# Supporting Apprentices with Disability

Every apprentice deserves the opportunity to learn and succeed. Some apprentices may have a disability or learning diversity that affects how they work, learn, or communicate. With the right support, these apprentices can perform at the same high standard as any other worker - they may just need a different approach, pace, or type of assistance.

Supporting an apprentice with disability is about understanding their needs, making reasonable adjustments, and working in partnership with your RTO and AASN/ACAP provider to help them succeed.

## 1. What Does Disability Support Mean?

A disability can be visible or invisible. It may be physical, sensory, intellectual, neurological, or related to mental health or chronic illness. The goal is not to lower standards but to provide fair access - ensuring the apprentice can demonstrate competence in a way that works for them.

Examples of disabilities that may affect learning or work include:

* Hearing or vision impairment
* Dyslexia or other learning differences
* Anxiety, depression, or mental health conditions
* ADHD or autism spectrum disorder
* Mobility or physical limitations
* Chronic pain or fatigue conditions

***Employer Tip:*** *You don’t need to be an expert in disability. You just need to be open, patient, and willing to adjust how training or supervision is delivered*

## 2. Talk Early and Confidentially

Support starts with a conversation. Some apprentices may not disclose a disability unless they feel safe to do so.

* Ask privately and respectfully if they need any adjustments to help them perform at their best.
* Focus on what helps, not the diagnosis - for example, “What can we put in place to make your work or training easier?”
* Keep information confidential and only share with relevant people (e.g., RTO, ACAP mentor).
* Record agreed adjustments and review them regularly.

***Employer Tip:*** *If you’re unsure how to approach the topic, ask your AASN/ACAP mentor for advice. They can guide the conversation or attend a meeting to support both parties*

## 3. Reasonable Adjustments in the Workplace

Reasonable adjustments are small changes that help an apprentice perform their job safely and effectively. They should not reduce the quality or safety of work - just the barriers to participation.

Examples of reasonable workplace adjustments include:

* Providing a stool or anti - fatigue mat for apprentices with mobility or pain issues.
* Allowing short breaks to manage fatigue or anxiety.
* Using visual task lists or photos for apprentices with literacy or concentration challenges.
* Reducing background noise or providing ear protection for sensory sensitivities.
* Providing instructions both verbally and in writing.
* Allocating a quieter workspace when focus is needed.

***Employer Tip:*** *JobAccess (www.jobaccess.gov.au) can provide free, confidential advice and may even fund workplace modifications or equipment through the Employment Assistance Fund*

## 4. Partnering with Your Registered Training Organisation (RTO)

The RTO plays a key role in ensuring training and assessment are accessible. If an apprentice is struggling, reach out early.

The RTO can:

* Adjust assessment conditions (e.g., extra time, oral questioning, using visual or practical demonstrations).
* Provide training materials in alternative formats (e.g., large print or digital).
* Arrange extra one-on-one sessions or additional training visits.
* Offer literacy, language, or numeracy (LLN) support.
* Liaise with the employer and ACAP to create a tailored support plan.

***Employer Tip:*** *Regular communication between the employer, trainer, and AASN/ACAP mentor ensures support strategies are consistent at work and during training*

**5. Support from Apprentice Connect Australia Providers (ACAP) Mentors**

Your ACAP provider can arrange mentoring and connect apprentices to specialist disability support services.

They can assist by:

* Helping identify barriers and strategies early.
* Coordinating with JobAccess or Disability Employment Services.
* Supporting wellbeing and confidence.
* Advising on contract extensions or changes if extra time is required for training.

***Employer Tip:*** *ACAP mentoring is free. Encourage your apprentice to use this support - especially if they need help balancing personal challenges, mental health, or learning needs*

## Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support (DAAWS)

The DAAWS program provides financial assistance to employers who employ apprentices or trainees with a verified disability. It helps create inclusive workplaces and supports apprentices to complete their training.

**Key Features:**

* Employers may be eligible to receive government funding or incentives to support the employment and training of apprentices.
* Apprentices must have a documented disability, verified by an ACAP provider through an Employment Services Assessment (ESA) or Job Capacity Assessment (JCA).
* The Training Contract must be current and valid.
* Payments are made quarterly to employers via the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) once eligibility is confirmed.
* DAAWS can be combined with other apprenticeship incentives.

**Additional Support Through DAAWS:**

* Funding for workplace modifications, mentoring, adaptive equipment, and literacy or numeracy support via JobAccess.
* Specialist assistance to help the apprentice meet competency standards at their own pace.

**Benefits:**

* Encourages inclusive employment and reduces barriers for apprentices with disability.
* Offsets additional supervision, training, or adjustment costs.
* Supports completion and long - term employment outcomes.

**More Information**:

* DAAWS - Australian Apprenticeships Official Site: [https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/financial - support/disabled - australian - apprentice - wage - support](https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/financial-support/disabled-australian-apprentice-wage-support)
* JobAccess - Workplace Modifications and Disability Employment Support: <https://www.jobaccess.gov.au>