

NDIS & Allied Health Professionals



Allied Health Service Providers (Professionals)

Allied Health is a term you will come across quite a lot when you're going through your National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) journey, and you might be wondering what it means and how can they help?

On this page, we will go over what Allied Health is, what type of services they provide and how they might help you on your NDIS journey.

What is Allied Health?

Allied Health is the term used to refer to an extremely diverse range of health professionals that are not nurses or doctors. Allied Health Professionals provide essential services to people of all ages across all types of disciplines. Whether it's mental health, disability care, speech or physical therapy, hearing treatment, or rehabilitation (to name a few), an Allied Health Professional can help.

Allied Health Professionals work proactively to assess, diagnose, and treat individuals and are often part of a multidisciplinary team practice that works towards patients' overall health and well-being.

You can find Allied Health Professionals in every branch of healthcare, and their roles within the NDIS are central to a participant's journey.

What is the role of Allied Health Professionals in your NDIS journey?

Allied Health Professionals make up the largest group of registered support providers who service NDIS participants. If you are an NDIS participant, the chances are you are working with or have worked with an Allied Health Professional previously. Whether in hospitals, aged care, private practice or at home, you can find Allied Health Services in all of them.

Because of the broad range of services Allied Health offers, their role in a person's NDIS journey depends on their circumstances. However, Allied Health delivers services and support for all types of disabilities across various settings.

Common areas that Allied Health operates in the NDIS are:

- Assessment of homes and surroundings and conditions
- Mental health care and support
- Physical therapy and muscular rehabilitation
- Reporting on progress and goals
- Collaborate with other care providers and guardians

To gain funding for Allied Health Professionals within your NDIS budget, it's necessary to understand the roles that many of these services play and how they will help you reach your NDIS goals. As your NDIS funding is directly related to your goals, a participant or their guardian will need to have at least a basic understanding of the services available and their role in your NDIS journey.

The Different Types of Allied Health Professionals

Occupational Therapist

An Occupational Therapist or OT is a vital support for many people who live with disabilities. An OT helps assess a person's cognition, mobility and capacity for daily chores such as eating, cleaning, dressing and cooking. Specialist Occupational Therapy practitioners can also provide extensive rehabilitation programs for neurological or physical disorders.

How do Occupational Therapists help in your NDIS Journey?

- Help achieve goals associated with day to day living
- Provide recommendations for specialist equipment
- Advise on safe movement techniques
- Can train and improve cognitive ability
- Can specialise in the rehabilitation of complex health cases
- Advice on accessibility solutions for households
- Conduct driving assessments
- Improve quality of life

Speech Pathologist/Therapist

A speech pathologist or therapist is an Allied Health Professional who can assist NDIS participants with improving their speech through speech therapy and their communication. Communication isn't just limited to how people talk but how people write, listen and read. A speech pathologist works with an extensive range of patients – from people who suffer from a cleft palate or a stutter right through to stroke patients or other brain injuries. They are also well-versed in developing a therapy for children who may be late bloomers, have a stutter from childhood, or lack confidence.

How do Speech Pathologists/Therapists help in your NDIS Journey?

- Provide diagnosis of communication deficiencies
- Help achieve a wide variety of goals regarding communication
- Provide coaching and training programs to overcome communication confidence issues
- Recommend specialist communication assistive technology
- Assessment and implementation of rehabilitation courses
- Develops speech therapy programs

Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy is one of the most well-known Allied Health Professions as it can help a wide range of ailments across many different disabilities. NDIS registered Physiotherapists are Allied Health Professionals who provide advice, treatment, courses and care to treat and maintain physical health and well-being. For people with disabilities, a physiotherapist can work towards rehabilitation, strength building, injury prevention and overall physical health techniques.

How do Physiotherapists help in your NDIS journey?

- Diagnose physical deficiencies and implement strategies to improve them
- Work with you to achieve goals associated with physical movement
- Establish rehabilitation routines
- Provide exercise strategies to improve physical health
- Educate participants on injury prevention
- Track and report the progress of goals related to your physical well-being

Exercise Physiologist

A registered NDIS exercise physiologist is a health professional who helps individuals recover from a range of conditions. From injuries or physical impairments to enabling them to return to daily activities and improving their physical well-being. An exercise physiologist is not just about exercise science. Instead, they use the most current and best evidence-based strategies and treatments to help people recover from injuries or physical impairments and return to their previous fitness and functional abilities. Exercise physiologists also provide individualised care for people of all levels of movement function.

How do Exercise Physiologists help in your NDIS Journey?

- They assess a person's fitness levels and work with their individualised treatment plan, health plan, and physical therapy treatments.
- They also minimise the risk of re-injury through monitoring activities and asking for feedback from patients or caregivers.
- In partnership with other health professionals, they might help people live healthier lifestyles by helping them to eat well and move more during daily activities.
- Track and report goal progress regarding physical recovery

Psychologist

People who have developed mental health issues due to their disability may be eligible to work with a registered NDIS psychologist or a psychosocial counsellor. Their role within the NDIS space is to help people with disabilities to develop coping skills and build upon socialisation and confidence techniques. Psychological services are designed to target current mental health issues and identify potential risk factors that may contribute to a further decline in mental health. However, if the mental health disorder is not related to a disability in some way, other government mental health services outside the NDIS may be available.

How do Psychologists help in your NDIS Journey?

- Assess participants mental health
- Build confidence and socialisation
- Work towards specific mental health goals
- Develop strategies for coping with depression and anxiety
- Create an extensive positive behaviour support plan

Osteopath

An osteopath registered with the NDIS treats individuals with diverse physical health concerns, including musculoskeletal and back pain and joint stiffness. Osteopathic manipulation uses the body's own innate ability to heal itself through gentle, non-invasive treatment. For people who have a disability or an illness that makes it hard for them to move around, Osteopathy can help them adjust their bodies to have better mobility. An Osteopath takes a holistic planning approach to understand why a person body might be suffering from muscular disorders and delves deep into its root causes.

How do Osteopaths help in your NDIS Journey?

- Identify the cause of pain and discomfort affecting your movement
- Assess current musculoskeletal health
- Develop techniques and programs to alleviate pain and improve movement
- Track and report goal progress

Orthotist

An NDIS registered orthotist is an Allied Health Professional who specialises in making, fitting, and customising orthoses (protheses) to support the body and enable more significant movement and freedom. Orthotics deals with all aspects of supporting the feet, ankles, legs, hips and back and work towards preventing injuries. Orthotics are dealt with in the field of orthopaedics and physical medicine. Orthotics are also closely related to human factors, ergonomics, and industrial design, all of which support people's movement.

How do Orthotists help in your NDIS Journey?

- Can design and fit customised mobility equipment
- Provides recommendations to the NDIS on equipment procurement
- Can transform participants mobility capability
- Ease pain and discomfort through effective prosthetic use
- Trains participants to use equipment
- Tracks and reports NDIS goals

Art Therapist

An NDIS registered art therapist provides creative, nonverbal means of presenting or interpreting life experience to facilitate the development or enrich life. They use art materials and other forms of creative expression (dance/movement, music, poetry) as the vehicle for communicating and expressing oneself. In terms of disability treatment, an art therapist may help someone improve their motor skills and coordination, develop focus, improve their confidence and self-esteem and even unblock repressed memories and break barriers for personal growth.

How do Art Therapists help in Your NDIS Journey?

- Provide an outlet for creativity and build confidence

- Improved motor skills and focus
- Can lead to more significant socialisation opportunities
- Access to quality materials and artistic methods
- Help develop artistic skills with teachers who specialise in helping people with a disability
- Can help reach NDIS goals concerning confidence and community engagement

Podiatrist

Podiatry is the branch of medicine devoted to studying and treating foot, ankle, and lower leg injuries. Podiatrists work with individuals who have a variety of injury or amputation concerns and those with functional difficulties such as walking problems. An NDIS registered podiatrist will help the NDIS participant access the NDIS funded services they require. Podiatrists are trained in all aspects of foot and ankle surgery, including managing rheumatoid arthritis, wounds and hypertension.

How do Podiatrists help in Your NDIS Journey?

- Diagnose and treat disabilities that affect the feet and lower limbs
- Treat medical conditions that arise from circulatory disease
- Provide plans for eliminating or decreasing falls
- Outline strategies to maintain foot health
- Treats chronic conditions
- Exercises to promote healthy circulation to mobility-limited participants.

If you are unsure what kind of allied health professional might help you achieve your NDIS goals, speak to your primary carer or guardian, chat to your doctor, or ask your local area coordinator. For more information on the different types of Allied Health Professionals, visit <https://ahpa.com.au/allied-health-professions/>.

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