

Factsheet for Interpreters-The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS): How does it work? How can I prepare?

The NDIS is a new system to help people with disability get the supports they need to live a good life. Interpreters may be contacted by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), or other organisations that are supporting people with disability to assist with communication. It is important to get all the information you need from your Language Service Provider (LSP) beforehand to prepare for your meeting/phone call, in order to best support the client.

Questions interpreters should ask their LSPs at the time a booking is made for all NDIS related appointments:

- What is the purpose of the meeting?
- How long is the meeting likely to take?
- What stage of the NDIS process is the client up to?
- Who is the person and organisation that I will be interpreting for?



Additional questions to ask your LSP at the time a booking is made, if you are told it is to discuss **pre-planning, planning and plan implementation** include:

- Could you give me some information about the person's disability and any treatments, therapies or equipment that will be discussed? This information will help me interpret the terminology and information accurately.
- Could you send me briefing information from the NDIA (or organisation that has made the booking) including topics of discussion and explanations of any terms, or jargon that you are likely to use so I can prepare appropriate bilingual terminology beforehand?
- What level of understanding do you think the client has about the NDIS?
- Will I be required to provide any sight translations, if so, can these documents be sent to me beforehand?

Ensuring the most appropriate interpreter mode is used

Once you have found out the purpose and approximate duration of the interpreting session you may need to discuss with the Language Service Provider if the suggested interpreting method will be appropriate, for example on-the-phone or onsite.

Onsite interpreting is preferable:

- Where it is likely that the conversation will be complex and long, this includes meetings to discuss NDIS related pre-planning/ planning / and plan implementation meetings;
- When the client prefers to have the interpreter onsite or feels unable or uncomfortable using the telephone;
- When there will be a number of people involved in the conversation or meeting (for example NDIA representatives, family members, service staff and/or advocates);
- Where it is important to gauge facial expression, hand and body gestures, for example, to check the client has understood a message, instructions or what is being asked of them.
- When person has a disability that limits their communication, for example, with someone who is deaf, or who has an intellectual disability.

When a phone session may not be appropriate

Keep in mind that **the client has a right to ask the NDIA for a face-to-face meeting if they would prefer**, however, they or the NDIA or other disability organisations may not be aware of this right. On-site interpreters are available in both metropolitan and regional areas. If you sense that the person does not understand the information provided over the phone in their own LOTE, has difficulty answering questions, and you feel that being able to observe body language and facial expression might assist them and you to communicate properly, you should alert the person providing the information of this fact. Ultimately, it is not the interpreter's responsibility for people to understand the information; it is the organisation's responsibility. However, interpreters do need to think of duty of care and appropriateness of the information provided, including the mode of interpreting.

When might an interpreter be contacted?

There are many stages of the NDIS process during which an interpreter might be engaged:

When	Who would contact you	Optimal Interpreting method	Meeting purpose and how best to prepare to interpret
NDIS access request, access enquiry	NDIA LAC (Local Area Co-ordinator)	Phone or on-site	A person will be making enquiries, or providing information and details so they can access the NDIS. Having general knowledge of disability and the NDIA would be beneficial.
Pre-planning meeting	A disability organisation, LAC, ECEI (Early Childhood Early Intervention) or other organisation	On-site	A LAC or disability organisation or other organisation might work with a person with disability and/or their family to discuss what supports they would like to have through the NDIS. This might include discussing their disability, their current circumstances, their goals and aspirations, and what supports, services, and/or equipment would assist them to have a good life. Having a general understanding of the NDIS would be useful for this meeting. Be prepared to ask for clarification of any terms not understood at the meeting, and explain if terms are not easily translatable into your language.
NDIS Planning Meeting	NDIA, LAC, ECEI	On-site	This meeting decides what supports the NDIA will provide for a participant. An NDIS planning meeting can be a lengthy process. There are up to 200 questions that the worker may ask in this meeting. You might need to prepare by ensuring you can interpret accurately disability terminology, commonly used NDIS terminology such as NDIS participant, goals, aspirations, and the notion of independence. Be prepared to ask for clarification of any terms not understood at the meeting, and explain if terms are not easily translatable into your language.
Plan implementation meetings	NDIA planner, LAC, a disability service or support co-ordinator	On-site	The meeting will focus on how the disability supports in the plan will be put in place. It might mean that the client will be asked their preferences regarding services they would like to choose, they may be provided with more information about their plan, such as how many hours they have for the various aspects of it, or how they would like to spend their funding.
Providing supports and services	Includes Disability organisations, support co-ordinator, therapists	Onsite	Find out beforehand what the purpose of the meeting will be as there could be many reasons for it. It might include a therapist communicating with a client, a service organising housework, or personal care, or organising support activities.
NDIS Appeals process	NDIA representative, or advocacy organisation	On-site	A person can challenge the NDIA regarding a decision they have made. Finding out as much as possible beforehand would be beneficial, including asking for any paperwork or materials you will be required to sight-translate.
Plan Review meeting	NDIA representative, or LAC	On-site	The meeting will be to review the participants plan and will usually take place on an annual basis or when their circumstances change so finding out as much as possible beforehand about the person's disability, supports and other arrangements would be useful.

For more information about the NDIS- www.ndis.gov.au

The NDIS has an extensive range of short factsheets that give more information on all the topics discussed above including Accessing the NDIS, NDIS plans, LACs, ECEI, Support Co-ordination, appealing NDIS decisions and reviewing NDIS plans. There is also translated materials in ten languages.

Visit www.ndis.gov.au/people-disability/fact-sheets-and-publications

AMPARO Advocacy has two factsheets translated into 33 languages including 8 in video format (spoken).

Factsheet 1- Understanding Disability in Australia

Factsheet 2- What is the NDIS?

<http://www.amparo.org.au/factsheets/>



Other ways that you can help to ensure you are interpreting effectively

- Make sure you use words and terminology that is current, and denotes positive language about disability to the person with disability or their family.
- Tell the worker if you think there are sensitivities around disability in your culture that they should be aware of, and that might impact on the discussion (for example how openly the client may want/be able to discuss what is being asked of them).
- Tell the worker if you think that the communication has not been totally understood (for example the worker assumes the client understands the terms, process or jargon being discussed) ; use your professional judgement to alert the worker that the client does not seem to understand.
- Tell the worker if you notice there is a gap, for example, either on understanding of the information, of how they are meant to contribute to the conversation, if they seem unprepared for the meeting or if they seem completely unfamiliar about NDIA, what it is and how it works.
- Be aware that you may be asked to interpret for workers who have not worked with interpreters before, who do not fully understand your role, your code of ethics, or have not had thorough training on how to work with an interpreter. Be ready to explain your role clearly and simply, mentioning the most important principles of the AUSIT Code of Ethics, such as accuracy, impartiality, competence, confidentiality.
- Planning meetings can be long, remind workers that as an interpreter a break may be required after 40 minutes or so, in order to undertake your role to the best of your capacity.

If there are disability terms that you don't understand, **ask beforehand or during the interview for the worker to provide more details, examples or explanation.** Explain to workers if there are terms including the term, "disability" that does not directly translate into your language. **Remember- an interpreter should not interpret anything they do not understand.**



