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NDIS Assistive Technology Changes

Temporary Measure May 2020 - September 2020

(Review occurring in June 2020)

NDIS participants can now use their funding to purchase a broader range of low cost assistive technology (AT) to access essential supports during the coronavirus pandemic. The changes will only be in effect until September 2020, unless extended by the NDIA. With many services and supports switching to online delivery due to the need for social distancing, access to technology is more important than ever.

The NDIS has announced that participants may be allowed to access low cost AT items, including tablets, in consultation with existing support providers.

Please see here for further details:

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/coronavirus/participants-coronavirus-covid-19/using-your-budget>

What low cost AT items are included?

AT items that may now be flexibly purchased if participants meet the criteria include smart devices (such as tablets).

Any purchase must be a reasonable and necessary support that relates to your disability and helps clients to pursue your goals. It must also meet additional criteria (see below for more detail).

Pricing limits for low cost AT items:

Participants are able to spend up to \$1,500 on low cost items from their existing budgets. However, they should not spend more than \$750 on electronic devices for the purpose of maintaining existing services such as online video classes.

Guidelines:

As a guide, participants should spend no more than \$600 on a tablet.

Participants will be able to use their funding flexibly to purchase low cost AT using their existing Core - Consumables budget.

The following criteria must be met:

- The device will be used to maintain funded NDIS supports like a program or therapy (for example physiotherapy)



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- The provider has confirmed in writing that the device is necessary to continue supports and services while maintaining physical distancing requirements
- The device or item is of the lowest specification that will allow funded supports to be continued.
 - The participant cannot already own or have access to another suitable item that would meet their needs. For example, through their employment or family ownership.

Important exclusions

- The device must be related to your disability. It cannot be purchased for entertainment, education or gaming
- Smart phones, smart watches or tablets with mobile connections (your tablet must connect to the internet over wifi)
- Only one device can be purchased
- Internet connection and data costs are considered ordinary living costs and are not covered by the NDIS
- The new policy does not cover software. Apps which have been specified and approved in an NDIS Plan can continue to be paid for with NDIS funding
- Replacements for loss or damage are not covered
- Additional hardware and accessories such as screen protectors, cases, additional chargers, selfie sticks and cables are also excluded.
 - Some additional accessories may be purchased if they relate directly to your disability such as mounting on a wheelchair.
 - The “lowest specification” requirement.
 - The NDIS will only fund the minimum items that meet your requirements unless a top of the range option is required because of your disability.

****Importantly, it is the responsibility of the participant or their representative to ensure that these inclusion criteria are met. Sensational Kids will not be held responsible for any misinformation provided and it is assumed that in requesting the funding of an AT device, you will have read, understood and met all of the inclusion criteria and are aware of the limitations imposed on this service/ funding.****



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Example 1 - Electronic devices

Devices with extra storage, larger screen size or other additional features do not meet the lowest specification requirement.

Only participants who require 'head tracking' or other sophisticated solutions are likely to be approved for a large screen tablet. For example, an iPad (32GB storage, WiFi) will be approved over an iPad with extra features (128GB storage, Cellular capability).

Example 2 - Gym equipment

If you are able to continue your gym training at home with the use of a theraband and fitness ball, this would be considered the "lowest specification" requirement. In this case, you could not spend your funding on a full gym set.

Renting an item should be considered instead of buying if it represents better value for money.

How do I purchase these items?

Participants can use funding flexibly to purchase low cost AT from their Core Supports - Consumables budget.

System changes will be made to ensure participants who do not have funding available in their Core budget for Consumables also have access to this funding flexibility. NDIS will provide an update when more information becomes available.

Clients should be able to flexibly access these funds from 9 May 2020 although if your plan does not have at least \$1 in the consumables support category you will need to wait until 9 May 2020 before you will be able to purchase your item(s).

Where you can purchase low cost AT: agency, plan and self management.

The usual requirements for registered and non-registered providers apply based on the way your NDIS Plan is managed.

If your NDIS plan is managed by a plan manager or if you self manage, you can choose to use registered or non-registered providers. That means you can purchase low cost AT from any provider or store, either in a shop or online.

Agency managed participants can only make purchases from NDIS registered providers.



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Confirmation of required purchase by service providers

Your service provider is required to provide confirmation/ substantiation that the device you are seeking to purchase is necessary to continue support and services while maintaining physical distancing requirements. Please contact Sensational Kids and we will provide you with a letter of support/ substantiation for these devices.

If your plan is managed by us, we (Your provider) will need to attach this written confirmation (a letter) to their service booking when we process a payment claim with the NDIA.

Participants who are self-managing their plan or are using a plan manager, and have funds in their core support budget under consumables, can purchase low cost AT items, and add the written confirmation to their payment claim, and should also keep a copy in case the Agency requests it at a later date.