

Planning for people with a disability

Disability Act 2006

Introduction

The *Disability Act 2006* (the Act) commenced on 1 July 2007. To enable people with a disability to pursue a lifestyle of choice, the Act provides a system of planning that is flexible and tailored to the individual wishes and needs of the person.

What are the guiding principles for planning?

The Act states that planning should:

- be directed by a person with a disability
- be individualised
- respect families and other people who are important to the person with a disability
- consider the informal support available to the person with a disability and consider other support services generally available to any person in the community
- maximise the choice and independence of the person with a disability
- facilitate tailored and flexible responses to the individual goals and needs of the person with a disability.

What is planning?

The best way to explain planning is that people with a disability are given the opportunity to discuss their goals, needs and aspirations and the way they can be supported to achieve these. Planning will have a different focus for each person. For example, planning for a child living with their family will be a very different process to planning for a young adult who is seeking a job and the opportunity to live independently.

What is assistance with planning?

Assistance with planning can include:

- developing or maintaining support networks of a person with a disability including family, friends, neighbours or colleagues
- helping to access the range of services available to all members of the community
- assistance from a disability service provider to facilitate the development and recording of a plan
- assistance to access specific disability supports.

How can a person get assistance with planning?

A person with a disability, or a person on their behalf, may ask a disability service provider to assist them with planning.

If a person with an intellectual disability or a person on their behalf requests support from a disability service provider, the disability service provider must offer the person assistance with planning.

The Act states that if a person has asked for, or accepted an offer of, assistance with planning, the disability service provider must arrange for this to occur within a reasonable period.

What if the disability service provider is unable to provide assistance?

Where a disability service provider is unable to provide assistance with planning, the service provider must inform the person with a disability and discuss alternatives with them, such as referral to another disability service provider who can provide assistance with planning.

What is a support plan?

A support plan is required where a person with a disability is accessing an ongoing disability service, for example, a day program or a residential service.

A support plan is developed between a person with a disability and the disability service providing them with support.

A support plan must describe:

- the person's goals and strategies
- how the disability service provider will support those goals.

A support plan should ideally also include goals and strategies related to:

- other disability supports
- other community services
- informal supports.

When must a support plan be developed?

The Act states that a support plan must be developed within 60 days of a person starting to use ongoing disability services from a disability service provider.

Who is involved in developing a support plan?

The person who is accessing a disability service and their family or support network should work together with the disability service provider to develop a support plan.

What happens when a person is using services from more than one disability service provider?

The person with a disability or their family or support network may ask the disability service providers to work together to develop a support plan. In this case, the person with a disability or their representative may coordinate the development of a support plan or they may request one of the disability service providers to coordinate this process.

When should a support plan be reviewed?

A support plan must be reviewed at least once every three years, however the plan can be reviewed earlier if the person with a disability or the disability service provider thinks this is required. This may happen, for example, if the person has met their goals or their goals have changed.

For people living in a residential institution, support plans must be reviewed every 12 months.

What about personal and private information?

Personal and private information is used to help staff working with a person with a disability to understand how best to support them. This information is often used within a specific service such as a residential service or day program. It is based on discussions with the person with a disability or their support network and may be shared between disability service providers when the person agrees to this.

However, personal and private information does not form part of a support plan. Examples of personal and private information include personal care such as dressing, bathing, and personal hygiene, meal assistance, health care issues, behavioural issues or therapy support.

What about current plans such as the general service plan (GSP) and the individual program plan (IPP)?

After the Act commenced on 1 July 2007, all existing IPPs and GSPs continue to have effect. It is the review of these plans that will trigger the transition to the new planning arrangements under the Act.

It should be noted however, the review of one plan may trigger the review of other plans. This will depend on whether the person with a disability would like to have one support plan, rather than a number of plans.

For further information about planning, contact:

Disability Services Division, Department of Human Services

Telephone: 1300 366 731 (9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday)

TTY: (03) 9096 0133 (for people who are deaf or have a hearing, speech or communication impairment)

Email: disability.legislation@dhs.vic.gov.au