



Connected Abilities Family Handbook

2023



Contents

Welcome	3
Universal Declaration of Human Rights.....	3
About Connect Children and Families- the Approved Provider.....	4
About Connected Abilities	6
The Keyworker:.....	7
Connected Abilities Philosophy.....	8
Connected Abilities Services:.....	9
Coordination of Supports:.....	10
Funding for service delivery:.....	11
Choice and Control.....	11
Transition of Provider	11
Important things to be aware of:	12
The National Principles of Child Safe Organisations	13
NDIS Code of Conduct.....	14
The Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics.....	15
Early Years Learning Framework	16
Policies and Procedures.....	17
Advocacy	17
Feedback and Complaints	18
The Working Together Agreement	20
Communication	20
Incidents, Emergencies and Disasters.....	21
Privacy.....	23
Further Information.....	23

Welcome

Choosing a provider to support your child's development is an important decision- we know because most of us at Connect have made those decisions for our own children.

Connect is an organisation with a simple purpose- **Together, we support children's and families' learning, safety, and wellbeing.**

The things that matter most to us are **tuning in, connection, showing kindness, striving for social justice, walking together, and celebrating every child.** We hold ourselves not only to NDIS Practice Standards and Code of Conduct, Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics, but also our own Code of Child Wellbeing.

This handbook gives you the information you need to decide whether you would like to engage Connect Abilities as your service provider and how we operate.

If you have any questions or concerns after reading this handbook, please contact us.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Connect operates in line with Human Rights as determined by the General Assembly as follows:

The General Assembly,

Proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration in mind shall strive by teaching and educating to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Members States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

About Connect Children and Families- the Approved Provider

Connect Children and Families began in Katoomba in 1981 as Possum Early Intervention Playgroup Service. This was set up by community professionals on a voluntary basis to meet the need of families seeking support for their young children before school. Since that time Connect has grown and diversified its programs and services, always in response to the local community that we serve.

Connect is governed by a Board of Directors and a Chief Executive Officer.

We support families to access services that respond to their needs, creating pathways both across our services, and to other community agencies that can support them.



connect

Children and Families



Our Vision

Children and families thrive in safe, connected communities



Our Purpose

Together, we support children's and families' learning, safety and wellbeing.

Our services exist to create positive change for children, families, and community. Children's safety is always our priority. Our services are available to children and families in their home, in early childhood education centres and pre-schools, in community spaces and schools and other family-centred services

Our Values



We tune in

We listen, we seek to understand the needs of our children, families, people, and community. We are responsive to their lived experiences and to research in our field.



We connect

We build relationships. We believe that the best outcomes for children and their families come from respectful relationships and working together.



We show kindness

We are compassionate, gentle and think about the safety and wellbeing of others. Being kind often takes courage and strength to give honest feedback – being clear is kind.



We strive for social justice

We oppose inequality and challenge social injustice by removing barriers to our services and identifying ways to enable equity of access, inclusion and children's rights.



We all walk together

We respect the lived experiences and heritage of Aboriginal peoples. We promote self-determination. We are Culturally sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal children and their families.



We celebrate

We celebrate every child – their individuality, gifts, ideas, and culture. We focus on their well-being, strengths and what triggers their curiosity and delight.

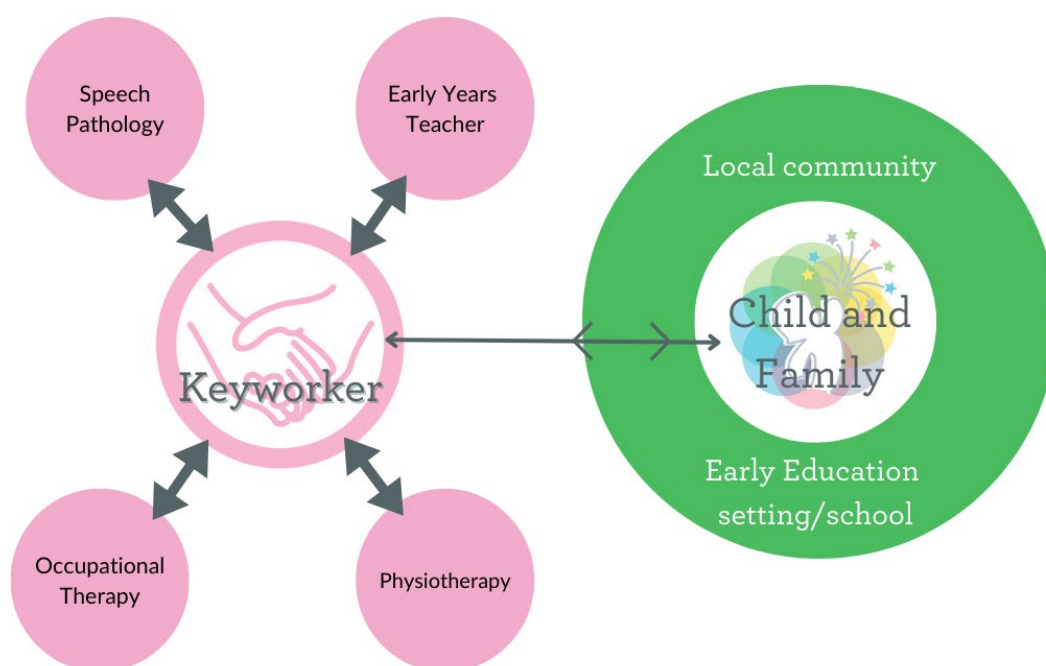
About Connected Abilities

We provide a **Transdisciplinary Family Centred** approach to supporting **children birth to 12 years old** who are **experiencing developmental difficulties due to a delay or have a diagnosed disability**. This is done in mainstream natural settings, that include the home, relevant educational setting and the wider local community..

Different disciplines provide different skills, knowledge, perspective, and ideas which can be shared effectively, enhancing the team's overall abilities. This information can be drawn upon by Keyworkers in their role of primary communicator and support with families and the networks around the family. The team work collaboratively and share the responsibilities of evaluation, planning and implementing services to support the children and their families. We promote capacity building of the family and other people around the child to ensure supportive strategies are incorporated into everyday life. We aim for the family to develop a toolkit of strategies to use as new challenges present themselves during the child's journey.

Our Transdisciplinary Team includes *Occupational Therapists, Speech Pathologists, Educational Specialists and Physiotherapists*. We have a manager and administration support to attend to the diverse family needs and enquiries each day.

We aim to deliver supports that respects participants culture, values and beliefs.



The Keyworker:

An essential part of the Transdisciplinary Team Approach.

This person will work directly with the family and the networks around the child to determine the most appropriate services for your child to meet their needs.

Each keyworker is supported by the team of professionals from different disciplines who share their knowledge and experience in working with children including:

- Early Years Teachers— Developmental support, transition to school, learning dispositions, community access.
- Occupational Therapist – Sensory supports, activities of daily living, aids and equipment, motor coordination, fine motor skills, executive function skills, community access, rehabilitation.
- Physiotherapist – Gross motor skill development, Muscle strength, daily living aids and equipment, motor coordination, community access, rehabilitation.
- Speech Pathologist – Speech and Language delays, Literacy, Social communication, Assessments, assistive technology, augmentative and alternative communication devices.

Your keyworker works in partnership with you and others to:

- Support you to know your rights and have advocacy
- Give your child a voice
- Help your child participate in their daily routine
- Help make a plan that works for your family routine
- Connect your family with mainstream community services
- Access the community
- Support the educators in your child's childcare, preschool or school setting
- Embed your child's therapy into their childcare, preschool or school setting
- Set goals and implement strategies to maximise learning opportunities
- Access the resources you may need for your child



Connected Abilities Philosophy

We respect and amplify children's voices and agency.

We listen to understand children's wants and needs and are responsive in our planning. We support children to build their capacity to advocate for their needs. We acknowledge the impact of traumatic life experiences and work in partnership with children, celebrating and utilising their strengths, interests and learning styles to achieve their goals.

We work in partnership with families.

We focus on what families want for their children and their family and work with them to achieve the best outcomes for their children. We seek to tune in by listening, understanding, and collaborating with families and children to support their goals. We utilise children's and families' strengths, interests, and experiences to encourage and engage them.

We strive to use natural environments.

We recognise the evidence that working with children within the natural environments that they learn in often provides opportunities for inclusive, predictable, and quality engagement. Our connections with the communities surrounding children and families are essential for collaboration and capacity building. We also understand that flexibility and choice are necessary for families and children and consider this in all our planning.

We connect by communicating openly and respectfully in partnership with children, families, colleagues and the community.

We value collaborative communication and the sharing of information and resources. We acknowledge that communication should be responsive to the individual requirements of families and children and look for ways to accommodate this.

We advocate for the rights of children and the removal of barriers to equitable participation and inclusion.

We courageously challenge social injustice and empower others to do the same. We model equity and inclusivity in our partnerships with families and communities. We actively support families to access information and resources that help them to meet their goals and outcomes.

We all walk together.

We work to understand the historical impacts and trauma of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and community members. We strive to be culturally sensitive and understand and promote culturally safe practices.

We are open to consistent critical reflection to support growth in practice and relationships with children, families and colleagues.

We commit to providing time, space and resources to support regular, meaningful opportunities for reflection. We recognise that curiosity is central to problem-solving, learning and responding to changing needs.

We maintain currency in best practices by engaging in multi-modal professional learning.

We value each team member's strengths, experience, knowledge, and skills. We work from evidence bases that include the lived experience of people with disabilities. We are committed to sharing new knowledge and ideas with our colleagues. We recognise that sharing up-to-date information and practices with families helps to build their capacity, confidence and motivation. We work within recognised and current professional guidelines and frameworks and are committed to supporting our staff to meet these requirements.

Connected Abilities Services:

Connect promotes Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention

Children learn most from the adults they have the strongest relationships with, and in the places in which they spend most time and feel comfortable, like home, childcare or school. Children learn through play and the activities they do with the people around them everyday. Our keyworkers and therapists support you to embed your child's learning into their daily routines this is called Routines Based Intervention in the most natural setting for the child. This is evidence based Best Practice which guide the way we work with families and children during the developmental journey. Promoting supports in natural settings, Connect deliver supports that uses children's natural interest in play, to help develop their skills in the environment.

Telehealth

Along with visits to your home or a mainstream setting, we can also provide telehealth services. These sessions on various virtual platforms (zoom and teams) allow for families and children to be connected with us remotely and be responsive to your changing needs. Therapy and support services can be delivered in the privacy of your own home and are tailored to your child's goals using evidence based practices/strategies.

Community Support for participation

Our team can support your child to overcome barriers to their participation in community activities and access to their neighbourhood e.g. scouts, afterschool sports and leisure activities. Specific activities and play experiences can also be carefully planned according to individual needs to develop specific skills and encourage cooperation, regulation, and collaborative play. This can be organised with extended family, siblings, friends or small groups. The benefits are building friendships, building confidence, improved communication, improved family capacity and overall inclusion in the community.

Coordination of Supports:

The coordination of NDIS supports refers to the process of managing and organizing the various supports and services that an individual with a developmental delay or disability may require to achieve their goals and improve their quality of life.

This involves working closely with families to identify their specific needs and goals.

The support coordinator acts as a central point of contact and assisting in developing and implementing a personalised plan for the participant.

This may include:

1. Assessing the participant's individual needs and goals.
2. Identifying suitable supports and services available under the NDIS.
3. Assisting the participant's family in understanding and navigating the NDIS system.
4. Coordinating the delivery of different services and supports from various providers.
5. Advocating for the participant's needs and rights within the NDIS framework.
6. Regularly reviewing and adjusting the NDIS plan based on the participant's progress and changing needs.

The goal of coordination of supports is to ensure that participants receive a comprehensive and integrated range of services that address their unique requirements and enable them to lead more independent, fulfilling lives. It also aims to streamline access to services, avoid duplication, and foster collaboration among service providers to enhance the overall effectiveness of support delivery.



Funding for service delivery:

Therapy and support services from the Connected Abilities team can be funded by your child's NDIS package or can be privately invoiced as a Fee For Service offer

We are a registered provider and accept all plan Management styles:

- NDIS Managed – Agency Managed
- Plan Managed – 3rd party manages invoices and funds
- Self Managed – participant manages payments and invoices and they are responsible to cover the cost of service delivery

Service delivery is Invoiced fortnightly – payments must be made in 14 days

For NDIS funded clients, Connect will create with you:

A Service Agreement and Schedule of Support to be completed annually. This document is an agreement between the participant and Connect and outlines policies, responsibilities and ensures we are addressing your needs, goals and preferences. We support you to make informed choices and allocate qualified, competent, skilled staff in a timely manner.

Choice and Control

Connect promotes your choice and control over the services you receive. We work with you to ensure your services always reflect your goals and current priorities. We aim to maximise the child's independence and participation. with Should you wish to change provider, we request 14 days' notice and we can cease your service agreement with us.

Transition of Provider

Connect will assist families in transitioning to or from our services in a planned coordinated way. We collaborate on the process and work with other within the framework of our privacy and confidentiality policies.

We will review any risks, provide documentation and help achieve the desired outcome for the child and family.

Important things to be aware of:

Child Safeguarding

Allied Health Professionals and Teachers are Mandatory Reporters and are therefore required by law to report any incident, disclose any concern raised, that there is a child at risk of harm. Please see our Child Protection policy for more further information via our manager or further information on Connect's commitment to being a Child Safe Organisation is available on page 14 of this handbook.

Home Visiting Risk Assessment Process

As part of our initial processing of a service agreement with you, we will be asking questions related to the safe environment of your home to inform our Workplace Risk Assessment. When or if staff visit you at home, your home becomes the workplace. Connect has an obligation to its staff to ensure that the workplace is a safe place to work. Your assistance with this checklist is appreciated.

Covid 19 Safety

Connect is a COVID Safe workplace.

All Connect Abilities staff are fully vaccinated.



We follow NSW Health Guidelines in relation to Covid 19 safe protocols. Our team members also have access to Personal Protective Equipment, such as masks and gloves, hand sanitiser and Rapid Antigen Tests to ensure all stakeholder's health and safety. Please see Connect's Covid 19 policy for more details.

The National Principles of Child Safe Organisations

As of February 2019, the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations have been endorsed by members of the Council of Australian Governments, including the Prime Minister and state and territory First Ministers. The principles aim to provide a nationally consistent approach to creating organisational cultures that foster child safety and wellbeing.

The National Principles of Child Safe Organisations are:

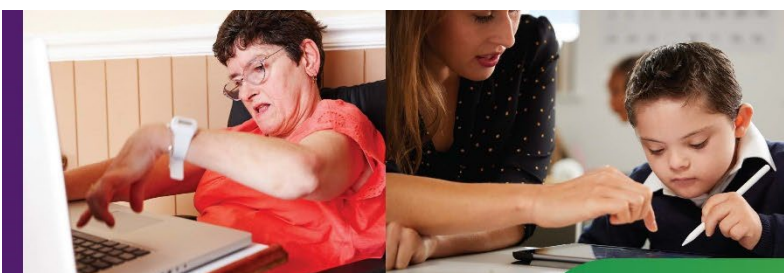
- Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
- Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
- Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
- People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
- Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
- Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
- Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
- Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

Connect Children and Families Charter of Commitment to Children and Young People

At Connect Child and Family Services, we are committed to:

- Upholding the rights of each child as expressed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We model this in our practices and behaviours.
- Creating environments where children have a voice and feel they are heard. We promote the wellbeing of each child.
- Prioritising our child protection obligations. We integrate protective behaviours into our practices enabling each child to grow in their capacities to promote and protect their own wellbeing and safety. As mandatory reporters, we report harm, or signification risk of harm, to a child to senior colleagues in Connect and to the relevant authorities.
- Acknowledging children's vulnerability, paying attention to each child and family. We are mindful of children's lived experiences and aware of the impact of trauma on children's behaviours and emotional wellbeing. We apply the best professional insights into child development and wellbeing.
- Building safe relationships with children and families, acknowledging that parents and families are the first and most important source of care and education in the life of a child. We notice signs that indicate they may need support and act to prevent the behaviours and situations that might put a child's wellbeing or safety at risk.
- Working together and in partnership with families, knowing it takes the whole community to keep children safe.

NDIS Code of Conduct



NDIS Quality
and Safeguards
Commission



The NDIS Code of Conduct

The NDIS Code of Conduct applies to all NDIS providers and workers (including employees and contractors).

What does the Code require?

Anyone providing supports and services to people with disability must:



Respect the rights of the person

Act with respect for individual rights to freedom of expression, self-determination and decision-making in accordance with relevant laws and conventions



Deliver services competently

Provide supports and services in a safe and competent manner with care and skill



Prevent violence, neglect, abuse and exploitation

Take all reasonable steps to prevent and respond to all forms of violence, exploitation, neglect and abuse of people with disability



Respect privacy

Respect the privacy of people with disability



Act with integrity

Provide supports and services with integrity, honesty and transparency



Take action on quality and safety

Promptly take steps to raise and act on concerns about matters that might have an impact on the quality and safety of supports provided to people with disability



Prevent sexual misconduct

Take all reasonable steps to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct.

If you witness any activity that breaches the NDIS Code of Conduct, either at your organisation or at another provider, you should report it to the NDIS Commission. Your report will help us take direct action to protect the safety of people with disability.

To report a possible breach of the NDIS Code of Conduct call 1800 035 544.

For more information about the NDIS Code of Conduct, visit the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission website at www.ndiscommission.gov.au

The Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics



VISION

Professionals who adhere to this Code of Ethics act in the best interests of all children and work collectively to ensure that every child is thriving and learning.

PREAMBLE

Early Childhood Australia recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been nurturing and teaching children on this land for thousands of years. The *Code of Ethics* acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional ways of being and caring for children.

This *Code of Ethics* is informed by the principles in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1991) and the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007). A Code of Ethics is an aspirational framework for reflection about the ethical responsibilities of childhood professionals who work with, or on behalf, of children and their families. In this *Code of Ethics* the protection and wellbeing of children is paramount and therefore speaking out or taking action in the presence of unethical practice is an essential professional responsibility.

Being ethical involves thinking about everyday actions and decision making, either individually or collectively, and responding with respect to all concerned. The *Code of Ethics* recognises that childhood professionals are in a unique position of trust and influence in their relationships with children, families, colleagues and the community, therefore professional accountability is vital.

CORE PRINCIPLES

The core principles in this *Code of Ethics* are based on the fundamental and prized values of the profession. They act to guide decision making in relation to ethical responsibilities. These core principles require a commitment to respect and maintain the rights and dignity of children, families, colleagues and communities.

- Each child has unique interests and strengths and the capacity to contribute to their communities.
- Children are citizens from birth with civil, cultural, linguistic, social and economic rights.
- Effective learning and teaching is characterised by professional decisions that draw on specialised knowledge and multiple perspectives.
- Partnerships with families and communities support shared responsibility for children's learning, development and wellbeing.
- Democratic, fair and inclusive practices promote equity and a strong sense of belonging.
- Respectful, responsive and reciprocal relationships are central to children's education and care.
- Play and leisure are essential for children's learning, development and wellbeing.
- Research, inquiry and practice-based evidence inform quality education and care.



DEFINITIONS OF TERMS IN ECA'S CODE OF ETHICS

A CODE OF ETHICS—defines the core aspirational values of the profession and provides guidance for professional decision making especially when there are conflicting obligations or responsibilities.

CORE PRINCIPLES—fundamental and prized values of the profession.

FAMILIES—the people who have significant care responsibilities for and/or kinship relationships with a child.

CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL—a person who works with or on behalf of children and families in education and care settings.

COMMUNITIES—a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common.

COLLEAGUES—includes employers and those with whom you work directly or more broadly.

STUDENT—a person undertaking study at a secondary or tertiary institution.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The first *Code of Ethics* for the Australian early childhood profession was developed in 1988; it was widely cited and used for 19 years. The first review of the *Code of Ethics* began in 2003 with the second version launched in 2007. The second review of the *Code of Ethics* began in 2014 with the third (current) version approved by the ECA National Board in February 2016.

ECA is grateful to everyone who has contributed to the development and ongoing review of the *Code of Ethics* including those who have participated in consultation surveys, forums and workshops over the years as well as those who have provided advice and oversight through their service on reference and advisory groups. We would particularly like to acknowledge those engaged in writing each version of the Code.



PO Box 86, Deakin West, ACT 2600
1800 356 900 (freecall)

T: (02) 6242 1800

F: (02) 6242 1818

E: eca@earlychildhood.org.au

www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au



Code of Ethics



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

Early Years Learning Framework

Fundamental to the Framework is a view of children’s lives as characterised by **belonging, being and becoming**.

BELONGING

Experiencing belonging – knowing where and with whom you belong – is integral to human existence.

BEING

Childhood is a time to be, to seek and make meaning of the world.

BECOMING

Children’s identities, knowledge, understandings, capacities, skills and relationships change during childhood. Becoming reflects this process of rapid and significant change that occurs in the early years as young children learn and grow.



Policies and Procedures

Connect's policies and procedures are available by request. Included in this handbook are summaries of key policies and procedures that are relevant to the delivery of our services.

Advocacy

Connect Child & Family Services Ltd. ("Connect") will take a committed and planned approach to actively advocate on the key issues affecting children and their families and carers. It will also support and encourage all service users, their families and carers to use, when appropriate, an independent and culturally appropriate advocate to support and represent them. Connect staff are not expected or permitted to act as an advocate when there is an issue between a service user and the centre's staff or services they provide or where there is a foreseeable conflict of interest.

- Conflict of interest issues are minimised;
- Access to independent advocates is supported.
- Appropriate use of the service Complaints policy
- Independence is assured for service users when requesting advocacy support.
- Request information about appropriate independent advocacy agencies that can be contacted.
- Connect will ensure that participants and families have access to translator services by holding registration with the NDIA provider interpreter services via TIS National.

Illness

If your child has displayed any of the following symptoms, you should seek medical advice and let us know you need to cancel the service. It is best they rest and recover for 48hrs before resuming support.

- High temperature
- Vomiting or diarrhoea
- Runny green nose, or
- Rash, swelling and pain
- Any symptoms consistent with Covid 19

Where your child is diagnosed with an illness, discuss the 'exclusion period' for that illness with your doctor and ask for a medical certificate to be provided. Connect can provide contact details for GP's, paediatricians and specialists in your local area if you require support with this.



Feedback and Complaints

We are committed to continuous quality improvement in the services we provide and in the way we manage our programs and facilities. If you have feedback, please share it with us, preferably in writing. You can provide [online feedback](#) or email us at connect@connectcfs.org.au.

Connect has a feedback and complaints policy.

You can make a complaint at the level you feel most comfortable, in person, by telephone, email or in writing.

STEP 1 Discuss your concern with (or write) to a staff member or Program Manager.

Telephone (02)4758 9966. All complaints are reported to the CEO and subsequently the Board of Connect. Fact finding and decision-making processes will be undertaken, and you will be advised of the outcome of your complaint. If a resolution is not easily obtained with the Program Manager, we will refer your complaint to the Executive Team.

STEP 2 Complaint escalated to the Executive Team of Connect. A representative of the Executive Team will contact you. If a formal meeting is required you may bring a support person.

STEP 3 The Executive Team will undertake fact finding and decision-making processes and you will be advised of the outcome of your complaint.

STEP 4 Resolution.

If resolved, the complaint process and resolution will be recorded in the complaints register and reported at the next Board Meeting to identify strategies to limit recurrence.

No resolution—proceed to Step 5.

WITHIN 14 DAYS

STEP 5 Approach an external agency for assistance in resolving the dispute.

A complaint can be made to the NDIS Commission by:

Phone: 1800 035 544 (free call from landlines) or TTY 133 677

Interpreters can be arranged

National Relay Service and ask for 1800 035 544



What is the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission and what is its role?



If you feel unsafe or unhappy with the NDIS services or support you receive, it's important to know that you can speak up about any problems you have. It's always okay to speak up.

The *NDIS Code of Conduct and NDIS Practice Standards* for providers and workers outline clear and enforceable standards for the quality and safety of support and/or services in the NDIS. If you, or someone you know, is not receiving quality, safe support and/or services, please talk to us. We have the power to take action to protect the rights and safety of NDIS participants.

We will respond to your concerns and complaints, including possible incidents of abuse and neglect of NDIS participants.

If you, or someone you know, is at immediate risk of harm, or you are worried about someone's safety or wellbeing, call 000 immediately.



About the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

You have the right to feel safe and receive quality service from your service providers. The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (the NDIS Commission) will work with you, service providers, workers, advocates and other people in the community to improve the quality and safety of support and/or services you receive.

The NDIS Commission is an Australian Government agency within the Social Services portfolio. It helps to protect the rights of people who receive NDIS support and/or services, and promotes their health, safety and wellbeing. It is the national regulator of NDIS support and service providers.

What does the NDIS Commission do?

We work to:

- ensure providers and workers know and follow the quality and safety rules
- help with, and respond to issues, complaints and serious incidents
- register and regulate NDIS providers Australia-wide
- educate and inform NDIS service providers, workers, participants and the community about the NDIS Commissions' quality and safety rules.

How to contact the NDIS Commission

If you have a question or want to know more, contact us:

Phone: **1800 035 544** (free call from landlines)

Text Telephone TTY: **133 677**

National Relay Service for people with hearing or speech impairments: <https://internet-relay.nrs.call.gov.au/> and ask for: **1800 035 544**

Submit the online complaint contact form: <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/about/complaints>

Email: contactcentre@ndiscommission.gov.au

Mail: **PO Box 210, Penrith NSW 2750**

Your rights

We support your right to:

- dignity and respect
- live free from abuse, exploitation, and violence
- be respected and have your culture and identity respected, receive good quality services and achieve your goals.



NDIS Commission start dates

The NDIS Commission started on:

1 July 2018 in New South Wales and South Australia



1 July 2019 in the Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory, Queensland, Tasmania and Victoria

1 December 2020 in Western Australia





The Working Together Agreement

At Connect we support a collaborative and coordinated approach to supporting children's development. This can be partnering with families, as well as partnering with allied health professionals (speech pathologist, occupational therapist, psychologist etc) and other agencies or services working with the family. We also recognise that developmental supports are most effective when they can occur in natural settings, which allow children build their understandings and skills in meaningful ways, such as these supports taking place in an Early Childhood Centre whilst children are playing with their friends.

To facilitate this approach, we use a resource developed by Re-Imagine Australia (formerly Early Childhood Intervention Australia) called the Working Together Agreement. This approach first begins with a meeting between the family, the centre and the allied health professional to ensure everyone has clear shared understandings to move forward in a collaborative way.

Please speak to your Centre Director if you have an allied health professional providing support and an initial meeting can be arranged. Visit: <https://www.flipsnack.com/earlychildhoodintervention/ecia-working-together-toolkit/full-view.html> for more information.



Communication

We offer a variety of means for you to communicate with us, phone, email or text message. Please refer to our Family Participation and Communication Policy.

Appointment reminders are sent via SMS in line with your schedule of supports.

Our team will complete visit notes and to distribute them to yourself and any other relevant stakeholder you've approved, such as early learning or school personnel, school or other providers involved in your child's support/therapy plan. We also complete a 12mth service review document.

We are happy to arrange meetings over the phone, via Zoom or face to face if needed.

You can email anyone on your child's support team or contact us via the Connected Abilities program manager or admin support Brenda.Pono@connectcfs.org.au or Louise.Maizey@connectcfs.org.au

You can get in touch with our accounts team via accounts@connectcfs.org.au or call our Head Office Monday to Friday between 9am and 3pm on 02 47589966.



Incidents, Emergencies and Disasters

We have emergency and evacuations procedures in place and our team regularly review them throughout the year. This includes evacuations, lockdowns, disasters, and medical emergencies.

We are committed to identifying risk assessed potential emergencies and disasters; the risk assessments are available for you as part of our policy document.

We include bushfire, flood and snow situations in our risk management. In the case of catastrophic bush fire risk rated days, our services will not be operational.

In a bushfire emergency, we will follow the directions provided by the Fire Fighting Commander or Police in attendance.

As a registered NDIS provider Connect implements and maintains a system to record and manage incidents that happen in connection with providing supports or services to people with disabilities. We have implemented an online system, Folio, to document any incidents that occur during our sessions. This ensures accurate recording of this events that meet any regulatory obligations.

The procedures will identify, assess, manage and resolve such incidents.

Connect will:

- Give staff access to appropriate up to date information, or professional development on the management of incidents; and know their roles and responsibilities as a NDIS provider to identify manage and resolve incidents and review practices.
- Make certain that all staff have access to the NDIS (Incident Management & Reportable Incidents) Rules 2018 and are aware of their responsibilities under these ensuring that this occurs as part of staff induction or orientation to the service and that position descriptions reflect this responsibility.
- Ensure that all incident notifications are reported to the Administration Manager of Connect and also the required regulatory bodies where required within timeframes outlined by NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission.

Contact Details for the NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission:

Phone: 1800 035 544 (free call from landlines)

Email: contactcentre@ndiscommission.gov.au

Identifying and responding to incidents: 6 step guide for workers

It is your responsibility to prevent, respond to, and report incidents that may occur when providing supports or services to people with disability.

1 Identify, prevent and mitigate

- You must take all reasonable steps to prevent all forms of harm.
- If you identify any risks of harm to people with disability talk to your employer.
- Ask your manager or supervisor if you are unsure about how to identify, reduce, and prevent risks to people with disability

When an incident does occur

2 Ensure immediate safety

- Call '000' if someone needs urgent medical care and/or if there is an immediate and serious risk of harm to you or others.
- Make sure you and the people around you are safe from harm.
- Notify your manager or supervisor.
- Follow your incident management procedures.

3 Respond to a disclosure

Sometimes you will not see an incident, but a person with disability will tell you ('make a disclosure') about it. In these circumstances:

- record and report this information as per your incident management procedures and tell your supervisor or manager as soon as possible
- reassure and support the person with disability by staying calm and explaining what will happen next
- listen to the person, writing down the details using their exact words. If you need more information to form a general understanding of the allegation, ask open questions, and avoid leading questions
- tell the person with disability that you have to report the incident.

4 Protect evidence

If it is your job to gather the initial information about a reportable incident, you must protect any evidence. For example, depending on the incident:

- do not disturb any evidence that may be required for an investigation
- if there is an alleged sexual assault, try to delay the victim bathing or showering until police arrive
- do not wash the person's clothing or bedlinen, but keep these things safe.

5 Record and report

If you become aware of a reportable incident you must notify your manager or supervisor as soon as possible. Do not rely on someone else to do this. Follow your workplace incident management procedures, including:

- record what you have seen and heard, including the details of any witnesses
- give your manager or supervisor any notes you have taken
- do not interview the person who is allegedly responsible for the incident.

6 Report to Police

Any allegation of a criminal offence against a person with disability must be reported to the police. Follow your incident management procedures, and:

- if appropriate, report the alleged offence as soon as possible
- tell the police that the impacted person is a vulnerable person and let them know if they will need communication aides or other supports
- support the person with disability when they are dealing with the police so that their wishes are made known.

NDIS providers must notify the NDIS Commission about a reportable incident that occurs, or is alleged to have occurred, in connection with the NDIS supports or services you deliver.

Reportable incidents are:

- The death of a person with disability
- Serious injury of a person with disability
- Abuse or neglect of a person with disability
- Unlawful sexual or physical contact with, or assault of, a person with disability
- Sexual misconduct, committed against, or in the presence of, a person with disability, including grooming of the person with disability for sexual activity
- Unauthorised use of restrictive practices in relation to a person with disability.



NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission



Contact Us | Call: 1800 035 544 (free call from landlines).

Our contact centre is open 9:00am to 4:30pm in the NT, 9:00am to 5:00pm in the ACT, NSW, QLD, SA, TAS and VIC Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays.

Email: reportableincidents@ndiscommission.gov.au | Website: www.ndiscommission.gov.au

Responding to incidents at your service (who to contact, etc):

Privacy

Privacy Notice

In order to provide care, we are required to collect a range of information, some of which is defined as personal or sensitive information, under the Privacy Act 1988.

Under the Act:

'Personal information' means any information or opinion about an identified, or reasonably identifiable individual.

'Sensitive personal information' means any information or opinion about an individual's racial or ethnic origin, political opinion or association, religious beliefs or affiliations, philosophical beliefs, sexual preferences or practices, trade or professional associations and memberships, union membership, criminal record, health or genetic information and biometric information or templates.

All personal or sensitive information you entrust to us will be used, stored or disposed of, as necessary, in accordance with the Privacy Principles.

By completing and submitting the Service Agreement and associated forms, you consent to the collection of all personal information, including sensitive personal information, contained in those forms.

Further Information

If you require any more information about Connect Children and Families and Connected Abilities, please don't hesitate to get in contact with us via connect@connectcfs.org.au or 02 47589966.

Alternatively, our website has a large range of information for families including about Connect Programs as well as useful links.

Please visit www.connectcfs.org.au.