



**NDIS Quality  
and Safeguards  
Commission**

# Career Options Guide



**NDIS Workforce Capability Framework**

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## About this resource

This document is a downloadable version of the interactive [Career Options Guide](#). It is intended to be used by stakeholders who need to access the tool as a Word document on their computer or in print.

This guide can help workers to explore work and career opportunities in the disability and related sectors. It will be most valuable for those currently working in general disability support roles but can also be used by others. It uses the [NDIS Workforce Capability Framework](#) to describe requirements for different roles, as a basis to understand where you can apply and develop your capabilities and interests.

Different opportunities for working in disability and related roles are described under four broad areas of interest:

- I want more variety in my work: Explore a range of general support options
- I want to focus on a specific type of support: Learn more about providing specialised supports
- I want to pursue my interest in accessibility and inclusion: Learn more about building capabilities and communities that support inclusion
- I want to move into a supervision/frontline management role: Learn more about supervisory or frontline management roles

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## Opportunities in general support work

This section introduces you to different types of general support work and could help you to find the kind of work that most interests you. You could also talk to workers doing this work or to people who rely on this type of support.

### What is general support work?

General support describes a broad range of work and there are plenty of opportunities to do interesting work that don't require deeper specialisation or additional qualifications. The role is as varied as the needs and interests of the people you work with. It could involve building a person's skills and confidence to do something new, supporting a person with self-care or participating in work, sport or social activities – and that's just scratching the surface. General support work occurs in different settings such as in a person's home, in group homes, activity centres, at a person's workplace or out in the community.

This section describes different types of support activities that are commonly part of a general support role.

### Personal care

Personal care is about supporting someone who is unable to undertake these activities independently. For a person who needs this support, your work is essential, and they need to be able to trust you. Personal care can set them for the day so they can get on with what is important to them.

Some examples of personal care activities include:

- Personal hygiene, including showering, bathing, oral hygiene, dressing and grooming
- Toileting, bladder and bowel management and menstrual care
- Eating and drinking
- Positioning or moving a person with mobility issues

### More information and resources

- [Personal care](#) – the NDIA describes personal care activities
- The Victorian government has developed a [guide on providing personal care to people with a disability](#).

### Things to consider

- Personal care can require you to assist people at their most vulnerable. It is intimate work that relies on establishing a respectful, trusted relationship with the person you are working with.

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- Depending on the requirements of the role, personal care can be quite physical, such as assisting a person with limited mobility to have a shower or using a hoist to assist a person to get into or out of bed.
  - This type of work can be a good way to understand whether you are interested to go further in working with people needing support to stay well and healthy. It can be a starting point to explore related work in more specialised support roles or for progressing to further study and related professional roles in the wellness and health sectors.
  - A good way to learn more about this work is to check out the [Framework capabilities](#) that support the objectives for 'Our relationship' and 'Be present'. There are also some additional capabilities about particular types of support, such as supporting people at mealtimes. The capabilities provide a good understanding of attitudes and behavioural indicators for doing this work well.

### More information and resources

- You can find out more about personal care here: The [NDIA describes personal care supports](#).
- The Victorian government has developed a [guide on providing personal care to people with a disability](#).

## Support with day-to-day activities

In a general support role, you could assist a person with day-to-day activities around the home such as preparing meals, cleaning or gardening. You could also be assisting a person with practical tasks such as getting to an appointment or going shopping. You will need to adapt your approach to meet the different needs of each person you support. For example, some participants may simply need transport assistance to get to where they need to go, or you might support someone who may feel anxious or needs extra encouragement to develop new skills to do things that are important to them.

Support with day-to-day activities can be done in different settings, such as a person's home or as part of a group activity. In all cases, it is important to find out what each individual wants and needs and deliver support that meets these individual requirements.

### More information and resources

[The Department of Social Services has further information on providing assistance with daily living.](#)

### Things to consider

- Providing this support is much more than simply cleaning, cooking or undertaking any other practical activity. All work in the NDIS starts with understanding the individual person, building a respectful, trusted relationship and delivering support that meets their needs and interests in developing their own ways to manage their daily activities. Check out the

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Framework capabilities that support the objectives for 'Our relationship', 'Support me' and 'Be present'.

- You may need to balance competing expectations. For example, a solution to address a workplace health and safety issue might conflict with respecting participant choice and control. The role requires you to understand organisational and participant expectations and make informed decisions.
- This can be a rewarding opportunity to share your own interests and skills. For example, if you have an interest in cooking or gardening, you might enjoy supporting another person to develop their interest and skills in that activity, if that is what they want to do.
- Depending on the requirements of the role, this work can be quite physical, such as assisting a person with household duties, cleaning and gardening.

## More information and resources

- [The Department of Social Services has further information on providing assistance with daily living.](#)
- [Every Moment Has Potential provides a free online learning resource about Person Centred Active Support](#)

## Positive behaviour support

General support roles often work with people who need support to better understand and manage their behaviour. Positive behaviour support takes a human rights approach, working with the participant to support them to understand the factors that influence their behaviour, to increase their independence and ability to manage their life. You will be introduced to the basic principles of positive behaviour support and how to apply them in practice. A behaviour support plan is required for delivering this type of support and it is developed by an NDIS Behaviour Support Practitioner. Practitioners must be considered suitable by the NDIS Commission (through an application process) before practicing as an NDIS Behaviour Support Practitioner. Like all support, this work requires solid, trusted relationships with the people you support, and your belief in their potential.

## Things to consider

- This work can be very rewarding but also challenging. Doing well requires you to develop resilience and take care of your own health and wellbeing. It is important to know when to seek support.
- Reflective practice is an important part of these roles. It means participating in conversations with others to examine your own attitudes and values and consider how you may need to challenge your tendencies to improve the way you work.
- As a support worker, you will need to work closely with NDIS Behaviour Support Practitioners to support participants with behaviours of concern. It is critical that you follow behaviour support plans and know when to ask for help if you are not sure what to do. You can find out more by checking out the capability: Support me to implement my positive behaviour support plan

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- If you have a particular interest in further developing your interest in this type of support, you can seek out opportunities to deepen your skills to support participants who require more intensive support. You could also consider related types of support such as supporting people with psychosocial disability ([link](#)).
  - You can find out more about this work by checking out the Framework for capabilities that support the objectives for '[Our relationship](#)', '[Your impact](#)' and '[Be present](#)' and the additional capabilities focused on support for people who need [support to implement a positive behaviour support plan](#). These capabilities provide a good understanding of attitudes and behavioural indicators for doing this work well.
  - You could also find out more about becoming a behaviour support practitioner. An NDIS Behaviour Support Practitioner is responsible for undertaking functional behaviour assessments, developing behaviour support plans and ensuring that workers responsible for implementing the plan have the capabilities they need. Detailed information on the capabilities required by NDIS Behaviour Support Practitioners are outlined in the [Positive Behaviour Support Capability Framework](#).
  - You can find more information on [applying for assessment as an NDIS Behaviour Support Practitioner](#) here. Practitioners require solid experience working with people who require positive behaviour support and should demonstrate adequate knowledge and skills across the domains of the PBS Capability Framework. The PBS Capability Framework does not require minimum years of practice, qualifications, training or professional development to be a behaviour support practitioner; however some practitioners may have health or allied health professional qualifications in fields such as social work, psychology, nursing, occupational therapy.

### More information and resources.

- [NDS Zero Tolerance – a resource about safeguarding the rights of people with disability](#)

## Connection and participation

Community access involves supporting people with disabilities to take part in everyday life in ways that are meaningful and valued. Exactly how this looks depends on the different needs and interests of each person you work with. It could mean providing support to go to work or school, take part in sport, pursue a hobby or see a movie.

To do this well, you need to really listen to find out what types of connection are most important to the person and how they want you to support them to achieve it. You will also need to learn to see and point out opportunities for the people you support to participate and be included in what interests them, in ways that matter to them. Evidence shows that, like all of us, having opportunities to participate and contribute is a significant factor in improving the quality of life for people with disability.

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## Things to consider

- This type of work means getting to know about opportunities for being part of social, community, education, and economic life. It will often mean providing support to people outside the home, in community or work settings.
- This work offers opportunities for workers with talents and interests in just about any activity – art, music, exercise, dance – to name just a few. Your role could involve sharing your skills or encouraging and supporting a person to attend mainstream activities to further their interests.
- Building capacity and confidence is great work for people with lived experience, who can share their own struggles and achievements to motivate and encourage others.
- Workers who share a cultural heritage or personal identity, such as LGBTIQ+ with the person they support, bring valuable experience to this type of support.
- Support should always be tailored to the needs of the individual participant. It often involves 1:1 work but may also involve supporting group activities.
- This type of work can be a good starting point to explore related work in more specialised support roles or for progressing to further study and related professional roles. This includes roles in allied health, such as physiotherapy, as well as further study in fields of interest such as music, dance or art therapy, exercise, and fitness coaching.
- You can find out more about this work by checking out the Framework capabilities that support the objectives for 'Our relationship', 'Your impact' and 'Support me'. These capabilities provide a good understanding of attitudes and behavioural indicators that support people with disability in ways that promote connection and participation

## More information and resources

- [NDIS | Community participation](#)
- [NDS | Community inclusion initiative](#)
- [NDS | Community participation in action](#)

## Support work in related sectors

Many of the capabilities you need to work in the disability sector are transferable to related areas in the wider care and support sectors.

One way to broaden your experience is to explore opportunities to use your support capabilities across more than one sector. This could be a good option to find work in your preferred location or explore your interest in working with a broader range of people. Working in aged care and veteran care shares many similarities with the disability sector and occurs in similar settings. Some Australian states are beginning to look more closely at an integrated care model to help provide more consistent and better coordinated support as people move between these sectors.

[The Boosting the local care workforce has a page with information about all the opportunities in care and support.](#)



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## Things to consider

- Working in related sectors can be a good option if you want to apply your capabilities to a broader range of situations and settings.
- Some service providers deliver services across these different sectors. You could seek out opportunities with these organisations. If you already work with one of these providers, you could ask them about opportunities to work across different sectors and check what additional training or experience you might need.
- While support work in these sectors is similar, there are also important differences. See links below.

## More information and resources

- [NDIS Workforce Capability Framework | General Support Work](#)
- [The Department of Education, Skills and Employment provides information on care and support careers.](#)
- [The 'Boosting the local care workforce' program runs events regularly,](#) where you can find opportunities to hear about what others are doing and best practice.

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## Specific types of support

This section introduces you to different areas of specialisation within the disability sector. It describes areas of work that would require you to deepen your expertise in one or more specific aspects.

### Working with different cohorts

Working with NDIS participants from different groups is one way to deepen your understanding and experience. The list below provides some examples of specialised work that is available in the sector:

- **Identity support:** Working with people who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds or LGBTIQ+ people
- **Early childhood support:** working with families, health, allied health and education professionals to support children who are NDIS participants
- **Working with people who are experiencing other challenges** such as risk of homelessness, domestic violence, family discord supporting other family members with disability

### Role profile

James is a support worker who focuses specifically on working with children and teenagers



#### Can you describe what you do in a few sentences?

I help kids with disabilities do things that everyone else wouldn't really have to think about.

#### What does a regular day look like?

I usually have a morning and afternoon shift for sessions with kids. I am guided by what they or their parents would like them to do. Before I meet up with them, I'll check their profile – it includes any assessments, their plans, likes, dislikes, triggers, etc. Then I'll plan the session around that. For example, if they have goals to improve life skills, we might do some cooking, or we'll go to the shops and they'll have money to pay for lunch or afternoon tea. If they don't like crowded places or if they

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find being around lots of people is too stressful, we might go to the park and kick a footy. Sometimes it can be respite care too. If their parents need a break, we might go to the trampoline park for the afternoon.

### **What's the best part of your role?**

Seeing kids grow, improve and get the best out of life. It's great to build a relationship, particularly with kids who don't necessarily engage with everyone but you're able to build a bond and good relationship with.

### **What are the biggest challenges?**

Sometimes kids face tough situations. It can be pretty confronting seeing what they go through.

### **How did you get into your current role?**

I was a builder for a while and went to America for a break and was a camp counsellor. I was working with a variety of kids as a camp counsellor and found I loved working with kids, building a relationship with them and helping them develop. I came back to Australia and applied to be a disability support worker through a friend who's family members worked in the industry and just loved it.

### **What skills or experience did you have that were helpful, and what did you need to learn?**

Having the camp experience to help me get experience working with kids in a controlled and safe environment has been really helpful. Being enthusiastic and having that transferable experience of building relationships were two key assets that got me started, and I did a lot of shadow shifts and training with people who were really experienced.

## **Capabilities**

The [NDIS Workforce Capability Framework](#) outlines core capabilities for General and Advanced Support Work. The additional capabilities detailed in the Framework relevant to working with specific groups are:

- Be responsive to my Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identity
- Be responsive to my culturally and linguistically diverse identity
- Be responsive to my LGBTIQ+ identity
- Support me and my family in my childhood

## **Things to consider**

Some of the things you should consider if you want to explore these types of work include:

- Do you have specific experience or interest in working with a particular cohort? For example, this work may overlap with your own lived experience.
- You may find your own assumptions and attitudes are challenged when learning about different values and ways of thinking. This can be especially challenging when doing this work. Is this something you enjoy?

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- Some organisations might specialise in supporting people with a particular experience or cultural identity. Others may support participants from many different backgrounds and walks of life. Think about the type and mix of work you would be most interested in and discuss this with organisations when looking for opportunities.

## More information and resources

If you want to learn more about different types of specialisations, you may like to review the following resources.

Supporting children

- [NDIS – Early childhood approach](#)

Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants

- [FPDN | First Peoples Disability Network Australia](#)
- [AIHW | Disability support for Indigenous Australians - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#)

Supporting Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Participants

- [DSS | Services Culturally and Linguistically Diverse participants](#)
- [NDIS | Cultural and Linguistic Diversity strategy](#)

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## High intensity health-related support work

High intensity support involves working with participants who require more specialised, health-related support. The support required is described in a support plan developed for the participant by an appropriately qualified health practitioner. Support workers play a role in implementing these plans, and usually work under direction of the health practitioner. These supports represent some of the highest risks for participants, workers, and others. Specific additional skills and knowledge are required to deliver high quality and safe supports in these areas.

This can be life-changing work. Having workers who can deliver specialised health supports can mean a participant can live with their family, in their community, and still get the support they need. It could be a key factor in deciding whether a person can leave hospital and return home. This type of support can also support a participant to be independent, enabling them to have more choice and control in how they live their life.

### Role profile

Aparna is a disability support worker who also provides in-home support and high intensity health supports to some participants



**Can you describe what you do in a few sentences?**

I provide a wide variety of support services to NDIS participants. I've done a lot of community access, personal care and general life skills. Now I do PEG feeding, injections, and cleaning and hygiene.

**What does a regular day look like?**

If I'm working with someone who I support with community access and daily living skills, we'll check in when I arrive, then plan out the day, where we might do some cooking, cleaning or go to the shops!

**What's the best part of your role?**

I've been able to support participants through many different stages of life and learning skills to support them through different challenges. It has been such a valuable experience!

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### **What are the biggest challenges?**

The biggest challenge is managing time across the multiple participants I support. I need to be strategic about how I can set up my day and what I do with different participants.

### **How did you get into your current role?**

I got into high intensity support work because I was supporting someone whose condition deteriorated to the point where they required regular subcutaneous injections and PEG feeding. To help keep the rest of their life stable, I got trained (with the support of my organisation) in providing this level of support.

### **What advice do you have for someone wanting to get into your line of work?**

The main thing is to ask for help when you need it. Take the opportunities that are given to you, and don't be afraid to ask for opportunities and training. We're working for the participants, and any way that we can help them live their best life is a great achievement.

### **Where do you see your career going in the future?**

I love what I do, helping people live their best lives and I can't see it changing anytime soon!

## **Capabilities**

The [NDIS Workforce Capability Framework](#) outlines core capabilities for General and Advanced Support Work. The additional capabilities detailed in the Framework relevant to providing higher intensity health-related support include:

- Support me to implement my health and allied health support plans
- Support me to implement my mealtime plans
- Support me to implement my medication plans

As well as reviewing the capabilities above, those interested in High intensity supports can review additional guidance on what is involved in the [High Intensity Support Skills Descriptors](#). These include supports for:

- Complex bowel care
- Enteral feeding and support
- Dysphagia support
- Ventilation support
- Tracheostomy support
- Urinary catheter support
- Subcutaneous injections
- Wound and pressure injury support

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## Things to consider

High intensity support work can be intimate and intensely personal, working with some of the most at-risk and vulnerable people.

- You will need to demonstrate the sensitivity and empathy needed to deliver intensely personal supports in ways that put people at ease and give them confidence.
- You will need to develop some basic knowledge about how the body works and practical skills to know what to do to deliver the required support, how to identify risks, and who to go to if there is a problem. You could consider further study in health-related courses such as nursing.
- You need to be comfortable with following instructions from others. It is critical that you follow the procedures outlined in the support plan.
- You will be the 'eyes and ears' for health practitioners, keeping them informed of changes that require their attention and reporting on how well the plan is meeting the participant's needs. This means you will need good record keeping skills and know how to follow up, so the participant has the support they need.
- Because these roles often work as part of a team, you will need to have good communication and collaboration skills, while keeping the participant as the central focus of what you do.
- You may need to learn how to use new technology or specialist equipment, and any relevant manual handling requirements.

## More information and resources

- [NDIS | Fact sheet: NDIS Practice Standards](#)
- [High Intensity Support Skills Descriptors](#)

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## Psychosocial disability

Psychosocial work supports people living with psychosocial disability to have more control of their lives, increase their independence and capability to deal with the complexities of day-to-day life. Your role will involve motivating, encouraging, listening, and advocating. You will learn about recovery-oriented practice and how to balance encouragement and support with respect for the rights of the person to make their own choices, at their own pace. You will also learn how to recognise external, social and environmental factors that influence the options and barriers faced by participants, and how to build capacity to challenge and build resilience.

People with psychosocial disability may also have a behaviour support plan. Positive behaviour support involves working with the participant to support them to understand the social, environmental and personal factors that influence behaviour, to increase their independence and ability to manage their life. You will learn about the principles of positive behaviour support and how to apply them in practice. A behaviour support plan is required for delivering this type of support and is developed by an NDIS Behaviour Support Practitioner. The role of an NDIS Behaviour Support Practitioner involves undertaking functional behaviour assessments, developing behaviour support plans and ensuring that workers responsible for implementing the plan have the capabilities they need. Detailed information on the capabilities required by behaviour support practitioners are outlined in the [Positive Behaviour Support Capability Framework](#). Practitioners must be considered suitable by the NDIS Commission (through an application process) before practicing as an NDIS Behaviour Support Practitioner. For more information on applying for assessment as an NDIS Behaviour Support Practitioner, see the below link.

- [Apply to be an NDIS Positive Behaviour Support Practitioner](#). Practitioners require solid experience working with people who require positive behaviour support and should demonstrate adequate knowledge and skills across the domains of the PBS Capability Framework. The PBS Capability Framework does not require minimum years of practice, qualifications, training or professional development to be a behaviour support practitioner; however some practitioners may have health or allied health professional qualifications in fields such as social work, psychology, nursing, occupational therapy.



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## Role profile

David is a support worker who works with people who have mental health and psychosocial disabilities



### Can you describe what you do in a few sentences?

As a support worker in mental health, my job is to motivate and empower participants to make their own choices and be leaders in their own lives. I have a big focus on building capacity and providing any support I can.

### What does a regular day look like?

With the participants I work with at the moment the day is based around timing of medication and different appointments the participants have. Outside of those times, it's all about what the participant wants and needs that day. I base my approach on how they are feeling, their goals, and what they want to do. Some of the activities might be cooking, going to the shops or just going for a walk or a coffee.

### What's the best part of your role?

All aspects of the role. The people I work with are the kindest, most beautiful people, and it's such a privilege to get to know and support them.

### What are the biggest challenges?

Having to watch participants go through the suffering on a bad day and knowing there's not much you can do for them on those days. For example, if someone has schizophrenia and is having a bad day, you know there's no way to take the voices they're hearing away.

### How did you get into your current role?

I've done a lot of different jobs prior to this and they all helped me build experience that's useful. I worked in childcare, retail, hospitality all over the world and when I came back to Australia I was working in aged care for a little while before I decided I wanted to work in mental health.

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I heard about a few companies that specialised in mental health and when I interviewed for my current role, the interviewer talked about more of a focus on getting the right person who was compassionate and patient, not necessarily the qualifications, and they would be able to train me.

**What skills or experience did you have that were helpful, and what did you need to learn?**

In addition to my past (varied) experience, the NDIS modules about restrictive practices and choice and control were really good for educating about disability and mental health. Then when I started, I got a lot of basic training around administering medication, first aid, resuscitation and then a lot of in-service training on the job.

## Capabilities

The [NDIS Workforce Capability Framework](#) outlines core capabilities for General and Advanced Support Work that apply to all support workers. The Framework also calls out some additional capabilities that are relevant to psychosocial work and work in trauma-informed care. In line with the Framework's approach, the below capabilities are written from the perspective of the participant.

- Support me with my Psychosocial disability
- Support me to implement my positive behaviour support plan
- Support me with my experience of trauma
- Support me with my complex, challenging or changing social circumstances

Support workers in this space will need an understanding of trauma informed care.

Some roles will require additional training or qualifications. It is recommended that you investigate specific roles of interest to find out about potential qualifications you could undertake. For example, many recovery coach or psychosocial support roles require:

- Cert IV (or equivalent) in mental health or peer work
- Bachelor's degree in human services
- Undergraduate degree in psychology
- Bachelor's degree in counselling.

## Things to consider

- This work can be very rewarding but also challenging. Doing well requires you to develop resilience and take care of your own health and wellbeing. It is important to know when to seek support.
- Reflective practice is an important part of these roles. It means participating in conversations with others to examine your own attitudes and values and consider how you may need to challenge your tendencies to improve the way you work.
- This work relies on establishing solid, trusted relationships with the people you are supporting. It is also important to be clear about role boundaries so that you don't set up unrealistic expectations.
- Depending on who you are working with, you may need to learn about and support participants to negotiate complexity. This can include managing supports across different

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government programs such as housing, employment, or health, interacting with the justice system, managing drug and alcohol dependency.

- There is increasing recognition of the role that people with lived experience can play as peer support workers. Support from a worker with firsthand experience can be highly encouraging and motivating.
- Support workers who provide psychosocial support may go on to work as a Recovery Coach. Recovery coaches do more advanced work and assist people with psychosocial support to manage their supports. This role shares similar capabilities with those needed for support coordination. So, if you are a support worker delivering psychosocial support, consider recovery coaching or more general support coordination roles.

## More Information and resources

If you want to learn more about working with participants with behavioural or psychosocial needs, including understanding about what is funded as part of the NDIS, you may like to review the following resources.

- [Psychosocial Recovery-Oriented Framework](#) developed by the NDIA
- [Reimagine | Mental health and the NDIS](#)
- [Disability support guide](#) has further information on a psychosocial recovery coach

You may additionally like to do your own research into providers specialising in psychosocial disabilities, as well as searching for related roles on job boards such as Seek, Indeed and Ethical jobs using search terms such as “NDIS Mental Health Support”, “Recovery Coach” or “Mental Health Disability Support”.

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## Allied Health Professionals

Allied health is a broad term for professions that assist participants to manage their health and wellness. In the NDIS, allied health practitioners work with participants to build their capacity for managing everyday life to achieve their goals.

The list of allied health professions is extensive (see the “More information and resources” section of this page for more), but some common examples include occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech pathologists, music therapists, and psychologists.

Allied health work requires a professional qualification. Allied health professionals are responsible for assessing, diagnosing, and planning the best way to provide support. Existing support workers who have an interest in finding out more about allied health work could look for allied health assistant roles in the NDIS. Advanced support workers and allied health assistants, work under direction of an allied health professional, to support the participant to implement the support plan. For example, this could mean working with the participant to support them to build recommended therapeutic activities into their daily routines.

This can be very rewarding work and is also a great way to decide whether you want to go further and enrol in a professional qualification in allied health.

### Role profile

Angela is an occupational therapist and team leader for the children she supports



**Can you describe what you do in a few sentences?**

I work with families to assess their child and understand any concerns they might have (such as how they are walking or talking), and then determine the best support to ask for. I act as their advocate in the requests they make for support, such as therapy, assistive technology (AT) or prosthetics. I also manage the team of practitioners and others who deliver the support.

**What does a regular day look like?**

There is no regular day! I work directly with families to understand options and decide on the support that's right for their child and then help write applications, recommendations and reports. I also coordinate and support the team of other allied health practitioners who provide the support to make sure plans are being delivered and participants are getting the outcomes they need. It's really

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important to make sure family members are treated as an active partner in supporting their child so I spend time with the team and the family to make this happen.

**What's the best part of your role?**

All the little things that make a positive difference. I still get excited when a child gets given some legs (like a wheelchair or prosthesis), for the first time, or a kid is able to join a game they haven't been able to play in the past because I've been able to adapt the environment to suit them.

**What are the biggest challenges?**

Time and resources are always a challenge so it's about working to find ways to make their plan work as well as we can. When I first started, I remember what a big shift it was going from knowing about my own specialty – occupational therapy – to understanding a transdisciplinary approach so families and children got the support they need while streamlining the number of 'experts' they have in their lives.

**How did you get into your current role?**

I started out as an occupational therapist but I could see the benefits of bringing together the whole team so that all the different supports were coordinated. The team leader role gives me a mix of being able to deepen my understanding of different therapeutic approaches and understanding the evidence base that underpins them, at the same time as giving me plenty of opportunity to collaborate with and learn from peers. I started out as a fairly inexperienced occupational therapy graduate and was lucky enough to be trained and mentored by a very experienced worker, who basically let me follow her around for a long time!

**What skills or experience did you have that were helpful, and what did you need to learn?**

As an undergraduate, I worked as a disability support worker while I was studying. This gave me a great opportunity to find out what work most interested me. Working with children who face particular challenges was what really excited me. If I get it right, I know I can make a really big difference that will last the rest of their lives. Moving into a team leader role, I needed to build an understanding of different disciplines (such as speech pathology, physiotherapy etc.) and shift my mindset from providing specific support, to putting the participant at the centre and finding ways to reduce the stress for the participant and their family.

## Capabilities

The NDIS Workforce Capability Framework outlines core capabilities for General and Advanced Support work that apply to all support workers.

Allied health work in the NDIS can be different from other settings. It requires a strong focus on listening to, engaging, and working closely with the participant and their carers. Active listening and communication skills are essential, as is an ability to understand each individual's preferences and routines to design supports that are least intrusive and fit into daily routines. The capabilities listed under the [Our Relationship](#) and [Support Me](#) objectives of the Framework are especially important.

The Framework also calls out some additional capabilities that are relevant to Allied health. For allied health professionals wanting to understand NDIS participant expectations, look at:

- Work with me to develop my health and allied health support plans

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To see what is expected of more advanced support workers and allied health assistants, look at:

- Support me to implement my health and allied health support plans

## Further specialisation

Most allied health fields require additional training and study, as well as registration with a national body such as the Australian Health Practitioners Regulatory Agency (AHPRA). To understand the requirements for the profession you are interested in, visit the AHPRA website (see the “More information and resources” section of this page).

Some allied health assistant roles may also require some additional training or qualifications. Check this with your current or potential employer. You may want to look at the Cert III or IV in Allied Health Assistance.

## Things to consider

- There are opportunities to work in a variety of settings such as in an individual participant’s home or in a group setting. Consider what would suit you best and check with potential employers where you would be working
- Allied health professionals are responsible for providing training and guidance so that plans are implemented effectively. Some organisations employ both allied health professionals as well as allied health assistants. Others may contract in these services. You may want to check with a potential employer on the training and supervision you would receive in this role.
- Most allied health work involves working with children and you may also be working as part of a team of other support professionals

## More Information and resources

If you want to learn more about allied health work in the disability sector, you may like to review the following resources.

Allied health information

- [AHPA | Allied health in the disability sector](#)
- [DSS | Allied health information from the boosting the local care workforce program](#)

Allied health assistant information

- [Seek | Allied health assistant careers information](#)

Skills, training and registration

- [AHPRA | Registration information](#)

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## Inclusion and accessibility

This section introduces you to the work in inclusion, accessibility and community participation.

### Connection and participation

Community access involves supporting people with disabilities to take part in everyday life in ways that are meaningful and valued. The NDIS signals a clear move away from outdated ideas of providing “care”, to providing support from a human rights-based perspective, that enables and empowers people to live the life they choose. While this is the key to all support work, you can also build more expertise and specialisation in this work.

Specialising in this work requires skills and experiences to build another person’s capacity and confidence to pursue, maintain and expand their interests and connections. The role will look different for every person and provider. Organisations may specialise in working with participants with particular needs, such as working with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander participants, people from different cultural background, children and their families, people in the LGBTIQ+ community, people who are or are at risk of homelessness, to name just a few.

Organisations might also specialise in working with people requiring particular types of support, such as recovery-oriented support to manage a psychosocial disability, or support people with intellectual disabilities. This work is also about challenging assumptions and attitudes as well as practical barriers that limit or prevent people with disability from being recognised, respected and able to contribute to all aspects of life – social, economic, political and cultural.

This work can also provide meaningful opportunities to use your own lived experience – you may share the experience of being part of a particular community or live with a disability which places you in a unique position to understand the barriers a person may be facing as well as provide real, authentic inspiration and encouragement through your own experience.

### Capabilities

Becoming an expert in supporting connection and participation is not tied to a single role in the disability sector. It is at the heart of the capabilities in the [NDIS Workforce Capability Framework](#). Deepening your interest in this work will depend on the particular aspect of work that interests you. Choose additional capabilities relevant to the area you want to focus on:

- Be responsive to my Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identity
- Be responsive to my culturally and linguistically diverse identity
- Be responsive to my LGBTIQ+ identity

You may want to understand more about how to work with people who are managing challenges. Here are some additional capabilities you may find useful. It is also a good idea to look at the longer list of additional capabilities as others might also be relevant:

- Support me with my experience of trauma
- Support me with my complex, challenging or changing social circumstances

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There are no standard qualifications for this work given the diversity of needs and expertise these roles require. It is a good idea to search for positions you would be interested in to see if there are any additional qualifications required. If you are interested in doing further study, you could choose training to build on your own personal experience, such as the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work. You may also be interested in further study in areas such as human rights and social justice or you could explore qualifications in community work, advocacy or social work. These are just a few ideas about further learning.

This work could also lead you to further study in a related professional health or allied health field to build your knowledge and expertise to work with people who require these particular types of support.

## Things to consider

- The best outcome from supporting a person to build or strengthen their connections and networks is that they no longer need your support. Knowing when to let go is an essential quality for doing this work well.
- You are more likely to do well in supporting a person to be included with the people and activities that interest them when you share similar interests.
- You could explore opportunities to work with a [Disability Employment Service](#) if you are interested in supporting participants to find a job and in providing advice and support to employers.
- Support coordinators play an important role in supporting and promoting connection and participation. You may also want to look at this option.
- You may also be interested in exploring related opportunities outside the NDIS such as disability advocacy. This work involves representing and advocating for people with disability. Depending on the nature of advocacy, you may require legal capabilities and/or qualifications. [National Disability Advocacy Program \(NDAP\)](#)

## Where to go for more information

- [NDS | Community inclusion initiative](#)
- [NDS | Community participation in action](#)



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## Support coordination

A Support Coordinator works one-on-one with participants to support them to:

- Understand and use their NDIS plan to pursue their goals
- Connect with NDIS support providers, community representatives, and other services they need
- Build confidence and skills to use and coordinate their supports
- Understand and keep track of their NDIS plan budget

Participants funded for support coordination often face particular challenges or have complex needs. General support work can be a great foundation for moving into a support coordination role. You will work at a deeper level to understand the particular interests, preferences and needs of participants, and help them find what they need.

You will need to build a detailed understanding of NDIS planning and process, rules, and reporting requirements. You will develop contacts and knowledge about different ways to support the needs and preferences of each individual. This includes opportunities for accessing government, community, mainstream, and disability specific supports, and addressing any barriers.

If you are a creative thinker who enjoys thinking outside the box, someone who is committed to supporting a person to pursue their full potential, who enjoys investigating and researching information, a good communicator, networker and connector, this could be a great next step for you. If you want to undertake formal learning about this type of work you could consider study in fields like community work or social work.

There are also differences between support coordinator roles:

- General support coordination roles.
- Support coordination roles with a focus on specific needs, such as exploring preferred living arrangements.
- Specialist support coordination, working with people with very high and complex needs or circumstances. Specialist support coordination requires further study in a relevant qualification to understand the particular types of complexity and barriers participants face in implementing their plans.

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## Role profile

Rachel is a support coordinator for a small NDIS provider



### Describe what you do in a few sentences?

I help people on the NDIS understand what support they're eligible for and how to use their plan to get the best outcome. I connect them with the right support providers or help build their capacity to manage their own support. I do quite a bit of work with children so I get involved in working with the whole family.

### What does a regular day look like?

On a typical day, I'll go through the list of people I support to work out what needs most urgent attention. I'll always check in with everyone at least once a week but, depending on what's happening, that can be more frequent or I might need to chase up with equipment or technology suppliers as well as service providers to make sure the participant gets what they need, when they need it. It can be quite a juggle. You have to be good at prioritising and time management.

### Best part of the job?

Being able to make a positive difference, and the variety of different people that I can help make the most of their NDIS plans.

### Biggest challenges?

COVID has been the biggest challenge, with scheduling and organising face to face meetings with NDIS participants and support workers. It makes it hard to juggle access issues. Then there's the pointy end of responding when a participant calls to say their workers aren't coming because they have to isolate. It can get stressful so it's important to keep a calm head and work through each challenge as it comes up.

### How did you get into your current role?

I was working in support work and then leading a team. Whilst on a training course I connected with the CEO of my current organisation. They said they needed support coordinators and asked if I was interested, and I haven't looked back!

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### How did you develop the required skills and experience?

I had a lot of experience working directly with participants and understanding their support needs. I did a three-day intensive support coordination course and then shadowed a more experienced support coordinator for a few weeks.

### What advice do you have for someone wanting to get into your line of work?

Put your hand up for as much as possible, particularly any learning or training events. My opportunities have come because I've stepped out of my comfort zone. It helps to ask lots of questions and be prepared to try new things.

### Where do you see your career going in the future?

It really depends on what my CEO is thinking! I'm getting opportunities to help build the best practice training for our organisation, as well as working to make sure our NDIS compliance is all up to date which I enjoy a lot, so I can see myself being here for a long time yet!

## Capabilities

The [NDIS Workforce Capability Framework](#) outlines core capabilities for Advanced Support Work that apply to support coordinators. There are two additional capabilities focused on support coordination:

- Work with me to explore and coordinate my supports
  - Support me to understand my plan and access and coordinate the supports I need. Think creatively when supporting me to explore innovative solutions, manage complexity and ambiguity, and negotiate with multiple providers and systems to put solutions in place.
- Work with me to explore and establish living arrangements that suit me
  - Support me to explore and establish the type of home, living arrangements and related supports that work for me. Think creatively when supporting me to explore my options, manage my living arrangements, and negotiate with mainstream and specialist housing providers and markets to deliver solutions that meet my needs and preferences.

## Things to consider

- If you are coming from a support worker role, providing support coordination is more focused on deepening your understanding of the participant's needs, exploring different options, and supporting the participant to decide what will work best for them. It is less 'hands on' than providing direct support.
- Support coordinators need to come to the role with an open mind, as participant needs vary greatly, and both the relationship and participant requirements will change over time.
- You may want to explore general support coordination roles as well as those that specialise in particular types, such as support coordination for children and their families, or establishing living arrangements to meet participant needs.

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- Researching, documenting and reporting are a significant part of this role so you should consider the skills needed to perform those tasks.
  - There is a large administration component to the role, involving creating and managing service agreements, billing, and other business-related elements.

### More information and resources

- [NDIS | What is support coordination?](#) NDIA description of support coordination
- [Seek | Support Coordinator role advice](#) provides an overview of the support coordinator role and recommend different training or courses

## Supervisors and Frontline Management

People in supervisor and frontline management roles have often worked their way up from support worker roles in disability and related sectors. This background experience can prove invaluable and provides a level of credibility, having worked hands-on with participants and clients. However, taking on a supervisor or manager role changes your relationship to both the organisation and other workers. You also need some different capabilities to be successful in a supervisor or manager role, so it's a good idea to check those out before deciding on this career direction.

Organisations use different titles for supervisory and management roles. The way these roles are designed, and their responsibilities, depend on the way work is organised. They can have different levels of responsibility for managing participant relationships as well as supporting, developing, and managing people. Some typical supervisor and frontline management roles in the disability sector include:

- **Team leader**
  - Team leaders are often a working member of the team with additional management responsibilities. Responsibilities vary and could include participating in recruiting and on boarding new workers, acting as a key contact point for team members, managing rostering and leave arrangements, communicating two-way information between the team and the organisation, consulting with families and specialists on specific plans, modelling good practice and providing practice feedback.
- **Practice coach**
  - Depending on the nature of support, some organisations delivering more intensive supports have coaching roles to model and reinforce practice frameworks. For example, experienced support workers could be appointed to a coaching role to support staff in delivering more intensive positive behaviour support. Responsibilities could include discussing and demonstrating specific approaches, providing refresher training opportunities, structured reflection and debriefing.
- **Supervisor**
  - Supervisors generally have broader responsibilities for either directly supervising workers or supporting team leaders to ensure workers are well supported, for example by managing rosters, assessing capabilities, providing feedback on performance, and arranging training and development opportunities for workers. They may be responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of support in achieving

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participant goals and will typically have some reporting responsibilities, for example on team performance, issues arising, or future needs.

- Supervisors provide a two-way link between the organisation and the workers. This includes explaining and modelling organisational values and policies, keeping workers up to date on capabilities, procedures and practice, providing feedback from frontline workers to the organisation and contributing to improving policies and practice.

## Role profile

Huyen is a team leader and practice advisor for a team of support workers who provide in-home support to participants



### Can you describe what you do in a few sentences?

I manage rostering and admin for my team, as well as run team meetings. I work with my team members to develop their skills and keep them engaged and motivated.

### What does a regular day look like?

I manage the roster, check in with everyone and make sure they have what they need. If we have a new member, I organise shadow shifts for them to work alongside one of our more experienced team members. I regularly catch up with all the support workers and help them with things like planning leave, making sure they have the resources and support they need and addressing any other challenges they may have. There will typically be some administrative work that needs to be done such as reporting. I need to be across any changes with our participants or organisational processes and pass this information onto the team.

### What's the best part of your role?

I love finding ways to motivate and build the capacity of my team members to provide a better service.

### What are the biggest challenges?

The logistics and admin can be time consuming. It can be challenging trying to organise team meetings and development opportunities when everybody is working all over the place, with different rosters!

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### How did you get into your current role?

I was working as a support worker for five years. I always put my hand up to fill in and help out team leaders and supervisors whenever they needed it. I learnt a lot about the admin side and then when a full-time role came up, I applied.

### What skills or experience did you have that were helpful, and what did you need to learn?

As an internal hire, I already knew our processes and practice with participants, but I needed to pick up some of the key leadership skills and figure out how to manage people who had been my peers. I took any opportunity to chat with the more experienced managers and asked to go on a leadership certificate course.

## Capabilities

To find out more about the workforce management capabilities for this kind of work, have a look at the core capabilities for Supervisors and Frontline Management in the NDIS Workforce Capabilities Framework.

- [Model and reinforce values in organisational culture and practice](#)
- [Promote quality through consistent good practice](#)
- [Support health and manage risk](#)
- [Foster and develop a capable workforce](#)

Depending on the workers they are managing and the participants they are supporting, Supervisors and Frontline Managers may also need to be aware of the additional capabilities in the Framework, which can be found under the General or Advanced Support work types.

Supervisor and management roles also require capabilities in other areas than those directly related to workforce management, for example decision-making and conflict resolution, and possibly budget management, performance assessment reporting and analytical thinking for input to future planning and policies. See the suggestions in the 'More Information and Resources' section below.

## Things to consider

- Frontline management roles often require prior experience in disability support work and may blend direct support with management responsibilities. Think about the different aspects of frontline management that interest you. For example, if you enjoy hands-on interaction with participants, you may want a role that allows you to combine this work with some frontline management responsibilities. Alternatively, you might be interested in fully transitioning to a supervisory or management role, as described above.
- The transition from a frontline role to a management role can be challenging. You will have different responsibilities and accountabilities and the move into this kind of role is likely to change the way you interact with your colleagues. It is a good idea to seek guidance from others who have gone through this transition and are experienced managers. You can ask your organisation about how you would be supported to move into this new role, as well as seeking out and talking to managers you respect who can encourage you, give you advice on key things to watch for and think about, and perhaps agree to be your mentor as you make the transition.

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- You will need to develop and apply some specific skills, such as:
    - **Coaching, mentoring, and developing others.** Leaders in disability need to be able to model the required capabilities and demonstrate the required tasks. They also need to be good at explaining good practice, facilitating others to develop and assessing capabilities. This means having a good knowledge of the Framework, staying up to date with good practice and knowing how to be effective in supporting others in their practice.
    - **Administration work.** Supervisors and managers are likely to have a significant portion of their time devoted to rostering, participant plan management, overseeing operations, record keeping, reporting, and, in some cases, budgeting and financial responsibility.
    - **General management responsibilities.** Having a clear focus on team purpose and aims, providing consistent direction at both a team and individual level, motivating people, running effective meetings, seeking out and listening to staff feedback, and managing conflict are all required of managers and supervisors in any industry. Individuals progressing from support worker roles will need to develop many of these skills to succeed in the role.
    - **Analytical thinking and communication skills.** Supervisors and managers will need to present information and arguments to assist the organisation to reflect on and improve the way it operates. You will need to understand and consider a wider range of interests such as how decisions affect participants, workers, and business sustainability.
  - You may also consider requesting training for the skills you will need in frontline management roles such as coaching, managing conflict, having difficult conversations, conducting team meetings.

## More information and resources

- [Practice leadership resource modules](#) – free resource developed by the Living with Disability Research Centre at La Trobe University.
- [Ability First Frontline Leader Project](#) – free resource on frontline leadership.
- Some providers also host their own frontline leadership training. If you work for a provider, we recommend you speak to your manager about what opportunities they can offer.