

Journey planner for caregivers

Accessing supports for children (0-12 years)

National Guideline

For supporting the learning, participation, and wellbeing
of autistic children and their families in Australia

OCTOBER 2023



Welcome

Autistic children and families often benefit from accessing supports for learning, participation and wellbeing.

These can include things like allied health therapies, to help children learn, to help those around them, and to make everyday activities more accessible and enjoyable.

Autism CRC has developed a National Guideline that helps practitioners deliver supports in ways that are safe, effective and desirable to children and families.

This journey planner is designed to help parents and caregivers know what to expect when working with practitioners, and to feel confident in finding the right people and supports for their child and family.



Journey planner for caregivers

Welcome to the start of your journey for supporting your child. I am a practitioner avatar, and I will be here to guide you through your planner. Let's see what your journey may look like.



1 Your child and family

The starting point for every journey is knowing that each child and family is unique. You know your child and family best, and you are in control.

3 Set goals

Work with the practitioner to set goals that are meaningful to you and your child.

5 Monitor and adjust

The practitioner should work with you and your child to monitor progress, adjust goals and supports, and end your work together when the support is no longer required.

2 Find the right practitioner

They should be competent, listen to you and your child, and work in partnership.

4 Select supports that work for you, your child and family

The practitioner should individualise support, what it is, who delivers it, in what setting, how much, and for how long must be right for you, your child, and family.

6 Reflect

All children deserve a childhood full of love, fun, learning and personal discovery. How does this support help achieve this? You are in control, and practitioners should work in ways that are parent and family-affirming.



1

Your child and family



The starting point for every journey is knowing that each child and family is unique. You know your child and family best, and you are in control.



Every child and family is unique, and every journey is different.

Therefore, when it comes to thinking about supports for your child and family, a good starting point is to consider:



The right help, from the right practitioner, at the right time can be very helpful to children and families. But it is not the same for all children and families. What is right for you, your child and family will be different to what is right for others.



If you are planning to seek support from a practitioner, this planner will help you make it a positive experience for you and your child.

After answering the questions above, you will have some goals in mind. In the next section, we will help you find one or more practitioners who might be able to help.

They will then work in partnership with you and your child to refine your goals.

2

Find the right practitioner



They should be competent, listen to you and your child, work in partnership and have...



✓ **Relevant qualifications**
to support your child and work within their scope of practice

✓ **Professional regulation**
eligible for membership with the relevant regulated professional association

✓ **Professional experience**
that matches their responsibilities

✓ **Knowledge and skills**
directly relevant to working with you, your child and family

The Guideline outlines some practitioners that have knowledge and skills that may be relevant to your child and family.

Using the **table on the next page**, think about the practitioners that may have relevant knowledge and skills to support your child and family in achieving your goals.

You can learn more about them by visiting their professional association websites.

But before you do, in the space below, we suggest you write down some key words that highlight what you want the working relationship to look and feel like for you and your child (e.g. helpful, respectful, neurodiversity-affirming, parent-affirming).



Remember: Practitioners should openly share the nature and level of their experience with you and your child throughout the journey.

Practitioners with skills and knowledge relevant to your child and family may include...



Practitioner	What will they support with?
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners	Support may vary based on individual qualifications and contextual factors
Medical practitioners	Health and wellbeing
Occupational therapists	Sensory processing and fine motor development, through participation in their occupations of life, including self-care and other daily living skills, play and leisure activities
Physiotherapists	Physical development of movement, functional ability, confidence, resilience, and ability in gross motor skills to encourage participation in daily life and physical activities
Psychologists	Cognitive development and child and family social-emotional wellbeing including psychoeducation and supporting learning/development, adaptive behaviour, relationships, self-esteem and identity, inclusion, and social development
Speech pathologists	Speech, language, literacy, social-communication, and swallowing
Audiologists	Hearing as the basis for learning, participation, and wellbeing
Creative art therapists	Development, participation, and wellbeing through creative arts
Dietitians	Health and participation in relation to mealtimes
Exercise physiologists and sports scientists	Development, participation, and wellbeing through physical activity and sport
Music therapists	Development, participation, and wellbeing through music
Rehabilitation counsellors	Development of future work aspirations
Social workers	Empowering children's and families' resilience and functioning
Behaviour practitioners	Acquisition of skills and addressing behaviours that harm self, others, and/or property
Developmental educators	Holistic development, equitable participation, wellbeing, and citizenship via a disability justice approach
Counsellors	Social-emotional wellbeing
Early childhood teachers	Personal, social, physical, and academic skills during the early years of formal education
Primary school teachers	Personal, social, physical, and academic skills during the primary school years of formal education
Special education teachers	Supporting children with disabilities to acquire personal, social, and academic skills in formal educational settings

3

Set goals



Work with the practitioner to set goals that are meaningful to you and your child.



The right practitioner should consider the unique aspects of your child, family and the contexts in which you live.



You started your journey with some goals in mind.

Now you have the opportunity to refine them, working in partnership with the practitioner.

Goals should focus on supporting your child to acquire and maintain skills, empowering you and your family, and/or creating accessible environments, as the basis for supporting learning, participation and wellbeing.

All goals should be neurodiversity-affirming.

Neurodiversity is the idea that people's brains are different and this is okay.

Neurodiversity-affirming goals:

- help your child with their learning, participation in life activities, and their wellbeing
- will not attempt to change your child as a person, or 'cure' autism

Consider the timeline for the outcome of the goals

Short-term

< 12 months



Medium-term

12 months to 2 years



Long-term

> 2 years



When deciding goals, ensure they are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant and meaningful to your child, family and context
- Set with a clear timeframe
- Understood by your family and relevant stakeholders
- Documented



An example of a goal focused on safety for a child named Noah (age 4)

	Short-term (< 12 months)	Medium-term (12 months to 2 years)	Long-term (> 2 years)
Your child: What skills would help your child reach their full potential?	For Noah to walk through the carpark at childcare safely by holding an adult's hand.	For Noah to walk through the carpark with an adult next to him.	For Noah to safely navigate familiar carparks (e.g. school) with an adult watching.
Other people: What can other people learn, do, or change that will help your child to be included and reach their full potential?	Ensuring that mum, auntie, and grandfather who share the drop-off and pick-up duties all know and follow the same strategy.	For the family to adapt the strategy, to move from holding Noah's hand to walking beside them independently (with support from a practitioner if needed).	For the family to further adapt the strategy (without needing support from a practitioner).
The environment: What changes can be made to make places and spaces more accessible, enjoyable, and inclusive for your child?	Making the childcare staff aware of the safety concerns, and place a notice on the door to remind all caregivers to slow down in the carpark (without identifying Noah).	Ensure that new staff and caregivers at the childcare are made aware of safety concerns and take appropriate precautions.	Ensure staff at the new school are aware of any safety concerns that may still remain and take appropriate precautions.



Remember: Agreed goals should be supported by multiple sources of evidence and contain all the information you, your child, family, and others require to ensure everyone can work together with clarity and purpose.

Use the template below to map out one or more goals for your child focusing on their learning, participation and/or wellbeing.



	Short-term (< 12 months)	Medium-term (12 months to 2 years)	Long-term (> 2 years)
Your child: What skills would help your child reach their full potential?			
Other people: What can other people learn, do, or change that will help your child to be included and reach their full potential?			
The environment: What changes can be made to make places and spaces more accessible, enjoyable, and inclusive for your child?			

Before proceeding, double check if each goal is:

- Specific (i.e. do you know what you are working towards?)
- Measurable (i.e. will you know when it is achieved?)
- Achievable (i.e. in the time frame, with the support available, if things go as planned)
- Relevant and meaningful to your child, family and context
- Set with a clear timeframe (e.g. days, months, a particular time period)
- Understood by your family and other people who might help with achieving it
- Documented (e.g. written down so you and others can refer back to it)

4

Select supports that work for you, your child and family



The practitioner should individualise support, what it is, who delivers it, in what setting, how much, and for how long must be right for you, your child and family.



Supports usually focus on:

- **Your child's**
 - communication
 - sensory experiences
 - cognitive development
 - social-emotional development and wellbeing
 - motor development
 - academic skills
 - daily activities and participation
- **Family wellbeing**
- **Creating accessible environments**

Consider the settings, duration, delivery modes and format



Settings

(e.g. child's home, clinical, educational, social, recreational, cultural)



Amount and duration

(e.g. hours and days, weeks, months)



Delivery modes

(e.g. in person, telepractice, combination)



Format

(e.g. one-on-one, group-based, combination)



Remember: An accurate and complete plan of the proposed supports should be provided to you in a timely manner.

5

Monitor and adjust



The practitioner should work with you and your child to monitor progress, adjust goals and supports, and end your work together when the support is no longer required.



In monitoring your child's progress, you may want to discuss the following with your practitioner:

- Your own observations and reports on progress, benefits, and costs
- Your child's feelings or reactions about the supports
- The observations and reports from other support providers, e.g.
 - other medical or allied health providers
 - your child's teachers or educators

Monitoring should be an ongoing progress, at minimum, practitioners should complete a formal review of support goals and progress every 3 months.

When to adjust goals and supports

- When your child achieves goal
- When your child and family request new goals
- If there are significant changes in the life of your child and family
- If you are not finding the progress meaningful
- If adverse affects occur

Remember: Your practitioner should empower and support you, your child and your family to make decisions about whether to continue, change or stop accessing supports.



6

Reflect

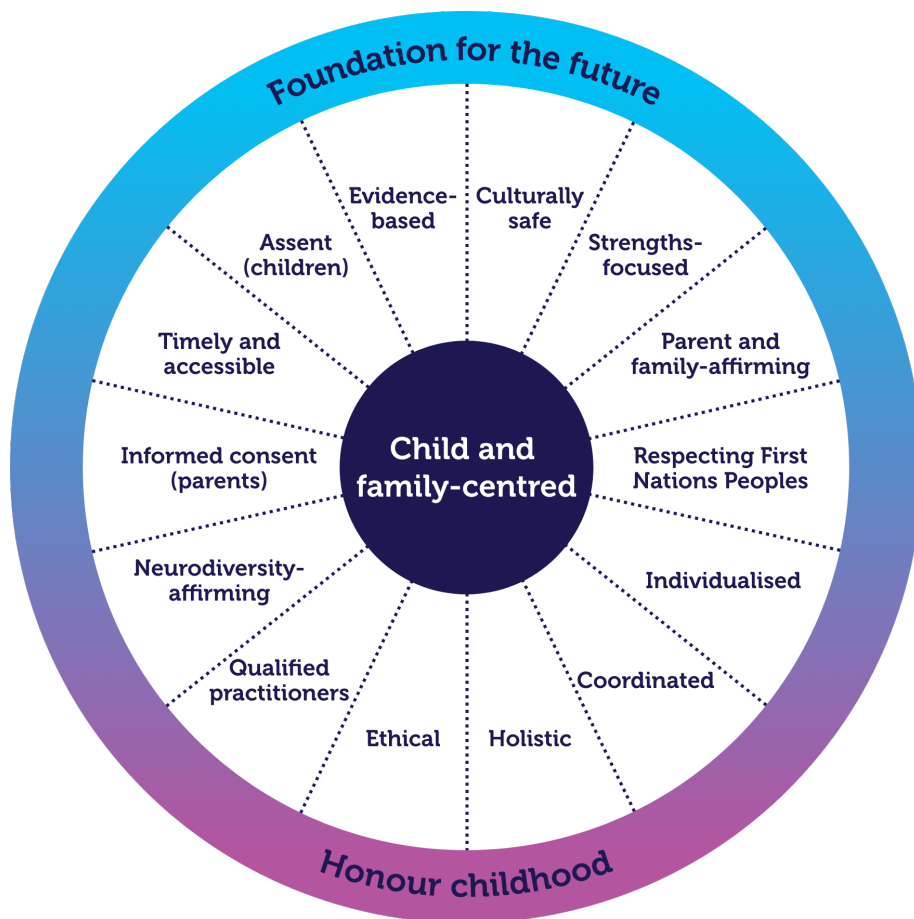


All children deserve a childhood full of love, fun, learning and personal discovery. **How does this support help achieve this?** You are in control, and practitioners should work in ways that are parent and family-affirming.



Guiding Principles

Your practitioner should follow these guiding principles when providing supports to your child, you and your family. **Has this been your experience?**



Remember: The ultimate goal is always to support the learning, participation and wellbeing of your child and family.

Register to download the Guideline and access additional resources at autismcra.com.au/supporting-children

Our values



Inclusion

Valuing lived experience



Innovation

Solutions for long term challenges



Evidence

Truth in practice



Independence

Integrity through autonomy



Cooperation

Capturing opportunities together



AutismCRC

Independent national source of evidence for best practice



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