



ndis

Helping patients navigate access to the NDIS

How practice nurses, allied health professionals, NDIS partners and other professionals in the community can assist GPs

Paving the path to access paves the way for your patients' success

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) aims to give people living with a disability the funding and supports they need to live their best life.

By providing access to lifelong supports and services, the NDIS builds the capacity of people living with a disability to function independently, pursue their goals and aspirations, and get more involved in social, community and work life. For many people, this will be the first time they receive any disability support.

When seeking to access the NDIS, patients and/or carers will often ask their GP for support, from general information and advice on eligibility to evidence gathering and documentation. Given the GP workload, there are very practical ways in which other professionals – both within and beyond the primary care environment – can assist GPs in their efforts to support patients. While every practice operates differently and has its own systems and processes, this booklet outlines some of the ways a GP can involve others when helping patients to understand the NDIS and access disability supports.



Who can apply for NDIS access?

Before supporting a patient to complete an NDIS access request, we recommend using this **6-point checklist** to check their suitability for the Scheme. Generally speaking, patients must meet three requirements:



- 1. AGE** – be aged <65 years*
- 2. RESIDENCE** – reside in Australia and be an Australian citizen, or hold a Permanent OR Protected Special Category Visa
- 3. DISABILITY OR EARLY INTERVENTION** – have a physical, intellectual, cognitive, neurological, visual, hearing or psychosocial impairment resulting in disability. This impairment must be (or is likely to be) permanent. It must also substantially reduce the individual’s ‘functional capacity’ (i.e. their ability to complete or partake in ordinary activities of daily living), while also affecting their capacity for social or economic participation (e.g. ability to find and keep work). Alternatively, there must be an expectation that the patient would benefit from early intervention supports.

*Refer children under 7 years old with developmental delay or disability to an NDIS early childhood partner for assessment. They will support the family to apply for the NDIS if appropriate. Refer patients 65 years and over who are looking for disability services and support for the first time to My Aged Care.

How does a patient apply for access?

Patients and/or carers can make an access request by:

1. Calling **1800 800 110** and providing details over the phone (this is called a **VERBAL ACCESS REQUEST**)
2. Completing an **Access Request Form** (this can be downloaded from the [NDIS website](#) or mailed out upon request).

An interactive online access request form is anticipated in the future.

Note: an application will only be progressed once the patient also submits adequate evidence detailing their impairment and its functional impact (e.g. copies of existing reports, letters and/or assessments from treating professionals, support workers, family members and carers).

From early 2021, patients will be able to complete a FREE independent functional capacity assessment, as a way of providing objective evidence of an impairment's functional impact.

How can patients submit their access request form?



The patient can return their completed access request form and any supporting evidence by:

Email: NAT@ndis.gov.au

Mail: GPO Box 700, Canberra ACT 2601

In person: at their [local NDIA office](#).

What is the role of a GP in the access request process?

The role of the treating professional is to provide **objective** evidence that the patient has a **permanent** impairment that results in **substantially reduced** functional capacity in **one or more** of the following areas: mobility, communication, social interaction, self-management, learning and self-care.

You can provide this information by:

- Completing the 'Treating Professional' section of the access request form; AND/OR
- Attaching **relevant** reports, letters and/or assessments from one or more treating professionals – if you feel this information is already adequately detailed elsewhere.

If your patient has a **psychosocial disability**, you can also choose to complete the [Evidence of Psychosocial Disability Form](#), which has prompts specific to psychosocial disability to help you detail the information required. In this case, you should clearly mark on the Access Request Form that an Evidence of Psychosocial Disability Form is attached.

Note: requesting costly new assessments from other treating specialists is not required if sufficient evidence of impairment already exists.

The planned introduction of independent functional capacity assessments for all persons seeking access to the NDIS will reduce the need to document a patient's functional capacity to the extent that it is currently required.

Who are the other professionals you can call on?

The makeup of practice teams varies considerably from practice to practice. In addition to GPs, your general practice may also employ practice nurses, allied health professionals and administrative staff. If these resources exist in your practice, adopting a collaborative care or co-management approach can be helpful when assisting patients to access the NDIS. Beyond your practice environment, there may also be other professionals within the community that you can call upon for assistance. A GP may use Medicare Items for a GP Management Plan and a Team Care Arrangement to identify and communicate with allied health and other professionals.

Allied health and other professionals



Allied health and other treating specialists, such as occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech therapists, psychologists, audiologists, neurologists, ophthalmologists and paediatricians, can provide GPs with some of the information necessary to support a patient's access request, such as evidence of impairment and its day-to-day functional impact. Typically, this will involve passing on existing documentation related to the patient's diagnosis, treatment and functional status. This might include standardised assessments and validated inventories they have recently completed with the patient (e.g. gross motor functional classification scale (GMFCS) to help describe current motor function).



Other non-health professionals in the community, including teachers and social workers, can also provide information to support a patient's access request, such as objective assessments of how a patient's functional capacity is affected by their impairment and what kinds of supports they would benefit from. These statements can be particularly useful for demonstrating the impact of an impairment across a range of different contexts and environments.

Practice staff



Practice nurses can help elicit information from patients that a GP requires in order to complete the Access Request Form (e.g. by meeting with the patient and/or carer first, the practice nurse can gain a more detailed understanding of the day-to-day challenges faced by the patient as a result of their impairment). They can then document these insights and help you identify what practical supports are required. Practice nurses can also assist you to request/collate existing evidence from other professionals (e.g. assessments, reports).



Practice managers and front desk staff can direct patients to where they can go for further information (e.g. NDIS website, Local Area Coordinators), request/collate information from other professionals to support an access request, and set up systems and processes within the practice environment to better accommodate administrative requirements (e.g. booking longer appointments for patients needing assistance with form-filling, displaying NDIS posters/leaflets in the waiting room, etc.).

NDIS Partners in the Community ('NDIS Community Partners')



Local Area Coordinators (LACs) are local organisations that help deliver the NDIS in the community. This includes assisting NDIS participants to create, implement and review their support plans. Pre-access, LACs can provide patients with general information about the NDIS, so they can make an informed choice about whether or not to apply for NDIS funding and supports. LACs can then guide the patient through the process of making an access request. LACs can also help identify whether the supports the patient requires are best provided by the NDIS or other mainstream providers.



Early Childhood Partners are local organisations who co-ordinate short-term support for children under 7 with a developmental delay or disability. If a child requires long-term support, the Early Childhood Partner will assist the family to make an NDIS access request.

Note: refer ALL children under 7 years of age to an Early Childhood Partner in the first instance.

To find a LAC or Early Childhood Partner in your area, visit www.ndis.gov.au/contact/locations

Helping patients understand the NDIS and if it is right for them

Who can help with initial enquiries?



Front desk staff can:

- Direct patients to the NDIS website and 1800 information line
- Refer the patient to a LAC/Early Childhood Partner for further information



LACs/Early Childhood Partners can help a patient/carer understand the NDIS and how to make an access request. They can also help patients understand the types of existing information (e.g. letters and assessments from allied health and other professionals) that can support their access request and assist them to obtain these. Some LACs/Early Childhood Partners offer regular information sessions for patients/carers in the community while others run dedicated 'clinics' within local general practices.

Who can help you assess if a patient is suitable for the NDIS?



It is not always clear if a patient will meet the NDIS disability requirement. In this case, LACs/Early Childhood Partners can support the patient to make an informed choice about whether or not to apply. LACs/Early Childhood Partners can also advise whether the types of disability supports the patient requires fall under the remit of the NDIS and direct the patient to other providers if appropriate (e.g. other public or community services).

LACs/Early Childhood Partners should be your first port-of-call if your patient needs information and support to help them make an informed choice about applying for the NDIS.

Helping patients with form-filling and related tasks

Who can help streamline the administrative process?



Front desk staff can:

- Direct the patient to download the Access Request Form online before their appointment
- Suggest a patient makes a verbal access request (if appropriate)
- Identify if it would be best for the patient to meet with the practice nurse first to complete some of the administrative requirements before seeing the GP
- Book a long consultation and tell the patient what to bring to their appointment, e.g. copies of any supporting information they may have at home.

Who can help patients fill out the Access Request Form?



Practice nurses can assist patients/carers to complete the Access Request Form, if required. They can also advise patients of the types of information that can support an access request, and get them to bring in copies of any letters and assessments from allied health or other professionals they may have at home.



Providing the best supporting information

Who can help you fill out the 'Treating Professional' section of the Access Request Form?



Practice nurses can compose evidence about the patient's disability and its functional impact by eliciting information directly from the patient and/or their carer. Many practice nurses are already highly skilled at completing health assessments and creating care plans. Further, they often have more time available to spend with patients than GPs. Practice nurses are permitted to fill out the 'Treating Professional' section of the Access Request Form, as long as it is then presented to the GP for review and sign-off.



Allied health professionals can compose or provide evidence regarding the nature and extent of a patient's impairment. In some cases, they may be more familiar with the functional impact of a patient's impairment than a GP and thus, better placed to describe activity limitations and the types of support the patient would benefit from. Allied health professionals can provide this information for GP review and sign-off, or sign themselves if they have been treating the patient for over 6 months.

Before completing the 'Treating Professional' section of the Access Request Form, consider which treating professional/s within the wider multidisciplinary team are best placed to provide evidence of a patient's impairment and its day-to-day impact.

Who can provide or help you gather existing evidence to support an access request?



Practice nurses and front desk staff can request supporting information from other professionals on your behalf. GPs don't always have all the information required to support an access request on hand (e.g. it may be held in different hospitals or with service providers, or may rely on case notes from specialised programs, educators and support workers). Practice nurses and receptionists can help you gather this material.



Allied health professionals may provide existing reports, assessments or letters regarding past or planned treatments, activity limitations (e.g. validated inventories), and what ongoing supports the patient requires.



Other non-health professionals (e.g. teachers, social workers) may also be able to provide existing letters, reports and assessments demonstrating that the impairment affects the patient's capacity for social and/or economic participation.

Attach copies of additional documentation (e.g. assessments) to the Access Request Form and direct the assessor to this information when completing the form. A thorough and comprehensive response the first time is less likely to lead to requests for more information. It will also help NDIS assessors and planners to confirm eligibility and accurately determine the type and level of support required.

Supporting patients is always a team effort

When helping patients navigate access to the NDIS:

- Consider whether you are the best treating professional to complete the Access Request Form and/or whether input from others would be useful
- Call on your professional peers to provide and help you collate the information needed to best support an access request
- Remember that non-health professionals can also be a useful source of information
- Ask practice nurses and administrative staff to assist with the task of evidence gathering
- Establish systems and processes within your practice to streamline the handling of patient enquiries and form-filling
- Refer patients to LACs and Early Childhood Partners for further information and advice, where appropriate.



Resources for GPs

For more useful resources, please visit:

www.ndis.gov.au/gps-and-health-professionals

For more information about the NDIS please contact:

National Disability Insurance Agency

 Telephone 1800 800 110

 Find us on Facebook/NDISAus

 Follow us on Twitter @NDIS

ndis.gov.au

For people who need help with English

 TIS: 131 450

For people who are Deaf or hard of hearing

 TTY: 1800 555 677

 For Speak and Listen: 1800 555 727

 Internet relay: National Relay Service
relayservice.gov.au

Use the following links to direct patients to their closest
Local Area Coordinator or Early Childhood Partner:

[Northern Territory](#)

[Queensland](#)

[Victoria](#)

[ACT](#)

[South Australia](#)

[Western Australia](#)

[New South Wales](#)

[Tasmania](#)