# NDS Quality and Safeguards Sector Readiness Project

## Factsheet: Emergency and Disaster Management in NDIS Supports and Services

This resource has been developed to assist providers to meet the requirements of the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission) in relation to **Emergency and Disaster Management and associated Practice Standards.**

This resource includes information and resources on:

- **Emergency and Disaster Management in NDIS Supports and Services Overview**
- **Preparing, preventing, managing, and responding to emergencies and disasters**
- **Planning: Including Business Contingency, Emergency and Individual Support Planning.**

## Emergency and Disaster Management in NDIS Supports and Services Overview

In November 2021, the NDIS Commission introduced a new **Emergency and Disaster Management Practice Standard.** They also reviewed and made additions to the existing practice standards to give NDIS registered providers more information on the expectations for how they prepare for, and respond to, different types of emergencies and disasters.

This was primarily in response to experiences that people with disability and their networks shared with NDIS Commission and the Royal Commission into Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of people with disability on:

- the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to people with disability, their wellbeing and safety; and
- the impact that service disruptions were having on people's lives.

> For more information on the Royal Commissions work in this area, see [People with disability at much greater risk of neglect during emergencies -](#) Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability

Most of the indicators in the Emergency and Disaster Management Standard, outline responsibilities for the governing body and organisational leadership.

The additions and amendments to existing standards outline the responsibilities of all workers and provide greater direction in areas such as:

- 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.

Key messaging from the Emergency and Disaster Management Standard and amendments are**:**

- **Ensuring that continuity and response plans are in place** so that critical supports and services can continue following an organisational, community or individual emergency.

- **Reviewing, testing, and adapting plans regularly** with people at all levels of the organisation, to ensure they continue to be current and meet the need.

- **Communicating plans and changes to plans** to the workers who need to implement them and people who may be affected.
- **Including people with disability** and, with consent, their networks. Including people with disability in planning and responses and communicating with people when things change.
- **Providing ongoing training and skills development to workers** in emergency plans, how to respond, and in how to continue to provide supports safely including infection prevention and control.

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."

## What is preparing, preventing, managing, and responding?

The **Prevention**, **Preparedness**, **Response** and **Recovery (PPRR)** cycle is a cycle of risk management used by emergency management agencies and businesses to guide their emergency management and response.

The PPRR cycle can help organisations to anticipate possible direct impacts to the people they support, their workers, suppliers, and the whole organisation, by identifying and planning for potential risks and laying out the actions workers need to take in the event of an emergency or disaster.

> The following two resources outline the PPRR cycle and offer some guidelines to assist organisations in utilising and adapting this framework:
>
> - Emergency Management: Prevention, Preparedness, Response & Recovery - ACOSS Resilience
> - Prevention preparedness response and recovery disaster management guideline - Queensland Government

## Business Continuity Plans

Business continuity plans lay out the blueprint for how an organisation will continue to deliver, recover, or restore critical activities - such as the supports and services provided to people with a disability - after a significant event, emergency, or disaster. They often extend beyond emergency and disaster planning to other events or issues which impact the continuity of operations such as a significant IT issue or power outage.

Key actions include:

- identifying risks to business continuity;

- analysis of any threats / hazards and their potential impacts; and

- developing strategies to respond and adapt if these threats become a reality.

**Scenario planning** with key people at various levels of the organisation, including people with disability, families and support staff, is a part of continuity planning and can help to unpack the **'what if'** questions and ensure that all worst-case scenarios are being considered.

The resources below can help with business continuity planning.

- [CSIA Planning for Business Continuity in Times of Disaster](#) is a user-led facilitation guide which aims to assist community organisations prepare in how to respond to emergencies and disasters, including scenario planning templates and resources.

- [Prepare for the unexpected (nsw.gov.au)](#) has information on the steps of business continuity planning and templates for small businesses.

- [Business continuity planning - Business Queensland](#) includes information on the steps to take, templates and ideas on training with workers.

- [NDS Risk Management Plan Checklist](#) includes information on what the NDIS Commission identifies should be included in risk management, including business continuity plans.

## Emergency or Incident Response Plans

Emergency response plans are part of business continuity. They outline the immediate response to people's safety (people with disability and workers), assets or the environment.

They should be specific to each type of emergency and disaster the organisation is exposed to. They should provide clear information and instruction to the people who need to respond, including **what to do**, **when to do it** and **how to do it.** This includes information such as all essential contacts, information about the environment and the people who can assist.

> In WA, there are 15 types of emergencies or incidents that an organisation or individual could be exposed to. Information can be found here: Prepare - Emergency WA Warnings & Incidents .
>
> Examples and information for two different kinds of emergency response plans are:
> - DFES - My Bushfire Plan WA: Prepare for an Emergency
> - Safe Work Australia - Emergency plans and procedures

## Individual support plans for people with disability

To ensure people with disabilities' safety, health, and wellbeing, it is expected that each person's Support Plan anticipates and incorporates responses to individual, provider and community emergencies and disasters.

How this is documented is likely to be different for each person, depending on factors such as the person's preferences and what supports are being provided - how critical they are to each person's safety and well-being.

Documentation about emergencies and disasters could include:

- **having additions in the person's Support Plan** and individual risk assessments - for a list of possible additions, see the NDS Prevention and Preparation Tip Sheet
- **having information in service agreements** which documents what can happen in workforce shortages and the arrangements that are in place
- **having separate safety plans in place** for people whose health, safety and wellbeing might be at risk
- **having a transition plan** which details what is in place and what needs to happen, if supports need to be delivered somewhere else, for example in a hospital.

## Including people with disability and their networks

Involving people with disability and their networks in discussions and decision making, is upholding their human rights but additionally, people with disability and their networks are critical resources in planning for events which impact them.

Communicating and consulting with people and their support networks increases the safety and well-being of people by learning about their lives, their supports, their connections, and their abilities. This strengthens everyone's capacity to respond in the event of an emergency or disaster.

Some resources which can assist with planning and documenting are:

- Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR) Framework and Toolkit by Collaborating 4 Inclusion includes resources such as webinars, workbooks and templates for planning including the Person-centred emergency preparedness (P-CEP) Workbook.
- Emergency care plan produced by Carer Gateway is for people who require essential supports from carers and informal supports.
- Redi plan Interactive PDF from Red Cross provides a template and tips for planning.
- Ready to Go Home Resources have been co-designed and co-developed with people with disability and can assist with people transitioning in and out of hospital.

## Reviewing and testing the plans

Reviewing, testing, and updating plans is a requirement of the NDIS Practice Standards. Beyond this, testing continuity plans and planned responses to emergencies and disasters is an essential part of the planned response remaining effective.

**Reviewing plans** helps to identify if changes have occurred which impact their effectiveness.

Consider reviewing plans:
- cyclically as part of internal audits
- when there are changes to organisational structure or key personnel
- when there are changes to existing workplace environments or new workplace environments
- when there are changes to activities the organisation carries out
- any time the organisation has needed to use the plans.

**Testing plans** can unpack whether what is in place is understood and provides people with enough information and direction to carry out their role and respond effectively. Questions to consider when testing plans include:

- **Are the plans easy to access?**
  Do workers know where to easily find them and do the right people have access to them?
- **Are the plans clear?**
  Do workers understand them? Do they interpret them correctly in practice, including the expected responses and their role?
- **Are the plans detailed enough?**
  Do they give workers and others everything they need to respond effectively including having relevant authorities in place to make decisions?
- **Are there gaps or issues in the plan?**
  How can these gaps be addressed?

## Providing training for the workforce

To respond effectively, workers need to have the information and skills to manage emergencies and disasters safely. This begins in orientation and induction of workers but should be an ongoing process.

Consider including:

- **Keeping emergency and disaster management discussions active.** Consider including standing agenda items on individual or team meetings.

- **Regular training in the organisations expected responses** including emergency management policy, procedures, and plans.

- **Training and skills building for each worker to understand individual needs** of each person they support.

- **Infection prevention and control training for all workers** including appropriate use of PPE.

- **Building the skills of workers to be able to talk with people with disability** about changes as and when they occur.

- **Involving workers at all levels** in training, reviewing, and testing plans to help embed the information and help people to feel prepared.

Some training and resources for training on COVID-19 including Infection Prevention and Control include:
- The NDIS Commission have access to free Infection prevention and control training and other information relating the infection prevention and control listed on their website: COVID-19 Information for providers
- The NDS COVID-19 Toolkit is a central access point for valuable information and resources on COVID-19 risk management, business continuity, well-being and vaccinations.

**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.