

NDIS Service Provider Tip Sheet

The Companion Card program is a voluntary scheme in which some Victorian businesses, venues and event organisers agree to provide complimentary event entry tickets to the accompanying carers of cardholders.

Venues and event organisers are not compensated for providing free tickets to the accompanying carers.

Who is eligible to apply?

Eligible applicants must be permanent residents/citizens of Australia residing in Victoria, have a permanent significant and/or profound disability, and require a high level of support to attend venues and events. This high level of support must be required for life.

Please note that having a permanent disability does not necessarily mean a person requires a high level of support or that this high level support is required for the rest of their life.

How is eligibility assessed?

Each application is assessed against a detailed eligibility framework on a case-by-case basis. A list of conditions eligible for a Companion Card is provided overleaf.

Various factors are considered to determine whether the high level of support an applicant requires fits the criteria for eligibility. For example:

- whether aides and equipment can be used to help lower the level of support required for an applicant to access venues or events
- whether the condition is episodic in nature
- whether interventions such as medication, therapy, treatment strategies or transport options could improve a client's independence.

What is a high level of support?

A person requiring a high level of support needs substantial assistance with mobility, communication, self-care, learning, planning and decision-making.

For the purposes of the Companion Card application process, this should be considered specifically in relation the applicant's ability to attend venues and events. This could include:

- an inability to use mobility aides
- an inability to effectively communicate or use alternative communication tools
- difficulty with toileting and eating at venues and events



- significant challenges with understanding instructions
- significant challenges exchanging money to pay for tickets, services and items where no alternatives are available.

Support needs are not considered to be high level in cases where:

- interventions like purchasing tickets online, paying with a debit card, and printing directions are possible
- a person only needs initial support while they are becoming familiar with a new place
- support needs fluctuate from day-to-day due to the episodic nature of a person's condition
- support is needed for 'just in case' situations such as the risk of a medical episode or falls
- a person is accompanied by a carer for reassurance and encouragement or to assist with building confidence
- where a venue or event fails to provide adequate accessibility access.

Helping your people apply

NDIS Service providers can support eligible applicants to submit accurate Companion Card application forms complete with supporting documentation.

By understanding who is eligible for a Companion Card, ineligible people can be discouraged from applying. This minimises disappointment and frustration for unsuccessful applicants, and will help the program to deliver cards faster to successful applicants.

How you can help people understand the Companion Card program

- Encourage people who are on the eligibility list (see overleaf) to apply.
- Advise people that the Companion Card is not issued to all people with a disability or people who have carers.
- Advise people that receiving Assistance with Social and Community Participation funding in their NDIS plan or having a Disability Support Pension does not automatically mean they are eligible for a Companion Card.
- Advise people that the Victorian Companion Card program is a voluntary scheme where participating businesses opt to provide complementary tickets. Venues and events are not reimbursed for these costs.
- Advise people that the Companion Card is not a legislated entitlement. Non-participating venues are not obliged to offer complementary tickets to people with disabilities.
- Advise people that accessibility shortfalls at a venue or event are not covered by the Companion Card program.
- Discourage people with minimal or moderate support needs from applying.

Examples of eligible conditions

- ☒ Autism indicated by a CARS score of 36 and above or DSM-V score of 3
- ☒ Autism in combination with an intellectual disability indicated by a CARS score of 30 and above or DSM-V score of 2 **AND** a FSIQ of 69 or below
- ☒ Intellectual disability indicated by a FSIQ of 50 or below
- ☒ Significant and severe conditions that cannot be controlled by medication or other treatment/intervention
- ☒ Down Syndrome
- ☒ Progressive neurological conditions – where the level of impairment/dysfunction is significant and advanced
- ☒ Uncontrolled epilepsy with frequent seizures (grand mal only, frequency more than weekly)
- ☒ Spinal injuries – where high-level assistance is required
- ☒ Osteogenesis imperfecta
- ☒ Cognitive issues where impairment is significant (eg. advanced dementia/ABI)
- ☒ Motor neurone disease
- ☒ Major organ failure where treatment/transplant surgery is not possible
- ☒ Combination of conditions in applicants who are 90+ years old
- ☒ Legally blind where visual acuity scores are less than 6/60 with corrected vision or less than 10% of peripheral vision
- ☒ Multiple sclerosis (primary and secondary progressive only)
- ☒ Muscular dystrophy
- ☒ Parkinson's Disease – with mobility problems

Examples of ineligible conditions

- ☒ Conditions which fluctuate and therefore the support needs change
- ☒ Conditions considered 'episodic' in nature where the need for attendant care is 'just in case' (eg. epilepsy, cardiac arrest, falls risk)
- ☒ Psychiatric conditions that may respond to interventions (eg. therapy, treatment)
- ☒ Where aids and equipment reduce the requirement for attendant care (eg. technology, walking frames, scooters)
- ☒ Post traumatic stress disorder
- ☒ Conditions where the need for attendant care is low (eg. providing reassurance or for 'just in case' situations)
- ☒ Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder/ Attention Deficit Disorder
- ☒ Autism indicated by a CARS score of 35 or less or DSM-V score of 2 or less **AND** a FSIQ of 70 or above
- ☒ Conditions where the incapacity is temporary
- ☒ Orthopaedic conditions (osteoarthritis/ joint replacements)
- ☒ Conditions that may improve or be better managed with time, treatment or interventions (eg. surgery, rehabilitation, recovery, training or medication management)
- ☒ People requiring assistance due to accessibility limitations of a particular venue or event
- ☒ Minor to moderate communication problems or communication barriers not related to the disability (eg. speaking a language other than English)
- ☒ Weight related conditions (eg. Obesity, anorexia)
- ☒ Chronic fatigue syndrome

Helping applicants complete the form

Apply for a Companion Card

Apply online

Online applications have two sections to complete. Part A will need to be completed by (or for) the person with the disability who is applying for a card.

Part B will need to be completed by your health professional. Part A must be completed before Part B can be completed.

 **Start application** 

Online applications can only be assessed once Part A and B are submitted.

Apply by post

Download and print a form yourself.

 **Download PDF**

Ask for a form to be posted to you.

 **Call 1800 650 611**

Post completed application to:

Companion Card Applications
G.P.O Box 4987
Melbourne VIC 3001

Applying online

Both sections of the application (part A and part B) must be completed online. We cannot accept or assess incomplete online applications.

If you are unable to complete an application online, please print the pdf of the form from the Companion Card website or request a form be posted to you. This will ensure that the most up-to-date form is used for each application.

Ensuring an application is relevant and complete

Only Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) registered professionals such as a GP, nurse, occupational therapist, speech pathologist, psychologist, or psychiatrist can complete the health professional section (part B) of the application form.

NDIS Service providers and other support providers not registered with AHPRA can provide supporting letters to accompany the application but cannot complete part B.

Please ensure responses relate to your client's ability to access venues and events only. Include information about the challenges a person may experience at home or in other settings (e.g. difficulty dressing or showering independently) is not relevant to the Companion Card application and should not be included.

Self-care – How much of the time do you need self-care support when accessing venues and events?*

☐ None ☐ less than 25% ☐ 25%–75% ☐ greater than 75%

Describe your self-care support needs when attending a venue or event*

Supporting medical evidence/reports **MUST** be provided with each application. These reports should include a diagnosis and the degree of functional impairment a person experiences when at a venue or event. Reports should also include any equipment, technology, medical interventions, or strategies used to better manage the impact of their disability. These reports are often provided by general practitioners, medical specialists, or allied health professionals such as an occupational therapist, speech pathologist, physiotherapist or psychologist.

Other reports such as National Disability Insurance Scheme Plans or MyAged Care Assessments can also be helpful in assessing an application.

For more information on the Companion Card visit www.companioncard.vic.gov.au