



NDIS Quality  
and Safeguards  
Commission



NDIS Workforce  
Capability Framework

# Supervising for Capability

Working Together – Having  
Conversations with Workers: A  
Guide for NDIS Participants who  
Supervise Workers

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## Contents

User icon key.....	2
Introduction .....	3
About the Supervising for Capability resources .....	3
Why we have this guide.....	3
What’s in this guide .....	3
Section 1: When to have conversations and how to get ready for them.....	4
When to have conversations .....	4
You’re about to start getting supports from a provider .....	4
A new worker is joining your support team .....	4
You want the worker to change how they do something .....	5
There’s an incident or a near miss.....	5
Regular check-ins about how things are going.....	5
Getting ready for conversations with workers.....	6
Using questions to suit your situation and identity.....	6
Keeping records of your conversations .....	7
Getting ready to share feedback .....	7
Section 2: The conversation guide.....	8
Sharing your information with workers.....	8
Understanding what’s important to you .....	9
Checking in and sharing feedback .....	10
Tips for feedback conversations .....	10
Setting up how you’ll give feedback.....	11
Giving and getting feedback.....	12
Supporting worker capability.....	13
Keeping you and others safe when supporting you .....	14
Other useful resources.....	15
More Supervising for Capability resources.....	15

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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 play an important role in supervising and supporting workers. And you can choose if and how much you want to be involved.

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 using a provider, they 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](#).

## Why we have this guide

We created this guide to support you to communicate with workers you directly employ. Or with people who connect you with workers, like online platform providers.

You can use this guide to help you:

- Think about the information you want to share
- Communicate well with workers, or their supervisors if you use a provider
- Agree on the way you work together to reach your goals
- Agree on the support you need
- Build good relationships with workers.

## What's in this guide

This guide has 2 sections.

- **Section 1** is about when you might communicate with a worker or their supervisor about what you want and need from your support and how they'll work with you. It lists some example situations. It also suggests things to think about to get ready for these conversations.
- **Section 2** has questions and tips you can use to guide your conversations. It also includes examples of how you can use the questions in different situations.

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## Section 1: When to have conversations and how to get ready for them

Good support relies on having strong, trusting relationships. To build a good relationship with workers, you need to communicate. Your conversations should be ongoing and open.

It's important for everyone to be clear and agree about:

- What you want and need from your support
- Who is responsible for what
- How you'll let the worker know how things are going
- How the worker will make changes as needed along the way
- How you prefer to communicate – for example, at the end of a shift or end of the week, in person, by phone call or by text.

### When to have conversations

There are different times when you might want to have a conversation with a worker about what you need and expect. Here are a few examples, with links to related tips in the conversation guide.

#### You're about to start getting supports from a provider

You meet with the worker or provider so they can get to know you and understand the support you need. They will read about your supports in your NDIS plan and service agreement. But having a conversation gives you the chance to explain how you would like to get that support.

Related sections of the conversation guide:

- [Sharing your information with workers](#)
- [Understanding what's important to you.](#)

#### A new worker is joining your support team

You decide what to tell the new worker to help them understand your needs. There are lots of ways to do this. You might like to explain your needs in person. Or you can ask the worker to look at information you've already provided, like the position description or service agreement, and then talk about it.

Related sections of the conversation guide:

- [Sharing your information with workers](#)
- [Supporting worker capability](#)
- [Understanding what's important to you.](#)

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## You want the worker to change how they do something

Your needs, health or living situation changes. You want the worker to change the way they support you. You and the worker refer to your earlier agreement. You talk about and agree on how to change it. This will ensure the worker is clear how to do your support in the new way. You can also use this conversation to give them feedback about what they've been doing well and how they're going.

Related sections of the conversation guide:

- [Understanding what's important to you](#)
- [Checking in and sharing feedback.](#)

## There's an incident or a near miss

For example, you notice the way the worker is using a piece of equipment could be unsafe. You talk with the worker about what happened and why. Agree with the worker on how to make sure it doesn't happen again. You record what you decide. This is so that you and all your support workers know about any changes to how they should do things.

Related sections of the conversation guide:

- [Keeping you and others safe when supporting you](#)
- [Checking in and sharing feedback.](#)

## Regular check-ins about how things are going

As part of your regular check-in, you and the worker refer to your earlier agreement about your support and what you expect. In this conversation, you:

- discuss how things are going with your support
- Take note of any feedback from you or the worker
- Make any changes to the way you get supports as your situation or needs change.

Related section of the conversation guide:

- [Checking in and sharing feedback.](#)

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## Getting ready for conversations with workers

There are a few steps you can take to get ready for a conversation with workers. This will help you get the most out of these conversations.

Think about:

- What you want the worker or the provider to know about you
- Any questions you have
- Whether you want someone else to be part of the conversation, such as a family member or friend.

### Using questions to suit your situation and identity

The conversation guide in Section 2 has a set of questions based on the capabilities in the [NDIS Workforce Capability Framework](#). The Framework describes the attitudes, skills and knowledge workers funded under the NDIS should have. You can use the Framework for ideas about other questions to include. There are links to relevant parts of the Framework in the conversation guide.

Depending on your support needs, think about any identity capabilities your workers should have. Identity capabilities include skills and knowledge to support:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Culturally diverse people – from different backgrounds
- Linguistically diverse people – who speak languages other than English
- LGBTIQ+ people.

There are also specialised capabilities. These are specific skills workers need to deliver certain supports. For example, skills to support a child with disability or carry out a behaviour support plan.

You might want to ask questions about support for any high intensity daily personal activities. You can find the skills and knowledge workers need described in the [high intensity support skills descriptors](#).

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## Keeping records of your conversations

It's a good idea to make a note of key points from conversations with the worker. This gives you, the worker and the provider – if you're using one – a record to look back on.

There are different ways you can keep records. If you're using a provider, you should talk to them about the best way to do this so it works for everyone. For example, you might:

- List the main points in a note on the fridge or in your room for the worker to see
- Keep a detailed record in a folder that you share with the worker and their supervisor.

If you're not using a provider, you might find you can use other ways of keeping track of conversations as well. For example, following up a conversation with a text or email. This also means you'll all have a record of what you talked about and agreed to.

Whatever you do to keep records, you need to be comfortable that everyone is managing and sharing this information in a way that respects rights to privacy. This includes your privacy and the privacy of workers.

## Getting ready to share feedback

It can be hard to give and receive feedback. It helps if you make checking in with workers and giving feedback a habit.

Check in regularly with the worker to let them know how things are going. How you do this depends on how well you know the worker. For example, if you're still getting to know each other, you could agree to spend the last 5 minutes of a shift to raise any issues you haven't had time to talk about. Or you could set up a weekly time to do this.

It's okay to have these conversations. It helps make sure you're getting the support you need and builds a better relationship with the worker.

Find more tips and questions to think about in the [Checking in and sharing feedback](#) section of the conversation guide.



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## Section 2: The conversation guide

In this section we give some tips on having conversations with workers and providers about your needs and what you expect. It includes:

- Questions you might like to ask yourself to get ready to have these conversations
- Examples to show how to use the questions
- Prompts for thinking about how to supervise and support the worker so they meet requirements.

Each of the conversation topics in this section relates to a core capability for workers from the Framework. We've included links to more information on the NDIS Workforce Capability website.

### Sharing your information with workers

When you're setting up your relationship with the worker, think about what kind of information you want them and others to know.

- What support do you want or need to help you to communicate with the worker?
- Who else in your life or your support team should the worker know about?
- If you're using a provider, do you know who to contact instead of the worker if you want to raise any issues?
- Who else is part of your relationship with the worker? For example, a plan manager or an online platform for finding workers? What role do they have? Do you know who to contact?
- What kinds of information about you are you happy for the worker to have or share with others? Have you agreed to this with the worker?

You can find more in the Framework about the capabilities that support you to [set up your relationship](#) and share information.

**Example:** Effie has said that privacy is very important to her. She doesn't want her support worker to contact her behaviour support practitioner or pass on information about her. Effie and the worker's supervisor work together to decide how and when they share information to keep her safe. They also decide that Effie needs to agree to any information they share.

**Example:** Nam employs his own workers. He wants them to work as a team to support his needs. When each worker starts, he asks if it's okay to share their phone numbers with his other workers and his partner. He explains that he's happy for them to share information about his health needs with other workers and his partner. Nam asks the workers to just check with him first before sharing.

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## Understanding what's important to you

Think about what the worker needs to know about you and your goals.

- What does the worker need to know about what's important to you and how you want them to support you?
- Does the worker need any support or extra information to help them support you? This might be about your cultural background, identity or the type of support you need.
- Does the worker need to learn about different models or approaches to support? For example, recovery-oriented practice?

You can find more in the Framework about the capabilities that support your [goals and choices](#).

**Example:** *Maya is an Aboriginal woman living with quite high health care needs. Maya grew up in a remote part of Western Australia but has been living in the city for the last few years to be close to medical support.*

*Maya explains to the provider that she wants to return to country and family. The worker talks with Maya about who could help her with setting up her supports in her community. She chooses some people from her community she wants to involve. Together with her support workers and health care team, they plan how to make this work.*

## Checking in and sharing feedback

Sharing open, honest feedback is an important part of a good working relationship. Communicate with the worker about any issues as they come up, so they don't end up becoming big problems.

### Tips for feedback conversations

- Let the worker know what they're doing well

Don't only tell them the things you're not happy about. It's good to also let the worker know when they're doing a good job. This helps them to know they're doing what you expect. It also helps build a better relationship between you and the worker.

- Give examples

Instead of a general comment, be specific and give examples to explain your feedback. This makes it easier for the worker to understand what to keep doing and what they might need to change.

General feedback	A better way using an example
<i>'I like the way you support me.'</i>	<i>'It was good the way you checked with me before serving up lunch. I really wanted to finish my game and having to stop then would have ruined my score!'</i>
<i>'You never turn up when you say you will.'</i>	<i>'You were half an hour late on Friday. It's a real problem for me if I don't know when you're coming. I was late for my appointment. Could you let me know well before if you can't make it on time?'</i>

- Refer to what you agreed about roles and expectations

It's important to have open conversations with the worker about what you can expect of each other and make a note of what you agree to. This gives you something to refer to when giving feedback about how things are going.

- It's okay to give feedback

Giving feedback can be hard and can sometimes raise strong emotions. For example, the worker might get upset if they feel like you're blaming them for an issue. They might argue or say something you find upsetting.

If this happens, you don't have to change what you're saying to make them feel better. But there are ways to try to keep the conversation calm. For example, you can let them know that you understand that they're upset. You can explain how something affects you and how making a change can help. If there are a lot of strong feelings, it can also help to have a break and come back later. This gives you both a chance to think more about the issues.

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- Let the worker ask questions and explain their point of view

Give the worker a chance to share their thoughts and keep an open mind. This will help you find a way to solve the problem, rather than talking about who is right or wrong. You can also learn what might be getting in the way of a worker doing something you're asking for.

- Keep a record of what you decide

If you decide to make changes after sharing feedback with a worker, it's useful for you both to make a note of what you decide. You can refer to this record in future.

If you're using a provider, there might also be things you or the worker want to follow up with their supervisor. For example, to make sure the worker gets any support they need.

## Setting up how you'll give feedback

Think about how and when you'll check in with the worker to share feedback.

- Is there an agreed way for you and the worker to share thoughts and feedback about how things are going? For example, a chat in person at the end of each shift or week? Or using email or a communication book?
- If you're using a provider, do you want to set up a regular time with the supervisor and the worker to talk about how things are going?
- Who else might have useful feedback about how the support is working for you and for the worker? For example, a family member.
- Do you feel comfortable giving positive and negative feedback to the worker about the way they support you? If not, what makes it hard to do this?
- What kind of support would you like to help you give feedback?

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## Giving and getting feedback

When you check in with the worker, think about what feedback you want to share.

- How are things going with your support? What is good and what could be better or different?
- How does the worker feel they're going in giving you support? Are there any areas they feel they need more training or help?

Find out more about [checking in and giving feedback](#) in the Framework.

**Example:** Rhonda is generally happy about the support she gets from Nan but lately Nan is spending a lot of time on her phone. Rhonda doesn't want to upset Nan so she hasn't raised it. She's also worried that if she mentions it to the service provider, she will get Nan in trouble.

If Rhonda and Nan agree about how and when to check in with each other, it can help when they have to talk about something hard. Rhonda suggests that they make a time once a fortnight to have a cup of tea and a chat about how things are going.

When they chat, Rhonda finds out that Nan has a daughter who has been sick. Nan was on her phone checking with her childcare centre that her daughter was okay. Nan realises that she hasn't been focused on work. She asks the centre to contact her partner if there's an issue with her child during working hours.

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## Supporting worker capability

If you're using a provider, you might want to be part of making sure that workers have the skills and training to support you. Think about how involved you want to be in that process.

If you directly employ your own workers, you might want to find out if the workers know how to do what you need. You can use the [core capabilities outlined in the Framework](#) to help check this.

- When a worker needs to learn something new, do you want someone to help you explain what to do? For example, a family member or a health specialist.
- If you directly employ workers, how will you know that they have the capabilities they need?
- How experienced is the worker in giving the types of support you need?
- Have you talked to the worker about how you'll assess their capabilities – including behaviours, attitudes and values?

**Example:** ABC Support Services support Gina's 5-year-old daughter, who relies on tube feeding. It's very important to Gina that the worker has the capabilities they need. Gina has always trained her daughter's workers so they know exactly how to support her.

A new support worker will be starting on Monday. They have recently done a training course. Gina talks with the supervisor about the worker. She agrees that she'll give the worker some extra hands-on training.

After the hands-on training, Gina thinks that the new worker is ready to work by themselves. She arranges for the supervisor to visit to see how the worker is going. The supervisor checks that the worker is doing what Gina expects and is meeting the provider's quality standards. The supervisor uses the capabilities in the Framework and [high intensity support skills descriptors](#) to do this.

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## Keeping you and others safe when supporting you

Think about what you need from workers in how they support you. This includes what you want them to know about safety and your right to make choices.

- What does the worker expect about the support and how they'll provide it? Do you expect the same things?
- There might be times when there's a risk to your safety, the worker's safety or the safety of others. How do you want to talk about and manage these situations?
- Does the worker know about dignity of risk – your right to make choices about your life, even if it involves some risk? Do they need any support to apply it?
- How will you help keep the worker and yourself safe while taking the risks you might choose?
- Are there any approved restrictive practices the worker needs to know about? For example, environmental restraints in a behaviour support plan. Does the worker know the rules and regulations around using restrictive practices?

You can find more in the Framework about the capabilities that support [managing your safety](#).

**Example:** Angelo is a young man living with autism. He tells his worker, Rex, that he wants to get out more to meet new people. But he explains that he gets agitated if a place is too noisy or too bright. He meets with Rex and his supervisor to plan how to manage this. They talk about ways he can feel confident when he is out. Angelo explains what he wants Rex to do if he starts feeling anxious or stressed.

**Example:** Aliya lives with a visual impairment and gets support to cook meals. She likes to do as much as she can herself. She knows how to use assistive technology to read labels. She's also confident using techniques to safely cut food.

At the start of each shift with the worker, she asks the worker to talk through any safety issues they can see. Aliya shares a list of common issues to look for. When they notice a safety issue, Aliya decides with the worker the way to make things safer.

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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.
- [High intensity support skills descriptors](#): This is a guide for NDIS providers and workers who support participants with high intensity personal activities they do every day.
- [NDIS Code of Conduct](#): This is a set of rules and standards for workers and providers to follow. It supports people to give supports and services in a safe and ethical way.

## More Supervising for Capability resources

- [Overview of Resources](#)
- [Setting up the Supervising Relationship: A Guide for NDIS Participants who Supervise Workers](#)
- [Supporting Workers to Learn: A Guide for NDIS Participants who Supervise Workers](#)
- [Tip sheet – Giving feedback to workers and providers](#)
- [Buddy Shift Tip Sheet for Supervisors](#)
- [Evidence for Assessing Capability – Tip Sheet for Supervisors](#)
- [Assessment Record template](#)
- [Reflective Practice Tip Sheet for Supervisors and Workers](#)
- [Performance Agreement template](#)