



NDIS Quality  
and Safeguards  
Commission



NDIS Workforce  
Capability Framework

# Supervising For Capability

Supervision and Support  
Relationship: A Guide For  
Supervisors and Workers  
September 2023



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## User icon key

Each document in the NDIS Workforce Capability Framework suite of resources uses one or more icons to show the intended user or users.

Icon	Key
	NDIS participants
	Workers
	Supervisors and frontline managers
	Senior managers and leaders
	NDIS providers

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## Introduction

Supervision is the way organisations manage and support their workforce so that services and supports are delivered in line with priorities, required standards and organisational procedures. When working well, it is an ongoing collaborative process involving regular interaction between workers and supervisors, as well as planned elements such as setting up a [performance agreement](#) and conducting annual reviews. In the NDIS, supervision also involves participants providing input into setting service expectations and giving feedback on how well things are going. The definition of supervision adopted in these resources, and the aspects focused on, are set out in the [Overview of Resources](#).

It is important to note that these resources do not deal with administrative aspects of supervision such as rostering shifts and managing attendance and leave, or the formal processes organisations use to respond to matters such as misconduct, breach of NDIS regulations or poor job fit.

## Related supervision resources

This guide is part of a set of ‘Supervising for Capability’ resources developed by the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (the NDIS Commission). You can view the [full set of resources](#) on our website or access related resources by selecting the links below. Further useful resources developed by the NDIS Commission are listed at the end of this guide.

### Related supervision resources

- [Overview of Resources](#)
- [Performance Agreement template](#)
- [Working Together: A Guide for Workers](#)
- [Working Together: A Guide for Supervisors](#)
- [Learning and Capability Development: A Guide for Supervisors](#)
- [Reflective Practice Tip Sheet for Supervisors and Workers](#)
- [Feedback Tip Sheet for Supervisors](#)
- [Evidence for Assessing Capability – Tip Sheet for Supervisors](#)

## What is in this guide

This guide contains advice on the following aspects of supervision in the NDIS:

- Roles and responsibilities of supervisors and workers
- Methods of supervision
- Setting up the supervisory relationship and arrangements

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- Developing a performance agreement
  - Developing a capability development plan
  - Reviewing the agreement and planning the next one.

## Using this guide

Supervisors and workers can use this guide when first establishing their supervisory relationship or as a reference when reviewing ongoing arrangements.

# Roles and responsibilities of supervisors and workers

## Supervisor

- Create a trusted, safe environment where reflection and learning are encouraged.
- Develop a performance agreement with the worker that describes their ongoing duties, the capabilities they should demonstrate when performing those duties, and their capability development plan.
- In partnership with the worker and each participant they support, confirm expectations on the supports to be delivered and identify specific participant needs and preferences.
- Ensure workers have the required capabilities to perform work assigned.
- Set up communication arrangements to ensure regular contact and timely responses to worker requests for advice or assistance.
- Provide clear and constructive feedback that identifies, acknowledges and reinforces good practice, in the moment and at planned sessions.
- Encourage the worker to raise issues and provide feedback.
- Plan and prepare for scheduled sessions with the worker, identifying areas of strength and areas to develop.
- Encourage reflection and critical thinking, exploring options to address challenges.
- Support learning and capability development.
- Support worker wellbeing.
- Invite and apply feedback from workers to improve your approach to supervision and to provide input to the organisation.
- Pursue your own learning and development in quality practice and in capabilities related to supervision.

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## Worker

- Be familiar with the role description, the NDIS Workforce Capability Framework (the Framework), organisational values and goals, and any other information essential to understanding job requirements.
- Work with the supervisor to develop a performance agreement, using the role description and the Framework as key references.
- In partnership with the supervisor and each participant you will support, confirm expectations on the services to be provided and identify specific participant needs and preferences.
- Positively engage with supervision by taking part in ongoing interactions and planned sessions.
- Reflect on practice, exploring options to address challenges with supervisor.
- Seek feedback from participants, supervisors and others to identify strengths and ask for help when needed.
- Prepare for planned supervisory sessions, reflecting on what has gone well and what has been difficult.
- Provide feedback to your supervisor on supervisory arrangements or relevant organisational settings.
- Self-assess capabilities and identify areas for further development that apply to a current role or a future opportunity.
- Use the supervision relationship to support wellbeing.
- Provide feedback on the effectiveness of learning and development and make suggestions about what else could help.

## Methods of supervision

A range of supervision methods can be used including observation of work, face-to-face meetings, video, phone, and text communication. Face-to-face meetings may be in person or by video conference. Other forms of direct communication could include apps, voice calls, video and/or text communication. The table below offers further guidance.

Methods of supervision	Modes of supervision
<p><b>Informal ongoing contact:</b> incorporating ‘check-ins’ and invitations to raise questions or issues as part of regular interactions to discuss assignments to participants or administrative matters, e.g. leave. Providing on-the-spot positive feedback for an interaction or task well done, or quick advice for easily resolved issues.</p>	<p>Voice call</p> <p>Face to face:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video call – phone or app</li> <li>• In person.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Debrief:</b> discussing what happened, what immediate actions may be required and what can be learnt. This is a good way to support workers’ wellbeing, and if needed, plan actions to reduce risk.</p>	<p>Text message – via phone or app</p> <p>Voice call</p> <p>Face to face:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video call – phone or app</li> <li>• In person.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Information sharing:</b> providing the worker with general information related to the organisation and keeping them up to date with wider organisation news.</p>	<p>Regular information bulletin.</p> <p>Email, text, social media apps, lunchbox/in house information sessions.</p> <p>Team or staff meetings.</p>
<p><b>Scheduled supervision:</b> this may take various forms depending on the focus of the session e.g. general review of work to date and any issues to manage in upcoming period, focused discussion on issues identified as needing support or direction in work to date etc. Ongoing or more complex issues identified from informal ongoing contact are best discussed in this kind of session.</p>	<p>Face to face:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video call – phone or app</li> <li>• In person.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Coaching:</b> can include demonstrating practice, shadowing and providing real-time feedback. It can also include building the worker’s capacity to self-reflect, discuss what went well and what could be improved, and gain confidence in finding their own solutions.</p>	<p>Face to face:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video call – phone or app</li> <li>• In person.</li> </ul>

Methods of supervision	Modes of supervision
<p><b>Reflection and Review:</b> the worker is presented with a real or hypothetical situation and encouraged to discuss how they did/would respond and suggest what they could do differently to improve outcomes. This approach is often used for more complex types of support. For tips on structuring reflective practice discussions, download the <a href="#">Reflective Practice Tip Sheet for Supervisors and Workers</a></p>	<p>Face to face:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video call – phone or app</li> <li>• In person with supervisor, and/or peers and technical experts.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Instructive:</b> used to develop an area of practice or develop a skill. It may be part of individual or workplace wide training.</p>	<p>One-on-one or group training for skill development.</p>

## Setting up the supervisory relationship and arrangements

Refer to the Guiding Principles in section 1 of the [Overview of Resources](#) as a starting point for setting up a positive and constructive supervisory relationship between supervisor and worker.

Supervision needs to be planned for and embedded at the beginning of any worker and supervisor relationship. This includes agreeing on what forms of supervision will suit different preferences and circumstances across a range of settings/tasks/roles/supervision connection points. Selecting the best mode of contact will depend on the nature of work, stage in the employment lifecycle, location of worker and supervisor. The table below sets out factors to consider when deciding how the supervisory relationship will work. Supervisors and workers can use the table as a checklist when discussing how they will work together. The main elements of agreed arrangements should be included in the performance agreement. It is important to discuss and agree how ongoing day-to-day supervision will be conducted, as well as the planned sessions needed to draw up the performance agreement or conduct a performance review.

Factor	Considerations
The type of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some types of services and supports are more complex than others, needing higher levels or different kinds of supervisor support and debriefing. For example, workers providing high intensity health or behaviour supports may need to be supported by an appropriate health or positive behaviour support practitioner.</li> </ul>

Factor	Considerations
The supervisory arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are all supervision functions performed by a single supervisor or are they distributed across different roles? For example, rostering or attendance management could be performed by another role; certain types of specialised supports may be supervised by a health practitioner; day-to-day supervision may be provided by a supervisor.</li> <li>• If supervisory responsibilities are split, the organisation needs to make sure these different roles complement each other. For example, the primary supervisor may need to coordinate with others for all relevant inputs to the performance agreement and all relevant feedback required for the performance review.</li> </ul>
Communications and check-in points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many NDIS services and supports are delivered in participants' homes or in community settings. Workers delivering those supports have limited opportunities to meet with their supervisors or other workers in person. Workers who provide supports to participants in group homes have more regular contact with colleagues and supervisors. Check-in arrangements should consider the circumstances and related opportunities for incidental supervisory contact.</li> <li>• Examples of communication and check-in arrangements include: text check-in at the end of each shift; call or text for immediate attention such as unexpected absences (e.g. due to illness) or to request a debriefing meeting; weekly or fortnightly phone or video catch-ups for routine check-ins; in-person performance review meetings every six months to discuss how things are going, address work issues, capability development progress or needs; attendance at regular staff meetings; participation in online peer practice meetings.</li> </ul>
The worker's level of experience and tenure in the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the worker is new to NDIS work, or is learning to deliver a new type of support, they will need more intensive support while they become familiar with the work and develop confidence. The supervisor also needs to provide more regular opportunities to check in, make sure they have the capabilities they need, and ensure the worker is aware of requirements set out in the Code of Conduct and the expected approach to service delivery described in the Framework.</li> <li>• If the worker is new to the organisation, they will require induction/orientation on local goals, priorities, policies, procedures, systems, etc. The supervisor should ensure this is provided.</li> </ul>



Factor	Considerations
Performance assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will the supervisor observe and assess how the worker is going in order to confirm that services and supports have been delivered and met required standards? Assessment should cover both the performance of the tasks (the ‘what’) and the way in which they are performed (the ‘how’: the demonstrated capabilities). The supervisor and worker should discuss how this will be done and how feedback will be provided, ‘in-the-moment’ if appropriate, or at a planned review session. Refer to the <a href="#">Learning and Capability Development: A Guide for Supervisors</a> for more details.</li> <li>• Attendance at a participant’s home to observe service delivery will need to be arranged and agreed with the participant.</li> <li>• Decide on the appropriate method of assessment to suit the nature of the support delivered. For example, delivering high risk supports will require a more formal approach to assessment. The Learning and Capability Development Guide provides further guidance.</li> </ul>
Giving and receiving feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of the key characteristics of an effective supervisory relationship is the value placed on clear, honest feedback, both to acknowledge or praise good work and to raise issues or areas that may need improvement. See the resources <a href="#">Working Together</a> and the <a href="#">Feedback Tip Sheet for Supervisors</a> for advice on this important aspect.</li> </ul>

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## Developing a performance agreement

The performance agreement should be developed collaboratively between the supervisor and the worker. If your organisation does not have a performance agreement process and template, you can select the link to the [Performance Agreement template](#) in the section on related supervision resources in the introduction to this guide. The level of detail included in the plan will depend on the worker's employment status: an ongoing employee will have a more comprehensive agreement than a casual employee who works only a few hours a week. However, all workers should have supervision arrangements in place based on documented duty and capability expectations.

The points listed below provide guidance on completing the Performance Agreement template:

- Period of agreement: this would usually be 12 months but could be for a shorter period.
- Planned review dates: for a 12-month agreement, reviews could be conducted at midpoint and end date when the agreement is renewed. When establishing an agreement for the first time, consider scheduling an early review to check in on how things are going and identify any need for additional guidance or capability development.
- Duties/responsibilities, capabilities, and achievement indicators: these should be discussed and agreed by the supervisor and the worker in a performance discussion meeting before finalising the agreement.
  - Duties/responsibilities: list only the main ones, drawn from the role description, relevant procedures and participant plans and agreements, adapted to reflect any particular focus that applies in the current period. For example: provide personal care to participants in their homes.
  - Capabilities: select 1-2 key capabilities from the Framework that are particularly relevant to each listed duty (some duties may draw on the same capabilities). Refer to the Framework and list relevant core and any specialised capabilities. For example: Build Trusted Relationships; Communicate effectively; Support Participants with a Psycho-social disability; etc. Also include any specific technical skills required, e.g. using a hoist.
  - Achievement indicators: describe the indicators that will show the worker has successfully performed the duties, demonstrating the required capabilities. Choose indicators that are specific, measurable and realistic. For example: participants report that they feel safe and confident; timely attendance; demonstration of correct procedures.

A review of performance should be conducted in a planned session between the supervisor and the worker, suggested as every six months.

Planning the next agreement should build on observations and capability development directions from the previous supervision period. It should also be used as the opportunity to discuss supervision arrangements and make any adjustments needed to improve their effectiveness and benefits.

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## Supporting a capability development plan

The [Performance Agreement template](#) includes a section for the worker's capability development plan. The performance agreement should be supported by a capability development plan section that captures capabilities that have been identified as emerging and others that a worker wants to develop. This enables capabilities to be reviewed and developed in supervision and support sessions, and have progress and achievements documented.

This plan should be based on the review of worker capabilities that are described in the [Learning and Capability Development: A Guide for Supervisors](#) and is informed by other feedback as it is obtained.

The capability development plan section identifies areas for development, how they will be addressed and how their achievement will be assessed. It is important that the capability development plan is not limited to technical skills such as using a ventilator, but also puts emphasis on developing 'soft' skills, such as communications and the ability to establish positive relations with others. These aspects can be challenging to develop if a worker is not a good fit for disability work but there is scope to strengthen both soft and technical skills as part of capability development.

The points listed below provide guidance on completing the capability development section of the Performance Agreement template:

- Capability or technical skills area for development: enter details of the skills and behaviours to be developed. This may be to improve current performance or to develop new skills for future career goals. For example: deepen understanding to support young people with autism.
- Method of learning/development: refer to the Learning and capability development guide for suggested methods. For example: on the job coaching; attend training short course on working with neuro-diverse participants; participate in a peer-to-peer community of practice to support practice reflection and development.
- Indicators of achievement: describe the indicators of achievement and how they will be confirmed. For example, increased confidence in managing difficult behaviour, confirmed by supervisor observation in typical situations.

For more information, refer to the [Learning and Capability Development: A Guide for Supervisors](#).

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## Supporting wellbeing

Wellbeing for each worker is influenced by a combination of personal, work, and organisational factors. Supervision is a key component of a robust worker wellbeing strategy. An effective partnership between the worker and their supervisor is one where both take responsibility for reflecting on, monitoring, and fostering wellbeing is constructive.

### Wellbeing indicators at work

- Having clarity about job role and the capabilities required to meet expectations.
- Engaged in purposeful work that contributes to positive outcomes for participants.
- Feeling respected and valued.
- Having good work acknowledged and receiving constructive feedback
- A safe and trusted work environment.
- A sense of belonging to a work team, collaborating, and working towards common goals.
- Worker's capabilities and development needs are supported.
- Workplace culture aligns with organisational values.

### Strategies to enhance wellbeing

- Creating a team spirit and regular informal touch points between workers and supervisors.
- Ready access to supervision for debriefing: this needs to be available close to the time of any incidents and is additional to regular scheduled supervision sessions.
- Employee assistance programs: should be promoted to enable workers get access to short-term counselling or support when they require an independent source of support.
- Regular scheduled supervision: the commitment to supervision that supports, reviews, and promotes the development of skills as outlined in a supervision agreement.
- Employee recognition program: simple forms of recognition of the value of having a committed, capable workforce.
- Opportunities for personal and professional development: this demonstrates the organisation's commitment to the worker's long-term career goals and personal growth (also see the NDIS Commission's [Career Options Guide](#)).

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## Other useful resources

- [NDIS Workforce Capability Framework](#): describes the attitudes, skills and knowledge required by all workers – including supervisors – and the behaviours you can expect to see.
- [Workforce Management and Planning Tool](#): a tool designed to support organisations to assess and plan current and future workforce needs and prioritise strategies, including learning and capability development plans.
- [NDIS Code of Conduct](#): promotes safe and ethical service delivery by setting out expectations for the conduct of both NDIS providers and workers.
- [NDIS Code of Conduct - Guidance for Service Providers](#).
- [NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators](#): specify the quality standards to be met by registered NDIS providers to provide supports and services to NDIS participants.