

Accessing NDIS support for children aged 0 to 6



If your child is developing differently compared with other children, or if your child has a disability, they may be able to get help from the NDIS.

The NDIS provides funding that can pay for therapy, equipment and support for your family that can help your child's development.

The Early Childhood Approach is part of the NDIS. It is specifically for younger children. You don't need a formal diagnosis for your child to get support.

Can my child get help?

To be eligible for the Early Childhood Approach your child must be aged 0 to 6 and they need to have a developmental concern, developmental delay or a disability.

The NDIS is available to Australian citizens, permanent visa holders and protected special category visa holders. You must be living in Australia to get help from the NDIS.

Young children who are not citizens or permanent residents (such as New Zealand citizens) are also eligible for help through the Early Childhood Approach.

The NDIS Early Childhood Approach is a free service.

How does my child get help?

The journey of identifying that your child has a disability and getting a diagnosis can be an emotional roller-coaster.

Finding out about your child's development or disability is different for every family. A doctor may tell you your child has a disability when they are born. Or the Maternal Child Health Nurse might notice your child is developing differently. You may have noticed something about your child or your child's early childhood educator might let you know.

If your child is not already seeing a paediatrician, you can see your GP or a Maternal Child Health Nurse.

Your GP, Maternal Child Health Nurse or paediatrician can refer your child to your closest NDIS Early Childhood Partner or you can contact them yourself.

Talk to a health professional

Discuss your child's development with your Child Maternal Health Nurse, GP or paediatrician.

Go to your NDIS Early Childhood Partner

Identify your child's needs and find out what support is available.

Get support

Depending on your child's needs, get support to help your child and family.

What the Early Childhood Partner will do

1. Get information about your child

The Early Childhood Partner will talk to you and gather information about your child. They will observe your child. They might do an assessment which involves asking you some questions. They will ask health care professionals who know your child for more information about your child's development or disability.

2. Talk to you about supporting your child's development

The Early Childhood Partner will talk to you about how you can support your child's development at home. You are your child's first teacher.

The Early Childhood Partner will let you know about local playgroups and other services that may benefit your child and family. This is called Early Connections.

3. Help you work out the next steps

The Early Childhood Partner will work out with you the best option for your child. There are a number of options: Early Support or an NDIS Plan. The best option depends of the severity of your child's developmental delay or disability.

Option 1: Early Support

Early Support is for children who have a developmental concern. This is when there is a least one area of development (such as talking) that is delayed but it is not as severe as developmental delay.

If your child has a developmental concern, the Early Childhood Partner can provide early support that helps your child and family.

Option 2: An NDIS Plan for your child

An NDIS Plan is for children who have a substantial delay across one or more areas of development. Children who have a diagnosed significant and permanent disability can also get an NDIS Plan.

The Early Childhood Partner will work out whether your child is likely to meet the NDIS eligibility criteria and may recommend that you apply for an NDIS Plan on your child's behalf.

If you decide to apply for an NDIS Plan, your Early Childhood Partner will help you through the application process.

An application to the NDIS is made through an access request. The Early Childhood Partner will complete the Access Request Form. You must provide evidence of your child's developmental delay or disability with the Access Request Form. The Early Childhood Partner will help you get the right evidence.

When the NDIS receives your completed access request it will be reviewed against the NDIS Act. The NDIS Act is the law that guides the NDIS and states who can get NDIS support.

You may be asked to provide additional evidence to help the NDIS make their decision.

You will be told in writing if your child's NDIS Access Request has been successful or not.

Getting an NDIS Plan for your child

If your child gets access to the NDIS, the next step is a meeting with the Early Childhood Partner to talk about what support your child and family needs. This is called an NDIS planning meeting.

After the planning meeting you will get a copy of your child's NDIS Plan. It will include how much NDIS funding is in the Plan and what you can spend it on. Generally, you can use your child's NDIS Plan to pay for therapy, equipment and support for your family.

Appealing or re-applying if your child does not get access to the NDIS

If your child does not get access to the NDIS and you disagree, you can ask for an internal review of the NDIS decision. If that is unsuccessful you can apply to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal for a review.

Re-applying to the NDIS

Access decisions are based on the current impact of your child's disability or developmental delay. The impact of your child's disability can change over time because of a degenerative disability or a deterioration in their day-to-day function. If the impact of your child's disability has changed and your access request was more than three months ago, you can make a new request. Make sure you include new evidence.

NDIS terms explained

Disability

A permanent physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, activities or how they interact with their environment. The NDIS uses the definition of disability in *The Disability Act 1992*.

Developmental concern

When there is a least one area of development (such as talking) that is delayed but it is not as severe as developmental delay.

Developmental delay

When a child is not developing physical, social or language skills as expected for their age. The NDIS has detailed criteria for developmental delay.

Early Connections

Support for children aged 0 to 6 with a developmental concern, developmental delay or disability and their families. Early Connections is provided by Early Childhood Partners who can help you find local playgroups and other services that may benefit your child. They can also help you apply for the NDIS.

Early supports

Support for children aged 0 to 6 and their families to help their child's learning and development. Examples include parent workshops, training for people who work with your child, strategies to build your child's skills, and help with setting daily routines.

Early intervention

Therapies, education and other support for children aged 0 to 6 with developmental delay or disability.

NDIS Plan

A written plan that states your child's NDIS goals, needs, supports and funding package.

Early Childhood Partner

Early childhood organisations and professionals in your local area who can observe and assess your child to work out the best support for your child and family. They can be occupational therapists, speech pathologists or early childhood educators.

NDIS Provider

A registered organisation or person who provides services or supports to people who use the NDIS.

Useful links

Contact your local Early Childhood Partner

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/contact/locations>

Early supports

<https://ourguidelines.ndis.gov.au/early-childhood/early-connections/what-types-early-connections-are-available/connections-early-supports>

Developmental delay and getting help for young children

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/understanding/families-and-carers/early-childhood-approach/developmental-delay-and-early-childhood-approach#what-are-the-next-steps>

Young children and hearing loss

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/understanding/families-and-carers/early-childhood-approach/what-if-my-child-has-just-been-diagnosed-hearing-loss>

NDIS Internal review of a decision

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/applying-access-ndis/how-apply/receiving-your-access-decision/internal-review-decision>

Related topics

Connecting with other families

<https://www.acd.org.au/connecting-with-other-families/>

Getting started with child care and kinder

<https://www.acd.org.au/getting-started-at-child-care-and-kinder/>