

What to expect from your Support Coordinator

VALID is contacted almost every day by NDIS participants, families, and Support Coordinators for advice about Support Coordination. NDIS participants tell VALID that they are not sure what their Support Coordinator should do for them, and Support Coordinators often call to request an advocate for a participant when the task that needs to be done is something a Support Coordinator should do.

What does the NDIS ask your Support Coordinator to do?

When you choose a Support Coordinator, the NDIS sends the Support Coordinator a 'Request for Service' form which gives instructions to the Support Coordinator about how they should implement your plan.

The Support Coordinator to Do List

The Request for Service also gives the Support Coordinator a standard list of things that they should do for all NDIS participants which says that they will:

- Support you to learn as much as you can about how the NDIS works
- Assist you to understand what each part of your plan means and how you can use the funding
- Teach you how to use the online Portal
- Help with finding service providers and tell you about the ways you can provide services with feedback
- Ensure you know how to change providers if you want to and to help you to weigh up different options
- Support you to set up service agreements if you choose to
- Make sure that service bookings are completed properly
- Make referrals for assessments you need and ensure urgent equipment requests are made
- Help you to implement the plan and to complete tasks on your behalf if you want or need them to
- Find opportunities for you to access supports and activities in your local community
- Ensure that support workers are following the recommendations made by allied health therapists about how to best support you
- Send reports to the NDIS about how the plan is going - this is usually completed two months into the plan, and then again at nine months in a one-year plan
- Make sure that funding is being spent within the set budget
- Show you how to coordinate your own supports if you want to do it yourself in the future
- Help you if you are in crisis (e.g. homelessness, hospitalisation, involvement with police)
- Make sure that you are accessing everything you are eligible to receive through other systems (e.g. housing, health, justice, education)
- Help you to prepare for your next plan review including understanding what has worked and why, what hasn't worked, the supports needed in the next plan, and drafting plan goals
- Prepare the information you need for scheduled reviews (i.e. annual review) and for unscheduled reviews (e.g. Change of Circumstances, Review of Reviewable Decision)

'Request for Service: Co-ordination of Supports', NDIS, accessed January 2019

Other things your Support Coordinator should do: NDIS Code of Conduct

All workers and service providers delivering services under the NDIS supports must abide by the NDIS Code of Conduct. This means that your Support Coordinator must:

- Support you to weigh up options and to assist you to communicate about what you want and need
- Provide unbiased information about their services, and to avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest and unethical practices
- Make a report to the NDIS Commission* if they are asked to do something that they are not qualified or trained to do by their employer
- Take action if they have concerns about the quality and safety of services you are receiving even if those services are provided by their own employer
- Make reports to relevant authorities including to their employer, the NDIS Commission, police and other authorities if they become aware of abuse, neglect and exploitation of a NDIS participant

Is there anything a Support Coordinator is not allowed to do?

The Support Coordinator cannot be paid to do advocacy, but they can attend meetings with you to help you to speak up for yourself (including your annual plan review meeting) and can help you to prepare for and submit a plan review. Support Coordinators can't manage staff rosters or provide personal care.

Do I need an advocate if I already have a Support Coordinator?

Independent advocacy is speaking or acting on behalf of a person or group with minimised conflict of interest. Independent advocacy might be provided by an advocate through a disability advocacy organisation, or if necessary, by the appointment of a formal guardian through the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). The NDIS does not fund advocacy. Advocacy services are funded by federal and state governments separately to the NDIS.

Support Coordinators are required by the NDIS to minimise conflicts of interest when they are working with you. They should ensure that they ask you and others that you know and trust about decisions that need to be made and should defer to family or an independent advocate when necessary.

If a person with disability does not have capacity to advocate for themselves on a decision that needs to be made, and informal support arrangements (e.g. family, friends) are inadequate to represent their rights and interests, it might be necessary to engage an independent advocate.

It is VALID's view that Support Coordinators should involve an independent advocate when:

- There is conflict regarding choices or decisions that need to be made that cannot be solved by talking it over with the person, family, friends or support staff
- There is undue or inappropriate influence or pressure being placed on the participant's decision-making by any person or organisation
- The person and their support network do not have the advocacy skills or knowledge to effectively resolve the issue (e.g. an investigation of abuse and/or neglect, Guardianship application, making an application to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal regarding the NDIS)

You can contact VALID for advocacy advice, referral and direct assistance by phoning 03 9416 4003 or email us at intake@valid.org.au.