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Here is an example of what a skills assessment checklist may include.

ABC Disability Support Services			
Skills assessment checklist			
	Un-assisted	Some assistance required	Full assistance required
Prepares meals for self			
Eats and drinks independently			
Self-administers medication			
Showers and grooms self			
Is continent (bowel and bladder)			
Dresses and puts on shoes			
Transfers and bears weight			
Reads and understands documentation			
Communicates verbally			

Use different assessment tools

During the formal assessment process a number of different assessment tools may be used. For any of the assessment tools used, if you notice a change where the individual can no longer manage a task they used to be able to perform, then a re-assessment would be required. Ensure that it was not just a one-off by checking several times under different conditions and on several occasions.

Here are examples of some different assessment tools.

Different assessment tools



Lifestyle planning tools

A lifestyle planning tool helps a person establish life goals and then an action plan to achieve those goals. This process is usually carried out with help from a case manager, who uses it to determine what programs need to be put in place.

Most lifestyle planning tools identify where assistance is required and how success is measured. For those with low literacy or intellectual skills this may be done with pictures.



Assessment tools specific to the organisation

Your organisation may have its own assessment tools tailored to the services it offers. These tools identify what services may be relevant to the person. If you are working in education, recreation or vocational training, assessment tools are often competency-based.

Additional documents

In addition to checklists, service agreements and individual plans, there are two other essential documents that are used to record the assessment process.

Forms and reports

Reassessment request forms or incident reports

Where a skills assessment is an informal observation process but it is not linked to the person's learning plan, you need to document your observations on the relevant form. If you are working as a support worker without direct supervision, this may be by using an incident report form. You may report an incident you have observed or a concern you may have arising from your observations. Some organisations have a separate form to request a reassessment.

A supervisor may choose to undertake a formal reassessment and then negotiate changes to the person's individual plan.

Communication books

Support workers need to communicate their observations to other support workers working with an individual. These observations, including when an incident report form is lodged, should be documented in the communication book.

The communication book is an open document for all to see. It is to communicate with other staff and family members and will be seen by the individual themselves. Make sure you write in plain English and record only what you have seen. Do not express personal opinions. This is a legal document that could be produced in court.

Example

Document assessment outcomes according to organisation guidelines

Claire is a support worker who is rostered to assist Ian with home care once a week. Before Claire commences working with Ian, she is told that Ian is nonverbal as a result of an acquired brain injury.

Claire and Ian get on well and over the months establish a rapport. Once he feels comfortable with Claire, Ian starts to communicate using single words or short phrases such as 'lunch', 'getting tired' and 'bathroom dirty' to express his needs.

Claire is pleased they are getting on well and realises after this has been happening for a couple of weeks that she should document in Ian's learning plan that Ian can speak when he feels comfortable with people.

Claire records on the learning plan the times that Ian speaks and under what circumstances. She also notifies her supervisor by phone and makes an entry in the communication book for other support workers.



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Strategies for identifying opportunities

For each of the main personal skill sets there are strategies that can be used to identify opportunity for development. Life skills, for example, can be taught in different settings using different techniques.

The following table shows a range of strategies you may use to identify life skills development opportunities, and examples for each strategy.

Strategy	Life skills
Formal training	Time management training Cooking class
Role modelling	Support workers and supervisor role model work-life balance
Demonstration	Meal preparation
Skills mastery	Practise using public transport
Contextualisation	Problem-solve how to get to the day centre
Drama and role-play	Role-play getting breakfast
Peer education	Share information on decision-making

Further strategies for identifying skill development opportunities

Different people will have differing needs for skill development in the following areas: vocational, social, personal support, relationships, and health and safety skills.

Here is an example of skill development opportunities for learning vocational and social skills.

Vocational skills

Formal training: TAFE courses

Role modelling: support worker and supervisor role model study skills and research skills

Demonstration: writing a letter

Skills mastery: learn to use a computer

Contextualisation: fill in job application or write a resume

Drama and role-play: role-play a job interview

Peer education: share information on part-time job opportunities

Incorporate learning opportunities in an individual plan

Formal skills assessment and identification of opportunities are a component of the person's annual review. Their person-centred plan will be amended to incorporate any new opportunities into a revised plan.



If assessment and the identification of opportunities has been part of an informal process, you need to document your observations and recommendations. Support workers working without direct supervision may need to arrange a case conference with a supervisor or the person's case manager to amend the plan. Check your organisation's procedures for recommending a formal reassessment or a variation to a person's plan.

A supervisor should then collaborate with the person to check that it aligns with what they want and amend the plan and obtain sign-off by all relevant parties. Once again, organisational procedures will determine the process to follow.

Collaborate with family and carers

During the assessment process, you may need to collaborate with the person's family and/or primary carer to monitor and assess the skills displayed by the person.



Family members

Family members can provide information on the person's education, professional history, schooling, hobbies, skills and interests. They can also provide information on the person's relationships and how they deal with conflict or frustration.



Primary carer

The primary carer can observe the person's abilities and development needs when the person is not being monitored by others. The primary carer can also provide information on the person's former skill level and any changes they have observed.

Employment officers

Employment officers can conduct an assessment of the person’s pre-employment, or employability skills.

Occupational therapists

Occupational therapists can provide a professional assessment of the person’s physical skills, mobility issues, and fine motor skills.

Programming staff

Programming staff can provide information about the person’s goals and aspirations, and identify the skills necessary to achieve these.

Technicians

Technicians have the ability to use various devices and equipment to assist with the person’s communication, mobility and motor skills.

Example

Identify skill development opportunities in collaboration with the person and relevant others

Simon is 17 years old and has Down syndrome. As part of his skills identification he says he wants to develop his social skills, find a girlfriend and get to act on the stage. Wendy, his supervisor, helps Simon research what local performance groups are in the area. They use the local paper and then check through the Arts Access Victoria website (www.artsaccess.com.au).



They locate several performance groups for people with disability and a theatre group in the area. Simon is now deciding which he wants to attend. He thinks he would like to join the theatre group that is run for adolescents in the 14 to 19 age range, and later join the performance group for people with disability once he has developed some performance skills.

Practice task 3

1. Describe two sources of information you could access to find out about training opportunities for a person with disability.



Topic 2

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 2A Engage the person with disability in identifying their learning goals**

- 2B Identify learning strategies to address the person's goals**

- 2C Develop formal person-centred skill development or maintenance activities with relevant others**

- 2D Document ongoing skill development or maintenance in the person's individual plan**

Plan person-centred, ongoing skill development

The way services are provided in the disability services sector has changed profoundly through the social model of disability. Person-centred planning is an individually-focused approach to planning for people in need of support and services, and centres on the unique needs, strengths, preferences, capacities and goals of the individual.

Person-centred plans provide a holistic approach to skill development, ensuring a person's social, sexual, emotional, psychological and cognitive development is encompassed. Working in this sector, you need to understand the process of person-centred planning and how to engage the person you are supporting in the process. You will become familiar with ways to identify strategies to meet the individual needs of people and develop a formal plan setting out those strategies.

2B Identify learning strategies to address the person's goals

This section investigates how you can use a range of strategies to address a person's goals and how the choice of strategies may vary according to the person or group of people with disability.

Strategies should be selected according to each person's disability. Not all strategies are appropriate for all groups. Although you can make some generalisations, be aware that there will always be exceptions.



Different learning strategies

Here are some different learning strategies and how they can be used to address the goals of different groups of people you support.

Effective learning strategies



Role modelling

- ▶ Physical disability: Used to model motivation, community involvement and some life skills.
- ▶ Cognitive impairment: Used to address socially inappropriate behaviour along with other strategies.
- ▶ Intellectual disability: Used with younger people with intellectual disabilities.
- ▶ Sensory impairment: Less useful than peer group support.
- ▶ Psychological impairment: Used with less-permanent psychological problems (for example, depression and eating disorders) along with other strategies.



Demonstration

- ▶ Physical disability: Used in rehabilitation process to learn fine motor skills (for example, new equipment and aids).
- ▶ Cognitive impairment: Used to teach life skills and mental activity (for example, problem-solving).
- ▶ Intellectual disability: Used to learn personal grooming, meal preparation and social skills. Good for concrete thinkers.
- ▶ Sensory impairment: Difficult to use with vision or hearing impaired people unless adjustments made.
- ▶ Psychological impairment: Some use with phobias and irrational fears.

2

Performance expectations

Performance expectations set the standard at which the person will be able to perform and under what conditions. They must be quantifiable so that you can measure if they have been met. They must also be realistic and achievable for the person concerned, and identify whether the performance requires support, or if it can be achieved unassisted.

For example:

Aimee will be able to shower herself and wash her own hair to maintain personal hygiene to the level expected by her school and housemates.

3

Criteria for achievement

Criteria for achievement provide a way of judging that the person has achieved their desired level of learning and independence with regard to specific learning objectives. The criteria usually define what the person needs to demonstrate, under what circumstances and how many times, in order to establish they are competent.

For example:

Lorena will be up and ready for school on time every day for a week.

4

Baseline assessment

Baseline assessment is an assessment of the person's ability in the area before training. It shows where they have to start from and is used to measure progress.

Baseline assessment may include statements such as:

- ▶ the person can walk 10 metres unassisted
- ▶ the person needs full assistance with meals
- ▶ the person can communicate yes or no answers only.

5

Formal training

Formal training includes rehabilitation, attending TAFE courses, skills coaching or any other type of organised training. This section of the plan details if, when and under what circumstances it is to occur.

For example:

Luke will attend pre-employment training two days a week (Tuesday and Thursday), commencing 27 November.

6

Equipment and resources

Equipment and resources include anything required to assist the person to achieve their desired level of competence. Examples of equipment include communication devices, mobility and lifting devices, voice-activated computers or talking clocks. Examples of resources include material resources (for example, art and craft material, finances or consumables) and human resources (for example, a page turner, note taker or driver).

7

Prompting and reinforcement

This technique can be used to prompt or verbally assist someone by telling them the next step if they seem unsure. It is a positive tool to use and should be seen as encouraging rather than correcting or nagging.

Reinforcement means to give added support, either by repeating the act to gain competence or by there being a positive outcome to undertaking the task.

Example

Develop person-centred skill development activities with others

Sophie Madison is a person with a mild intellectual disability who wants to become a chef. Her person-centred activities are drawn up at the time of planning. Sections on progress and independence, prompting and evidence will be completed as Sophie progresses.

This is the plan drawn up for Sophie.

ABC Disability Support Services				
Name: Sophie Madison				
Commencement date: 30 October 2015				
Learning objective: To undertake vocational training to be a chef				
Performance expectations: Sophie will enrol and attend vocational training and complete the program possibly as a traineeship or apprenticeship.				
Criteria for achievement:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Achieve literacy skills to standard required for course entry ▶ Enrol in course and attend regularly ▶ Complete all course work including practical ▶ Graduate from course as a chef 				
Formal training	Equipment and resources	Progress and independence	Prompting / reinforcement	Evidence signed
Pre-employment literacy training				
Certificate course TAFE	Chef kit Course materials			
Sequence of training: Literacy training Certificate course as chef				
Assistance required: Support worker to demonstrate and role model Dietitian to provide information in accessible form				
Evaluation methods: role-play, simulation, demonstration				

- ▶ Use the SMART goal-setting formula: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-based.
- ▶ Use dot points or numbering for action plans or when breaking down a task.
- ▶ Initial any changes or variations, sign and date all entries, and ask the person to sign.

Example

Document ongoing skill development in the person’s individual plan

Glenda lives in a shared house with four other residents. When she is asked to set some personal goals, all she can think of is that she wants a dog.

Her support worker helps Glenda decide what sort of dog she wants by looking at a series of pictures. They then cut out a picture of the breed of dog Glenda wants and stick it on a chart. Glenda and her support worker then work out what she needs to do before she can get a dog and what she needs to learn to look after it.



They write in simple sentences and put a picture with each point so Glenda can follow the plan.

Practice task 8

Prepare and conduct an interview with a disability support worker or manager. Identify how the worker ensures ongoing skill development is documented effectively in a person’s individual plan. Identify how the person makes adjustments to their written communication to ensure the information is accurately recorded and understood by the person with disability.

Click to complete Practice task 8

Summary

1. Use active listening and culturally appropriate communication techniques to establish a rapport with people you support to engage them in the planning process.
2. Identify the strategies most appropriate to an individual’s learning goals, and understand the different theories of how people learn under various conditions and at various stages of their lives.
3. Ensure a person’s skill development or skill maintenance plan includes appropriate services and learning processes that support the person’s individual needs. This enables the person to maximise their potential in the areas identified by their individual goals.
4. Document ongoing skill development in the person’s individual plan in plain English, being mindful that it could be a legal document.
5. Consider the use of pictures and storyboards for people with intellectual disabilities or cognitive impairment.



Topic 3

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 3A Work with the person to implement ongoing skill development strategies in a respectful, motivating and empowering manner**

- 3B Ensure the individual skill development or maintenance plan is implemented consistently**

- 3C Access and use equipment and resources to facilitate learning**

- 3D Document outcomes in the person's individual plan**

Implement person-centred, ongoing skill development strategies

Whether you are employed as a support worker or a supervisor in the disability sector, you will be required to help implement skill development plans. This involves encouraging and motivating the people you support and providing positive reinforcement to their learning. You must also ensure the plan is implemented in a consistent and respectful manner that acknowledges their individual needs and learning style. You may need to draw on different learning strategies and access a variety of equipment and resources. You will also be involved in documenting their progress.

3

Recreational officers, lifestyle and leisure consultants

- ▶ Information on how activities are integrated into the development plan
- ▶ The current level of performance that can be expected

4

Physiotherapists or occupational therapists

- ▶ Baseline assessment and expected outcomes
- ▶ Time lines and activities to be undertaken
- ▶ The current level of performance that can be expected

5

Dietitians

- ▶ Any special requirements regarding nutrition and hydration

6

Education psychologists

- ▶ Support and encouragement strategies that are in place; expected outcomes
- ▶ Assistance they can offer for holistic growth

7

Teachers

- ▶ The program or plan the person has commenced
- ▶ Desired outcomes
- ▶ Any special needs such as communication devices; other resources such as scribes and note takers
- ▶ Information on the current level of performance that can be expected

8

Development officers

- ▶ The program the person has in place and their role, plus the role of others

9

Employment officers

- ▶ Expected outcome of program and time lines
- ▶ Any vocational component of the program
- ▶ Information on the current level of performance that can be expected

10

Technicians

- ▶ Any special assistance, equipment or devices required
- ▶ Information on the current level of performance that can be expected

Guidelines on sharing information

You need to be aware of your organisation's guidelines on the sharing of information. There are a number of policies and procedures you have to be familiar with, including:

- ▶ privacy and confidentiality
- ▶ duty of care and dignity of risk
- ▶ informed choice
- ▶ record maintenance
- ▶ organisational guidelines for sharing information.

Guidelines

Where the change in a person's skill level requires a change to guidelines, you need to follow workplace procedures as this also involves a change to the quality system. An example would be if you change guidelines for support workers assisting people to access an ATM.

Communication books

A communication book is used to communicate information between support workers, the family, the person and other relevant health professionals. It remains in the person's home and is an open document for all to see. Entries must be fact, not opinion; report only what you have observed. All entries should be signed and dated.

Files notes

When you have had a face-to-face discussion with the person about their skill development progress, record the conversation in a file note. Follow workplace procedures, as file notes are a legal record of dialogue.

Staff meetings

A person's skill development requirements may be discussed at a staff meeting. In order to disseminate information, it should be shown on the agenda and added to the meeting minutes.

Training sessions

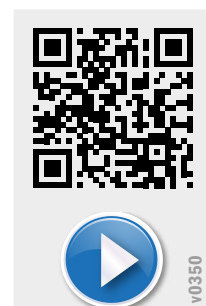
Where training or an information session is run for staff who will be working with a person in their skill development, this information should be recorded as a file note and in the support worker's training record.

Case management meetings

A formal agenda and minutes should be recorded for case management meetings. This is usually undertaken by the case manager.

The importance of documentation

You will generally be given information about documentation needed in your work role as part of your induction process and on an ongoing basis by your team leader or manager. You can also consult your organisational policies and procedures, which will be provided in hard copy and/or in electronic format. Depending on your role, you may be regularly involved in the process of reviewing and updating policies and procedures.





Topic 4

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 4A Monitor the person's development and provide feedback about their progress towards learning objectives**

- 4B Review records and update plan to meet changing needs**

- 4C Identify opportunities for ongoing skill development**

Evaluate skill development and review plan

A skill development plan should be considered a living document to be reviewed and amended as the person progresses toward their goals. To review a skill development plan, you need to evaluate the person's progress and provide feedback to them, their carer and relevant others for the person's development. This, in turn, should lead to a series of discussions to identify new opportunities for skill development.



Health skills

- ▶ Maintaining physical health (including sexual health)
- ▶ Joining a gym, yoga, dance or exercise group
- ▶ Having regular health check-ups
- ▶ Joining education programs; for example, family planning, or LGBTQ Youth Programs



Safety

- ▶ Having regular health check-ups
- ▶ Following safe sex procedures
- ▶ Taking part in a self-defence club

Opportunities within the community

When identifying learning opportunities that can provide ongoing skills enhancement, the best source of information may be the person themselves. In addition, you could consult with other health professionals to help you identify learning opportunities.

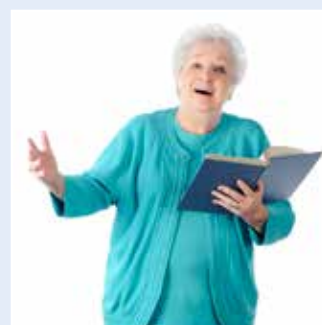
Openings that offer ongoing opportunities for skills enhancement are not restricted to those opportunities within the disability sector. To support both community integration and ongoing skill opportunities, you may choose to identify clubs, associations and employment that are available to the broader community.



Example

Identify opportunities for ongoing skill development

Sonia wants to improve her social skills, including her ability to talk to people and make friends. She also likes to express herself through singing. Her supervisor, Chris, puts her in touch with the local women's choir. Sonia joins the choir and it gives her an outlet for developing her singing skills and social interaction.





Topic 5

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 5A Identify informal learning opportunities and encourage learning**

- 5B Provide prompt and constructive advice in an appropriate format**

- 5C Provide encouragement when the person takes initiative**

- 5D Withdraw support to an appropriate level to encourage experiential learning and development**

Use incidental learning to enhance skill development

When creating and documenting a person-centred skill development plan you can assist a person with disability to systematically achieve their learning goals. However, much can also be gained through incidental learning, which is the largely unstructured and unplanned learning that happens as a consequence of what is going on around us. As a supervisor or experienced support worker, you should try to incorporate incidental learning into the day-to-day activities of a person you are supporting and facilitate their skill growth through a more informal process.

5A Identify informal learning opportunities and encourage learning

Informal learning opportunities arise out of the everyday activities undertaken by a person with disability. Having conversations, observing others, trial and error, and working with experienced others all allow a person to acquire new skills in an unofficial, unscheduled manner. As a supervisor or experienced disability support worker, you should identify informal or incidental learning opportunities for the person you support and encourage their active participation.



Formal, informal and incidental learning

It is important to understand the differences between formal, informal and incidental learning to ensure you plan skill development activities that best suit the needs, preferences and lifestyle of the person you support.



Formal learning

Formal learning opportunities include enrolling in a TAFE or university course, attending school, joining a swimming team, attending coaching or enrolling in a cooking course.

Formal learning always includes an agreement on what is to be learnt, the time frame and the roles and responsibilities of the learner and the trainer. On completion of the training it is expected that the learner will have gained knowledge, skills and abilities.



Informal learning

Informal learning opportunities include learning how to bake a cake by watching someone, asking someone to show you dance moves or joining a theatre company.

In informal learning, there is no contact or time frame and the roles and responsibilities of the learner and the trainer are not defined. There are no learning outcomes or standards that should be achieved. If either party wants to stop the process, they can.



Incidental learning

Incidental learning happens all the time. For example, if you enrol in a TAFE course, you will also learn how to get up on time, manage your time, pack your lunch, get along with other students and use the internet for research. These are not things that you agree to or set out to learn. Instead, you learn them incidentally along the way.

Incidental learning takes place wherever the learner happens to be and occurs as a consequence of other activities.

Types of feedback



Instructions

When giving instructions or talking a person through a process:

- ▶ give simple, clear instructions one at a time
- ▶ be patient and wait for the person to complete one step before you give the next instruction
- ▶ praise the person on completion of each step
- ▶ if something goes wrong, explain why and let them try again
- ▶ demonstrate if necessary
- ▶ do not make a fun of mistakes or a person's attempts.



Prompting

When prompting:

- ▶ if you can see the person is having trouble, ask them what comes next and talk it through with them
- ▶ remember you can also use nonverbal prompts
- ▶ do not criticise when they do something incorrectly.



Praising

When praising:

- ▶ congratulate the person on what they can do
- ▶ emphasise strengths and achievement
- ▶ point out the progress they have made
- ▶ point out to others what a good job the person has done.



Giving feedback

When giving feedback about what is working and not working:

- ▶ make sure you have the person's attention, getting them to stop what they are doing if necessary
- ▶ give the positives first, then say what needs to be done differently; talk about the task, not the person
- ▶ suggest rather than tell; don't set yourself up as the expert
- ▶ let them experiment with ways of doing things if the first way doesn't work
- ▶ finish with praise.



Encouraging experimentation

When encouraging further experimentation:

- ▶ step back and ask what they think
- ▶ be patient and let them experiment, and possibly fail, without intervening
- ▶ create an atmosphere where it is okay to make mistakes along the way
- ▶ concentrate on the outcome, not the process.

Give verbal encouragement

Nearly everyone enjoys a compliment, even if they do not know how to accept it at the time. Praise for something well done is always appreciated, especially when the person knows it is deserved.

When giving verbal encouragement to a person with disability, use the following technique.

Event	+	How you felt	+	Reason
When you (be specific about what they did)		I felt (describe the emotion you felt, such as proud, happy or overjoyed)		because (state the reason, such as: 'it is the first time you have achieved this')
'When you devised a weekly menu and wrote out the shopping list'		'I felt so proud of you'		'because you achieved your learning goal to show how you can be independent.'

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

In addition to providing verbal encouragement, it is useful to know what motivates and encourages each individual person with disability. Maslow's hierarchy of needs describes the broad categories of needs or rewards that motivate most people. This model can help you identify what motivates an individual and what is the best form of encouragement to use with them.

