



NDIS Adult Access Guide for PDA

Step-by-step access for adults with a PDA profile

Accessing the NDIS as an adult with PDA presents specific challenges — the system was built primarily with physical and developmental disability in mind, and autism assessment criteria have historically under-identified adults with PDA profiles. This guide walks through the process with those challenges in mind.

This guide is for adults

For information on accessing NDIS for a PDA child, see our NDIS Access Checklist (FD31) and Application Template Pack (FD32), available at pdaaustralia.com.au/ndis

NDIS Eligibility for Adults with PDA

To access NDIS, you must meet the access criteria: you are under 65, an Australian citizen or permanent resident, and you have a permanent disability that substantially reduces your functional capacity.

Autism — including PDA profiles — is listed as an NDIS-eligible disability. The key question is not whether you have autism, but whether it substantially reduces your functional capacity in one or more of: communication, social interaction, learning, mobility, self-care, or self-management.

Step 1: Get a Current Autism Diagnosis

NDIS requires a formal diagnosis from a registered health professional — typically a psychologist or psychiatrist. If you don't have a current diagnosis, this is the starting point.

- Contact your GP for a referral to a psychologist or psychiatrist experienced in adult autism
- Ask specifically about someone with experience in PDA profiles and masking in adults
- Prepare a written account of your functional difficulties — focus on what you cannot do, not just traits
- An existing diagnosis from a public or private provider is accepted — you don't need a new assessment if you already have one

Step 2: Gather Functional Evidence

The NDIS access decision is based on functional impact, not diagnosis alone. This is where many adult PDA applications struggle — masking means functional difficulties are often invisible in clinical settings.

What Functional Evidence to Gather

- Your own written account of how your disability affects daily functioning — be specific and concrete
- GP letter confirming diagnosis and functional impact
- Allied health reports (OT, psychologist) documenting functional difficulties
- Evidence from multiple settings if possible — home, work, community
- Employment history that demonstrates the functional impact on work capacity



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- Any medical, mental health, or carer documentation

Writing Your Supporting Statement

This is the most important document in your application. Write honestly about what you cannot do reliably, not about what you can do on a good day. Describe specific functional domains:

- **Communication:** Do you struggle to initiate or respond to communications reliably? Are written communications significantly easier than verbal?
- **Self-management:** Can you reliably manage appointments, schedules, finances, and routine tasks?
- **Social interaction:** Is community participation, employment, or relationship maintenance significantly restricted?
- **Self-care:** Are daily living tasks (hygiene, nutrition, sleep) significantly affected during high-demand periods?
- **Learning:** Has your functional capacity affected your ability to study or train?

Step 3: Make the Access Request

- Call NDIS on 1800 800 110 or submit an Access Request Form online at [ndis.gov.au](https://www.ndis.gov.au)
- You can have a support person with you — an advocate, allied health worker, or trusted person
- Submit all supporting evidence with the access request — do not submit first and follow up with evidence
- Note: verbal and phone access requests exist if written processes are a barrier

Step 4: If Your Access Request Is Declined

Many valid applications are initially declined. This is not the end. You have the right to request an internal review, and if still declined, to appeal to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT). Many successful NDIS participants were initially refused.

- Request the internal review in writing within 3 months of the decision
- Obtain additional functional evidence if possible
- Contact the NDIS Appeals Service for guidance
- Disability advocacy organisations can assist with appeals — see [ndis.gov.au/finding-support](https://www.ndis.gov.au/finding-support)

Step 5: Your First Planning Meeting

Once access is approved, you will have a planning meeting to develop your first NDIS plan. Prepare for this meeting — come with a written list of your support needs and goals.

- Request a longer planning meeting if you need it — this is your right
- Bring a support person if this helps



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- Be explicit about PDA: describe how demand avoidance affects your capacity to use supports
- Request plan management (a plan manager, not self-managed) if financial administration is difficult

Key Takeaways

1. NDIS eligibility is based on functional impact, not diagnosis alone
2. A strong own supporting statement is often the most important document in an adult application
3. Masking makes adult PDA NDIS applications more complex — write about bad days, not good days
4. Initial decline is common and is not the final answer — request a review
5. Disability advocacy support is available and free for complex applications

Helpful Tip

NDIS: 1800 800 110 | [ndis.gov.au](https://www.ndis.gov.au)

For children's NDIS resources, visit pdaaustralia.com.au/ndis

For adult PDA resources, visit pdaaustralia.com.au/adults