

Asking about disability

Introduction

Around one in five Queenslanders has a disability.

Consumers with disability are more likely to experience barriers accessing appropriate health care, have unique care needs, and experience higher rates of morbidity, mortality and healthcare safety incidents.

This fact sheet provides some simple ways to ask about and assess disability. Collecting disability demographics can help us to:

- partner with consumers from diverse backgrounds
- provide person-centred care
- monitor access, safety, and quality issues
- develop quality improvement initiatives.

It is important to collect disability demographics in the same way we ask about age, gender, cultural background, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification.

Consumer quote

“When you know more about me, you can provide me with care that is best suited to me. Asking questions can help you get to know me.”

Different types of questions for different situations

Organising events or appointment bookings

It is important that we consider people's access and participation needs when we plan events and services. Asking about a person's needs before an event allows us to make reasonable adjustments to make sure that all people can access and participate in our event.

A sensitive way of asking about a person's disability needs is:

Question	Answer
<i>“Is there anything I/we can do to help you access or participate at our [event/appointment]?”</i> Examples of assistance include wheelchair access, arranging an interpreter, longer appointments, hearing loop, access for a support person, bringing an assistance animal and speech captioning	Allow free text.
People's disability access and participation needs are highly diverse and so it is helpful to allow the patient to respond in their way to tell you what is important to them. This question also provides an opportunity for people to raise other types of access needs, such as interpreters or childcare.	

Collecting demographic data

Disability demographic questions should be considered whenever and wherever we collect consumer demographics. This could include quality improvement systems, community surveys, consumer satisfaction surveys, or consultation groups.

Question	Answer
<i>“Do you have a disability?”</i> A disability is an impairment which is likely to be permanent or long-lasting and makes it hard to do everyday tasks	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say
This is short and easy to answer, but it won't tell you about the type of disability.	

Ideally, this second question can also be asked to provide extra detail about the type of disability:

Question	Answer
<i>“What type of disability do you have?”</i>	☐ Physical disability ☐ Intellectual or cognitive disability ☐ Autism spectrum ☐ Vision ☐ Hearing ☐ Neurological disability ☐ Psychosocial disability ☐ Other disability: _____ ☐ Prefer not to say

People can have different needs depending on the type of disability they have. Asking this question can provide insights about differences amongst people with disability.

Other types of questions

Question	Answer
<i>“Are you a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participant?”</i>	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I am in the process of making an access request ☐ Prefer not to say

This is short and easy to answer, but it won't tell you about the type of disability.

Question	Answer
<i>“Do you live in a supported accommodation service?”</i>	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say
<i>“If you answered yes, what type of supported accommodation do you live in?”</i>	☐ Disability supported accommodation ☐ Residential Aged Care Facility ☐ Supported Accommodation Provider

This question can also tell you if you need to coordinate intake/ discharge with another support service.

Question	Answer
<i>“Do you receive a Centrelink Disability Support Pension?”</i>	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say

This can help identify people with disability who receive income support.
Note: Note all people with disability receive a Disability Support Pension.

Question	Answer
<i>“Are you the main provider of unpaid care for an older person or someone with a disability, mental illness or chronic illness?”</i>	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say

Carers are an important group of consumers – particularly for consumer partnership and quality improvement work.

Adapted from material developed by Metro South Health, Health Equity and Access Team.