



**SUPPORT
WORKER**

V'S

**THERAPY
ASSISTANT**



Having worked within this sector for some time now with a number of participants assisting them with obtaining funding, implementation of plans and reviews a common thing I see is the confusion around “Therapy Assistant” and also some families not knowing this is a potential option within the NDIS funding for them or their child.

Participants are often confused as to what actually is a “Therapy Assistant” so I have created some information below for you to give some more understanding of the role and difference between the Therapy Assistant & Support Worker.

What Is A Support Worker

A Support Worker is often engaged to cover a wide variety of roles and responsibilities which may entail supporting a person with their daily self-care, supporting to access the community, supporting to engage in activities/day tours, supporting with shopping tasks and much more. There is currently no national consensus as to the specific roles and responsibilities are of a support worker and support will vary dependent on each individual they are providing support to. Support Workers have no mandatory requirement for registration, professional development or certificates to work as a support worker however some will choose to obtain a Certificate III or IV in specific areas. Although for Support Workers it is not mandatory to hold insurance you will find most will and when engaging supports for participants it is something I highly recommend. If the Support Worker is registered with the NDIS they will be required to hold insurance, first aid/CPR, police check, blue card, yellow card and qualifications/and or relevant experience.

Regardless of engaging a registered or non-registered Support Worker my recommendations to participants is to engage supports that have the following in place:

- Insurance
- First Aid/CPR
- Blue Card (if engaging with children)
- Police Check (obtained within last 3 months)
- Experience working with participants with same disability or transferrable skills
- Suitable roadworthy and insured vehicle (if required to provide transport)
- References



What Is A Therapy Assistant

The national register for training in Australia (training.gov.au, in: HLT42512 – Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance) defines allied health assistants as:

‘Workers who provide therapeutic and program related support to allied health professionals. The worker is required to conduct therapeutic and program related activities under the guidance of an allied health professional. Supervision may be direct, indirect or remote and must occur within organisation requirements. The worker is required to identify client circumstances that need additional input from the allied health professional.

Therapy Assistants are Support Workers that hold:

- a certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance, and/or
- are directly employed and supervised by a registered Allied Health Professional.



A therapy assistant will generally receive ongoing training, supervision and development by a Qualified Allied Health Professional. They will also perform tasks and activities that require a higher level of skill and knowledge than what a support worker may be able to offer. Often therapy assistants will also be covered by the Allied Health Professionals insurance. Therapy assistants can provide support in the home and sometimes within clinic.

Benefits Of A Therapy Assistant

- Therapy assistants are significantly cheaper than an Allied Health Professional and can assist with implementing an at home program provided by the Allied Health Professional. To access a Therapy Assistant, you will require this funding within your NDIS plan under capacity building.
- Provides additional therapy during the week giving opportunity for more intensive therapy.
- Can often be provided in the home environment making it easier for the parent and/or participant.
- Provides parents with an opportunity to have some time free up for other activities that need to be done within the home whilst a therapist is implementing the plan.
- If you have a child in early intervention (under 7) having access to more therapy provides more opportunity for development and growth towards achieving their goals.





Before Engaging A Therapy Assistant

Before engaging a therapy assistant, it is important that a level of satisfactory training and supervision in you/your child's needs. Ensuring the assistant is trained in implementing appropriate activities and exercises for you and/or your child. The amount and type of training and supervision required will vary depending on the therapy assistant's knowledge, skills and competence, the environment, the type of activities, the child's needs, and the phase of treatment that you and/or your child is currently in.

Once that therapy assistant is trained and competent in the activities, then there must be some way for the allied health professional to be able to monitor and adjust the program if necessary, it is important to develop a method of communication between the allied health professional, therapy assistant and family to ensure any issues are addressed and any changes are able to be implemented in a safe manner. We want to ensure the program is being implemented in a manner that best suits you and/or your child's goals as well as providing flexibility within the program. This may require ongoing training for the therapy assistant at times of change in the program. It is important to ensure the therapy assistant is working within their skill set and knowledge, they will also be required to report back to the allied health professional with progress notes or areas of concern.



How To Engage A Therapy Assistant

Depending on how your plan is managed will depend on how you can engage supports. If your plan is self or plan managed you will have the flexibility to engage a therapy assistant that isn't registered with the NDIS. If your plan is agency managed you will need to engage a registered provider to offer this support. Therapy Assistants can be difficult to find as there is a limited number available however my recommendations would be to discuss with your current allied health professional to see if they have a suitable therapy assistant they can train in implementing a home based program or alternatively you can advertise on platforms such as Mable, Hire Up, Kynd and Facebook. Also, if you have a Support Coordinator you can request, they assist you with engaging a therapy assistant. Remember when looking for an independent the list above in support worker requirements is the list, I would be suggesting you take into consideration.

References:

Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council. 2015.
HLT42512 Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance