



NDIS Quality  
and Safeguards  
Commission



NDIS Workforce  
Capability Framework

# Supervising for Capability

## Setting up the Supervising Relationship: A Guide for NDIS Participants who Supervise Workers

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## User icon key

Each guide in the NDIS Workforce Capability Framework set of resources has one or more icons on the cover. These show who the guide is for.

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

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# Introduction

## About the Supervising for Capability resources

This guide is part of a set of Supervising for Capability resources from the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. We created these resources to help NDIS participants support and supervise workers well.

You can find the full set of resources on the [Supervising for Capability home page](#). We've also listed them at the end of this guide.

If you're a participant who uses a provider, the provider may already be using these resources to help them supervise workers. You can both use them to help set up and discuss the way you work together.

These resources are to use alongside the NDIS Workforce Capability Framework. The Framework describes the attitudes, skills and knowledge we expect all workers funded under the NDIS to have. We call these their capabilities. Visit our website for more about the [Framework and capabilities](#).

## What is supervision

Supervision is the way an employer manages and supports workers. This includes giving workers the skills and support they need to do a good job.

When it's working well, supervision:

- Is an ongoing process
- Is collaborative – the worker and supervisor work together
- Involves regular communication
- Includes planned sessions for review of work.

In the NDIS, self-managing participants may directly employ workers. They have a key role in supervising and giving feedback to workers.

We give more background on supervision and the main principles in the [Overview of Resources](#).

## Why we have this guide

We created this guide to help supervisors and workers set up a relationship so that workers know what they should be doing in their role. This includes knowing the capabilities workers should develop.

If you're a participant who directly employ workers, you can use this guide when you:

- First set up your relationship with a worker
- Plan how you'll supervise a worker

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- Review ongoing supervising plans.

If you're using a provider, you can use this guide to set up the relationship for sharing feedback with workers and providers.

Workers can use this guide as a reference. It can help workers understand what to expect from their relationship with a supervisor. This includes participants who supervise workers.

## What's in this guide

This guide has advice about supervising in the NDIS. It includes the following sections:

- Roles and responsibilities of supervisors and workers
- Ways to supervise
- Setting up the relationship between supervisor and worker
- Supporting wellbeing.

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# Roles and responsibilities of supervisors and workers

## Supervisors (participants)

- Create a trusted, safe workplace. Support the workers to learn and think about their practice and learning needs.
- Check what everyone expects from the supports.
- Give clear and practical feedback. Notice, point out and support good practice. Do this in the moment and at planned sessions.
- Make sure workers have the capabilities they need to do assigned work.
- Support workers to learn and develop capability.
- Ask for feedback from workers to improve the way you supervise them. Act on that feedback. Also give feedback to the provider, if you use one.
- Set up plans for communicating with the worker. Make sure there is regular time for feedback and responses to worker requests for advice or help.
- Support worker wellbeing.

## Workers

- Know the position description, the Framework and the values and goals of the employer. Know any other information needed to understand the job requirements.
- With the supervisor (and participant, if different), check what everyone expects from the supports. Find out what the participant needs and prefers.
- Think about practice. Explore options to address challenges with the supervisor.
- Self-assess capabilities. Find areas for more development to use in a current role or in the future.
- Take part in sharing knowledge about practice. And take part in learning and development opportunities.
- Support the supervising process in a positive and active way. Take part in ongoing check-ins and planned sessions with the supervisor.
- Ask for, receive and act on feedback to support personal development. Give feedback to support others to develop.
- Use the supervision relationship to support wellbeing.
- Give feedback on how well learning and development is going. Suggest what else would help.

## Ways to supervise

You can supervise workers in a range of different ways. This includes:

- Observe or watch someone do their work
- Have face-to-face meetings – in person or by video call with a phone or app
- Communicate through voice phone calls and text messages.

We give more details in the table below.

Ways to supervise	How and when to do it
<p><b>Informal ongoing contact</b></p> <p>This includes check-ins and asking the worker to bring up any questions or issues as part of day-to-day contact. This might involve giving on-the-spot positive feedback for an interaction or task well done. Or quick advice about issues you can deal with easily. It also includes discussing matters like leave, shift times, wages and so on.</p>	<p>Face-to-face:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• at the start or end of shifts</li> <li>• during a shift when there is free time, such as waiting for laundry or waiting for an appointment</li> <li>• video call – phone or app.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Debriefing</b></p> <p>When there has been an issue or incident, a debrief is a way to discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what happened</li> <li>• what actions might be needed straight away</li> <li>• what everyone can learn.</li> </ul> <p>Debriefs are a good way to support the wellbeing of workers. And, if needed, plan what to do to reduce risk.</p>	<p>Follow up straight after an incident by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• text message</li> <li>• voice call.</li> </ul> <p>Or 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></p> <p>Sharing information includes giving the worker general information they need to do their job. For example, about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work health and safety</li> <li>• changes to your support needs</li> <li>• changes to work rosters and the work setting</li> <li>• who to contact or what to do in an emergency.</li> </ul>	<p>Email, text message, group chats, social media apps.</p>

Ways to supervise	How and when to do it
<p><b>Scheduled supervision sessions</b></p> <p>You can do this in different ways. It will depend on how often you see a worker, or if you're taking part in a set supervision session with a provider. If you see a worker regularly and give ongoing feedback through check-ins, you could have a set supervision session every 6 months. Or once a year.</p> <p>You can use this to discuss changes in your needs or the worker's training needs. With a provider, there might be a set session when there are detailed or complex issues to discuss.</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></p> <p>Coaching includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• showing someone how to do something</li> <li>• shadowing – the worker watching how someone else works</li> <li>• giving feedback in the moment.</li> </ul> <p>It can also include helping the worker to think about their own practice and discuss what went well and what they can improve. This can help a worker gain confidence in finding ways to solve problems.</p>	<p>Face-to-face:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in a buddy shift</li> <li>• in person.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reflect and review</b></p> <p>This involves giving the worker a real or imagined situation and asking them to discuss what they would do. If it's a real situation the worker was part of, they can suggest what they could do differently to get a better result. This approach is often used for more complex types of support.</p> <p>For tips on running reflective practice discussions, download our <a href="#">reflective practice tip sheet</a>.</p>	<p>Face-to-face:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• video call – phone or app</li> <li>• in person</li> <li>• in a buddy shift.</li> </ul>



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## Setting up the relationship between supervisor and worker

The main aim of supervising is to give workers the feedback and support they need to do a good job. You can use the principles in the [Overview of Resources](#) to start setting up a positive relationship between supervisor and worker.

At the start of your relationship with a worker, you should plan for supervising. This includes how you'll do it and build in time for it. This plan should also be in agreement with providers you use. This includes agreeing on how you'll:

- Supervise workers you directly employ
- Give feedback to workers a provider employs
- Connect with the supervisor or manager if you're using a provider.

### Setting up the relationship checklist

In the table below, we explain things to think about when setting up a relationship between supervisor and worker. You can use the table as a checklist when discussing how you'll work together. You should include the main points of what you agree in any service agreement or position description.

It's important to discuss and agree:

- How you'll supervise on an ongoing day-to-day basis
- What planned sessions you need to give feedback and review a worker.

What to think about	Tips and questions to ask
The type of work	Some types of services and supports are more complex than others. These need higher levels or different kinds of supervisor support and debriefing. For example, high intensity health or behaviour supports. Workers in these cases might need support from a health or positive behaviour support practitioner.  If you use a provider, this should be part of their supervisor role. If you directly employ workers, think about whether you need a specialist to coach or supervise them now and then.

What to think about	Tips and questions to ask
Who is involved in supervising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you use a provider, different people might have different duties. For example, one role might manage rosters or keep track of worker hours. A health practitioner might supervise certain types of specialised supports. Another role might supervise day-to-day activities.</li> <li>• If you're using a provider, it's important to be clear about who coordinates the workers who support you. And who the main contact is for supervision of workers.</li> <li>• If you directly employ workers, do you have other informal supports also interact with them? For example, partners, family members, friends or housemates. If so, it's important to be clear about who is in charge and giving feedback. You might need to think about what happens in an emergency. For example, who can communicate with and supervise the worker if you are not able to give direct feedback?</li> </ul>
Communicating and checking in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you're using a provider, you should find out how they'll check in with workers. This is so the check-ins don't disrupt your supports and also so you can be involved in giving feedback. The provider should consider your situation and different options for check-ins.</li> <li>• When you directly employ and supervise workers, you need to build regular check-ins into shift times so the worker expects these. Plans for check-ins could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Checking in with the worker at the end of each shift</li> <li>– How the worker will check in with you if they're ill or need a debrief after an incident, for example by calling or texting</li> <li>– Having in-person performance review meetings every 6 months to discuss how things are going. This includes discussing work issues and capability development progress or needs</li> <li>– Taking part in a meeting of the team of workers you employ.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

What to think about	Tips and questions to ask
The worker's level of experience and time working with you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the worker is new to NDIS work they will need more intensive support while they learn the work and develop confidence. This is also the case if the worker is learning a new type of support. If you are the supervisor, you'll need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Allow time for more regular check-ins with the worker</li> <li>– Make sure they have the skills and knowledge they need</li> <li>– Make sure they understand the requirements set out in the NDIS Code of Conduct and in the Framework.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If you're using a provider, it's their responsibility to make sure the worker has the support, skills and knowledge they need. But you can ask and check this is covered.</li> <li>• If the worker is new to working with you, they'll need an induction or orientation session. This is a way to introduce them to the basics such as your goals, your needs, work safety and the systems you use. You could also use the <a href="#">NDIS Worker Orientation Module: Quality, Safety and You</a> for workers you directly employ. The provider supervisor should introduce procedures and systems to do with the organisation.</li> </ul>
Review of performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will you observe and assess the worker to check that they delivered supports and services and met required standards? A provider should have a way to assess the worker that covers both what they did and how they did it. The supervisor and worker should discuss a plan for assessment and for giving feedback.</li> <li>• If you directly employ workers, you could give feedback in the moment or at a planned review session.</li> <li>• The way you assess the worker should suit the type of support. For example, if the worker gives high risk supports, you may need help from an expert to assess the workers are working as expected. The <a href="#">Supporting Workers to Learn</a> guide gives more advice.</li> </ul>
Sharing feedback	<p>Sharing clear, honest feedback is a key part of a good relationship between supervisor and worker. This includes feedback about good work as well as about issues and what needs to improve. Our <a href="#">Working Together - Having Conversations with Workers</a> guide and <a href="#">feedback tip sheet</a> have more advice on this important part of supervising.</p>

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## Supporting wellbeing

Personal life, work and the workplace can all affect the wellbeing of a worker. If you're using a provider, the organisation and other workers and staff can also influence a worker's wellbeing.

Supervision is a key part of supporting worker health and wellbeing. Both the worker and the supervisor are responsible for thinking about, tracking and promoting wellbeing. They should do this in a positive way. This is part of a successful partnership between worker and supervisor.

## What supports wellbeing at work

- Being clear about the role and the capabilities needed to do what is expected.
- Doing work that has a purpose that supports positive results for the participant.
- Feeling respected and valued.
- Having good work noticed and getting useful feedback.
- Being in a safe and trusted workplace.
- Belonging to a team, working together and working towards shared goals.
- Having support to develop capabilities.

## Ways to build wellbeing

- Create a team spirit: Work together to meet your goals. If you employ more than one worker, provide informal ways for workers to meet and communicate. For example, a morning tea or a group call.
- Be available for debriefing: A debrief needs to happen close to the time of any incidents. This is on top of regular check-ins or supervision sessions.
- Promote an Employee Assistance Program (EAP): If you're using a provider, they should promote their EAP. These programs help workers get short-term counselling or support from an independent organisation when they need it.
- Plan regular supervision: Commit to supervising to support, review and promote learning and development. You should keep a record of your plan for supervising. The plan could be in the service agreement with a provider, or in the worker's position description.
- Recognise workers: There are simple ways you can recognise and show you value a committed, capable worker. For example, a small gift at Christmas for workers who have been supporting you for a long time.
- Allow time for training: This shows you care about and support the worker's ongoing learning. If you're using a provider, you might support the worker to take up a training option the organisation provides. For example, to support a worker's long-term career goals and personal growth. (For more about work and career options, visit the NDIS Commission's [Career Options Guide](#)).

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## Other useful resources

- [NDIS Workforce Capability Framework](#): The Framework describes the attitudes, skills and knowledge that all workers and supervisors need. It includes how they should behave and what you can expect.
- [NDIS Code of Conduct](#): This is a set of rules and standards for NDIS providers and workers to follow. It supports people to give supports in a safe and ethical way.
- [NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators](#): The practice standards list the quality standards NDIS providers must meet to provide supports and services to participants.

## More Supervising for Capability resources

- [Overview of Resources](#)
- [Performance Agreement template](#)
- [Working Together: A Guide for Workers](#)
- [Working Together – Having conversations with workers: A guide for NDIS Participants who supervise workers](#)
- [Supporting Workers to Learn: A Guide for NDIS Participants who Supervise Workers](#)
- [Reflective Practice Tip Sheet for Supervisors and Workers](#)
- [Tip sheet – Giving feedback to workers and providers](#)
- [Evidence for Assessing Capability – Tip Sheet for Supervisors](#)