

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

NDIS Psychosocial Supports

This document provides a summary of the discussion and findings from the deep dive workshop, focused on providers of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) psychosocial supports, held on the 7th of December 2021. The workshop was undertaken on behalf of Occupational Therapy Australia (OTA) and sought feedback from a diverse group of occupational therapists, at different career stages and working in a range of services and locations around Australia. The summary below provides a high-level overview of the findings of the workshop.

Key findings

Identifying training and development needs

- For those in smaller and sole trader practices, decisions about training were primarily based on an informal or ad hoc approach informed by participant and scheme-related needs, supervision and information coming through peer networks or from training providers and key knowledge leader organisations (e.g., Summer Foundation).
- Larger providers had more formal arrangements including structured graduate programs involving competency and capability frameworks, formal supervision and reflective practice-based processes, and training focused on therapeutic approaches (e.g., cognitive remediation training in vocational rehabilitation). Where frameworks have been developed, these are focused primarily on earlier career needs.
- Participants noted that their training and development needs included both clinically focused training to develop and build OT mental health and psychosocial disability-focused skills, and training focused on the operational requirements of working within the NDIS.
- The NDIS was noted strongly as a complex scheme to work under with changing views on evidence-based practice and reasonable and necessary supports, a poor focus on developing practitioners and communication of National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) requirements, and a unique way of working with a strong deficits-focus required in reporting to the NDIA. Some public health organisations have funded roles to focus specifically on this area.
- Areas of need identified were:
 - o Navigating the NDIS
 - o Discharge planning
 - o Supporting applications for housing
 - o Report-writing
- Access to supervision was considered potentially challenging and expensive for those working as sole traders or only OT in an organisation.

Defining career stages and associated training needs

- Career stages were recognised and supported, noting that a range of different career pathways were likely to be relevant as practitioners progressed into senior and advanced levels. This reflected discussions in other workshops that discussed both clinical and leadership/managerial pathways.

- Examples of senior or advanced practice discussed included moving from clinical roles into clinical support functions focused on supervision and mentoring, becoming a more specialised practitioner focused on areas of work such as Positive Behaviour Supports, Assistive Technology and Key Worker models.
- The importance of supporting and valuing senior practitioners as generalist mental health OTs/ generalist OTs was emphasised.
- The NDIS Commission's Positive Behaviour Support Capability Framework and associated training and resources were noted as being well-developed.

Core skills required to work with or within the NDIS

- In addition to broad support for the proposed areas of capability, additional areas were also highlighted:
 - o Case management/care coordination was considered an important skill for OTs to have and an area of weakness in the NDIS more generally.
 - o Working with teams (including NDIS roles such as Local Area Coordinators, Support Coordinators and Disability Support Workers)
 - o Working with Allied Health Assistants as well as Lived Experience Workers
 - o Understanding Positive Behaviour Supports and associated legislation (including variations across different jurisdictions).
 - o Cultural Awareness and working with refugee communities in the context of the NDIS and psychosocial disability supports.
 - o How to delivery high quality therapy within an insurance scheme.

Additional post-session questions

- 1. Are there any other areas of capability that should be included in a capability framework for OTs working in the NDIS?**
- 2. How can OTA best work with organisations with existing education and training programs to identify areas of need or to collaborate?**
- 3. Are there any other capability frameworks or guidelines you are aware of that OTA should consider?**

If you would like to provide feedback, please contact: pherrmann@squarecircleconsulting.com.au.