



# Frequently Asked Questions

## Revised High Intensity Support Skills Descriptors, June 2023

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### What are the High Intensity Support Skills Descriptors (HISSD)?

The high intensity support skills descriptors (HISSD) describe the skills and knowledge that NDIS providers should ensure their workers have when supporting participants with high intensity daily personal activities (HIDPA) as defined in the NDIS Practice Standards (High Intensity Daily Personal Activities Module).

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## Are these new skills descriptors?

No, these are not new skill descriptors. The high intensity support skills descriptors were first published in 2018 with the NDIS Practice Standard Quality Indicators. The revised skill descriptors are an update to the 2018 skill descriptors after consultation with allied health bodies, NDIS providers, participants, and unions.

## What has changed?

The review of the skills descriptors were undertaken as a project element within the NDIS Workforce Capability Framework project. The review has:

- updated the content of the skills descriptors in line with contemporary practice and expert advice,
- updated the format and language of the descriptors to align with the contemporary language and participant focus adopted in the workforce capability framework.

The points to note in the changes from the 2018 version of the skill descriptors:

**Participant focus:** A focus on participant engagement and control has been embedded in the revised the skill descriptors.

**Alignment:** The revised skill descriptors broadly align with Module 1 High Intensity Daily Personal Activities (HIDPAs) and include the following changes:

- A new descriptor has been included in the skill descriptors to support participants with dysphagia.
- The stoma care skill descriptor has now been integrated into descriptors for bowel care, enteral feeding, tracheostomy support and ventilator support and supporting people who use urinary catheters.
- The wound care skills descriptor has changed from being additional advice to being included as a skill descriptor.
- Some of the revised the skill descriptors include optional guidance to support common applications. For example, the skill descriptors for subcutaneous injections includes guidance when supporting a participant to manage diabetes; the enteral feeding the skill descriptors provides guidance when workers are supporting participants who receive medication via a feeding tube.
- The skill descriptor for workers who support participants to manage epilepsy and seizures is remaining as an additional descriptor, as it was in the previous version.
- The skill descriptor to support mealtime preparation and delivery which was in the previous version as an additional descriptor is now included as an additional capability in the workforce capability framework.

**Training:** The revised skill descriptors has an emphasis on confirming currency of skills and knowledge and providing training as required, where there is change in participant support plans or support workers.

**Detail of skills and knowledge:** The new skill descriptors do not represent significant changes in scope of worker responsibility but provide more detailed guidance on skills and knowledge.

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## When do these updated skill descriptors come into effect?

The revised high intensity support skills descriptors will be available on the NDIS Commission website in December 2022 and will become effective 1 February 2023.

## Who are the high intensity support skill descriptors for?

The skills descriptors provide guidance for NDIS providers, workers, auditors, and participants. They describe the skills and knowledge that NDIS providers should ensure their workers have when supporting participants with high intensity daily personal activities (HIDPA) as defined in the NDIS Practice Standards (High Intensity Daily Personal Activities Module).

NDIS service providers should ensure their workers are aware of these expectations and receive the training and support they need to achieve them.

## How do you use the skills descriptors?

The skills descriptors provide guidance on appropriate training for workers delivering high intensity daily personal activities, including periodic reassessment and refresher training.

Auditors will use the descriptors as a guide when auditing the high intensity daily personal activities modules. Providers should be able to demonstrate during their three yearly audit, mid-term audit, or if required for compliance, that the workers have the necessary skills and training.

Participants, their family and their support network can use the skills descriptors to understand the quality of support they can expect and as a reference when talking with service providers and selecting workers.

Trainers should use the skills descriptors to ensure the training they offer equips workers with the skills and knowledge expected to provide high intensity supports.

## What is the skills descriptors relationship to Practice Standards and audit?

The NDIS Practice Standards Module 1 has the high intensity personal daily activities with outcome standards specific to provision of:

- Complex Bowel Care
- Enteral feeding and management
- Severe Dysphagia management
- Tracheostomy management
- Urinary Catheter management
- Ventilator management
- Subcutaneous injections
- Complex wound care

The Practice Standards Quality Indicators provide detail of indicators of quality which can be used to demonstrate conformity to the outcomes. There has been no change to the practice standards or quality indicators which a provider is audited against.

The quality indicators for the high intensity personal daily activities reference the skills descriptors in the indicator related to support workers training.

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For example in the quality indicator for enteral feeding it says:

*All workers working with a participant who requires enteral feeding have completed training, relating specifically to each participant's needs, type and method of enteral feeding and regime, and high intensity support skills descriptor for enteral feeding, delivered by an appropriately qualified health practitioner or person that meets the high intensity support skills descriptor for enteral feeding.*

They are all very similar with the same expectation of who delivers training except in the indicators for Dysphagia and Ventilator management where the last part 'or person that meets the high intensity skills descriptor' is not included.

The high intensity support skills descriptors were first published in 2018 with the NDIS Practice Standard Quality Indicators. The revised skill descriptors are an update to the 2018 skill descriptors after consultation with allied health bodies, NDIS providers, participants, and unions.

Where a provider is delivering high intensity daily personal activity (HIDPA) supports, an independent approved quality auditor (AQA) can use the skills descriptors, among other things, to assess whether a provider has demonstrated conformity to the NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators.

All registered providers are expected to meet the core module where applicable to the supports they deliver and any other supplementary modules relating to the supports they provide that are applicable.

### **What training, assessment and evidence of competency might a provider delivering high intensity daily personal activities need to provide?**

The revised skills descriptors have been split into skills and knowledge expected for delivering these supports. There is a combination of following the persons care plan as developed by relevant health practitioner and having knowledge of key aspects of the support being provided.

It is expected that relevant health practitioner assessment and training would be obtained within a timeframe that takes account of risks for the participant, consistent with the provider's obligations for managing risk.

Providers should assess as appropriate all persons providing training on the high intensity supports. A provider may need to provide competency evidence, assessment evidence and the data collection evidence to show a person is competent to train others. This should take into account the individual context of the participant, and the provider's risk management strategies.

The skills descriptor recommends an annual review and refresher training. A refresher is **recommended** where a worker has not provided the support for 3 months. This is a recommendation and it will depend on the individual context of the participant and worker being reassessed; otherwise this should be annually.

For participants, consistent workers providing support can make a big difference to wellbeing.

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## How does general medication management relate to medication that may be administered as part of a high intensity personal daily activity?

The Core Module of the NDIS Practice Standards including management of medication, risk management, mealtime management etc. apply to all registered providers delivering higher risk supports.

Providers registered to deliver 104 high intensity daily personal activities are assessed against the Core Module (including management of medication) and Module 1 – High intensity personal daily activities. Many providers are responsible for medication management which is why this practice standard is included in the Core Module.

The new version of the high intensity support skills descriptors still includes guidance for providers delivering supports to participants at high risk of seizure, titled 'Epilepsy and Seizure Support' This section has expanded the guidance for providers from the last version of the skills descriptors.

There are a number of medications that can be high risk and all need to be managed appropriately and in accordance with the advice of the person's doctor/s.

## What about participant choice?

The updated skills descriptors have a focus on participant engagement and control which has been embedded in the revised document. The skills descriptors provide guidance for NDIS providers, workers, auditors, and participants.

Providers are encouraged to share the document with participants and other interested parties. It is expected that the provider is working together with the participant, their informal supports, and the relevant health practitioners to understand and implement the relevant support plan.

Participants whose plan is managed by the National Disability Insurance Agency can only receive supports from a registered NDIS provider. The class of support *104 high intensity daily personal activities* does not in itself require registration. However, registered NDIS providers **must** only deliver the supports under *104 high intensity daily personal activities* if it is set out in their certificate of registration. This is a condition of registration set out in section 13C of the *National Disability Insurance Scheme (Provider Registration and Practice Standards) Rules 2018*.

## The descriptors were developed following consultation – who was involved in the consultation?

The revision of the skills descriptors took place in early 2022 with KPMG leading the work. Consultation occurred in two phases and involved representatives for allied health peak bodies related to the descriptors, as well as providers delivering high intensity supports, approved quality auditors and participants.

## Where can I get information on auditors and provide feedback on auditors?

Information about NDIS Commission approved quality auditors (AQAs) can be found on the [NDIS Commission website](#) and [JAS-ANZ website](#). AQAs undertaking audits of NDIS providers are supported by the [National Disability Insurance Scheme \(Approved Quality Auditors Scheme\) Guidelines 2018](#).

All AQAS are required to have internal complaints resolution mechanisms. Providers should contact their auditing body in the first instance if they disagree with an audit finding. If you are unable to resolve the issue, you can complain to the Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand (JAS-ANZ), who is the accreditation body that oversees the AQAs. Alternatively, you can contact the NDIS Commission to seek advice or discuss any concerns.

## How do the HISSD link to regulatory requirements and the NDIS Workforce Capability Framework (the Framework)?

	Who it applies to	What it covers	Workforce requirements
<b>Regulation</b>			
Code of conduct	Must be met by all NDIS providers and workers	Minimum standards to be met when providing NDIS supports and services	NDIS providers and workers must 'provide supports and services in a safe and competent manner with care and skill'
NDIS Practice Standards & Quality Indicators	Must be met by registered NDIS providers  Advisory for unregistered providers	NDIS practice standards describe high-level, participant focused outcomes  Quality indicators set out indicators that demonstrate achievement of each practice standard outcome	The quality indicators set out the requirements that workers are trained in the specific needs of the participant, and have the skills to meet the relevant indicators of high intensity daily personal activities (HIPDAs)
<b>Guidance to meet requirements</b>			
High Intensity Support Skills Descriptors (HISSD)	Applies to all NDIS providers and workers delivering high intensity daily personal activities	Supplementary advice to support NDIS providers and workers to comply with the High Intensity Daily Personal Activities (HIDPA) module in the NDIS practice standards.	The HISSD describe the additional specialised capabilities needed to deliver high intensity supports related to the HIDPAs.
<b>Supporting resources</b>			
NDIS Workforce Capability Framework	Applies to all NDIS providers and workers	Translates the NDIS Practice Standards and Code of Conduct into observable behaviours	Describes the core and additional capabilities that all NDIS workers should demonstrate when

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	<b>Who it applies to</b>	<b>What it covers</b>	<b>Workforce requirements</b>
		that NDIS providers and workers should demonstrate when delivering supports and services.	providing supports 'in a safe and competent manner with care and skill'.