



# Developing a Disability Action Plan



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This information sheet explains how to create a Disability Action Plan, including steps to take and elements to include in your plan.

## Why a Disability Action Plan?

All children, including children with disability, have the legal right to enrol in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. It is therefore essential that ECEC services are able to create inclusive and welcoming environments for children with disability and complex additional needs.

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) encourages all approved providers to develop a Disability Action Plan, to promote inclusion and eliminate discriminatory practices.

For more information on the purpose of creating a Disability Action Plan, see Information Sheet 8—*Making inclusion a strategic priority for your service* in this series.

## Who is involved?

A proposal to create a Disability Action Plan can be initiated by approved providers, service supervisors and management, educators or even families. However, to align with the requirements of the DDA, the overall responsibility for endorsement, resourcing and review of the plan should rest with the approved provider. The approved provider may delegate aspects of the development and

implementation of the plan to the service supervisors and educators, while retaining overall responsibility for the plan.

The following information is drawn from the Australian Human Rights Commission's [Disability Discrimination Act Action Plans: A guide for business](#), which explains the strategies set out in the DDA. ECEC services are encouraged to refer to this guide when developing their plans.

## How to create a Disability Action Plan

### Step 1: Review your ECEC service's current policies and practices

*The action plan of a service provider must include provisions relating to the review of practices within the service provider with a view to the identification of any discriminatory practices—DDA Section 61(c).*

The first step in creating a Disability Action Plan is to conduct a review or audit of your ECEC service, to identify:

- what approaches to inclusion are working well in your ECEC service
- what areas could be strengthened or improved
- what barriers to access and participation are occurring in your ECEC service, such as physical, communication, attitudinal and cultural barriers
- what the current and future needs in your community are.

Ideally, a review will draw on the perspectives of the people (children, families and other support agencies) who may currently use the ECEC service, as well as reach out to those who are not accessing the service.

The review should include analysis of your ECEC service data, such as enquiries about enrolments, referrals from specialist early intervention and support agencies, actual enrolments, individual education plans, educators, parent surveys/interviews, and any relevant grievances or complaints about inclusion.

This review will form the 'baseline' or the picture of 'where

the service is now'. This forms a foundation from which to develop priorities, goals and strategies for improvement in the Disability Action Plan.

### **Step 2: Devise policies and programs to eliminate disability discrimination**

*The action plan of a service provider must include provisions relating to the devising of policies and programs to achieve the objects of this Act—DDA Section 61(a).*

There are many different models for strategic planning and change management. It is important that your ECEC service uses an approach that integrates with your existing planning and quality improvement processes.

To develop the Disability Action Plan, your ECEC service may decide to bring together a working group or advisory group that includes relevant stakeholders to assess and map out areas for improvement, based on the findings from your earlier review. Relevant stakeholders may include:

- approved provider
- service supervisors
- manager
- staff in specialist roles
- parents or carers of children with disability and their advocates
- external support agencies
- people with disability.

The working group will identify and prioritise policies and procedures to update or create, as well as programs and practices that should be improved to enable greater inclusion of children with disability. The working group may also identify resources to support the changes.

The working group should have clear terms of reference, specifying its authority to make decisions and requirements for approval from the approved provider, service supervisors and management.

Creating inclusive policies and practices will not always be easy, and ECEC services will need to understand the interests and needs of different parties.

### **Step 3: Set goals, targets and timeframes**

*The action plan of a service provider must include provisions relating to the setting of goals and targets, where these may reasonably be determined against which the success of the plan in achieving the objects of the Act may be assessed—DDA section 61(d).*

Successful plans include clear goals, strategies and tasks with clearly defined timeframes and measurable outcomes. The goals must also be achievable and relevant. Setting goals involves careful consideration of what actions will make the most difference for children with disability and their families.

All goals should have the timeframes attached as well as measurable targets for the outcomes to be delivered.

A Disability Action Plan may prioritise goals that will be achieved in the short term (less than a year), medium term (two–three years) and long term (three–five years).

### **Step 4: Devise and incorporate evaluation strategies**

*The action plan of a service provider must include provisions relating to the means, other than [goals and targets] of evaluating the policies and programs [included in the plan]—DDA Section 61(e).*

While measurable goals and targets can assist an ECEC service to determine whether the plan is on track, the DDA encourages the approved provider, service supervisors and management to undertake regular structured evaluation of the effectiveness of the plan in eliminating discrimination. These reviews may link in with the service's quality improvement processes.

### **Step 5: Appoint people to be responsible for the implementation of the plan**

*The action plan of a service provider must include provisions relating to the appointment of persons within the service provider to implement the provisions [of the action plan]—DDA section 61(f).*

The Disability Action Plan should clearly identify the people, teams or working groups who are responsible for the implementation of strategies and tasks. The plan should also highlight the timeframes and mechanisms to report back on the achievements of the plan—not



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only to the approved provider, service supervisors and management, but also to children, families, local support agencies and the wider community.

**Step 6: Communicate and promote the plan to people within your service and the wider community**

*The action plan of a service provider must include provisions relating to the communication of [action plan] policies and programs to persons within the service provider—DDA section 61(b).*

Creating a Disability Action Plan can involve significant consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. When goals and strategies are agreed on, it is important to communicate and promote the plan, to demonstrate that the ECEC service is taking a proactive approach to building inclusion.

It is essential that all staff are aware of anti-discrimination legislation and its implications. Communicating achievements with relevant stakeholders and the wider community is also important. ECEC services can also share what has been learnt from the experience and what alternative steps can be taken to improve outcomes for children with disability and their families.

## Where to find more information

The Australian Human Rights Commission [website](#) provides a range of resources to help ECEC services develop Disability Action Plans. This includes a useful checklist as well as examples of action plans.

## Case study: dealing with diverse needs and interests

Jade is a two-year-old girl and is enrolled in a family day care scheme for two days per week. The educator has two other children in her care (aged three years and four years). Jade has complex medical issues and global delay and is not yet walking. The educator is fully committed to working with Jade, but has concerns about managing the medical procedures. The parents of the other children have said they are concerned that Jade may take up all of the educator's time and that their children may miss out.

This case study highlights a number of issues that could be addressed in a Disability Action Plan:

- recognition of the needs and rights of all children in the service
- the importance of creating shared understandings of inclusion among management, educators and families
- the vital role of communication between educators and families
- the need for educators to have the knowledge and skills required to support children.

In addressing these issues, the Disability Action Plan would include specific goals and statements on children's rights, communication and consultation, and educator training and professional development.

## References

Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC). (n.d.). *Disability Discrimination Act Action Plans: A guide for business*. Sydney, NSW: AHRC.

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