

Guide to Reasonable and Necessary (R & N) decisions

Pets and companion animals

Case example

Samantha lives with social anxiety. Because of her disability she has withdrawn from society and prefers to live in isolation. Samantha loves animals. Samantha's allied health professional recommends she gets a pet to give her companionship. They give a report that states animals are known to have a positive effect on wellbeing. Based on this recommendation, Samantha asks us for funding to buy a pet to support her emotional wellbeing.

Would we fund this?

No, we would not fund a pet or companion animal as they are not an NDIS support.¹ While pets can be comforting and valued companions, they're unlikely to meet our [definition of an eligible assistance animal](#) or the [NDIS funding criteria](#). This because they aren't a disability specific support and are therefore unlikely to be an effective and beneficial support. [Our Guideline – Assistance animals including dog guides](#) has more information about the definition of an assistance animal.

Why wouldn't we fund it?

NDIS laws determine what we can and can't fund. Things we can fund are called NDIS supports. You can use the funding in your plan to buy NDIS supports if they are related to your disability and are in-line with your plan.²

To work out whether a support is an NDIS support for you, we look at the information you give us against the [NDIS funding criteria](#).

We may fund assistance animals. However, we don't fund pets or companion animals as they are not an NDIS support.³ This is because the costs of buying, training, feeding, and looking after a pet or companion animal are a day-to-day living cost that's not related to your disability support needs. We would expect families or individuals to pay and care for a pet or companion animal, the same as for anyone without disability.

We may fund an assistance animal as long as it meets all of our [NDIS funding criteria](#).

For further information on assistance animals please read [Our Guideline - Assistance animals including dog guides](#).

Case example

Anton is 16 years old and lives with a psychosocial disability, and anxiety related to his disability. He has panic attacks when he's in unexpected situations and doesn't feel safe when

strangers visit his home. Anton has capacity building funding in his NDIS plan and uses this for occupational therapy and psychology.

Anton's allied health professional has suggested to Anton that he get a dog for emotional support. They think a dog is likely to help Anton to feel less anxious when he's in unexpected situations. The calming presence of a dog may also help Anton feel safer when he's around strangers.

Anton's parents ask us for funding to buy a dog and for the ongoing upkeep cost of the animal. They include the allied health professional's recommendation for a dog with their request.

To work out if this is an NDIS support for Anton, we look at the information Anton's parents have given us against the [NDIS funding criteria](#). We think about whether the dog meets our NDIS criteria for an assistance animal including if:

- the extra living cost is solely and directly because of Anton's disability needs
- there is evidence the dog will be effective and beneficial for Anton, taking into account current good practice. When we say taking into account current good practice, we mean thinking about what's recommended, or has been found to work well, for other people in situations like yours
- the dog is value for money, and is the most cost effective support option compared to other supports that might help in the same way at a lower cost
- it would be reasonable to expect families to pay for the cost and upkeep of the dog for their child.

In Anton's case the planner decides:

- while the dog could give some emotional support to Anton, and could help him feel safer around strangers, it's not an assistance animal
- buying the dog and looking after it is something that most families would reasonably expect to pay for, if they wanted a dog for emotional or safety reasons.

The planner decides the pet doesn't meet the [NDIS funding criteria](#). The support is not approved. The planner includes funding in Anton's plan for capacity building support to work with his allied health professional. They can work together to build his capacity to carry out strategies to be able to manage his anxiety related to his disability.

For more information, refer to:

- [Our Guideline - Reasonable and necessary supports](#)
- [Our Guideline - Assistance animals including dog-guides](#)
- [Would we fund it - Assistance animals](#)
- [Would we fund it – Therapy animals](#)

¹ NDIS Act s 34(1)(f), NDIS (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) (NDIS Supports) Transitional Rules, Sch 2 item 7(a).

² NDIS Act s 34(1)(f).

³ NDIS Act s 34(1)(f), NDIS, NDIS (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) (NDIS Supports) Transitional Rules, Sch 2 item 7(a).