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Step 1: Speak to your child's health or education professional

This may be their family doctor, early childhood educator or child health nurse.

Let them know you have concerns about your child's development.

They'll help you work out what supports you and your child might need.

They may also put you in touch with an early childhood partner in your area.

Step 2: Understand your options

NDIS supports under the early childhood approach

The early childhood approach is about supporting children with delays in their development or with disability.

It's available for children younger than 6 with developmental delay or children younger than 9 with disability.

Children younger than 6 don't need a diagnosis for the early childhood approach.

Early childhood partners can:

- connect you with community and mainstream supports and services
- give you information about child development
- help you understand the impact of your child's delay or disability
- check if your child is likely to benefit from early support
- provide a short period of early supports where appropriate
- support you to apply to the NDIS
- monitor your child's progress and help them to move on from the early childhood approach.

Early connections

Early connections are for children with delays in their development or with disability. They provide quick access to supports that meet your child's needs.

They're available for children younger than 6 with developmental delay or younger than 9 with disability.

They might include connections:

- with community and mainstream supports and services
- to information relevant to your child's development
- with other families for peer support
- with early supports
- to apply to the NDIS.

Early connections aim to build on your child's strengths and your own. They can help you support your child to develop the skills they need to take part in everyday activities.

Your child doesn't need to be eligible for the NDIS for early connections.

Your child mightn't need NDIS supports in the future if they get early connections.

Some early connections are also available to families living in Australia regardless of their citizenship or visa status. However, your child needs to meet the residence requirements to be eligible for the NDIS.

Early supports

Your child may be able to get early supports if they're younger than 6 and have developmental concerns.

This is usually for a short period of 3 to 6 months. It can be up to 12 months.

Early supports are designed to build capacity in you and your child. They promote learning across everyday settings including your home.

An early childhood partner works with you to understand your child's strengths and needs.

They'll work out what kind of NDIS supports could meet your child's needs. They'll also work out how long your child might need them for.

This information is put into an early support plan.

Step 3: Contact an early childhood partner

Your child's health or educational professional may connect you with one of our early childhood partners.

You can also connect with them directly by using the office finder on our website. If you're not sure who your early childhood partner is, call us on 1800 800 110.

Early childhood partners work with you to understand your child's needs.

They can do this by:

- talking to you
- asking for information prepared by the professionals who know your child well
- observing your child in their usual environment
- using assessment and screening tools to understand your child's development.

They'll connect you with the NDIS supports that best meet your child's needs.

If your child is 9 or older

Our NDIS partners, also known as local area coordinators, support children 9 or older with disability.

They can connect you with community and mainstream supports and services in your area. They can also help you work out if the NDIS is right for your child.

Use the office finder to find an NDIS partner near you.

Related information

What is an early childhood partner

How to find other services and supports

Find an office

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