

Oral Health Policy and Procedure

1.0 Purpose

Participants are at risk of poor oral (or dental) health, such as gum disease, tooth decay, loss of teeth and subsequent illnesses leading to detrimental effects on the person and their health, wellbeing and quality of life. This policy's purpose is to ensure that the staff know the participant's oral health.

Participants are at a higher risk of poor oral health because, over their lifetime, they are more likely to have experienced poor nutrition, poor dental hygiene and lack of access to oral health care services. As a result, they may have tooth decay, gum inflammation and damage, ulcerations, and mouth infections. If not treated, oral health conditions can lead to loss of teeth, inability to eat certain food or drinks, acute and chronic pain, illness and hospitalisation. Diseases of the mouth can also impact the health of the whole body. Other risks include dysphagia (difficulty swallowing food and drink) refer to *Mealtime Preparation Policy and Procedure*.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all staff working with participants or developing and reviewing support plans.

3.0 Policy

121 Supports Hunter Pty Ltd is aware that good oral health includes brushing twice daily using fluoride toothpaste and flossing teeth and gums. Also important are good nutrition, annual dental checkups and treatment.

121 Supports Hunter Pty Ltd must monitor participants' health, safety and wellbeing, support participants to maintain their health and access appropriate health services, including oral health services.

Oral health problems can be addressed by taking care of the whole mouth, including:

- teeth, gums, lips and cheeks,
- through regular dental checkups,
- brushing teeth,
- flossing, clearing food from the mouth after eating,
- good nutrition,
- staying hydrated,
- reducing sugar, alcohol and
- quitting smoking.

Our organisation encourages regular dental checkups to detect and treat oral health issues early. Participants are urged to see a dentist if gums bleed, are puffy, lumpy, or inflamed, and if a participant complains of or demonstrates oral pain. We will provide Easy Read Oral Care information as relevant.

Staff must follow the NDIS Code of Conduct to:

- act with respect for individual rights to freedom of expression, self-determination and decision-making following applicable laws and conventions
- provide supports and services safely and competently with care and skill
- promptly take steps to raise and act on matters that may impact the quality and safety of participants' support.

121 Supports Hunter Pty Ltd will comply and deliver safe, quality supports and services and manage risks associated with the supports you provide to NDIS participants following the [NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators](#).

This policy is linked to the NDIS Practice Standards, including:

- **Support planning:** participants are actively involved in developing their support plans. Support plans reflect participant needs, requirements, preferences, strengths, and goals regularly reviewed.
- **Independence and informed choice:** participants are supported to make informed choices, exercise control and maximise their independence relating to the supports provided
- **Access to supports:** participants access the most appropriate supports that meet their needs, goals and preferences.
- **Incident Management:** participants are safeguarded by the incident management system, ensuring that incidents are acknowledged, responded to, well-managed and used are part of our continuous improvement.
- **Information Management:** participants' information is managed to ensure that it is identifiable, accurately recorded, current and confidential. Each participant's information is easily accessible to the participant and appropriately utilised by relevant workers.
- **Human Resource Management:** The participant's support needs are met by competent workers with relevant qualifications, expertise

4.0 Procedure

4.1 *Supporting participants*

Relevant staff must monitor participants' health, safety and wellbeing, support participants to maintain their health and access appropriate health services, including oral health services. Participants are supported to take care of their oral health, improve their oral health care knowledge, and access dental services.

4.1.1 Plan access to oral health care

Staff are required to:

- talk with the participant about their mouth and ask if they have any worries or pain
- ensure that the participant's support planning includes caring for their oral health, for instance, brushing teeth twice daily and regular dental checkups
- assist the participant in forming a partnership with their dentist and participating in a person-centred planning process with the dentist
- develop a knowledge base about the participant and work with an NDIS behaviour support practitioner to determine if adaptive sensory processes are needed to facilitate a successful dental visit
- be aware that a change or increase in a participant's behaviours of concern may result from dental pain
- use accessible tools and resources, such as social stories, to prepare and plan a visit to the dentist.

4.1.2 Visit, the dentist supports

- the participant in accessing dental care for regular (at least 12 monthly) checkups
- to facilitate informed decision-making regarding oral health care and treatment using the participant's preferred communication methods. Involve the participant's family, independent support person or guardian in the decision-making process where appropriate.
- involve the participant's family and informal supports to assist the participant in attending a visit to the dentist, where appropriate,
- support the participant before, during and after a visit to the dentist, including assisting them to communicate with the dentist and following up on the dentist's recommendations after the visit
- use available tools and resources to understand more about good oral health care, how to assist someone brushes their teeth, eligibility for public dental health care, what information the dentist needs and what happens at the dentist visit.
- ensure that any information is provided to the participant in accessible formats, including Easy English and Easy Read, where required.

4.1.2 Follow up on oral health care

- after a dentist visit, support the participant to follow up with:
 - recommended care or changes to daily brushing routines
 - referrals to specialist dental, medical or allied health professionals.

- Ensure participants access regular (at least 12-monthly) dental checkups and that records include any changes or need for dental health assessments. Recommendations are communicated to all relevant staff, and follow-up actions are undertaken.
- Ensure the dentist's recommendations are documented in the participant's oral health care plan, support plans and other relevant documents.

4.1.3 Assist daily oral care

- encourage, educate and motivate participants to look after their teeth and gums.
- ensure participants have the items they need to care for their teeth, such as a toothbrush; dental flossing aids; fluoride toothpaste; and any other items recommended by the dentist
- ask the participant what help they need to brush their teeth and rinse after eating a meal
- ensure arrangements are in place to support person-centred participation and decision-making in oral health care activities for the regular care of teeth, including the type of food eaten, twice-daily brushing with fluoride toothpaste, flossing and rinsing.

4.1.4 Referrals to other professionals

Consider and act on whether the participant needs any of the following referrals:

- a **speech pathology** when gagging when brushing teeth, unable to clear food after eating and chewing, difficulty eating certain foods, swallowing problems, weak or absent cough or drooling.
- an **occupational therapist** to assist participants with handling a toothbrush, flossing, using dental cleaning aids recommended by the dentist, and supporting learning oral hygiene skills.
- an **NDIS behaviour support practitioner** may assist the participant with strategies to manage anxiety and plan reasonable adjustments for a successful dental visit.

4.1.5 Training and development

121 Supports Hunter Pty Ltd will review our training program to increase staff training and skills in areas such as:

- knowing where and how to access dental services provided through local health districts and how to access emergency dental services in the local area
- knowing whether there are specialist dentists who are skilled in working with people with disability
- training in oral health care and development of oral health literacy
- how to support tooth brushing, flossing and rinsing food from the mouth after eating, especially for participants on soft foods. For instance, encouraging regular drinks of water throughout the day

- working with a dental practitioner to develop an oral health plan for a participant that includes: risks or problems; dental work they have had before; support needed to brush teeth; the participant's dentist; whether they need a specialist dentist
- training on ways to support reluctant participants to engage in oral health care and services, including training in positive behaviour support, supported decision-making or motivational interviewing techniques.

5.0 Resources

5.1 *Preparing and supporting participants to visit the dentist*

- The Australian Dental Association and Designlab Inclusion Melbourne have developed a [series of videos about going to the dentist, teeth brushing and oral care](#) for people with intellectual disabilities. There are also oral health planning forms for the dentist and participant.
- [Your Dental Health Guide for people with disability](#) was developed by the Australian Dental Association Western Australia and Inclusion Melbourne. This resource includes practical information for dentists, participants, their families, guardians and NDIS providers.
- [Maggie goes to the dentist](#) is an example of a social story that can be customised to assist a participant prepare for a dental visit.
- [Going to the dentist](#) is a guide for families and carers of people with Autism, WA Health.
- IDEAS [Dentists and Disability](#) website have oral health information and resources for people with disability.
- The [Australian Dental Association](#) also has a range of oral health resources available for the general community.

5.2 *General Information f*

- [VicHealth Every smile](#) has tools, resources and ideas to improve the oral health of people in supported accommodation services.
- [Dental Practice Education Research Unit, Adelaide University](#), has information sheets for Dentists and Carers.
- [Health Direct](#) has a guide to accessing oral health services in Australia.

(Resources above are from the NDIS Oral health practice alert)

6.0 Related Documents

- Easy Read – Oral Health
- 121 Person Centered Support Plan
- Support planning Policy and Procedure.

- Independence and informed choice Policy and Procedure
- Access to Supports Policy and Procedure
- Incident Management Policy and Procedure
- Information Management Policy and Procedure
- Human Resource Management Policy and Procedure

7.0 References

- [NDIS Practice alert: Oral Health](#)
- NDIS Code of Conduct Rules 2018
- NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators 2021