



NDIS Quality  
and Safeguards  
Commission



NDIS Workforce  
Capability Framework

# Supervising for Capability

Supporting Workers to Learn: A  
Guide for NDIS Participants who  
Supervise Workers

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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 help you:

- Make sure workers have the training and skills they need
- Support workers to learn and develop when you supervise them
- Know what the NDIS Commission expects of service providers you might use.

## What's in this guide

This guide has practical tips to help plan and provide training for workers. It also has tips for assessing how well a worker is learning and developing their skills. The guide has 4 sections:

- Roles and responsibilities
- Understand learning and development needs
- Plan learning and development
- Supporting learning and development.

There are checkpoints in some sections. The checkpoints are questions to help you review what you're doing now. You can also download tip sheets for more help.

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## How the NDIS Code of Conduct applies

The [NDIS Code of Conduct](#) is a set of rules and guidelines for the way services are delivered. All NDIS providers and workers must follow these rules. The Code of Conduct says that providers must provide supports and services safely, with care and skill. The NDIS Commission expects NDIS providers to make sure workers have the right training, skills and qualifications to follow this rule. This includes through supervising workers.

It's up to each provider to make sure they meet this requirement. As a participant, if you directly employ workers, you should also make sure they have the training and skills they need. This guide can help you do this.

## The benefits of learning and development

When a worker keeps learning and developing, it's good for everyone involved. This includes you, the worker and the service provider.

### Benefits for workers

Workers can get useful information through assessments of their skills and knowledge. Assessments can tell a worker what they need to learn. This might be to add to or develop new skills to help them in their current role, or to get ready for a new role.

Workers who feel more able and confident are generally happier in their job and more likely to stay in the same job.

### Benefits for participants

As a participant, you benefit when you get your NDIS supports and services from workers who have the skills and knowledge to meet your needs. You also benefit when confident supported workers stay with you for longer.

### Benefits for providers

Participants should be aware that providers are better able to reach their service delivery goals when they:

- Know what capabilities – skills, knowledge and attitudes – their workers need
- Develop plans to assess strengths or gaps – including plans for the provider and for each worker
- Help workers take part in learning that will fill gaps in skills and build capability.

Regular reviews of learning needs make sure that information on capabilities is up to date. This includes reviews by providers and by workers.

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## Roles and responsibilities

Who is responsible for learning and development of workers depends on who employs the worker.

If you're using a provider to deliver your supports, they will be responsible for making sure workers have the skills and qualifications they need. Or they will have staff who are responsible. Participants can work with supervisors and workers to find out what learning and development a worker needs.

If you directly employ workers you are also taking on a supervisor role and can support their learning and development.

This section lists what providers, supervisors and workers need to do.

### Provider or senior management

- Set up ongoing learning as a key part of the organisation's values and culture.
- Know what capabilities the workers need to meet current and future business needs. Plan for learning and development to fill gaps.
- Collect data to track how well support meets what participants expect. Find patterns in worker strengths and gaps in capability. Flag any workforce issues that might come up.
- Get feedback from participants, workers, supervisors and other practice experts. Use this to help decide what learning and development to focus on.
- Set up a system to plan, run and record training. This includes a system to check whether the training is meeting everyone's needs.
- Make sure each worker has an ongoing capability development plan.

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## Supervisors (participants)

- Create a trusted, safe workplace. Support workers to learn and think about their practice and learning needs.
- Check what everyone expects from the supports.
- Give clear and practical feedback. Notice, point out and support good practice. Do this in the moment and at planned sessions.
- Make sure workers have the capabilities they need to do assigned work.
- Support workers to learn and develop capability.
- Ask for feedback from workers to improve the way you supervise them. Act on that feedback. Also give feedback to the provider, if you use one.
- Set up plans for communicating with the worker. Make sure there is regular time for feedback and responses to worker requests for advice or help.
- Support worker wellbeing.

## Workers

- Know the position description, the Framework and the values and goals of the employer. Know any other information needed to understand the job requirements.
- With the supervisor (and participant, if different), check what everyone expects from the supports. Find out what the participant needs and prefers.
- Think about practice. Explore options to address challenges with the supervisor.
- Self-assess capabilities. Find areas for more development to use in a current role or in the future.
- Take part in sharing knowledge about practice. And take part in learning and development opportunities.
- Support the supervising process in a positive and active way. Take part in ongoing check-ins and planned sessions with the supervisor.
- Ask for, receive and act on feedback to support personal development. Give feedback to support others to develop.
- Use the supervision relationship to support wellbeing.
- Give feedback on how well learning and development is going. Suggest what else would help.

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## Understand learning and development needs

There are 3 main reasons a worker might need to learn something or develop their skills:

- To meet your needs as a participant
- To fill gaps in the worker's knowledge or build on their interests
- To meet the goals of an organisation – for example, a provider might have worker learning and development goals so they can provide certain services, improve quality or grow the business.

We explain more about participant and worker needs below, along with things to think about for both.

### Participant needs

#### Reasons for learning and development

The core capabilities in the Framework describe what skills and knowledge all workers need to have. But you might have extra or more specialised needs. For example, needs for support:

- Related to your health, such as if you have epilepsy, diabetes or use a ventilator
- Related to your identity, such as your culture, background or language
- To take part in the community, meet new people and connect with friends and family.

#### What to think about

You need to know that the workers you choose have the right capabilities to support you. You also need to keep a record of worker training and experience.

Having workers with the right skills and experience is only one part of the planning process. For example, you might prefer one worker more than another. And workers being away or leaving can create a gap if you don't have enough other workers with the skills you need.

When checking the training and experience a worker has, think about:

- If the worker or team of workers can meet your specific needs
- Whether you can cover any gaps if someone is away.

If not, you might need to support the worker or workers to build more capability. For example, through training or learning activities.

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## Worker capabilities

### Reasons for learning and development

Workers may already have skills and experience that help them to show they have the core capabilities. A number of things can influence the need for a worker to keep learning and improving. For example:

- Their current capabilities and strengths and what extra training or refreshers they need
- How confident they feel about their job and how valued they feel
- Their personal development and career goals.

### What to think about

If you employ workers directly, you need to make sure they have the capabilities you need. If you use a provider, this is the supervisor's role. But you can ask to be involved in this process.

To make sure a worker has the right capabilities, you need to:

- Observe and review how the worker is going
- Have ongoing conversations with them about their strengths and training needs.

This should be a natural part of everyday check-ins or practice review sessions.

More structured and planned review sessions give you a chance to have more in-depth conversations about how things are going and learning needs. You can find more about ways to supervise workers in the [Setting up the supervising relationship](#) guide.

To check if a worker knows how to provide some types of support, you may wish to assess their capabilities. There are templates you can use if you want to do this in a more formal way. You can find the templates in the [supervision](#) and [training development](#) resources for providers.

#### **Checkpoint: What do the workers need to learn or develop?**

- Are you clear about the worker's capabilities – what they can and can't do?
- Do you know if your workers have the right skills and knowledge? How will you address any gaps?
- What do you know about the strengths, development needs and interests of the worker? How do you find out?
- How do you keep track of the training and experience of the worker? If you use a provider, do they have a system to record and report on this? If not, how else will you do it?
- Does your funding allow for enough buddy shifts? If you directly employ workers, do you have a budget for training? If you're using a provider, are they telling you what you are paying for? Tip: The rate a provider charges should include some time for inducting, training and supervising staff.

## Plan learning and development

If you're using a service provider, it's their job to plan and provide the learning and development workers need. They might involve supervisors to help do this.

If you directly employ workers, you should have conversations with them about learning and development. You should arrange the training they need to give you safe, quality support.

This section is about:

- How you might plan learning and development
- Things to think about to support learning.

## Understanding how people learn

There is no 'best' way for someone to learn. People have different learning styles, likes and dislikes. All learning involves:

- Gaining knowledge – often through set training sessions in person or online
- Using the knowledge in practice – this is best done on the job.

Learning needs to involve not only what to do, but also how to do it. This includes the values and attitudes people need to do the work well. A lot of training focuses on what the worker must do, but doesn't develop key 'soft' skills. These are skills that can affect how you experience and feel about your support.

Your regular check-ins with a worker can reinforce the person-centred values and expectations of NDIS work.

## Deciding ways to support learning

When deciding the best way to support learning or a type of training, start by thinking about your goal or purpose. In the table below, we explain some things to think about to help you weigh up your options.

What to think about	Questions to ask
Purpose or goal	<p>What do you hope to achieve with the learning and development? If it goes well, how will it help you and the worker? For example, what would the worker do in a different way?</p> <p>Be clear about the goal of any learning and development. This helps give you a way to measure progress. It also helps you decide if what you did worked or whether you need to try something different.</p>

What to think about	Questions to ask
How the training applies	<p>Are you thinking about the right type of training or development to match your needs? Think about this when you're choosing any training courses, including online or in-person training.</p> <p>Check that the course content is likely to meet your purpose. You can use the knowledge in the relevant capabilities in the Framework to help with this. You should also check on the expertise of the course presenter.</p>
Worker abilities and needs	<p>What are the needs and interests of the worker? For example, a worker with low levels of English literacy might struggle if learning involves reading and writing at a higher level.</p> <p>Are there any barriers to access? For example, if you're choosing online training, does the worker have good computer skills? Do they have a computer and internet access?</p>
Resources and what's practical	<p>Make sure the learning and development is possible and practical. When will the worker do the training and how does it affect their schedule? Can some learning happen as part of the work they're doing already?</p> <p>People learn best when they can practice new skills or knowledge straight away. Will the worker be able to apply what they have learned? Can you find time to check in with the worker soon after they finish the learning to find out how they're going?</p>

## Supporting learning and development

There are many ways you can support learning and development. This can range from using everyday activities to more formal training programs.

This section has suggestions for two types of learning:

- On-the-job learning – ongoing learning that happens as part of doing the job
- Structured training – a more formal and deliberate approach to learning. This can strengthen and speed up development. This type of training is particularly useful to build knowledge that supports practice. Workers must have both knowledge and practice to develop their capabilities.

In the tables below, we explain the different types of learning and ways you can support that learning.

### On-the-job learning

Type of on-the-job learning	Ways you can support it
<p><b>Practice</b></p> <p>Learning by doing builds a worker’s skills and confidence. Be clear about what you expect and what good practice looks like. Give regular feedback, especially early on. This helps workers to track their own progress, ask questions and ask for extra support when they need it.</p>	On the job.
<p><b>Buddy or shadow shifts</b></p> <p>A buddy shift involves pairing a learner with an experienced worker. This is a way to introduce a less experienced worker to the work and to you. For tips on how to set up useful buddy shifts, download our <a href="#">buddy shift tip sheet</a>.</p>	On the job.
<p><b>Coaching</b></p> <p>Coaching includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• showing someone how to do something</li> <li>• watching how someone works</li> <li>• giving feedback in the moment</li> <li>• helping the learner to think about their own practice and learning.</li> </ul> <p>This is a common way to support workers who give more specialised support. For example, positive behaviour support. But all workers can benefit from the chance to discuss, reflect on and make changes to the way they work.</p>	<p>Face-to-face:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• video call – phone or app</li> <li>• in person.</li> </ul>

Type of on-the-job learning	Ways you can support it
<p><b>Reflective practice</b></p> <p>Reflective practice involves giving the worker a real or imagined situation and asking them to discuss what they would do. If it's a real situation the worker was part of, they can suggest what they could do differently to get a better result. This approach is useful for more complex types of support.</p> <p>For tips on running or taking part in reflective practice discussions, download our <a href="#">reflective practice tip sheet</a>.</p>	<p>Face-to-face:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● video call – phone or app</li> <li>● in person with you, and/or co-workers and technical experts.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Real-time feedback</b></p> <p>Feedback helps workers know how well they're doing. This includes positive and negative feedback. For some types of feedback, it's best to give it in the moment.</p> <p>If the feedback is about something sensitive or complex, you need to have a follow-up conversation with the worker. You should have that conversation soon after giving the feedback.</p> <p>Download our <a href="#">feedback tip sheet</a> about what feedback to give and when and how to give it.</p>	<p>On the job, in person.</p>
<p><b>Debriefing and support</b></p> <p>When there has been an issue or incident, a debrief is a way to discuss what happened. This includes what actions the worker might need to take and what they can learn. This supports worker wellbeing. It can also put in place changes to reduce the risk of an issue happening again.</p>	<p>Face-to-face:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● in person with supervisor, and/or co-workers and technical experts</li> <li>● video call – phone or app.</li> </ul>

## Structured training

Self-directed and structured training	Ways you can support it
<p><b>Induction</b></p> <p>Induction training introduces new workers to their job and workplace. It's also called orientation. If you directly employ your own workers, make sure that they've done the <a href="#">NDIS Worker Orientation Module: Quality, Safety and You</a>. If you're using a provider, they're responsible for inducting workers they employ.</p> <p>You should also tell workers what you expect from your support and explain your values. This gives you a basis for how you work together.</p>	<p>Different ways, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in person</li> <li>• one on one</li> <li>• group sessions</li> <li>• online training.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Just-in-time learning</b></p> <p>This type of learning breaks topics down into small chunks. It's sometimes called micro-learning. Learners can access topics for learning as and when they need to. This can also be useful to refresh or check knowledge. For example, about a specific process or type of support.</p> <p>Several organisations have this kind of training online, such as the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. It usually includes tests and quizzes so the learner can review and assess.</p>	<p>Learning or training apps, podcasts and other online options.</p>
<p><b>Short courses</b></p> <p>These usually focus on specific skills and knowledge. For example, a course in manual handling or supported decision making.</p>	<p>Online, in person</p>
<p><b>Formal qualifications</b></p> <p>A formal qualification can give a worker a broad basis for working in the sector. Qualifications include certificates, such as the Certificate 3 in Individual Support or the Certificate 4 in Disability.</p>	<p>If you directly employ a worker who wants to do a qualification, you may be able to help. For example, by giving feedback and being the workplace for practical parts of the course. A provider might ask you to give feedback or let them observe a worker doing a qualification.</p>

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## Keeping records of learning goals

It's a good idea to make a note of the learning goals you set with workers. This helps you track their progress and what they achieve. If you're using a provider, they might record this information in separate learning and development plans or learning records.

If your provider doesn't have a system or you're not using a provider, you can use our [Performance Agreement template](#) if you wish. It has a capability development plan section where you can record learning for each worker.

**Checkpoint: What will you set up to support learning and development for your workers?**

- Do the workers have clear learning and development goals? Do they have a plan to meet those goals?
- Based on what you know about the learning needs of the workers, which types of learning will you use?

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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.
- [NDIS Code of Conduct](#): This is a set of rules and standards for NDIS providers and workers to follow. It supports people to give supports in a safe and ethical way.
- [NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators](#): The practice standards list the quality standards NDIS providers must meet to provide supports and services to participants.
- [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.

## More Supervising for Capability resources

- [Overview of Resources](#)
- [Setting up the Supervising Relationship: A Guide for NDIS Participants who Supervise Workers](#)
- [Working Together – Having conversations with workers: 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](#)