

Supported decision making for potential National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants with psychosocial disability

Control over your own life is a human right.

Decision making is how most people use this right.

Who is this fact sheet for?

This fact sheet is for people with psychosocial disability who would like, or may need, support to make decisions. It is also for carers, families, professionals and other people who provide support for decision making.

What is psychosocial disability?

The National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum says the term psychosocial disability “describes the disability experience of people with impairments and participation restrictions related to mental health conditions”.¹

NDIS and decisions

The NDIS encourages people with disability to make choices about their supports and services. Some people may need or want support to make these decisions. This type of support is called ‘supported decision making’.

What is supported decision making?

Supported decision making happens when one person supports another person to make a decision. Sometimes people also refer to supported decision making as decision support. Someone who supports a decision might:

- ensure the person knows they have a decision to make
- explain information
- find information in an understandable format
- help the person to identify and explore personally relevant options
- think about the good and bad things that may happen from a decision
- identify risks and consider safeguards
- help weigh up the decision
- make sure people listen and understand the decision once it’s made.

¹ Unravelling Psychosocial Disability. (2011).p.1. Available at: https://nmhccf.org.au/sites/default/files/docs/nmhccf_psychosocial_disability_brochure_web_version_27oct11.pdf [Accessed 13 Nov. 2016].



Why would I use decision support?

Everyone uses informal decision support from time to time, for example when we speak to friends or family about a decision we are making. Some people may need or want more formal support to make a decision and a voice to ensure it is recognised.

People may want or need more formal support as they age, due to a disability, acquired brain injury or mental health conditions. They might use it on an ongoing basis or for a specific decision. Using decision support for one decision does not mean you need it for every decision. It remains your choice whether or not you want to use decision support.

Some people use decision support to identify their preferences, understand information or explore options. Others use it to make sure their decision making process is documented and their decision is recognised and put in place once it is made, particularly if they don't feel they are being heard by those around them.

Who provides decision support?

Many people have a role in ensuring decision support is available when and where it is needed. Friends and/or family often provide each other with everyday support to make decisions.

Professionals such as guardians, psychologists, advocates, support workers and social workers may also provide decision support in the course of their work with a decision maker.

There are also websites, which can support decision making, or help decision supporters in their role. For example see: <http://www.support-my-decision.org.au/>.

What types of decisions could be supported?

Any decision, no matter how big or small, can be supported.

How do I access decision support through the NDIS?

People who experience severe and persistent mental illness may be able to receive supports through the NDIS. If you think this might be you or someone you care for, you can find out more information about how to get ready for the NDIS at this website:

<https://myplace.ndis.gov.au/ndisstorefront/ndis-ready.html>.

The first step would be to apply to access the NDIS. The National Disability Insurance Agency (the Agency that runs the NDIS) will tell you if you can access the NDIS. If you can access the NDIS, a National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) representative will talk with you about your goals. Your goals will help form a plan, which will tell you what sorts of supports the NDIS will be able to fund for you. Depending on where you live, the NDIA representative might be from the NDIA and called a 'planner' or they might come from a community organisation and be called a 'Local Area Coordinator' or a 'Partner in the Community'.

It's a good idea to talk with the NDIA representative about your decision support needs. This helps the NDIA understand what help you might need with decision support so that you can implement your NDIS plan.

