NDS Quality and Safeguards Sector Readiness Project

Board Briefing Note

Issue: Emergency and Disaster Management Standard

National Disability Services (NDS) has developed this resource to assist Boards and Governing bodies understand the requirements of the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission in relation to Emergency and Disaster Management.

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Context: At the beginning of 2022, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission) introduced three new Practice Standards. This briefing note relates to one of these additional Practice Standards and the associated changes - **Emergency and Disaster Management**. The other two standards – Mealtime Management and Severe Dysphagia are more operationally focused.

The new standard and associated changes were in response to:

- NDIS Commission concerns about continuity of support, and participant safety and wellbeing, based on their experiences during the COVID 19 pandemic and
- evidence to the Disability Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (DRC) about the impact of service disruption on peoples' lives. See DRC Issues Paper People with disability at much greater risk of neglect during emergencies.

In updates to providers, the NDIS Commission state the Emergency and Disaster Management Practice Standard outlines the "planning required by providers to **prepare**, **prevent**, **manage** and **respond** to emergency and disaster situations whilst mitigating risks to and ensuring continuity of supports that are critical to the health, safety and wellbeing of NDIS participants".

As a core Practice Standard, Emergency and Disaster Management **impacts all registered providers of support.** Like all NDIS Practice Standards, there is an outcome, and several indicators NDIS providers are required to achieve. The majority of the indicators outline responsibilities for the governing body and senior leadership of the organisation.

Emergency management is also referred to or inferred in several other new indicators that have been added to existing standards or through amendment to wording of existing standards. These changes work alongside the Emergency and Disaster Management Standard to provide greater direction on the expectations for:

- individual safeguards associated with emergencies and disasters
- consultation with people with disability about emergency planning
- training for workers, for example in emergency management plans and infection prevention and control.

Practice Standard - Core Module: Emergency and Disaster Management

Outcome: Emergency and disaster management includes planning that ensures that the risks to the health, safety and wellbeing of participants that may arise in an emergency or disaster are considered and mitigated and ensures the continuity of supports critical to the health, safety and wellbeing of participants in an emergency or disaster.

To achieve this outcome, the following **indicators** should be demonstrated.

- Measures are in place to enable continuity of supports that are critical to the safety, health and wellbeing of each participant before, during and after an emergency or disaster.
- The measures include planning for each of the following:
  - preparing for, and responding to, the emergency or disaster
  - making changes to participant supports
  - adapting, and rapidly responding, to changes to participant supports and to other interruptions
  - communicating changes to participant supports to workers and to participants and their support networks.
- The governing body develops emergency and disaster management plans (the plans), consults with participants and their support networks about the plans and puts the plans in place.
- The plans explain and guide how the governing body will respond to, and oversee the response to, an emergency or disaster.
- Mechanisms are in place for the governing body to actively test the plans, and adjust them, in the context of a particular kind of emergency or disaster.
- The plans have periodic review points to enable the governing body to respond to the changing nature of an emergency or disaster.
- The governing body regularly reviews the plans and consults with participants and their support networks about the reviews of the plans.
- The governing body communicates the plans to workers, participants and their support networks.
- Each worker is trained in the implementation of the plans.

See Appendix 1 for new and changed indicators in the core standards that are in addition to the new Emergency and Disaster Management Standard and/or Appendix 2 for the relevant changes to the Verification Module.

Considerations for Boards and Governing Bodies

The Emergency and Disaster Management Standard raises a range of considerations for governing bodies:

- Does the organisation have the necessary systems in place to meet the requirements of the new standard and other related changes?

- Are those systems proportionate to the risk, the size and scale of the organisation and the scope and complexity of the services?

- Does the business continuity plan adequately consider the potential impact of all types of emergencies or disasters which could impact the organisation?

- Does the risk register include how the organisation will respond to emergencies and disasters and the likelihood of them occurring based on the location and nature of the services?

- Does the organisation have an appropriate system in place to assess individual safeguards and the likely impact of any emergency?

- Does the organisation have emergency or disaster plans and would workers know what to do in an emergency or disaster?

- What steps does or will the organisation take to meet the requirements to develop emergency and disaster plans in consultation with people with disability and their support networks?

- How will the organisation ensure that workers at all levels have ongoing, up to date information and training to implement plans effectively?

- Does the organisation have adequate communication strategies in place, including allowing for the changing nature of emergencies and disasters?

- What oversight is required to ensure implementation, testing, review and ongoing monitoring of the plans and systems in place?

- How will any required changes be made and what are the roles and responsibilities?

- Is the organisation's insurance adequate?

Appendix 1
New and amended core module indicators related to Emergency Management Standard

Practice Standard	New Indicators
Risk Management	• Where relevant, the risk management system includes measures for the prevention and control of infections and outbreaks. • Appropriate insurance is in place, including professional indemnity, public liability and accident insurance.
Human Resources	• Workers with capabilities that are relevant to assisting in the response to an emergency or disaster (such as contingency planning or infection prevention or control) are identified. • Plans are in place to identify, source and induct a workforce in the event that workforce disruptions occur in an emergency or disaster. • Infection prevention and control training, including refresher training, is undertaken by all workers involved in providing supports to participants. • For each worker, the following details are recorded and kept up to date: their contact details and details of their secondary employment (if any).
Service Agreements	• Service agreements set out the arrangements for providing supports to be put in place in the event of an emergency or disaster.
Support Planning	• Risk assessments include consideration of the degree to which participants rely on the provider's services to meet their daily living needs and the extent to which the health and safety of participants would be affected if those services were disrupted. • Each participant's support plan anticipates and incorporates responses to individual, provider and community emergencies and disasters to ensure their safety, health and wellbeing and is understood by each worker supporting them.

Practice Standard	New Indicators
Safe Environment	- Infection prevention and control standard precautions are implemented throughout all settings in which supports are provided to participants. - Routine environmental cleaning is conducted of settings in which supports are provided to participants (other than in their homes), particularly of frequently touched surfaces. - Each worker is trained, and has refresher training, in infection prevention and control standard precautions including hand hygiene practices, respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette. - Each worker who provides supports directly to participants is trained, and has refresher training, in the use of PPE. - PPE is available to each worker, and each participant, who requires it.
Management of Waste – amended wording highlighted	- Policies, procedures and practices are in place for the safe and appropriate storage, handling and disposal of waste and infectious or hazardous substances (including used PPE), and each policy, procedure and practice comply with current legislation and local health district requirements. - An emergency plan is in place to respond to clinical waste or hazardous substance management issues and/or accidents. Where the plan is implemented, its effectiveness is evaluated, and revisions are made if required. - Each worker involved in the management of waste, or infectious or hazardous substances, is trained in the safe and appropriate handling of the waste or substances, including the use of PPE or any other clothing required when handling the waste or substances.

Requirements to notify the NDIS Commission of changes which affect the organisation's ability to provide services.

There are mandatory reporting requirements to NDIS Commission for registered providers, which relate to events that significantly affect the providers ability to comply with any conditions of registration under the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 (the Act). These are requirements which could be triggered as a result of an emergency, disaster or significant event occurring.

These include:

- Events which **extensively limit a provider's ability to comply with the NDIS Practice Standards.**

- Events which **seriously impair a provider's ability to effectively conduct its operations and deliver ongoing supports or services** to NDIS participants.

- **A decrease in workers that leads to a provider being unable to provide continuity of services or supports** to the people accessing their services.

- **A significant increase or decrease in the number of participants** being provided with a support or service.

- Changes which adversely affect people with disability accessing the supports and services a provider is registered for including:

  - **a decision to not accept new participants** for supports or services either on a temporary or permanent basis
  - **a significant increase in wait times** for supports or services
  - **a significant shortfall in available workers** to provide the supports or services
  - **the cessation of the provision of supports or services** either on a temporary or permanent basis.

- Changes and events relating to **COVID-19, which adversely affects participants**, this includes all the above and in addition:

  - a worker confirmed COVID-19 infection
  - a participant confirmed COVID-19 infection
  - a significant increase or decrease in the number of participants who require services because of a decrease in workers due to infection
  - a decrease in workers that is unexpected and/or to the extent that the provider is unable to provide continuity of services.

For all changes which require notification, and how to notify, see: https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/providers/registered-ndis-providers/provider-obligations-and-requirements/notice-changes-and-events.

Please note: This resource was reviewed in May 2023 by the NDS Quality and Safeguards Sector Readiness Project. The resource is general in nature and is provided as a guide only. NDS believes that the information contained in this publication is correct at the time of publishing, however, NDS reserves the right to vary any of this publication without further notice. The information provided in this publication should not be relied upon instead of other legal, medical, financial, or professional advice. Please always refer to online documents for the latest versions including the NDIS Practice Standards and advice to providers on the Code of Conduct.