



## How to ask for NDIS funding for Support Workers

Most NDIS plans will include some funding for Support Workers. For Support Workers, it is more important to talk with your planner about how much support you need from support workers. You will need to tell them how many hours a day, or a week, you need support. It is important to remember not only activities and tasks that are everyday or very common, but also things that might not happen all the time, such as a weekend away, or going to events like parties or concerts.

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.

## How to make a complaint

If you are not happy with your Support Worker you might like to make a complaint. The first step would be to talk to the worker's manager and discuss your concerns. Alternatively, you could contact the complaints manager at 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 can contact 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](mailto:contactcentre@ndiscommission.gov.au)
- 🌐 [www.ndiscommission.gov.au](http://www.ndiscommission.gov.au)
- 📍 NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission  
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