



How people with a disability can be included as active partners in flexible assessment in workplace – experience of all parties

Flexible assessment

Trainers and assessors can make assessment flexible in many different ways. Learners and workers doing the Certificate IV in Disability Work can show that they are competent in a range of ways that does not have to involve writing essays. What is required is methods that give the worker the opportunity to show that they can do their job.

Assessment can be real and relevant. Flexible assessment methods could include:

- verbal answers to questions based on real work situations
- showing the assessor how they go about their work
- discussing scenarios and case studies
- workplace supervisors involved in discussions and signing off assessment
- client/s involved in assessment

Flexible assessment in action – case studies

At a training agency in Regional Victoria all of these options are given to Certificate IV participants. Most of the learners are trainees and are employed as disability workers with different local government and government funded agencies.

Set out below are two case studies. They provide examples of how people with a disability can be included in the assessment of people training to be disability workers. Following the case studies are comments from an assessor about the process.

Jenny is the trainer and assessor and has welcomed people with a disability being included meaningfully in the assessment process. She finds it a useful way to assess that good values and respect are being shown by workers. Who would know this better than the person receiving their support?

1. Mario and Laura

Mario had a car accident some years ago. He acquired a brain injury. He has some issues with memory and comprehension. He also has restrictions in his physical movement and requires assistance with personal care each day. He lives with his wife. Laura began working with him through an agency. She did not have any qualifications and supported Mario for six months, learning her job from him and what he required. The agency she worked for offered traineeships so Laura signed up to do her Certificate IV in disability work.

Mario was Laura's only client and throughout her training Mario helped Laura to gain confidence. When Jenny offered the option of Mario being involved in her formal assessment Laura was very happy.

How Mario was involved

Jenny spoke with Mario to see if he was interested in helping to assess Laura. She then prepared a sheet that listed all of the essential skills and knowledge for all of the core competencies in the Certificate IV. Mario was given this sheet and asked to tick a box and indicate if Laura demonstrated each of those skills and knowledge. This included questions about dignity, respect, confidentiality, choices.

Mario was asked to sign off on this official paperwork to be included in Laura's assessment file.

Jenny also visited Mario at his home while Laura was there to discuss her progress. All three of them were involved in the discussion. Jenny also observed Laura at work.

What Laura thought

Laura found Mario's comments about her work were great because they were "straight from him and they were concerning him." They have a good working relationship and she thought that Mario being involved in her assessment was "appropriate and comfortable" for her. She felt "he was genuinely involved" and saw that there were benefits for Mario as well because he was involved and respected.

What Mario thought

Mario felt that the experience deepened his understanding of Laura's training. He has volunteered to come into classes at the Training Organisation to assist with the training of other workers. He sees himself as having an important role in the training of his workers and when he left rehabilitation he had been given the confidence by the support staff there to take an active role in training his support workers.

2. Tonya and Anne

Tonya requires assistance with personal care as a result of a stroke. She lives with her husband who is very involved in her care. Anne is one of her paid carers and works with her several times a week. Anne did the Certificate IV in Disability Work this year as a trainee.

Jenny asked Anne if she would like assessment that included a client to be part of her flexible assessment and she agreed. She chose Tonya as the person with a disability that she wanted involved in her assessment because she felt very confident with her and her husband.

Jenny rang Tonya and explained the process. Tonya cannot write at the moment, but was happy to discuss her care with Jenny. She asked her husband Pete to help her complete any paperwork, including signing off on the assessment.

What Anne thought

Anne was worried about the assessment side of the Certificate IV. When she found that Tonya could actually assess her she was delighted. "Because it was the client I didn't feel like I was being watched." She just went about her work as usual and the whole experience felt like "it wasn't assessment, it was learning." Anne found it really valuable to get such positive feedback from her client. "I didn't realize how pleased they are with me." The client and her husband took the assessment very seriously and provided evidence to Jenny via the tick sheet and discussion that Anne's work and her attitudes were what they expected. Anne was happy for Pete to be involved as well as "we are part of the same caring team."

What Tonya and her husband thought

Tonya happily agreed to be involved. She was concerned about not being able to write, use ticks or even sign her name but was pleased when Jenny explained that her husband could also be involved. He is usually there when Anne is assisting Tonya. Pete sees their involvement in Anne's assessment as "a very important process".

Assessor's comments about people with a disability being included in assessment of workers.

Jenny's comment's can be summarized under three headings:

- How you can involve people with disabilities in assessment of workers
- The benefits
- Things to watch out for

How you can involve people with a disability in meaningful assessment

- ✓ Take the time to explain the process of assessment to learners/workers and people with a disability
- ✓ Meet with the client and provide them with the chance to get to know you and ask questions about the assessment process
- ✓ Always ask if they wish to be involved and let them know they can stop being involved at any time, assess their level of comfort
- ✓ Through discussion with the person with a disability, decide how best it is for them to be involved eg by discussing the worker's work with the assessor, or answering written questions, or tick sheet, or other method
- ✓ Inform the person with a disability about confidentiality and privacy policies

The benefits of involving a person with a disability in a worker's assessment

- Respect is shown to the person with a disability by involving them in the training and assessment of the worker who provides their care
- All units of competency in the CSTP can be assessed in the workplace
- It is a real situation
- Assessment can take place over time, different circumstances and on more than one occasion
- Can be a choice that relaxes the worker – might be much easier for them than producing written work
- Provides the opportunity for another party than just the classroom trainer to see the worker at work
- Feedback is given by the person with a disability to the worker and assessor
- It is a genuine way to assess dignity and respect and an individual approach

Things to watch out for when involving a person with a disability in a worker's assessment

- That all parties understand their roles and the importance of confidentiality
- No one should feel under any obligation to participate in the process – the worker does not have to, the client does not have to
- That relatives or persons involved in close relationships are not assessing each other
- That the person with a disability is not asking a worker to do anything in an unsafe way in breach of Occupational Health and Safety legislation. For example, “I want to be lifted this way...”
- Don't wear out the goodwill of a person by asking them to be involved in assessment of many workers
- Respect the needs of the person with a disability and the worker – organize assessment times around them

Links

All units of competency for the Certificate IV in Disability Work can be found at the National Training Information Service website: www.ntis.gov.au

Follow the prompts to “Search NTIS”, click on “To search Training Package competencies (units)”.

Enter code or title of competency. Scroll down to Essential skills and knowledge.

General information on training packages, assessment, the Vocational Education and Training sector can be found at: www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training

The rules about assessment can be downloaded from the same site at

<http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/998C692D-E4CA-4DF0-9CFD-48B72E1F2141/10902/assessmentguidelines.txt>

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research is found at:

www.ncver.edu.au

At this site two articles on flexible training and assessment can be found

An NCVER report “Maximising confidence in assessment decision making”, includes reference to a “Witness testimony form” when using other parties in the assessment process. This is found at

www.ncver.edu.au/research/proj/nr9029_2pdf

Another NCVER report “Exploring assessment in flexible delivery of vocational education and training programs” is found at

www.ncver.edu.au/research/proj/nr0007.pdf