

Understanding ECI Language

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Introduction to Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) language and concepts

This fact sheet provides a guide to some terms you may hear while on the ECI journey or pathway. The fact sheet will not cover all language used but is intended as a guide for understanding, especially for families and caregivers who are beginning their ECI or NDIS journey. You may not hear all of these terms when using early childhood intervention services, but they can be useful to know.

For more detailed definitions and information on the NDIS and concepts, please see CYDA's Fact Sheet on Understanding NDIS Language.

Social and medical language in disability

The language used by medical professionals and in the disability community can be different. Your child's medical professionals, allied health professionals and therapists may use similar or different terms. Understanding the different terms and language used by professionals and others in the community, in both medical and social spaces, can help you and your child access as many supports as possible along the way.

Language used in ECI services

ECI, the NDIS and other services

Early childhood intervention (ECI): ECI is a term used to describe services and supports for children and families during the early years. ECI services aim to support children with disabilities or developmental delays by taking action as early as possible to get the best results for the child and family.

Early childhood early intervention (ECEI): The NDIS uses ECEI rather than ECI as their preferred term. The ECEI pathway within the NDIS is for children aged 0–6 with an identified developmental delay or disability. ECEI services are not delivered by the NDIA directly, but by ECEI partners in the community.

NDIS: The National Disability Insurance Scheme is one way that Australians with disability are supported. The NDIS provides eligible individuals with funding for disability related expenses and supports, including technology, home modifications, and therapies. You must apply and be accepted to join the NDIS. The NDIS is delivered by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), who make the decisions about funding and access. A person who is accepted onto the NDIS is called an NDIS participant.

Functional capacity and functional capacity assessment:

A person's functional capacity is an understanding of how their disability impacts on their daily life, including their mobility, communication and self-care. A functional capacity assessment may be needed to understand functional capacity or to provide evidence of disability or developmental delay. Functional assessments can be used to identify developmental delays or to track progress and improvement.

Family-centred practice: Family-centred practice is a way of working that is used by people working in early childhood intervention (ECI) services. The goal is for families and professionals to work together as partners in the journey to best help the child. This approach recognises the expertise of families as well as the professionals' experience and aims to use them both together to get the best possible result.

Informal supports: Informal supports is a term the NDIS uses to describe the support provided by people in an individual's life, including parents, families, and friends. These supports are not paid or contracted, so they are different to 'formal' supports provided by support workers. The NDIS takes these into account when making decisions about an individual's NDIS plan.

Concepts and ideas

Inclusion: Inclusion means that everyone who wants to participate in something has the opportunity to do so and can access any adjustments or supports needed to make it happen. Inclusion can refer to many different settings, including education.

Inclusive education: Inclusive education happens when all students are learning with their similar-aged peers together in the same classroom and accessing the same learning opportunities. It also means making any reasonable changes or adjustments to allow this to happen, as listed in the [National Disability Standards for Education](#).

CYDA is the Chair and co-convenor of the Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education (ACIE), a group of organisations around Australia who are committed to improving inclusive education for students with disability. To learn more about inclusive education, visit <https://www.acie.org.au>.

Meaningful participation: Meaningful participation is a concept used to highlight the difference between attending an activity and truly being part of it. Instead of just being there when an activity is happening, meaningful participation means an individual is fully included and participating in the way that they want to, with any support that is needed for them to do so.

Social model of disability: The social model of disability is a way of thinking about disability that says people with disabilities are disabled by the barriers to inclusion that they face instead of their disability. When people with disability are given the access and adjustments they need and are fully included in their families and communities, they experience better outcomes. There are many different models, approaches and thoughts around disability. For more information, see the [Disability Royal Commission report on disability theories and models](#).

Human rights: All humans have the same rights and these rights must be respected and upheld. People with disability can face more barriers to realising their rights than people without disability. Australia is a signatory to both the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) and the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#). These Conventions require their signatories to uphold and support the human rights and freedoms of children and of people with disability.

Parental responsibility: Parental responsibility refers to all the duties, power and responsibilities that parents have in relation to their child. These exist for children with or without disability. The Independent Advisory Council of the NDIS has a report about what is reasonable and necessary support across the lifespan. This document can help provide some clarity around what you can request and the support needs at different ages: [Reasonable and Necessary Support across the Lifespan: An Ordinary Life for People with Disability](#).

People who work with you

Service provider (SP): A service provider is someone who provides you with services and supports.

Support worker (SW): People who provide supports directly to you can be called support workers. You might hear or use many different terms (or types of support worker), including:

- Specialists
- ECI workers
- Therapists or therapy assistants
- Support workers
- Key workers
- Family support workers
- Case managers

Disclaimer: CYDA's In Control Our Way resources have been created to support families of children and young people with disability to self-manage their NDIS plans. Information provided is intended as a general guide and may not contain the most recent information and updates. CYDA is not responsible for decisions made by the NDIA or its partners in the community. For the most current information on the NDIS, refer to the NDIS website. These fact sheets are current as of September 2020.

View the full set of In Control Our Way resources at: cyda.org.au/