

Psychology and the NDIS: How psychologists support people with disability and their families

Community Resource



What is the NDIS?

The Australian Government's National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provides support for Australians with a disability to improve their quality of life by connecting them to the community and a range of supports. The NDIS aims to:

- provide reasonable and necessary supports, including early intervention supports, for people with disabilities;
- support the independence and participation of people with disability; and
- enable people with disability to exercise choice and control in achieving their goals and in how their support is delivered.

Currently, more than half a million Australians are NDIS participants and around a quarter of NDIS participants have seen a psychologist as part of their support plan.

Psychologists provide support to help people with disability to enhance their capacity and functioning. A psychologist can also provide help for participants and their family members to understand and navigate the NDIS.

How do psychologists and the NDIS understand disability?

Disability is *"an evolving concept that results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."* (United Nations).

This definition reflects a 'social model' understanding of disability, which is used by both the NDIS and psychologists. This way of thinking about disability emphasises the importance of not only providing support to people, but, importantly, addressing issues in the environments in which they live, learn, work and play, which can often be the greatest source of disablement.

The NDIS and psychologists

Psychologists can help someone start their NDIS journey by:

1. Linking people to the right organisations and people, as well as the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), which is the Government agency that runs the NDIS, to find out if they are eligible for support.
2. Helping people understand the role of a psychologist within the NDIS.
3. Providing psychological assessment, where relevant, to support people in their application to the NDIS.
4. Providing ongoing psychological support.



Psychologists bring unique skills, knowledge and evidence-based practice to help people understand that how we think, feel and behave all work together to influence our health, wellbeing and quality of life.

Once a person is accepted as a NDIS participant, there are many ways that psychologists can provide support, such as:

- Supporting people to use their mind, knowledge and skills to change both their inner world and the world around them.
- Assisting people with disabilities to achieve a better quality of life:
 - To better understand their lived experience and the world around them.
 - To think in ways that help them to feel better about themselves and to respond with more resilience to life's challenges.
 - To learn the skills and develop the confidence needed to exercise choice and control in their lives.
 - To act in ways that enable them to live, learn, work and play to participate more fully in their community and realise their potential.
 - To promote their mental health and social and emotional wellbeing.



Psychologists can do this in different ways, including by:

- Working one-on-one or in small groups with people with disabilities to provide counselling, treatment, coaching and skills development.
- Conducting assessments and providing evidence for disability and functional capacity.
- Helping families, friends and carers to make the changes needed to address attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder the person's full and effective participation in society.
- Helping parents and caregivers support young children's development through the NDIS Early Childhood Approach.
- Working with support teams, organisations and other health and disability professionals to help participants achieve their goals.
- Providing education and training, facilitating planning and support problem-solving for individuals, families and teams.
- Providing feedback, support and guidance to family, carers and support workers.

Psychologists bring expertise in assessment and the development of strategies to support people with:

- Practical skills and helpful behaviours for daily living.
- Social and communication skills for everyday living.
- Skills to build self-confidence and resilience in everyday living.
- Skills such as learning, remembering and understanding the world, problem-solving and decision-making.
- Behaviour support planning and intervention to address unhelpful and challenging behaviours.
- Understanding any links between disability and trauma through trauma-informed care.
- Any mental health impacts of their disability and promoting their social and emotional wellbeing.
- Psychosocial disability (see page 5).
- How people, families and support systems can better work together (sometimes called a multisystemic approach).

Psychosocial disability

The NDIS provides support for people who may be experiencing disability due to a mental health condition/s. The support the NDIS provides is based on the impact of the mental health condition and the level of impairment, not the diagnosis, and aims to improve a person's functional ability through psychosocial recovery supports.

There are a number of eligibility requirements that need to be met, including the need for support for social and economic participation in the community due to lifelong impairment.

With their understanding of the impact of mental health conditions, psychologists can support people with psychosocial disability to improve their level of independence and capacity to undertake daily living activities, participate in their community, and be involved in social and economic activities, such as employment.

Through the NDIS, psychologists focus on building a person's capacity and empowering them and their support networks to manage life's challenges.

Tip: The reimagine.today website, supported by the NDIA, provides information to help people with a psychosocial disability to apply for NDIS funding: reimagine.today



Finding a psychologist



The APS [Find a Psychologist](#) website helps you to find qualified and trusted psychologists across Australia.

The website allows you to find a psychologist near you, or providing telehealth services, and who has expertise in relation to issues which are meaningful to you and your goals.

You can filter by psychologists who are registered NDIS providers. This is important if you have an Agency-managed plan (also known as a NDIA-managed plan), as you can only access a psychologist which is a registered NDIS provider.

If you have a self-managed or plan-managed funding which includes psychology, you can choose any psychologist.

The NDIS provides more information about the different types of plan management [here](#).

When contacting a psychologist, the following questions may be helpful:

- Do you have experience providing NDIS services?
- Can you help me to access the NDIS?
- Do you provide NDIS assessments in relation to my disability or disabilities?
- Can we explore potential NDIS psychology supports that might help me with my goals?

More information

APS

Access the [APS website](#) for information about:

- [Tips about working within the National Disability Insurance Scheme](#) (NDIS)
- [How psychologists can help with NDIS access](#)
- [Psychologists' critical role within the NDIS](#)

NDIS

You can visit the [NDIS website](#) for:

- [Booklets and factsheets about how the NDIS can help and information about community connections](#)
- [An eligibility checklist](#)
- [An explainer on psychosocial disability](#)
- [Details for accessing mental health supports](#)

[reimagine.today](#)

Access the [reimagine.today website](#) for useful resources to help you understand how the NDIS works and for more details about psychosocial disability.

APS would like to thank all members of the **APS NDIS Working Group** who contributed to this resource:

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