



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Health**

# WA Disability Health Framework 2015–2025

Improving the health care of people with disability  
Second Edition



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# Contents

Overview	1
Disability Health Framework	2
The Framework	3
Vision	3
Purpose	3
Goals	3
Guiding principles	3
Key concepts	4
Disability	4
Defining health	4
Diversity	4
Family and carers	4
Health disparities in people with disability	5
Diversity within disability	6
Priority areas for action	8
1. Priority area one: understanding and recognition	8
1.1 Improved awareness and understanding	8
1.2 A collaborative approach to health care for people with disability	8
1.3 Tailored evidence-based approaches	8
2. Priority area two: health and wellbeing	9
2.1 Self-management and empowering individuals	9
2.2 Effective communication	9
2.3 Timely access to health information and care	9
3. Priority area three: workforce capability	10
3.1 Training and education for the health workforce	10
3.2 Collaboration in the workforce	11
3.3 Role of people with disability in workforce capability	11
4. Priority area four: inclusive health care	11
4.1 Inclusive information and communication	11
4.2 Continuity of care across the continuum	12
4.3 Addressing barriers to access	12
System influencers	13
1. Individual, community and organisational capacity	13
2. Networking and engagement with stakeholders	13
3. Safety and quality in health care	14
4. Disability Access and Inclusion Plans	14
5. Data and research	15
5.1 Data	15
5.2 Research	15
6. Technology	16
Acronyms and terms	17
Documents linked in the Framework and Companion Resource	19
References	22

# WA Disability Health Framework 2015–2021 Highlights



## Priority 1 Understanding and recognition



**180+** people engaged to develop the Disability Access Inclusion Plan 2020–2025



**78%** of disability service providers, carers and community report awareness of the Framework and Disability Toolkit for Change<sup>^</sup>



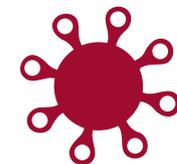
**420+** attendees at International Day of People with Disability Events (2015–2020)



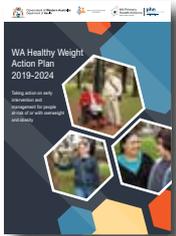
## Priority 2 Health and well-being



Promoting better care via improving the health care of people with disability checklist



**610** downloads Disability COVID-19 resources



Contributed to the WA Healthy Weight Action Plan 2019–2024



## Priority 3 Workforce capacity



**10+** events NDIS Community Practice Forums with TRACS WA



Strengthening care pathways via Ready to Go Home and Hospital Stay Guidelines



Supporting increased employment opportunities by raising awareness of Building the Talent Pool initiative



## Priority 4 Inclusive health care



**940+** views WA disability Health Framework Animation



**7** recommendations from the Sustainable Health Review



Launch of the Care of Patients with Disability Health Pathway

# Overview

The Western Australian Disability Health Framework 2015–2025: Improving the health care of people with disability (the Framework) was developed by the Disability Health Network as WA Health’s response to the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Disability Action Plan 2014–2021 and the Australian Government National Disability Strategy 2010–2020.<sup>2</sup>

“Disability is a natural part of the human experience”<sup>1</sup>

The Framework and its Companion Resource were updated in 2021 in response to the changing landscape of the health system. Updates have included local, national and international policy documents and reforms, as well as activities undertaken from the Framework implementation, and emerging public health priorities. The Framework provides direction for WA Health and its partners to achieve improved health outcomes for people with disability. It outlines priority areas for improving the health outcomes of people of any age living with disability and encompasses the spectrum of diversity. This includes Aboriginal people and people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) backgrounds. It applies to a person over their life course; starting with child and family-centred practice through to palliative care and end of life approaches.

Individuals, the community and other sectors across the State (such as disability, aged care, and mental health) were involved with the development of the Framework. Ongoing collaboration and partnerships with these areas will facilitate WA Health’s achievement of the priority areas. Individuals, the community and other sectors may also use the Framework to guide their own development of actions, plans and policies to improve the health outcomes of people with disability.

The Framework adopts the social model to define disability. This acknowledges that the physical, attitudinal, communication and social environment must change to enable people living with impairments to participate equally in society.

There is a strong rationale for a disability health focus. This rationale is explored in more detail in the WA Disability Health Framework Companion Resource, and includes:

- health disparities that exist for people with disability
- acknowledgement that people with disability are best placed to input to the design, planning and delivery of their supports and services to ensure barriers to health care are removed
- legislative obligations and local, state and national strategic directions.

The vision of the Framework is an inclusive Western Australian health system that empowers people with disability to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health and wellbeing throughout their life. In order to achieve this vision, the Framework provides goals and guiding principles for WA Health when developing policy, implementing services and making decisions regarding the provision of health care. The Framework presents four systemwide priority areas for action:

- understanding and recognition
- health and wellbeing
- workforce capability
- inclusive health care.

Addressing the priority areas and implementing improvement initiatives effectively and sustainably requires an understanding of system influencers. These can be enablers of change or barriers. Key system influencers are provided in the Framework, *A Western Australia for Everyone: State Disability Strategy 2020–2030*<sup>3</sup> and the *WA Health Sustainable Health Review*<sup>4</sup>. It is recommended to review the updated Framework in conjunction with the national strategy, *Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021–2031*<sup>5</sup> upon its release.

# Disability Health Framework

## Our Vision

An inclusive Western Australian health system that empowers people with disability to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health and wellbeing throughout their life.

## Purpose

Provide direction to WA Health and its partners on policy development and service delivery to achieve improved health outcomes for people with disability.

### Goals/outcomes

- Recognise the right to effective services and care for people with disability
- Foster a broader understanding of the health needs of people with disability
- Improve the quality, accessibility, inclusiveness and coordination of services necessary to meet the health needs of people with disability

### Priority areas

- Understanding and recognition
- Health and wellbeing
- Workforce capability
- Inclusive health care

### System Influencers

- Individual community and organisational capacity
- Networking and stakeholder organisational capacity
- Sustainable Health Review<sup>4</sup>
- National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards<sup>6</sup>
- NDIS Act 2013 and NDIS Rules<sup>7</sup>
- NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework<sup>8</sup>
- Disability Access and Inclusion Plans
- Data and research
- Technology

## Guiding principles

- Person-centred
- Collaborative
- Responsive and flexible
- Continuous improvement
- Respect and dignity

# The Framework

## Vision

An inclusive Western Australian health system that empowers people with disability to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health and wellbeing throughout their life.

## Purpose

Provide direction to WA Health and its partners on policy development and service delivery to achieve improved health outcomes for people with disability.

## Goals

- Recognise the right to effective services for people with disability.
- Foster a broader understanding of the health needs of people with disability.
- Improve the quality, accessibility, inclusiveness and coordination of services necessary to meet the health needs of people with disability.

## Guiding principles

### Person-centred

The person with disability, their family and carers are empowered to make informed decisions about, and to successfully manage, their own health and care. They are empowered to choose when to invite others to act on their behalf.

### Responsive and flexible

Services and strategies are flexible and responsive to the needs of people with disability, recognising all forms of diversity including those from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds residing in communities across WA, including rural and remote locations.

### Respect and dignity

People with disability have the same rights as everyone else – to be respected, make their own decisions, feel safe and have opportunities to live a meaningful life.

### Collaborative

Through working together, sharing an understanding of roles and responsibilities, and building partnerships with stakeholders, including people with disability, their families and carer(s), health outcomes can be improved.

### Continuous improvement

Programs and services are involved in continuous improvement processes to achieve best-practice. Stakeholders, including people with disability, their families and carer(s), contribute to the ongoing monitoring, measurement and evaluation of programs and services.

# Key concepts

## Disability

The Framework adopts the social model<sup>10</sup> to define disability. This is the internationally recognised way to view and respond to the needs of people with disability.

The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)<sup>11</sup> recognises that disability arises from the combination of impairments and barriers that “hinder...full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.” The impairments can include “long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments” whilst the barriers can be attitudinal or environmental.<sup>12</sup>

A social model perspective does not deny the reality of impairment or its impact on the individual. Instead, it seeks to change society in order to include people living with impairment. In this context:

- **Impairment** is a medical condition that leads to disability.
- **Disability** is the result of the interaction between people living with impairments and barriers in the physical, attitudinal, communication and social environment.

## Defining health

The Framework adopts the World Health Organization definition of health<sup>13</sup>:

Given the holistic nature of health, the role of and understanding of social determinants of health is important.

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”<sup>14</sup>

## Diversity

Diversity is a broad concept including disability, age, experience, race, ethnicity, under-resourced populations, socio-economic background, education, sexual orientation and gender identification, marginalisation, religion and spirituality. This includes Aboriginal people, people from CaLD backgrounds, and people from Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI+) communities. Diversity also exists within different types of disability such as cognitive, physical, rare, genetic and undiagnosed conditions, chronic or acute. Diversity is about understanding, respect and acceptance.

## Family and carer(s)

It is important to consider the role of families and carer(s) when providing health care to people with disability. It is recognised that people with disability often rely on their family and carer(s) to support them in a way that those without disability do not.

# Health disparities in people with disability

In 2018, it was estimated that 17.7 per cent of the Australian population had a disability.<sup>14</sup> While this number has declined slightly from 18.3 per cent in 2015, the prevalence of disability is projected to continue increasing due to the ageing population and increases in chronic health conditions, among other causes.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the overall improvement in the general population's health, the gap between the health of Australians with disability and those without disability remains large.

Current data suggests that over half (62 per cent) of adults aged 18 to 64 with severe or profound disability reported poor or fair health compared with 7 per cent for those without disability.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 1: Disability health in Australia (15 to 64 years) – comparative prevalence rates for some health-related conditions<sup>17</sup>**

Health condition/behaviour	Severe/profound disability	Typical adult population
Long-term conditions:		
Diabetes	23%	7%
Arthritis	14%	6%
Osteoporosis	43%	7%
Mental health problems	48% (particularly with intellectual disability)	6%
Childhood onset of mental health issues	38% to 49% <sup>c</sup>	7%
Obesity <sup>a</sup>	78%	64%
Low exercise <sup>a</sup>	43%	10%
Daily smoking <sup>a</sup>	17%	13%
Suicidal ideation <sup>a</sup>	42% and 18% attempted	13.3% and 3.2% attempted <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Age range is 18 years and over<sup>18</sup>; <sup>b</sup>Age range is 16 to 84 years<sup>19</sup>; <sup>c</sup> Pooled prevalence estimate<sup>20</sup>

An Australian Institute of Health and Welfare study<sup>16</sup> found that people with severe or profound disability, aged 64 years and under, are more likely than other people with disability to:

- see three or more health professionals for the same conditions
- have a health professional help coordinate their care
- face communication difficulties with health professionals.

The health of families and carer(s) also needs to be considered as many people with disability depend on their family as major contributors of their care.

# Diversity within disability

A supportive and inclusive health system requires understanding and recognising the diversity that exists within disability. Aboriginal people, and people from CaLD and LGBTI+ communities with a disability can experience additional barriers within the healthcare system, creating ongoing health inequities.

## Aboriginal people

Aboriginal people are 1.9 times more likely than non-Aboriginal people to experience disability.<sup>21</sup> Aboriginal people with a disability in remote communities, along with their families and carer(s), are often faced with barriers to access appropriate health services. In Western Australia, three in ten Aboriginal people did not access a health provider when they needed to; costs, being too busy, and transport and distance were reported as the top barriers for service access.<sup>22</sup>

The rate of disability is higher among Aboriginal people aged 55 years and over when compared with younger Aboriginal people. Approximately 53 per cent of Aboriginal people over 55 reported having some form of a disability and 18 per cent reported a severe or profound disability.<sup>21</sup>

The WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015–2030<sup>23</sup> identifies the importance of cultural determinants as protective factors that support Aboriginal people living long, well and healthy lives, and the need to develop and deliver health programs that are culturally responsive and relevant.

## Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) communities

Research has shown people with a disability from CaLD backgrounds often underutilise health services,<sup>24</sup> with people born in non-English speaking countries 50 per cent less likely to receive formal assistance than people with a disability born in Australia.<sup>25</sup>

Factors preventing CaLD communities accessing disability services can include:

- language barriers
- cultural beliefs and attitudes towards disability
- lack of culturally appropriate services
- lack of knowledge related to disability rights and resources.<sup>26, 27</sup>



## Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI+) communities

People with disability from the LGBTI+ community can experience several barriers to accessing appropriate health services. LGBTI+ young people with a disability reported significantly higher levels of psychological distress, experience of verbal abuse and attempted suicide than those without a disability.<sup>28</sup> The Western Australian LGBTI Health Strategy 2019–2024<sup>29</sup> highlights priority areas for improving the health and wellbeing of LGBTI+ populations.

### Multiple impairments

People with disability can also commonly experience multiple impairments or restrictions, and long-term health conditions. For instance, 85 per cent of people with a psychosocial disability report having a co-existing disability,<sup>30</sup> whereby:

- 63 per cent report having a physical disability
- 38 per cent report having an intellectual disability
- 33 per cent report having a sensory disability.

A psychosocial disability is a term used to describe a disability that may arise from a mental health issue.<sup>31</sup>

### COVID-19

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a highly infectious virus with a greater death rate than many other infectious diseases.<sup>32</sup> People who are most likely to experience severe disease include older persons and people with pre-existing health conditions.<sup>33</sup> The potential impact of the pandemic on people living with disability is disproportionately higher than those living without a disability.

In June 2021, Australian household surveys found one in four (29 per cent) people living with disability report experiencing high or very high psychological distress in response to the pandemic compared to 17 per cent of people without a disability.<sup>34</sup>

The Australian Government response to COVID-19 continues to evolve with new data and evidence emerging.<sup>35</sup> Australian National and State Governments have worked alongside disability sector organisations to ensure people with a disability have access to information about COVID-19, vaccinations and outbreak planning. The COVID-19 Planning Resource for People with Disability<sup>36</sup> assists with managing support needs when isolating at home, reducing risks associated with COVID-19 and responding appropriately in the event a person with a disability, or their carer(s), contracts COVID-19.

For more information visit:

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) advice for people with disability](#)<sup>37</sup>
- [COVID-19 coronavirus: Disability services](#)<sup>38</sup>
- [HealthyWA COVID-19 \(coronavirus\)](#)<sup>39</sup>
- [The Series of National Guidelines for COVID-19](#)<sup>40</sup>
- Lifeline: 131 114
- Beyond Blue Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service: 1800 512 348

# Priority areas for action

People with disability have a right to have their health needs identified early and managed in a responsive manner. People with disability are at greater risk of experiencing discrimination and barriers that may make it more difficult to achieve these rights. Although many of the health needs of people with disability are the same as those of the rest of the community, the type of impairment, complexity, stage of life, gender, orientation and culture may also impact on an individual's level of need. There is great diversity across the population of people with disability and in addressing priorities, diversity should be considered.

## 1. Priority area one: understanding and recognition

Enabling the provision of services which meet the needs of people with disability requires an understanding and recognition of the specific issues relevant to them. There is often a tendency to group all people with disability together, however people do not fit pre-determined stereotypes. Within an individual there exists a complex interplay of influences on actions, health outcomes and health delivery. Delivering person-centred care requires consideration and recognition of the conditions, needs and aspirations of the individual.

Understanding and recognition can be achieved through the following mechanisms.

### 1.1 Improved awareness and understanding

- Promote awareness and adoption of the social model of disability amongst healthcare providers and services.
- Remove barriers that prevent access to services (including impediments to physical access, financial access, information, communication, sensory and coordination) across all healthcare programs including health promotion and other population-based public health initiatives.

### 1.2 A collaborative approach to health care for people with disability

- Collaborate with people with disability, their families and carer(s) in the planning, development and implementation of health services and policies that affect them (e.g. Disability Access and Inclusion Plans, design of new infrastructure, policy review).
- Recognise the role of carers in the health care of people with disability and ensure systems are in place to identify, record their involvement and provide support where required.

### 1.3 Tailored evidence-based approaches

- Develop or reform health and disability policy, strategies and plans to be in line with the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability*,<sup>11</sup> the *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992*<sup>41</sup> and *WA Disability Services Act 1993*.<sup>42</sup>
- Analyse current availability of data and improve collection of health data on disability populations, and research on disability-related health disparities and interventions.

#### Tips for Collaboration

1. **Co-design** with people with lived experience of disability from the very beginning and throughout the whole journey.
2. **Support** and include a person with lived experience of disability on recruitment panels.
3. **Encourage** people with lived experience of disability to participate on committees and leadership roles.

## 2. Priority area two: health and wellbeing

Health and wellbeing are essential to having the best possible quality of life and for participation in social, educational and employment activities. As health and wellbeing are impacted by a range of social determinants, services require a cross-sectoral, holistic approach. Health promotion activities should reflect the diverse needs of people in all communities whether they be urban, rural or remote.

There should be a focus on supporting people with disability, their families and carer(s) to develop the knowledge, confidence, skills and behaviours to achieve the best possible health. Social and sexual needs should also be addressed as a part of health and wellbeing.

The health and wellbeing of carers of people with disability is also important. Research indicates that carers report a 59 per cent decline in physical health and two-thirds a decline in mental and emotional health.<sup>43</sup> The increasing incidence of disability with age, the fact that people with disability are living longer, along with the increased demand for community living may extend the length of a caring role and impact the carer's health and wellbeing.

It should be noted that people with disability and carers are recognised as being more at risk and harder to reach through health promotion strategies. Health and wellbeing can be achieved through the following mechanisms.

### 2.1 Self-management and empowering individuals

- Assist people with disability, their families and carer(s) to know what questions to ask in order to define any assistance or information they may require for their care.
- Provide self-management information to people with disability, their families and carers.
- Recognise the role of families and carers as intermediary target groups for health information.
- Promote access to health and wellbeing education for people with disability, their families and carers.
- Support health promotion research and evaluation that is inclusive and representative of people with disability and those who support them.

### 2.2 Effective communication

- Present health promotion, prevention strategies and healthcare information in a range of formats inclusive of people with disability.
- Promote increased connectedness within the community through more innovative means, such as social media, and a variety of communication methods.

### 2.3 Timely access to health information and care

- Build on and link with existing health service and health promotion initiatives including health screening, oral care and chronic condition prevention programs.
- Promote wellness maintenance and early intervention for the purposes of reducing impairment and disability.
- Promote timely and effective identification, diagnosis and management of co-occurring health conditions and disability, such as co-occurring mental health and cognitive conditions.
- Promote collaborative cross-sectoral partnerships to improve the capacity of service providers to promote health and wellbeing in a holistic manner.
- Encourage the use of Health Passports, My Health Record and Forms with disability specific information to improve information exchange, safety and high-quality care.

### 3. Priority area three: workforce capability

Strong leadership and workforce capability development is required to ensure people with disability receive equal health service provision.

To improve workforce capability, it is important to address health workers' values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and behaviours. Building the workforce capability should also include increasing cultural competency and adherence to equal opportunity employment measures.

Workforce capability can be enhanced by people with disability, their families and carers sharing their stories. People with disability, their families and carers are also 'workers' who can contribute to their own health and wellbeing as well as participate in decision making about their health.

Initiatives to increase workforce capability should include all services related to social determinants of health. Disability support workers can play a key role in supporting the health and wellbeing of people with disability. The aged care workforce should also be considered as part of the workforce as people with disability over 65 years of age (over 55 years for Aboriginal people) may need more targeted disability health support and services than traditional ageing supports and services.

On 3 December 2019, the Western Australian Premier Hon. Mark McGowan and Minister for Disability Services Hon. Stephen Dawson announced a five per cent disability employment target in the public sector by 2025.<sup>44</sup>

“Employment is a cornerstone for independence and improved life choices that not only benefits the person with disability but provides social and economic benefits for the entire community. We need to recognise that people with disability bring valuable talent, experience and insight to the workplace. People with disability are an integral part of a diverse and inclusive workforce. The extent to which people with disability are included in social, economic and civic life is also an important driver of Western Australia's future prosperity.”  
– Hon. Stephen Dawson, Disability

Workforce capability can be achieved through the following mechanisms.

#### 3.1 Training and education for the health workforce

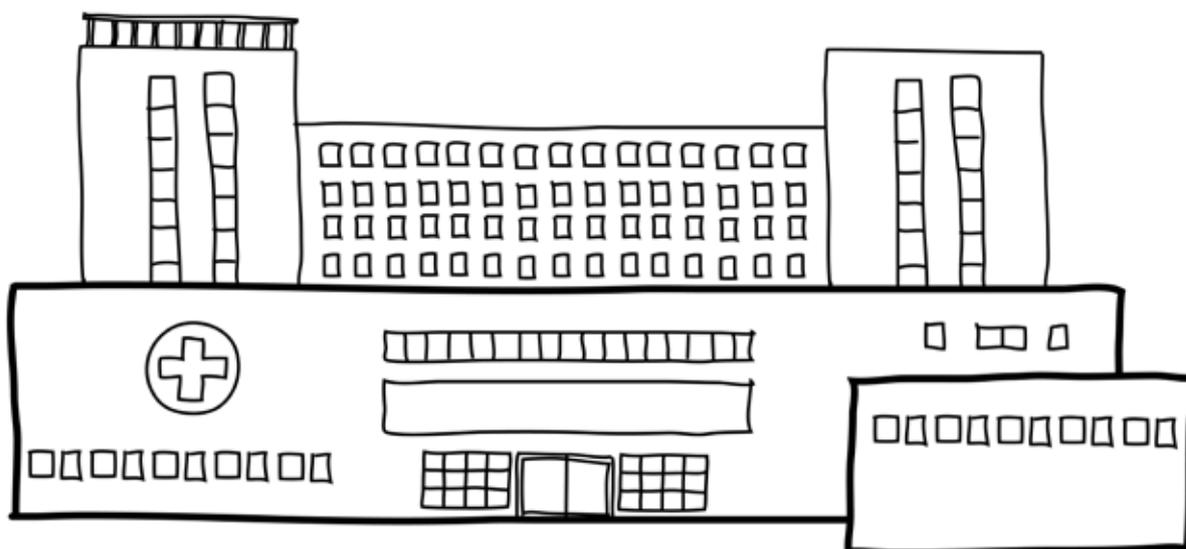
- Identify training opportunities to improve awareness amongst the health workforce of the specific needs of people with disability, their families and carers.
- Set clear standards and processes for attaining suitable qualifications for those providing health services to people with disability.
- Address cultural responsiveness by supporting training that is culturally specific – for example, as per the WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015–2030,<sup>23</sup> and the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy – Western Australia 2021–2029.<sup>45</sup>
- Promote relevant existing training tools and increase interactive learning opportunities i.e. online training packages, webinars etc.
- Integrate education on the health and human rights of people with disability, their families and carers into undergraduate and continuing education for all health and disability workers and other relevant disciplines.
- Provide opportunities for new graduates and inexperienced staff to obtain specific clinical, social and analytical skills that are relevant to disability health care delivery using processes like mentoring and targeted placements.

### 3.2 Collaboration in the workforce

- Promote a culture of collaboration amongst the workforce recognising the importance of multidisciplinary teams with clear communication between all members, including the person with disability, their families and carers.
- Research the gaps in health care to identify any need to improve services and collaboration between service providers.

### 3.3 Role of people with disability in workforce capability

- Strengthen self-advocacy skills for people with disability, their families and carers to effectively address specific challenges in accessing health services.
- Recognise that self-advocacy requires knowledge, skills, energy and capacity and not all people with disability, their families and carers will have these; those that do not will require support within the system including access to advocacy organisations.
- Include people with disability, their families and carers as providers of education and training.
- Include people with disability on recruitment panels, committees and boards.
- Provide support systems for people with disability in the workforce that enable meaningful employment and career opportunities,<sup>3</sup> for example the People with Disability Action Plan to Improve WA Public Sector Employment Outcomes 2020–2025.<sup>46</sup>
- Recruit and employ people with disability to develop a workforce that is representative of the community it serves in alignment with the Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy for WA Public Employment 2020–2025.<sup>47</sup>



## 4. Priority area four: inclusive health care

Every individual has a right to have their health needs identified and managed in a responsive manner. Evidence indicates that people with disability are currently more likely to experience discrimination and barriers in health care provision including prohibitive costs, limited availability of services, physical barriers and inadequate skills and knowledge of health workers.<sup>48</sup>

In 2019–20, 22 per cent of complaints lodged to the Australian Human Rights Commission were related to the *Disability Discrimination Act*.<sup>49</sup>

Inclusive health care does not discriminate and in fact may be delivered in different ways to ensure equity of access. Barriers to inclusion can only be identified and mitigated effectively by the inclusion of people with disability, their families and carer(s) in health care planning and design. People with disability may also have increased health care requirements and multiple service providers. Efforts should be made to strengthen continuity and coordination of care between services and sectors to encourage and facilitate timely participation in health care.<sup>49</sup>

Inclusive health care can be achieved through the following mechanisms.

### 4.1 Inclusive information and communication

- Improve access to personal health care information for people with disability, their families and carer(s) e.g. Health Passports, My Health Record and forms contained in the Hospital Stay Guideline for hospitals and disability service organisations.<sup>50</sup>
- Ensure the communication needs of both the person and the carer are assessed and met, as per the WA Health Language Services Policy.<sup>51</sup> This may require the use of interpreters, hearing loops, meetings in a quiet space or providing written advice in plain language or Easy Read format.
- Facilitate access to information about available services through the development and promotion of easily accessible service directories.
- Investigate opportunities to modify existing systems of patient information to identify people with disability and improve data sets, leading to greater opportunities for linkages, analysis of health care usage, targeted interventions and responsiveness to trends.

### 4.2 Continuity of care across the continuum

- Develop referral pathways for people with disability inclusive of transition from paediatric to adult services.
- Undertake collaborative and person-centred care planning within multidisciplinary teams that values the role of the person with disability, their families and carer(s) in decisions about their health care.

### 4.3 Addressing barriers to access

- Recognise that barriers to service access include structural, systemic and attitudinal factors and consider remedial strategies, such as:
  - workforce capacity to deliver culturally appropriate and inclusive services
  - connect existing support and funding services for better access and care coordination.
- Acknowledge challenges to service delivery in rural and remote areas and devise solutions e.g. use of telehealth and e-health.
- Assess and address availability of services that meet the specific needs of people with disability, recognising there may be circumstances where tailored services are required.

# System influencers

Addressing the priority areas and implementing improvement initiatives effectively and sustainably requires an understanding of system influencers. These can be enablers of change, or barriers. Whether they are enablers or barriers will depend on broader contexts outside the scope of this Framework such as reform agendas, political landscape and progress of implementation of national or state initiatives.

The findings from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability have highlighted the importance of creating supportive systems that protect the rights of people with disability throughout their lives. Other enablers or barriers may be identified and considered in the achievement of the vision.

## 1. Individual, community and organisational capacity

Improving the health of people with disability requires capacity building at multiple levels. It starts with the capacity of the individual to affect their own health and wellbeing. As well, it is the capacity of the community to respond inclusively to the health needs of people with disability. It is also the capacity of an organisation to develop and implement inclusive policy and services and importantly the capacity of healthcare workers to understand and respond effectively to health needs. Capacity building can occur in different ways and may focus on areas including:

- self-advocacy, self-disclosure and self-determination of people with disability, their families and carer(s) for the best possible health care and outcomes
- health literacy of people with disability, their family and carers
- champions of the disability health agenda both in community and organisations
- leadership to foster a culture of disability-inclusive policy and services
- relationships between WA Health, the disability sector and community groups
- workforce education, training and retention strategies.

## 2. Networking and engagement with stakeholders

Improving health outcomes for people with disability requires collaborative and connected services. People with disability should be consulted and actively involved in all stages of developing and implementing policies and services that relate to their health care. This aligns with the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards.<sup>6</sup>

The network approach to health reform provides the opportunity to **connect** all stakeholders across the State and across sectors to **share** ideas and develop solutions to **improve** systemwide policy, planning and purchasing and the development of integrated person-centred care pathways. Bringing together stakeholders fosters a culture of high quality and comprehensive engagement with all partners, enabling collective input at a range of levels and for different purposes.

Nothing about us without us!<sup>52</sup>

Central to the network approach is the guiding principle of empowering people with disability and their supports to be involved in health care planning and the provision of the care pathway.

The Commitment to Inclusive Engagement<sup>54</sup> was developed by the Disability Health Network as a guide to ensure health care engagement activities that relate to people with disability are inclusive of people with disability, their families and carer(s). This tool and other resources such as the Hospital Stay Guideline<sup>50</sup> should be used across WA Health.

The three principles for inclusive engagement are:

- respect and rights
- inclusion
- transparency.

### 3. Safety and quality in health care

The Review of Safety and Quality in the WA Health System 2017<sup>55</sup> defines a series of interdependent concepts that have been developed to foster a shared and unified approach to promoting and assuring the delivery of safe, high quality health care in WA. Safety and quality are improved by the participation of health services in external accreditation and peer review programs. Safety and quality are driven by:

- identifying and supporting leaders who value safety and quality in health care
- strengthening governance structures and processes to enhance accountability for safety and quality
- work collaboratively to support systemwide improvements and innovation.

The National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards<sup>6</sup> are especially important for people with disability given they are high users of health services. The Standards provide the opportunity for health services to work with people with disability to design more inclusive and safer health services that suit the needs of that cohort.

Many fields and professions within health have their own specific standards of care, which should always be adhered to. Efforts should be made to ensure all standards and assessment criteria reflect the needs of people with disability. Other relevant standards that may be used to measure the quality of care provided to people with disability include:

- [Hospital Stay Guideline for Hospitals and Disability Service Organisations<sup>50</sup>](#)
- [National Standards in Mental Health Services 2019<sup>56</sup>](#)
- [Quality of Care Principles 2014<sup>57</sup>](#)
- [NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework<sup>8</sup>](#)

### 4. Disability Access and Inclusion Plans

It is a requirement of the *WA Disability Services Act 1993*<sup>42</sup> that public authorities develop, implement and report on a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) that outlines the ways in which the authority will ensure people with disability have equal access to its facilities and services.

The Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2020–2025<sup>58</sup> states the Department of Health's commitment to ensuring that people with disability, their families and carer(s) are able to fully access the range of health services, facilities and information available in the public health system. The intention of WA Health is to provide people with disability with the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities enjoyed by other people in the community. The DAIP is intrinsic in meeting the overall corporate objective of ensuring safety and quality in health services and can be used as a vehicle for change and improvement in enhancing the health and wellbeing of people with disability.

## 5. Data and research

Good quality data and research are essential for providing the basis for policy and programs and for efficient allocation of resources. There is, however, insufficient rigorous and comparable data and research related to disability and healthcare systems nationally and globally.

### 5.1 Data

The WHO Global Disability Action Plan 2014–2021<sup>15</sup> suggests that data needed to strengthen healthcare systems includes the:

- number of people and health status of people with disability
- social and environmental barriers including discrimination
- responsiveness of healthcare systems to people with disability
- use of healthcare services by people with disability
- extent of the need, both met and unmet, for care.

Collecting and using data is important for obtaining an objective understanding of the population and health status of people with disability, their families and carer(s) and identifying barriers, gaps and priority areas. Effective and usable data also supports measurement of the effectiveness of improvement activities.

Limitations exist when attempting to compare and analyse information across different data sources because of the different definitions of disability used and how the data is collected. Information sources such as the World Health Organization, Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare all collect data for different purposes, so have different definitions and analysis parameters.

### 5.2 Research

Research on disability should be inclusive of people with disability, their families and carer(s), as highlighted by Finding 7 of the 2014 Report of Audit of Disability Research.<sup>59</sup> Research agendas should be drafted with the active participation of people with disability, their families, carers or representative organisations. The Report also identifies gaps in research about specialist services and mainstream services for people with disability.

The WHO Global Disability Action Plan 2014–2021<sup>15</sup> outlines a number of priority areas for health-related research such as:

- measurement of disability and its determinants
- identification of barriers to health care
- success factors for health promotion interventions for people with disability
- prevention of secondary conditions
- early detection and referral of health problems through primary health care.

Supporting and developing capacity in research and quality data collection in WA is critical to ensuring the best possible care is delivered to Western Australians with disability. In particular, it is important to support opportunities to work in collaboration with research providers within and outside of WA Health to ensure research is aligned with the priority areas within the Framework. Evaluation of services and improvement initiatives, both qualitative and quantitative, is integral to measuring intervention effectiveness and impact as well as fostering involvement in quality improvement processes and contributing to evidence-based practice.

## 6. Technology

Advances in technology should be used to deliver innovative services, communication and support for people with disability, their families and carer(s). Service delivery models such as telehealth may be utilised to improve access to services. Electronic patient records will enhance care coordination across sectors. Technology may also offer solutions to assist some people with disability to communicate their health and wellbeing needs and self-manage for improved health outcomes. Co-design approaches for the development of technology should include people with disability, their families and carer(s).



# Acronyms and terms

Acronym/term	Definition
<b>Carer</b>	<p>A carer is someone who provides unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness or general frailty. Carers include parents and guardians caring for children.<sup>16</sup></p> <p>It should be recognised that family and friends may still be in a caring role even when the people they support do not live with them or live in supported accommodation.</p>
<b>DAIP</b>	Disability Access and Inclusion Plan
<b>Disability</b>	<p>Disability is the result of the interaction between people living with impairments and barriers in the physical, attitudinal, communication and social environment.</p> <p>Impairment is a medical condition that leads to disability.</p>
<b>GP</b>	General Practitioner
<b>Health</b>	Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. <sup>13</sup>
<b>Health literacy</b>	Health literacy is the ability to gain access to, understand and use information in ways which promote and maintain good health. This includes nine domains of how people find, understand and use health information, and how they manage their health and interact with the health system and healthcare providers. <sup>60</sup>
<b>LGBTI+</b>	LGBTI+ is used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. The use of this acronym is not intended to be limiting or exclusive of certain groups and we recognise that not all people will identify with this acronym or use these specific terms.
<b>People with disability</b>	This is the contemporary phrase used for people who live with impairment and are affected by barriers that exist in society which cause disability
<b>Social determinants of health</b>	The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies and political systems <sup>61</sup>

Acronym/term	Definition
<b>Support worker</b>	A disability support worker provides personal, physical and emotional support to people with disability who require assistance with daily living. They provide assistance with showering, dressing and eating, and often facilitate or assist with outings and other social activities. The level of assistance provided will depend on the person's ability and health. Care may also include assistance with self-medication and arranging activities to enhance the individual's physical, emotional and intellectual development.
<b>WA</b>	Western Australia
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

# Documents linked in the Framework and Companion Resource

2014 Report of Audit of Disability Research

Australian Charter on Healthcare Rights

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031

Authorisation of Restrictive Practices in Funded Disability Services Policy

A Western Australia for Everyone: State Disability Strategy 2020–2030

*Carers Recognition Act 2004*

Chief Psychiatrist's Review Report: Building rehabilitation and recovery services for people with severe enduring mental illness and complex needs – including those with challenging behaviour

*Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992*

Disability Health Network Website

*Declared Places (Mentally Impaired Accused) Bill 2013*

*Equal Opportunity Act 1984*

Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan

*Guardianship and Administration Act 1990*

Hospital Stay Guideline for Hospitals and Disability Service Organisations

Ministerial Advisory Council on Disability

*National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013*

*National Disability Insurance Scheme (Restrictive Practices and Behaviour Support) Rule 2018*

NDIS Applied Principles and Tables of Support

National Oral Health Plan 2015–2024

National roadmap for improving the health of Australians with intellectual disability

National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards

NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework

People with Disability: Action Plan to Improve WA Public Sector Employment Outcomes 2020-2025

Policy Framework for Substantive Equality

*Privacy Act 1988*

Quality of Care Principles

WA Rare Diseases Strategic Framework 2015–2018

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015–2030

*WA Disability Services Act 1993*

WA Health Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

WA Health Language Services Policy

WA Health Promotion Strategic Framework 2017–2021

WA Health Sustainable Health Review

WA Strategy to Respond to the Abuse of Older People

WHO Global Disability Action Plan 2014–2021

Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy for WA Public Sector Employment 2020–2025

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