



Buddy Shift Tip Sheet for Supervisors

A buddy shift (also known as shadow shift) is arranging for a less experienced worker to accompany an experienced worker on one or more shifts. This allows the less experienced worker to understand more about participant's needs and preferences, get to know the work routine and apply learnings.

The tips below are designed to help you arrange buddy shifts.

Check in with the participant

The first step is to check in with the participant to explain why you want to arrange a buddy shift and confirm that they are comfortable with this.

Choose the right buddy

Being able to do the job is not the same as being good at explaining and demonstrating it. Ideal buddies are strong performers who demonstrate both correct procedure and organisational values of respect and person-centred practice, as described in the [NDIS Workforce Capability Framework](#). They also need to be good at supporting co-workers. Communication skills and interpersonal qualities such as patience, encouraging questions and checking for understanding are valuable attributes to look for when selecting buddy trainers.

Set clear expectations

Effective buddy shifts rely on both the buddy worker and the inexperienced worker being clear about the purpose of these shifts. Here is an example of how you could describe the buddy worker role.

Scenario: You want a new worker (Anjali) to support a participant (Leigh) who uses a hoist to get out of bed. You know Anjali has completed manual handling training and has supported other participants who rely on hoists but she needs someone to explain Leigh's specific needs and type of hoist. You arrange for her to do two buddy shifts with Leigh's current support worker and then review how she is going. You also let her know that you will check in with her, Leigh and her buddy at the end of the two shifts.

The role of the buddy worker

Think about what you want the buddy worker to explain and demonstrate. Here is how the list could look when introducing a new worker to using a hoist:

- Introduce Anjali (new worker) to Leigh (participant) and invite Leigh to explain what is important when being moved using the hoist.
- Show Anjali the support plan and hoisting procedure and point out safety issues and how to manage them.
- Demonstrate how to position Leigh and what to watch out for to avoid any skin damage or discomfort.
- Demonstrate the procedure and describe each step as you go.
- Encourage Anjali to question you and Leigh to check her understanding.
- With Leigh's agreement, ask Anjali to demonstrate how to use the hoist, and step in to correct or adjust if you need to.

You can use this list as a guide to prepare your own description of what you want a buddy worker to explain and demonstrate.

The role of the new worker

It is important for new workers to feel OK about asking questions and saying they are not sure. Here is what you could say to Anjali:

- The buddy shift is your chance to watch and ask questions, so you are confident using the hoist to support Leigh. Both Leigh and your buddy worker are there to help you learn what to do. It is your job to speak up if you are not sure. Start by watching what your buddy does and let them know when you are ready to have a go at using the hoist. By the end of the shift you should be able to:
 - Understand what is important to Leigh when she is being moved using a hoist.
 - Know how to position Leigh to avoid any skin damage or discomfort.
 - Demonstrate that you understand manual handling principles and how to keep yourself safe when moving Leigh.
 - Check the procedure and demonstrate using the hoist with the support of your buddy.
 - Check in with Leigh to ask how you went supporting her.

Check in

The purpose of checking in is to find out whether your strategy of using a buddy shift was effective. You can use the list below as a prompt on what you would check to confirm the effectiveness of the buddy shift:

- Check with Anjali to discuss how she is progressing. Was she able to demonstrate using the hoist? Does she know how to apply manual handling techniques to prevent injuring herself and does she know how to minimise any discomfort for Leigh? How confident is she about doing this independently?
- Check with the participant about how they felt Anjali went. Would they be confident having her work with them independently or are there any specific aspects where she needs more practice?
- Check with the buddy trainer whether they observed Anjali following the correct procedure and able to establish a good connection with Leigh.
- Decide whether Anjali is now ready to work independently or needs additional support.