



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

National Standards for Disability Services and their application in the National Panel of Assessors Program

Evidence Guide

DSS Version 1



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Introduction

This Guide is part of the National Standards for Disability Services (National Standards) Resource Package for the National Panel of Assessors (NPA) Scheme. It aims to help NPA providers and Certifying Bodies to understand and apply the National Standards to the work of an NPA provider. They focus on rights and outcomes for people with a disability.

Each of the six standards are described in detail along with guidance on what you can do to meet the standard and how you could show that you were meeting the standard.

The Guide has been written to support NPA providers to meet the requirements of the National Standards. It is designed to support NPA providers and Certifying Bodies to:

- understand the National Standards
- know when they are being achieved
- reflect on everyday practice, and
- undertake more formal internal and external reviews of services against the National Standards.

Using this Guide

This Evidence Guide is for staff working in an NPA provider organisation, particularly those working as an NPA assessor, as well as Certifying Bodies undertaking audits against the National Standards. The Guide also outlines what external certifying bodies may look for in any formal audit or review against the National Standards. NPA providers may need to change their practice and operations to meet the standards.

It can be used for:

- Induction for new employees
- Training and development
- Individual reflection, self-assessment and improvement planning
- Team meetings
- Individual and service planning
- Consultation with people with disability and their family, friends, carers and advocates
- External certifying bodies.

This document is a Guide only and some evidence suggestions listed in this Guide may not be relevant for all NPA providers.

When using this Guide in the context of undertaking an audit, Certifying Bodies should take into account that providers may have slightly different ways of showing compliance with the National Standards.

How the National Standards Work

Standard One: Rights

The intent of this standard is to promote ethical, respectful and safe service delivery that meets, if not exceeds, legislative requirements and achieves positive outcomes for people with disability. The Human Rights principles are relevant across all the standards and each standard supports the achievement of basic rights. This standard has a focus on particular rights such as freedom of expression, self-determination, choice, privacy and freedom from discrimination.

The standard recognises people's inherent right to freedom of expression and the right to freely make decisions. Including exercising control over, their own lives. It reinforces the fundamental right of people with disability to have respect and dignity. This includes the dignity of risk - the right to choose to take some risk in life.

The standard acknowledges the risks of harm, neglect, abuse or violence that some people with disability may face when using services or supports. The standard highlights the roles for services and supports, families, friends, carers and advocates in reducing these risks. The standard promotes individual rights and individual and service responsibility.

The standard emphasises the importance of:

- dignity and respect;
- freedom of expression;
- self-determination;
- choice and control;
- confidentiality and privacy;
- freedom from discrimination, exploitation, abuse, harm, neglect and violence;
- the role of families, friends, carers and advocates in the safeguarding of rights; and
- comprehensive systems to prevent or promptly respond to any breaches of rights.

Rights for people

I have the right to exercise control and choice when I use services. I also have the right to dignity of risk and to be free from discrimination or harm.

Outcome for people

I can make choices about the services I use, and how I use them. When I use a service, I am respected and safe.

Standard for service

The service promotes individual rights to freedom of expression, self-determination and decision-making and actively prevents abuse, harm, neglect and violence.

Indicators of Practice and evidence examples

1.1 The service, its staff and its volunteers treat individuals with dignity and respect.

To comply with this indicator, NPA providers should:

- provide a short description of what treating individuals with dignity and respect means in practice, and provide examples of their practice.

1.2 The service, its staff and its volunteers recognise and promote individual freedom of expression.

To comply with this indicator, NPA providers should:

- provide a short description about how they ensure that an individual has the freedom to seek and receive information on the assessment services they have received.

1.3 The service supports active decision-making and individual choice including the timely provision of information in appropriate formats to support individuals, families, friends and carers to make informed decisions and understand their rights and responsibilities.

- Not applicable to NPA Scheme.

1.4 The service provides support strategies that are based on the least restrictive options and are contemporary, evidence-based, transparent and capable of review.

- Not applicable to NPA Scheme.

1.5 The service has preventative measures in place to ensure that individuals are free from discrimination, exploitation, abuse, harm, neglect and violence.

To comply with this indicator, NPA providers should:

- describe how they would report any suspected instances of individuals facing harm, neglect, abuse and violence, including the use of any policies or procedures (that are consistent with relevant legislative and regulatory frameworks),
- provide a copy of at least one of the following:
 - client incident management policy
 - working with vulnerable persons policy / framework, or
 - any policy or procedure that outlines how the organisation promotes the safety, wellbeing, rights, dignity, diversity, abilities and independence of people they assist.

1.6 The service addresses any breach of rights promptly and systemically to ensure opportunities for improvement are captured.

- Evidence for this Indicator is the same as that listed in Indicator 1.5.

1.7 The service supports individuals with information and, if needed, access to legal advice and/or advocacy.

- Not applicable to NPA Scheme.

1.8 The service recognises the role of families, friends, carers and advocates in safeguarding and upholding the rights of people with disability.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

1.9 The service keeps personal information confidential and private.

To comply with this indicator, NPA providers should:

- provide confirmation from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations that they are compliant with government cyber security policies such as having achieved Right Fit For Risk accreditation.

Standard Two: Participation and Inclusion

The intent of this standard is to promote the connection of people with disability with their families, friends and chosen communities. It also requires that services work collaboratively with individuals to enable their genuine participation and inclusion.

This standard recognises the role that services can play in enabling the contribution and inclusion of people with disability, and their valued participation in the community, including work and learning. In meeting this standard, services will actively support and encourage individuals to connect with family and friends and to feel included in their chosen communities. This should be based on an individual's interests, identity, heritage and aspirations over time. Importantly, the focus on 'valued role' needs to be one of the individual's choosing. Services will also work with the wider community to promote participation and inclusion.

The standard emphasises the importance of:

- promoting a valued role for people with disability in public and private life;
- connection to family, friends and chosen communities;
- economic and community participation and associated benefits to the individual and the broader community;
- participation based on an individual's interests, identity, heritage, preferences, goals and aspirations (which may change over time); and
- the role of family, friends, carers, advocates and other organisations in promoting participation and inclusion.

Rights for people

I have the right to participate in my chosen community. I also have the right to decide how I have contact with family, friends and community.

Outcome for people

I follow my interests, with the support of my services, family, friends, carers or advocates.

Standard for service

The service works with individuals and families, friends and carers to promote opportunities for meaningful participation and active inclusion in society.

Indicators of practice and evidence examples

2.1 The service actively promotes a valued role for people with disability, of their own choosing.

To comply with this indicator, NPA providers should:

- briefly describe how they undertake assessment services professionally and in line with the guidelines on the DSS website, to ensure the person with disability receives an accurate and fair assessment.

2.2 The service works collaboratively with individuals to connect to family, friends and their chosen communities.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

2.3 Staff understand, respect and facilitate individual interests and preferences, in relation to work, learning, social activities and community connection over time.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

2.4 Where appropriate, the service works with an individual's family, friends, carer or advocate to promote community connection, inclusion and participation.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

2.5 The service works in partnership with other organisations and community members to support individuals to actively participate in their community.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

2.6 The service uses strategies that promote community and cultural connection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

To comply with this indicator, NPA providers should:

- describe how they ensure they are aware of any cultural needs of consumers prior to the assessment,
- describe how they respect and promote cultural awareness in their everyday practice, and
- if relevant, show evidence of participation in relevant training, where necessary, regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness.

Standard Three: Individual Outcomes

The intent of this standard is to promote person-centred approaches to service delivery whereby individuals lead and direct their services and supports.

Services used by people with disability are expected to be flexible and tailored to each individual's strengths and needs, and deliver positive outcomes. This includes an individual's disability as well as the need for services to competently recognise and respond to issues related to age, gender, culture, heritage, language, faith, sexual identity, relationship status, and other relevant factors.

Achieving individual outcomes requires collaboration between the individual and service provider to ensure active choice and decision-making. This means a joint effort based on mutual respect rather than the service provider making all the decisions. A focus on individual outcomes includes individuals and services working together to review progress against planned and measurable outcomes.

The standard also recognises the potential role, with the individual's consent, of families, friends, carers and advocates in planning, delivery and review, with the individual's consent. It encourages active dialogue between an individual, their families, friends, carers and/or advocates and a service regarding the nature of the service or supports provided, with a focus on the minimal restrictive options.

The standard emphasises the importance of:

- people with disability leading and directing their supports with support from family, friends, carers and advocates (with consent);
- service planning, implementation and review being based on individual strengths, needs and life goals;
- collaboration and dialogue;
- responsiveness to diversity; and
- minimal restrictive options.

Rights for people

I have the right to lead and direct decisions about my life and how the services I use support me.

Outcome for people

I use services and supports which build on my strengths and support me to reach my life goals.

Standard for service

Services and supports are assessed, planned, delivered and reviewed to build on individual strengths and enable individuals to reach their goals.

Indicators of practice and evidence examples

3.1 The service works together with an individual and, with consent, their family, friends, carer or advocate to identify their strengths, needs, and life goals.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

3.2 Service planning, provision and review is based on individual choice and is undertaken together with an individual and, with consent, their family, friends, carer or advocate.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

3.3 The service plans, delivers and regularly reviews services or supports against measurable life outcomes.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

3.4 Service planning and delivery is responsive to diversity including disability, age, gender, culture, heritage, language, faith, sexual identity, relationship status, and other relevant factors.

To comply with this indicator, NPA providers should:

- briefly describe how they seek information from the employer, DES provider, JobAccess or a nominee to understand any diversity factors of the consumer prior to the assessment
- describe how they plan and deliver services that are responsive to a person's:
 - disability
 - communication requirements
 - other diverse needs.
- briefly describe how they respect and promote diversity in their everyday practice.

3.5 The service collaborates with other service providers in planning, service delivery and to support internal capacity to respond to diverse needs.

- Evidence for this Indicator is the same as that listed in Indicator 3.4.

Standard Four: Feedback and Complaints

The intent of this standard is to ensure that both positive and negative feedback, complaints and disputes are effectively handled and seen as opportunities for improvement. To meet this standard, services are required to have clearly communicated and effective systems in place to address and resolve issues raised by individuals, families, friends, carers and employers.

This standard recognises that robust and timely feedback, including compliments and complaints, is a key driver for continuous improvement. Services should have a range of opportunities to seek feedback from individuals ranging from: day to day feedback; formal consultation & engagement; regular satisfaction surveys; or consumer groups.

In addition, this standard recognises that people need to feel safe to make a complaint or provide negative feedback. This includes being able to access independent mechanisms for complaints, appeals or disputes without fear of adverse consequences or loss of service. The standard also includes being able to have access to advocates and independent information, support, advice and representation.

The standard emphasises the importance of:

- clear and regular communication about how to provide feedback including how to make a complaint;
- the use of feedback and complaints to continuously drive service improvements;
- regular, proactive and inclusive feedback systems;
- effective complaints management and resolution;
- transparent dispute management; and
- access to independent information, support, advice and representation to ensure people are able to provide feedback or make a complaint.

Outcome for people

I have the right and freedom to give positive and negative feedback about all aspects of my supports and services and expect to see improvements as a result. I also have the right to independent advice and support to provide feedback or make a complaint when I need it.

Outcome for people

I have a range of ways to speak up about my supports and services and play an active role in working out how things will improve. I know how to access independent support and advice when providing feedback or making a complaint.

Standard for service

Regular feedback is sought and used to inform individual and organisation-wide service reviews and improvement.

Indicators of practice and evidence examples

4.1 Individuals, families, friends, carers and advocates are actively supported to provide feedback, make a complaint or resolve a dispute without fear of adverse consequences.

To comply with this indicator, NPA providers should:

- briefly describe how they ensure consumers understand the assessment process, including how to provide feedback
- provide a short explanation about how they would resolve a dispute with the consumer, employer or provider, and
- provide a copy of a feedback and complaints policy or procedure that outlines how feedback from participants is managed, and the process for escalating complaints if the complainant is not satisfied.

4.2 Feedback mechanisms including complaints resolution and how to access independent support, advice & representation, are clearly communicated to individuals, families, friends, carers and advocates.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

4.3 Complaints are resolved in collaboration with the individual, family, friends, carer or advocate in a proactive and timely manner.

To comply with this indicator, NPA providers should:

- briefly describe the process for managing a complaint about an assessment service, and
- if they have a complaints tracker, provide a copy of the tracker to demonstrate how complaints are recorded and dealt with.

4.4 The service seeks and, in conjunction with individuals, families, friends, carers and advocates, reviews feedback on service provision and supports on a regular basis as part of continuous improvement.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

4.5 The service develops a culture of continuous improvement using compliments, feedback and complaints to plan, deliver and review services for individuals and the community.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

4.6 The service effectively manages disputes.

- Evidence for this Indicator is the same as that listed in Indicator 4.3.

Standard Five: Service Access

The intent of this standard is to ensure that access to services and supports is fair, equal and transparent so that individuals are supported when services are not available and barriers to access are identified and removed. The standard applies

across service entry or commencement, service use and, where relevant, exit or leaving a service processes.

Access to services and supports is dependent on a range of factors, including location, an individual's identified needs and the resource capacity of a service.

This standard recognises that individuals should be supported to understand criteria and processes regarding access to, and use of, a service. This also includes clear explanations when a service is not available to an individual, and referral to alternative service options.

The standard emphasises the importance of:

- accessible information to respond to diversity of need;
- transparent and consistently applied service commencement and leaving a service processes;
- information provision and active referral when a service is not available;
- the value of partnerships with other agencies and relevant community members to enable referral; and
- regular reviews to identify and respond to any potential barriers to access.

Rights for people

I have the right to access services based on fair, equal and transparent criteria, and support to receive a referral when a service is not available.

Outcome for people

I understand what the service offers, access to the service that is fair and equal and I am supported with other options when I can't access a service.

Standard for service

The service manages access, commencement and leaving a service in a transparent, fair and equal and responsive way.

Indicators of practice and evidence examples

5.1 The service systematically seeks and uses input from people with disability, their families, friends and carers to ensure access is fair and equal and transparent.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

5.2 The service provides accessible information in a range of formats about the types and quality of services available.

To comply with this indicator, NPA providers should:

- briefly describe how they ensure that individuals understand the assessment process and how they explain the process in an accessible manner, and
- as per the NPA Service Guarantee, describe how they explain the:
 - purpose of the assessment service,
 - what the provider will do as part of the assessment, and
 - what the participant will be required to do as part of the assessment.

5.3 The service develops, applies, reviews and communicates commencement and leaving a service processes.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

5.4 The service develops, applies and reviews policies and practices related to eligibility criteria, priority of access and waiting lists.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

5.5 The service monitors and addresses potential barriers to access.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

5.6 The service provides clear explanations when a service is not available along with information and referral support for alternative access.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

5.7 The service collaborates with other relevant organisations and community members to establish and maintain a referral network.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

Service Six: Service Management

The intent of this standard is to ensure that services are managed effectively and efficiently. It requires services to be person-centred and to ensure flexibility to respond to individual strengths and needs. It also requires services to promote a culture of continuous improvement as a basis for quality service delivery.

A range of systems and processes are required to support quality service provision and these are reflected in the standard. The standard refers to the active involvement of people with disability, families, friends, carers and advocates in service and support planning, delivery and review. Support for organisational learning and skills development is considered integral to a culture of quality service delivery and continuous improvement. This includes support and training for staff and volunteers. Additionally, service delivery that is reflective in practice and based on contemporary evidence will support the best possible outcomes for individuals.

Adherence to workplace related legislative and regulatory frameworks is an expectation within the standard. This will support accountability through sound governance and enable services to be delivered in a safe environment by appropriately qualified and supervised personnel.

The standard emphasises the importance of:

- sound governance and management in all aspects of service planning, development and provision;
- clear communication to staff, people with disability and other stakeholders;
- continuous improvement and evidence based practice;

- a range of methods for active participation of people with disability and their family, friends, carers and advocates in planning, delivery and review at the individual, service and organisational levels; and
- compliance with workplace related legislation and regulation including Work Health Safety, human resource management and financial management.

Rights for people

I have the right to services and supports that are effectively managed, regularly reviewed, accountable and contemporary.

Outcome for people

My strengths and needs are effectively supported through soundly managed services.

Standard for service

The service has effective and accountable service management and leadership to maximise outcomes for individuals.

Indicators of practice and evidence examples

6.1 Frontline staff and management are suitably qualified, skilled and supported.

To comply with this indicator, NPA providers should:

- provide evidence that NPA provider staff have been approved to work as an assessor by DSS (NPA providers can request this from DSS).

6.2 Practice is based on evidence and the minimal restrictive options and complies with legislative, regulatory and contractual requirements.

To comply with this indicator, NPA providers should:

- briefly describe how they undertake assessments in line with the DSS guidelines for Supported Wage System (SWS) assessments, Ongoing Support Assessments (OSA) and Workplace Modifications Assessments.

6.3 The service documents, monitors and effectively uses management systems including Work Health Safety (WHS), human resource (HR) management and financial management.

Not applicable to NPA Scheme.

6.4 The service has monitoring, feedback, learning and reflection processes, which support continuous improvement.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

6.5 The service has a clearly communicated organisational vision, mission and values, which are consistent with contemporary practice.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

6.6 The service has systems to strengthen and maintain organisational capabilities to directly support the achievement of individual goals and outcomes.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.

6.7 The service uses person-centred approaches including the active involvement of people with disability, families, friends, carers and advocates to review policies, practices, procedures and service provision.

- Not relevant to the NPA Scheme.