

Tips for Navigating the NASC (Needs Assessment & Service Coordination)

- Prepare yourself
 - Be aware that NASC stands for Needs Assessment and Service Coordination:
 - the *needs assessment* is done at home or at their office (usually) by one person.
 - the *service co-ordination* is done by a separate person who allocates resources against what is written on the form.
- It is important that what is written on the needs assessment is very clear, as a separate person will be reading it and allocating resources against it.
- You can self-refer to the NASC but it may carry more weight if referred by a paediatrician, GP or other professional.
 - If you have an idea of what you can request, this is helpful. If you are unsure, or this is your first needs assessment, ask others what sort of support they get, or talk with friends in similar circumstances. Various organisations can put you in touch with people in similar situations or with local contacts to talk to, such as:
 - [Parent to Parent](#)
 - [Autism New Zealand](#)
 - [New Zealand Down Syndrome Association](#)
 - [New Zealand Organisation for Rare Disorders](#)
 - [Epilepsy New Zealand](#)
 - Think about what help would be useful and in what form. For example do you want support with personal care in the home, carer relief hours, buddy support? Work out how much support you think you will need. The types of support available include:
 - Carer Support
 - Home Support
 - Holiday Programme Hours
 - Overnight Respite
 - Individualised Funding
 - It may be worthwhile doing a course that provides some insight into how NASC works, from independent organisations such as Imagine Better, SAMS, or Disability Connect in the Auckland area.
 - Decide where you want to have the assessment – it does not have to be at your home. Ask for the assessment during the day, and not the evening.
 - If it is at your home don't go to the extra effort of having your house spotless. They won't take your family member away if it is messy! If you don't want them to "assess" your house-keeping skills have it at their office.

- Always have a support person (or advocate) with you, it doesn't matter who it is and they don't have to say anything.
- Needs assessments can take up to four hours
- Your family member has the right to be involved in the meeting/s. However there may be times when you might consider a separate time to meet with the needs assessor, for example if your family member becomes anxious or upset or if you need to talk about difficult issues privately.
- They will have to see your family member at some point and you will need to make arrangements for this to happen. You can decide when and where you want this to happen, so it works for you and your family member.
- Make sure you think about what a 'good life' for you and your family member might look like. Think about both the current day-to-day situation and what your family member's goals might be.
- Write a list of everything you do during the day with your family member. Be honest, don't sugar coat it, and describe things as they really are. Write down their whole day/week and all the assistance they require over that time:
 - think about the weekend?
 - how do they occupy themselves?
 - do they need assistance to fill their day meaningfully?
 - is it easy or hard to take them out?
 - how does that impact on their life (and yours?), etc....
- Compare your disabled family member with another person of the same age. Ask yourself what do you do for your family member that you don't need to do for another person of the same age? Write down all the things that differ and be specific:
 - can they get up on time for school?
 - can they work by themselves?
 - what self-help skills do they have?
 - do they need to be woken up?
 - do they need to be taken to the shower/toilet?
 - can they wash themselves, or do they need help?
 - do they need assistance with walking (ie uses a frame/holds hand)?
 - can they stand with/without assistance?
 - do they need assistance with eating (ie food must be blended, or can feed oneself but requires changing after eating, etc)
- It is important to be specific about your family member and what their diagnosis means for them. Describe them, as the diagnosis can sometimes mis-represent the person.
- Look at your last assessment and make notes on how things have changed.

- Be careful about the wording. The person who does the assessment is not usually the same person who decides what support you need. For example a needs assessment that reads “the child goes to the grandmother on Saturday” could be interpreted to mean that the mother gets a break every, and all day Saturday, when in fact it means she gets an hour off every now and then on a Saturday.
- Ask to have the assessment sent to you; this can be done by e-mail or by mail. Only sign it once you are happy that what has been written is correct and summarises your circumstances accurately.
- Have another person read the assessment and see if it is a true record of your family member. Sometimes another pair of eyes sees things that you don't.
- Change the wording if necessary and add anything you want.
- Send it back and once you are satisfied with the changes sign it.
- Add letters from doctors, teachers, or specialists if you are happy to do so. Some specialists will write to the NASC agency regarding your family member if you ask them. Letters such as this carry some weight.
- If you feel you don't get what you need you have the right to appeal (this won't go against you).
- If you feel mistreated you have the right to complain and you can be assigned another person to work with you. Follow the complaints procedure and if you don't feel heard you can then go to the Ministry of Health. Just ring the Ministry and ask who would be the best person to talk to about your complaint.
- The NASC needs to do a written assessment every three years. But you can have a reassessment at any time if needs change.
- NASCs need to contact you every year regarding the needs assessment. This is to make sure the services are still useful. At this time it is usually rolled over from last year. Don't let them cut your services if your needs have not gotten less.
- If you are to have a review ring several weeks beforehand so services continue with no break. You do not want the review to be at the end of December or January when everyone is on holiday.
- If it is a rollover call four weeks beforehand so services continue smoothly.
- Sometimes you don't get contacted by them so ring them yourself
- Don't be afraid of them, you have more power than you think and you know your family member better than anyone.
- After the needs assessment go easy on yourself. Do something for yourself (have a coffee with a friend), as the process can be draining and depressing highlighting the negatives.
- **Encourage someone else and help them if necessary, pass it on.**