

accessing interpreters and the NDIS fact sheet

This fact sheet helps clarify when interpreting services are funded by the NDIA for people with a disability and English language needs.

This fact sheet borrows extensively from the excellent resource developed by Amparo Advocacy Inc in Queensland: *Accessing interpreting or translation services for NDIS participants* (see reference in 'Further reading' at the end of this fact sheet).

When are interpreters needed?

An interpreter is needed when:

- It is clear that the person does not speak English
- The client's English (or that of their carer/family) is limited and unlikely to be sufficient for a complex conversation
- The client (or their carer/family) requests one.

When is interpreting supported by the NDIA?

Through an agreement with TIS (Translating Interpreting Services) National, the NDIA supports free interpreting for:

- NDIS access request, access enquiry
- NDIS planning meeting
- NDIS appeals process
- Plan Review meeting
- Plan implementation: NDIS participants and carers/family members can access unlimited free interpreting through TIS National for the duration of their plan as long as the service or activity for which interpreting is needed is in the plan and delivered by a provider who is registered with the NDIA.
- Support Coordination: Support Coordinators can use TIS interpreters free of charge when working with participants and their family/carers.

Participants also have a right to ask for their plan to be translated in their preferred language.

Funding for interpreters services (apart from Auslan) cannot be included in a participant's plan, however there is no limit to how often a participant can access an interpreter with TIS to communicate with NDIA-registered services if the conditions are met.

Agencies wanting to access free interpreting through TIS need to register with TIS National (131450) and receive a TIS National Client Code. Note that if you already access TIS for other services, you still need to register specifically to access NDIS support and obtain a separate code.

How to choose an interpreter

Following the principle that 'an interpreter should not interpret something they do not understand', the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health has trained several hundred interpreters in understanding the concepts of the NDIS and how to translate these concepts in their language. When requesting an interpreter, we recommend you ask for one who has done the Understanding the NDIs training.

The process is different with TIS National. TIS can agree to fulfil a client's request for a specific interpreter, as per their Allocation Policy. To request a specific interpreter agencies are required to provide evidence of continuity of care and complete an indemnity form. Currently to access this form you must go online with your TIS code to complete a request for specific onsite or phone interpreter.

Phone or on-site (face-to-face)?

Face-to-face interpreting is generally preferable, but not always possible (for instance in regional areas where there may not be local interpreters).

Face-to-face interpreting is recommended:

- For meetings where the conversation is complex and/or when the client needs to make a decision, for instance in planning and implementation meetings
- When a number of people are involved in the conversation or meeting
- When a person has a disability that limits their communication, for example someone who has an intellectual disability or a speech impediment.

There are times however when a phone session is more appropriate. This may be the case in regional areas where a particular language is not widely spoken and the client is likely to be known to the interpreter. It is a client's right to request a face-to-face interpreter.

Briefing the interpreter

It is essential to brief interpreters, regardless of whether they are on the phone or face-to-face.

This involves letting them know:

- Who is in the room: client, carer, support person, agency workers. This is particularly important for phone interpreting
- The purpose of the meeting
- What has happened prior to the meeting (has pre-planning happened? Is this the first/second conversation?)
- Any other relevant information about what may happen during the meeting, including planned interruptions, documents that will be provided, and knowledge of the client's emotional reactions or communication abilities based on previous interactions.

Further reading

- NDIS [language interpreting services](#)
- Amparo [Accessing interpreting or translation services for NDIS participants](#).
- Health Translations [translated information about the NDIS and disability](#).
- CEH [NDIS and disability services glossary of terms](#)