NDIS Practice Standards in Psychosocial Support Services
Core Module 2: Governance, Operations, Risk, Quality and Information Management
Webinar – 25 March 11:00AM – 12:00PM

WEBINAR REPORT AND TRANSCRIPT

Presenters:
- Daniel Kim – Host, Redback Connect
- Sherie Avalos, Acting Director of Provider Registration at the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.
- Fiona Loughlan, General Manager of Institute for Healthy Communities Australia, an Approved Quality Auditor.

Participants:
- 114 people registered to attend the webinar
- 47 people attended (41.59% of registrants)

Transcript:

DANIEL KIM:
Welcome, and thanks for joining us in the Learning Cafe for today's webinar. I'm Daniel Kim, your host. I'd like to begin with acknowledging the Aboriginal owners on the land on which we meet, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. And pay my respects to the Elders, past, present and emerging.

This webinar is gonna be recorded and will be shared after today's event. So if you wish to come back to it later or share it with others, you can. Or what about language used in the mental health sector and it's used in reference to the NDIS. In the mental health sector, the term consumer is describing a person accessing a mental health service. In the context of NDIS funded psychosocial services, we will use the term 'participant' in reference to a mental health consumer with psychosocial disabilities and NDIS plan.

So risk is used in our webinar today, and it will refer to organisational risk, and how it is managed rather than a participant. Now, this is the third in the series of ten webinars where we are systematically unpacking the new national NDIS Practice Standards and registration requirements to examine how they apply in psychosocial support services. I also acknowledge the lived experience of the people recovering from mental health conditions here today and in our community and their many contributions to the mental health service sector, particularly those with lived experience who contributed to the work of this project.

Now we are also hearing from some very important speakers today. We are joined live in the studio by a couple of very important panellists beginning with Sherie Avalos from the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. Sherie has 20 years of experience in the disability sector and executive management. And is currently the Acting Director of Provider Registration at the commission. Sherie, welcome to the program.

SHERIE AVALOS:
Thank you. Thank you for having me today.

DANIEL KIM:
It's great to have you with us.

SHERIE AVALOS:
I'm really excited to be here.

DANIEL KIM:
Now, on top of that bio, you've also spent ten years as a provider in a past life. Yeah, as a provider, helping and supporting people with mental health conditions to choose, find and get a job.

SHERIE AVALOS:
Yes, I have. Yep. I think the first person that I assisted was over 25 years ago, and that young man, I call him young, is still working, which is fantastic.

DANIEL KIM:
That's wonderful, isn't it?

SHERIE AVALOS:

It is.

DANIEL KIM:

Looking forward to the insights you'll be bringing to us today. And we're also joined by Fiona Loughlan, the General Manager from the Institute for Healthy Communities Australia, which is an approved quality auditor. Fiona has over 15 years of executive management experience across regional and corporate environments. And this is everywhere, in government, not for profit, private sector organisations, and with tertiary business and legal qualifications. Fiona, welcome to the program.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Thank you for having me. Pleasure to be here.

DANIEL KIM:
It's great to have you with us. It's just good to have a panel where we've got somebody who's directing everything and somebody who's actually in the field helping people with the work that we're talking about.

SHERIE AVALOS:
Yeah, thank you.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:

Very good.

DANIEL KIM:

We have plenty to cover today. Clearly a lot to unpack and we're really looking forward to give them everything. But before we dive into the content for today's webinar, I'd like to ask you to rate your current overall knowledge of the NDIS Practice Standards and Registrations Requirements. You'll be seeing a poll coming up on your screen at the moment. Please let us know how you would rate your knowledge. 1 being the least and 5 being expert. This is gonna help us evaluate the effectiveness of the webinar and how future webinars can be planned and improved.

Live Polling Question: How would you rate your knowledge of the new practice standards?
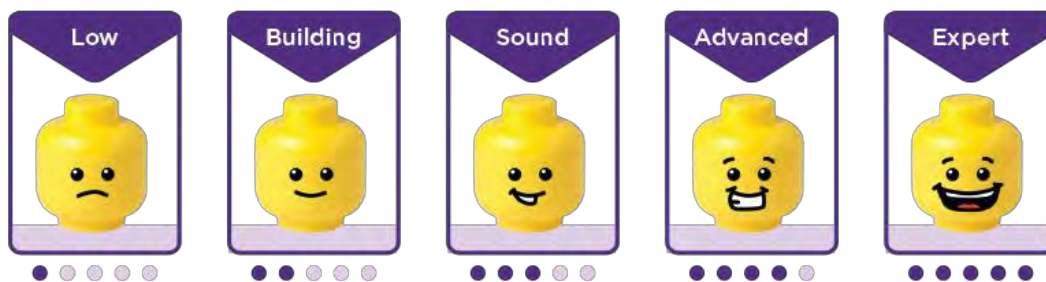
And at the end of the webinar, we'll ask you this question again along with a survey question, and that will help us clarify and better understand your learning needs. And just while you are answering those questions, let's take a look at the Embracing Change series in a whole because it's a project of ten webinars and one national forum. And it's part of a learning strategy to assist organisations that provide services to people living with psychosocial disability and their supporters in achieving conformance of work, practice with the new NDIS Practice Standards and Registration Requirements. It's all a bit of a mouthful, isn't it?

SHERIE AVALOS:

It is, isn't it?

DANIEL KIM:

But that's why we've got you here today. So in webinars 1 and 2, we talked about the pinpoints and priorities for the providers, and you'll see it on your screen right now, in applying those Practice Standards in psychosocial services. In the second webinar, we unpacked the part one of the core module, rights and responsibilities, and how they were two sides of the same coin. And today, we are heading part 2 of the core module, Governance and Operational Management.

Now, there's a lot to cover in that topic alone so we're gonna do it over two webinars. And today, we're gonna look at the first four outcomes. The quality indicators being governance and operation management, risk management, quality management, and information management. Gee. That's quite a bit to go through. I believe we might have another slide that shows you those four, so if you can get that up for us, the specific outcomes. Yes, here we go.

So it's the risk management, quality management - So governance and operational management, risk management, quality management, and information management are the quality indicators we will be talking about today. Just as talking of this webinar in particular and the learning outcomes for our viewers, it's almost like high school where we're talking about outcomes -

SHERIE AVALOS:
Yes, doesn't it? And university. (LAUGHS)

DANIEL KIM:
That's it. The dot points we're gonna try and cover today. By watching this webinar with Fiona and with Sherie, you will be able to describe the participant outcomes and the quality indicators for Governance, Operations, Risk, Quality and Information Management under the NDIS Practice Standards.

You'll be able to recognise specific psychosocial work practice documentation that can meet these outcomes and the quality indicators. Recognise the pitfalls to avoid in preparing for audit against these outcomes and indicators. And recognise the benefits to participants and the organisation of a successful audit result against these outcomes and indicators. Now, that is a whole lot of verbiage from me, so I think we'll just head straight over to you, Sherie. Can you just take us through the pages 7, 8 and 9 of the Practice Standards?

SHERIE AVALOS:
I can. Thank you very much. But I actually think you're doing a great job and you probably could have continued on with it. Look, I just wanna refer back to - it's on our website, and I'm sure everyone has access to this, but this is NDIS Practice Standards, my bible. And it does outline what we're talking about today. Through my presentation today, through this discussion, I'll drill down in two of the practice standards. But then, I'll refer to the Practice Standards guidelines and quality indicators. So I just thought I'd give you a little bit of background first, if that's OK.

So what are the Practice Standards? They're the requirements that set out the standard of service that you must deliver to be a registered NDIS provider. Really importantly, they are benchmark for providers to assess performance and demonstrate high quality and safe supports for participants. Each Practice Standard is built from a high-level - from a participant outcome to support the quality indicators. During a provider's application for registration, the NDIS commission that will advise you as the provider what Practice Standards apply to your application and what type of audit. For the providers - The providers will need to deliver. If you're delivering a high risk, a more complex support, you'll be assessed against the core standards. And as we've just been told that we're gonna look at the four of those core standards today. And if you are being assessed against the core standards, you'll actually be audited with a certification audit, which Fiona's gonna talk about a bit later. Fantastic. So I'm gonna get this buzzer right.

DANIEL KIM:
And just while we do, we would also encourage everyone to participate in the conversation today. There's a live chat going on, on this live webinar. If you click the purple button at the top of your screen, there's a bit of online community going on. And any questions that you ask will come through to us on this trusty old iPad of ours. We can either take questions as we go or we can take questions at the end. And probably would make sense to take them at the end. So we'll let people have their conversation online and we'll get the questions further through to us. If there's anything that's pertinent, we might interrupt and see how we go.

SHERIE AVALOS:
Happy to. And actually, sorry, I should say hi to the community out there first too.

DANIEL KIM:
Yes, any shout outs that you like to do?

SHERIE AVALOS:
Hi everyone. I hope the weather's good where you are, and I'm really enjoying that rain may I say. So if we're looking at the principles guiding practice standards, I thought I'd run through that as well before we delve down into the Practice Standards.

Supports to the NDIS participants either be consistent with the NDIS Act. So when you're looking at developing your policies and procedures under the Practice Standards, also, I would refer to the Act as well. But the Practice Standards are consistent with the Act. And they underpin core principles. And the core principles are around the participants. So the participants are assessed when engaging in community life. The participants are involved in the decision making. The diversity of individual participants is supported. Relationships are important to participants and they're recognised. And participant's choice control is enabled and respected. So there's really key guiding principles.

DANIEL KIM:
Is there a big difference between the guiding principles and the participant outcomes in quality indicators?

SHERIE AVALOS:
Between the guiding principles, no, they're actually embedded within the quality outcomes. Indicators. Sorry, indicators. And they underpin all that. OK. So what does the Practice Standard look like? Well, the standard defines the outcomes that the NDIS provider will be audited against. So Fiona will talk a bit more about how that will happen. And if they wish to apply to be registered with the Commission, there's a high-level outcome statement, which I'll go through in a moment. They're all participant focused. They targeted so that the provider's focus is practical, and the elements of it is to guide the collection of the evidence. So I just want to sort of emphasise that the Practice Standards are a guide and not all elements of service delivery. So the quality indicators, they're evidence-based, and they're against each practice standard. So each Practice Standards, that's what's going to look like. So let's have a look at one.

So I'm going to - Lost the top of that in the slide, but that's OK. Sorry, people. I'm looking at one screen and it's down on the bottom. So apologies there, first time. And so the one I thought - I've chosen to really sort of drill down in today... but the other two are just as important. But the first one is around quality management. So the outcome is that each participant benefits from a quality management system relevant and proportionate to the size and scale of the provider. Look, I like to point out that's really important here when it comes - from the provider's perspective. We're not looking at that a provider that is small and has, you know... a couple of participants or - They would not have a quality management system that is sophisticated and as large as a large organisation. Would you say that, Fiona?

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Totally agree.

SHERIE AVALOS:
Excellent. So the quality indicators actually reflect that throughout the practice standards. So, as I said, the outcome is to gauge participant benefits from a quality management system relevant to the size, and which promotes continuous improvement in service delivery. So under each outcome is quality indicator. So for quality management, we're looking at the provider maintains a quality management system that is relevant and portionate to the size, we're emphasising this, but also the system that you have in place defines how you're gonna meet the requirements of the legislation for these standards.

So we're looking at the NDIS rules and the NDIS practice standards, standard rules. And the system needs to be reviewed and updated as required. And I just thought I'd take this moment to talk about, and this is sort of to decide, but when I was a provider the method that I used when it came to reviewing policies and procedures is that we looked at the timeframe in which we would review them, depended on the risk that was associated to that policy and procedure.

So, for example, and it's not a written rule, but, for example, our governance policies, we reviewed every 12 months. Feedback we reviewed that yearly, complaints was every six months. Medication management, every six months give or take that. But so reviewing your policies and procedures and keeping them live and active and getting feedback from participants. That's just my provider. The experience there. Just thought I'd bring that in.

The providers quality management system is documented. And as I said, I've just talked a bit about internal audits that are relevant to the size again. And that the provider's management system supports continuous improvement. So using the outcomes that you get back from participants when you're looking at feedback any risk related data and evidence that you've got that inform. So evidence externally that can inform best practice for policies and procedures. And as I just said, feedback from participants and workers, really, really important from both those avenues.

DANIEL KIM:
And there's a lot in there. So if we could just get the slide back up one more time so that the viewers can see those dot points just reiterated. So we've talked about the quality management systems and particularly as it pertains to supporting continuous improvement. That's what it is for most providers, isn't it? Continuous improvement.

SHERIE AVALOS:
Yes. Yup, yup. Keep evolving. The other one I thought I'd just drill down on and focus. Oops, I've got, are you gonna do it for me or are we gonna do it?

DANIEL KIM:
I've got it to the next one now.

SHERIE AVALOS:
Oh, wonderful. Thank you very much. Teamwork. See that's what it's about, isn't it? Team work. OK. So the next one that I'm looking at is the information management. So the outcome is the management of each participant's information ensures that it's identifiable, accurately recorded, current and confidential. So each participant's information is easily accessible to the participant, and appropriately used by workers. OK.

So what are the indicators? Really importantly again, that each participant's consent is obtained to collect and use and retain the information to disclose. Each participant is informed how their information is stored and used and when and how each participant can access or collect their information and we draw or amend their prior consent. And if you step, or if we refer that back to and link that back to your quality management system, you'd have that documented in your quality management system. There'd be a policy and procedure around how you would record, how you would gain this information and how it's kept private and confidential. So that would be in your policy and procedure.

An information management system is maintained that is relevant and proportionate to the size. So then again, as I mentioned before, it depends on the size of the organisation and the scale of the organisation and at that time, at that point in time. Documents are stored and appropriately used, access, transferred, storage, security, retrieval, retention. So always, as I said, that would be included in your policy and procedure about information management. So how do you do it?

DANIEL KIM:
And that's really important too cause we're living in a post GDPR world where everyone's interested in information, how you manage it, where does it go...

SHERIE AVALOS:
GDP.

DANIEL KIM:

GDPR, where, Europe basically changed the rules about privacy and then everybody's like, oh, yes, privacy. Yes, and with all the Facebooks and Googles of this world doing all sorts of things with our data. This is really, really...

SHERIE AVALOS:

It is really. And it's really important. It is. So they're the two that I thought I'd drill down in. But as I said, included in this webinar. We've also got governance and operational management. So if anyone's got questions about that, happy to take that on. But similar you've got your practice standards, which talks about your key outcome and then how you can achieve that.

DANIEL KIM:
Yes, that's right.

SHERIE AVALOS:
OK. So we'll move on to what's important, practice standards audits. All registered providers must be audited against the relevant NDIS practice standards. So I spoke about that previously. So if you're delivering a high risk, more complex supports, you'll be audited against the core, which is what we're talking about today and at the last webinar and the next few webinars.

Audits are proportionate to size. Again, I've mentioned that, but I'll mention that again because it's really important for the organisation and the risk and the complexity of the services that they deliver. We're approving and training more audit bodies. We have some more audit training coming up. We've currently, there's currently around or over 400 auditors and I'm sure Fiona's got more that she would like to be trained, which is good.

So we're growing that. We're growing that market. And all auditors need to be trained through the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission before they'll actually be out and auditing. But just want to say we're here to help and guide you through the process. Access the website. It's really, there's a number of documents that step out step by step. And there's also documents around the practice standards, but more than happy for you just to give us a call on our 1800 number. It's on the website. And as I said, access our website and one of our contact centre staff or registration staff can help you through that process.

DANIEL KIM:
Yes, thank you very much.

SHERIE AVALOS:
That's OK. Hope I didn't whisk through that.

DANIEL KIM:
No, not at all. No. We've got a couple of questions coming through here. Jane is asking, Sherie's slides mentioned providers can make a choice about becoming registered with permission. If a provider of services to people with a psychosocial disability doesn't wish to apply for registration. What are the consequences?

SHERIE AVALOS:
OK, great question. Non-registered providers of NDIS supports may still work with NDIS participants without being registered. However, it should be noted that a number of expectations, which is mandatory. So if you will be delivering behaviour supports, providing specialist disability accommodation or there's the likelihood that an intermine or ongoing use of a restrictive practice is in place when assisting the participant, you do need to register. But in addition to that, it should be noted that registration is necessary if you're supporting a participant who is agency managed. So if a participant is self managed or a plan managed, you don't need to be a registered provider, but if they're agency managed, you do.

DANIEL KIM:
Yeah. OK. Hope that helps you, Jane.

SHERIE AVALOS:
Yes, hope it does, Jane.

DANIEL KIM:
Yes, and of course, just a quick reminder. It's the purple button at the top of your screen to join the chat and get those questions in. Another one's coming through from Andrew and he's asking, are you able to provide an example of what is best practice in terms of the way participants information is stored and how they can easily access and change it?

SHERIE AVALOS:
OK. So we don't necessarily describe best practice. However, I just want to confirm that participant's consent is obtained to collect and hold and disclose this information. So that's really important. It's really important that participants understand how their information is stored, used and how they can access and correct or withdraw their information. Information is accurate, it needs to be accurate and up to date in a timely manner. There are access controls for appropriate use for relevant workers and really importantly that the storage is secure and confidential. And this will actually be outlined in your policy and procedure.

DANIEL KIM:
There's a few more coming through, but I think we might save them to the end, otherwise we're never gonna get to Fiona's presentation.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Excellent. Can I just tack on the end of what you just said, Sherie? So that's the kind of thing that auditors are going to be looking for when they're assessing onsite. So they want to actually ensure that participants understand how their information is treated.

SHERIE AVALOS:
That's one of the questions I ask. And rightly so.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Thank you.

DANIEL KIM:
And feel, please feel free to build upon each other's points during the course of the webinar.

SHERIE AVALOS:
We'll be here for hours if we do. But no, that's OK, we will.

DANIEL KIM:
It's alright with me. But I don't know if it's alright with the MHCC and the audience.

SHERIE AVALOS:
And the audience.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
It's all about the audience. (CROSSTALK)

SHERIE AVALOS:
That's why you're here, aren't you, Daniel?

DANIEL KIM:
Ostensibly. I'm the one telling you to keep going.

SHERIE AVALOS:
That's right.

DANIEL KIM:
OK. Well, thank you for the insights from a Commission perspective. If we now throw the baton over to you Fiona. Could you talk us through some of the presentations you've got from an auditor perspective?

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
OK. So as we've already heard, the NDIS commission requires all registered providers to undergo an audit and that audit can be either a verification or a certification assessment. The idea behind that is to provide assurance that certain standards of safety and quality in the delivery of services and supports are being met.

One of the objectives of this requirement is to boost provider capacity to achieve improved outcomes for participants. That's really what the whole system is about. And the other way that I look at it, it's applying mainstream business excellence to disability services. For providers who have been used to accreditation or audit in under other schemes, they may find that while in the past the focus was on a minimum level of compliance and meeting the funding contract, this doesn't actually cut it anymore in today's environment.

So just as you're required to demonstrate that you're maintaining and improving your professional qualifications and expertise through CPD, NDIS has included the audit requirement to encourage continuous quality improvement in all providers delivering services to NDIS participants. The audit scheme reflects an overall maturation in quality assessment. Say five to 10 years ago, an auditor would want to see your policy documents and would probably go through a bit of a check list. This scheme, however, is about making sure that your governance systems, which, when we talk governance systems, we're talking policies and procedures, are consistently applied and resulting in approved outcomes for participants. The way that we test that is by talking to people and making sure that they understand what they're entitled to, what their plan looks like, what they can expect for the service, that the workers understand what the policies and procedures are.

So, if we were to only review your APRA registration or even review your National Standards for Mental Health Services Audit report it doesn't necessarily demonstrate that you're meeting the registration requirements. However, these certainly assist you in demonstrating compliance with the NDIS practice standards. So, the audit is really about encouraging continuous improvement in providers. So, you can see there's a consistent theme building here. It's gradual, it's ongoing, it's incremental improvement that will result in better outcomes for service users.

DANIEL KIM:
If we can just get that slide up one more time for everybody, as well. These are the key points that you're making. It's a gradual thing. It's an ongoing incremental improvement. It's just constant improvement and it betters everybody, doesn't it?

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
It does.

DANIEL KIM:
Particularly for the participants. That's really the focus of it.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
It does. You have a better service, a better business, better outcomes for service users.

SHERIE AVALOS:
And a safe service.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Yes. So, one of the questions we get asked a lot is certification verification and what's involved in each standard. One of the easiest ways or less complex ways to explain it is for those businesses that are delivering lower risk and less complex services they'll require verification assessments only. If you're delivering higher risk services either against the core module only or you need additional modules, you will require a certification assessment. At the moment we're looking at what's required and we were looking at verification assessment. The majority of registration groups fit within the low risk and less complex service groups. However...

DANIEL KIM:
Can we go back to that slide?

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
We can go back to that one.

DANIEL KIM:
This one.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
So, probably the one that applies in this scenario is therapeutic supports. If you've got that you will only need a verification assessment. A verification assessment occurs once in three years. It's not against the practice standards that Sheri was showing you before. There's a specific set of standards that are relevant to a verification assessment.

SHERIE AVALOS:
Can I just say one thing? If that provider is delivering also a high risk or complex and a lower risk, less complex support they will be doing a certification..

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Exactly. So, the higher the risk the more rigorous the assessment.

SHERIE AVALOS:
So, they could be doing one for a verification and one for certification, but they will be doing a certification.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Exactly. And we would apply the certification standard to them in that case. Good question. Thank you.

SHERIE AVALOS:
I'm asking the questions now.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
So, this webinar today is really all about the certification assessment. So, I just wanted to touch on verification. So, for certification we have those registration groups that have the higher risk and complexity and they require an assessment against the core module as well as against the specific indicators that relate to their registration groups.

When we're doing the assessment we're actually assessing against not just the outcome, not just the module, but each quality indicator. So, Sherie was talking earlier about the quality indicators in relation to information management for instance. We need to evidence that each of those quality indicators are met in relation to the verification assessment and the certification assessment.

One of the other things about the certification assessment... So, it's actually a two-step process. So, you have what's called a stage one assessment which is in sense a document review. So, it's off-site. We will review the information that you have uploaded to the Commission's portal and that will be policies and procedures.

If you haven't been able to upload all of your documents to the Commission's portal, you can provide them to us and we will verify them. You are provided with a report at the end of that assessment and that report will let you know if you're ready to proceed to the next stage or if there's work that you need to do to proceed to the next stage. So, while we can't say categorically by looking at your policies and procedures at that point that you're eligible for registration, we have an indication by reviewing your policies and procedures how you're going.

The next phase is the stage two assessment and that's conducted on-site. You will receive a lot of information to help you prepare for that going forward.

So, your stage two assessment, as I said, is on-site while your documentation at this point is important. What's more important is that we assess how your quality management system is applied across all of your services. So, that involves interviews and interviews form the main part of our assessment methodology.

So, we will talk to your governing body, your board directors for instance. We'll talk to your workers. We'll talk to your participants, as well. We will also review files as part of this process. So, we really are looking at gathering evidence from a wide range of areas so that we can ensure the Commission that you're eligible for registration and make a recommendation in relation to that. If you operate across a number of sites we'll agree with you prior to that audit which sites we will be visiting, but again we need to talk to participants and workers at each site.

At the conclusion of the on-site audit we present the findings to your organisation's management and any other interested parties who want to be involved in the audit process. That could be participants, that could be workers. A couple of other things to remember in relation to certification assessments are that you will have a mid-cycle assessment that will be on-site and the date for that mid-cycle assessment is actually aligned to your registration renewal date not your certificate expiry. So, in the past in other standards, your dealings were with the certification body or in this case the approved quality auditor. Under the NDIS practice standards assessment everything is linked back to the Commission and the registration expiry date. So, that's important to remember.

Some of the things that we're looking at as we're on-site and reviewing your operation, so for instance in relation to governance and operational management if we were looking at the outcome of participant support is overseen by robust governance and operational management systems relevant or proportionate to the size, scale of the provider, and the scope and complexity of supports delivered.

We look at the outcome indicator of opportunities provided by the governing body. Kinds of documentation that we would be looking at, and these are examples only. They're not prescriptive, and again it's dependent on the size and scale of the organisation. So, we may want to look at a policy specifying that board membership should include certain number of people with lived experience. We may want to look, well, we will want to look at your strategic plan. If we look at the outcome indicator defined structure implemented by the governing body to meet our governing body's financial legislative regulatory and contractual responsibilities. It would be good to have a matrix of your organisational policies and procedures that's mapped to the practice standards, NSMHS and any other relevant regulations. We will generally look for meeting minutes about working groups and so on and so forth. If we wanted to test the outcome indicator of the skills and knowledge required for the governing body, role descriptions, opposition descriptions specifying the roles for which lived experiences are the required or the desired are really good starting points for that.

One thing to remember when you're preparing all of your documentation is a number of artefacts that you have will actually meet a number of different indicators. So, it will map back to a number of different indicators. So, it's not multiple documents for one indicator. Look at your overall management system and your operations, and how you work, and look at the outcome indicators that are relevant to your scope and work out what it is that you've got for each layout.

One of the key features of the NDIS practice standards is the scheme actually enrols all participants automatically into the audit process. That means that if a participant does not want to be sampled, does not want to talk to an auditor they must opt out. This is quite a departure from what a lot of providers have been familiar with in the past. And what that means is when you're preparing for your audit, you must have a system or a method of providing your participants with the opportunity to opt out.

Part of the preparation for the on-site assessment is your audit body will ask you for a list of all of your participants that's de-identified. We don't want to see any participant's personal information. So, from that de-identified list the auditors will select a random number, or

random participants, to conduct file reviews on and to actually interview. The interviews can be conducted in a range of different ways. It can be face to face, it can be over the phone.

In some circumstances, we can do focus groups. We prefer, we get better outcomes by talking to people as individuals or with their support workers with them. But this is a key difference under this scheme. So you need to be prepared to advise your participants, invite them to the opening meeting, invite them to the closing meeting and engage them in the audit process. Because, as I've said, one of the key features of this scheme is that it's all about achieving better services and better outcomes for participants. And we don't know that if we don't talk to people. So, that's why we're doing it.

DANIEL KIM:
It's almost common sense, isn't it?

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Oh, it is. It is. It is. Yes. Yes. And again, if you have a participant who actually doesn't want to participate in the audit process, that's OK. That's their right. That's their choice. But as a provider, you need to make sure that it's been documented and will be available for the auditor to review. And again, this is another test of how your quality management systems or your documents are working for you.

DANIEL KIM:
It's one of those things where if you zoom out far enough and you think about the broader goal, of course you want to involve the participants, but like when you're just in the middle of preparing for the audit and getting things ready, like it's so easy to miss even though when you think about it in hindsight, common sense.

SHERIE AVALOS:
Participants are core, and they're core to these court orders.

DANIEL KIM:
Yeah. And that's the message I'm getting from both of you today.

SHERIE AVALOS:
Keeping it safe.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:

Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Yeah. OK. So, I guess, pitfalls. Yeah. Make sure that participants are aware that they're automatically included in sampling unless they've opted out and that they have enough notice and opportunity to opt out. So... If participants have agreed to be engaged in the audit process, let them know in advance what the requirements are. Find out what supports they need. And also it's a good idea to talk to your audit body and the auditors in advance as to how they can actually engage with participants in the best possible way to get the best outcome.

DANIEL KIM:
People are gonna watch out for these, aren't they? Again... Is that the last slide that you had?

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Yeah.

DANIEL KIM:
Yes. OK. Well, we've actually had like a ton of questions come through.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
OK, great.

DANIEL KIM:
And I'll work out what order we'll sort these. (LAUGHTER) And again, you probably don't need a reminder because you have been submitting so many questions, but it's the purple icon to get involved with the chat. It's at the top of your screen. We've got a whole lot of questions. I'll try and save time, but not really at names. But one question we've got is, why do I need to go through this with professional registration as well as the National Mental Health Standards? I don't need anything else?

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Look, APRA registration's fine. That's one of the things that the auditors check as part of their process. NSMHS is also a great standard, but the two of those combined don't necessarily meet all of the requirements of the NDIS practice standards, which has been designed to be a higher standard overall.

SHERIE AVALOS:
And also designed around the participant and their choice and control at that.

DANIEL KIM:
Yes. OK. I see. Thank you. Another question that's come through is, we've talked a bit about what the term risk means in relation to this part of the practice standards. Is there anything you would add or emphasise about this?

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
So the whole concept of risk within these practice standards as we've said, is around the risks to participants so, and their wellbeing, the quality of the services that they receive. So I think from my perspective, it's quite clear. Like, one of the things that we look at as when we do certification assessments is that you have a risk management plan in place and a risk strategies. So we would want to know what you've identified as the key risks within your service and what mitigations you're putting in place to actually resolve those risks. So risk is at a couple of levels. It's in the risk of the registration groups, the risks to participants, but it's also within your business and how you're managing it.

SHERIE AVALOS:
Yeah, I'd like to continue off from that and that your risk management system includes incident management, so it links to it. So when you're identifying your risk, you're doing it fine for your risk management, incident management, complaint management, work health and safety, human resource management, financial management, information management, where we've just talked about, and governance. So it all links together in the risk, overriding risk. So when you're identifying it and you're documenting it, you document it right across all those other systems as well.

DANIEL KIM:
It's the big picture view, isn't it?

SHERIE AVALOS:
It is. And, you know, backtrack to what I was saying before, this is about not just, so participants are at the core of it, but it will also support you to run a better business if you're following these guidelines.

DANIEL KIM:
Yeah. OK. Cool. Thank you very much. Another question, they're coming through thick and fast, but why is the audit process important? And there's a lot of preparation. So what can a psychosocial provider expect from the process? Can you share any examples of how a provider can demonstrate compliance?

SHERIE AVALOS:
Yeah, so again the audit process is important to ensure that you're meeting the registration requirements of the NDIS commission. You can demonstrate compliance by having your quality management systems in place. Make sure that you look at the NDIS practice standards. What are the outcomes that you're looking to achieve? What are the quality indicators that you need to be assessed against? And then look at what policies, procedures, and documents you have.

The next step in addition to that is to make sure that your workers are educated about how to apply, what your policies and procedures are and how to apply them. And then the next phase in that is to ensure that your participants or your service users actually understand what their entitlements or rights are in relation to the service that you're providing.

DANIEL KIM:
Yep. Thank you. Another question we've got coming through is, do auditors interview participants or service users? Does an auditor have the capacity to engage with consumers and carers in a way that makes them feel safe and respected?

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Yes. Look, absolutely. Interviewing participants, service users, is part of the audit process. Our auditors have a lot of experience in interviewing people with, issues, disabilities. Recently one of our auditors conducted an interview on a beach as the participant was fishing because he didn't feel safe being inside a building. So the support worker was there as well. She put her iPad away because that would make him feel uncomfortable and conducted the interview as he was fishing and that went really well. There's another example of interviewing a participant under a baobab tree. So it's about the conversation to make sure that participants feel safe and can actually share their experience. It's not, we're not interrogating people. We want to understand what they have actually experienced.

SHERIE AVALOS:
That's a fantastic example, Fiona. I love that. (CROSSTALK) Yeah, definitely. Oh, no. Maybe not today in the rain. (LAUGHTER) Oh, I'm gonna share that when I get back to the Commission.

DANIEL KIM:
That's a win-win for everybody. As an auditor, you would get more accurate information to work.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Yeah, it's good and it gives, so it gives you confidence in the quality of the service that people are experiencing, which is what we do it for realyl.

DANIEL KIM:
It's good to know people have their smarts about them. I mean, the word audit in itself can be scary, and you used the word interrogation. (CROSSTALK)

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Yeah. That's what people see it as. You know, it can be scary. We don't want it to be scary. We want it to result in better service.

DANIEL KIM:
Cause that's the real aim. It's to help everybody. And we've got heaps of other questions coming through. I've got a very simple one here, or where did it go? They keep moving. Will auditors want to interview the same sample of participants as the file audit selections?

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Generally, yes. Yeah. Yeah. We prefer to.

DANIEL KIM:
Cool. Do organisations need to pay for an audit and how often do they need to take place?

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Yes. Providers do need to pay for an audit. So you have a stage one and a stage two audit for your initial registration. Depending on how your state of readiness, it can be between six weeks and two months between the stage one and stage two in your first year, 18 months following the confirmation of your registration that you then have a mid cycle assessment and then 18 months following that you go through a recertification assessment.

DANIEL KIM:
Great. Thank you. Another question is, does the training provided to auditors specifically deal with psychosocial disability?

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
It depends on, yes, the NDIS training does deal with that. And, yeah.

SHERIE AVALOS:
So just to elaborate on that, there is a half day disability awareness training, which includes mental health.

DANIEL KIM:
Oh, yes. OK, cool. Thank you. Can't work out where we got up to, they just come through. So are you able to provide an example of what is best practice in terms of the way participant information is stored by it?

SHERIE AVALOS:
We've done that one. I was gonna say that sounds familiar.

DANIEL KIM:
Oh, gee, I wish I had a way to sort of mark these cause they came through. I might, we might take, where did the other ones go? In a while, I actually had a few questions myself or I'd like to get my screen in order. You know, we were talking about how, the examples of how we can demonstrate compliance. I was thinking if we could maybe highlight the benefit that it has to both the provider and also to the participants.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Of having improved, or having a continuous quality improvement mindset.

DANIEL KIM:
It almost sounds like a trite thing to say, but I think in the hustle and bustle of getting documentation ready and making sure that people are interviewed at the right times, maybe thinking about locations outside of the office, out of the buildings, people might lose sight of why we're doing this.

SHERIE AVALOS:
Why we're doing this.

DANIEL KIM:
Maybe if we could, if better you could contribute what your thoughts might be on the benefits to everybody involved.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Yeah. Well, you know, if you haven't been exposed to quality standards in the past, they really help you to look at how you're working and to review. Could you be doing something better. So one of the questions that you're asking yourself is, what can we do differently? How can we provide better services? We know that if we're meeting customer needs or service user needs and they speak highly of a service, we're going to grow our business, but it's really about developing a gradual and ongoing incremental improvement process. And that's really at the heart of quality improvement.

SHERIE AVALOS:
I just want to continue on from there that if, you know, as you said, you get, you do, you get really worked up and really involved in going through this audit process, but at the end of the day, what you're getting out of that is what the participants' getting out of that. They're getting a safe and quality service and a service that throughout the practice standards we keep coming back down to that it's participant focused. And if you pass your audit, you are a participant focused organisation that has choice and control and really importantly is safe.

DANIEL KIM:
Yes. Yeah. Well, thank you very much. I think everybody involved in the whole space understands the importance of ongoing audits and continuous improvement. Would you say, or would you be of the opinion that having seen a couple of industries in recent years go under things like Royal Commissions and there's a greater scrutiny on things like

governance regardless of the industry you're in, would you say there's a bigger focus now on audits and getting these done properly than they were?

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Yes, there is. It's been incremental over time. I think what we've got in the disability sector at the moment is right for where we're at now. It's helping organisations who haven't been exposed to quality in the past to actually develop an understanding of how it can provide better outcomes for their service users. And, as I said, it helps them run their business better. It's not just about a big stick, it really is about helping organisations to do things better. Through that, it's an independent third party who you can trust coming in to tell you what you're doing well. It's not all about looking for mistakes. It's not, it's not. It's about looking at what you're doing well, celebrating that and looking at how you can improve.

DANIEL KIM:
Yes. That's really good. Really good. I mean, I suppose that's the whole reason we've got this new legislation that's coming in the first place, isn't it?

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Yeah. DANIEL KIM: Yeah. Good. Thank you. I've got some of my question cues in order now. We've got a question here. What other resources does the commission have that can help me with my registration?

SHERIE AVALOS:
Excellent. Yes. So as I said before, go to the website, and now I'm trying to visualise the website to assist you, but go to the website, so NDIS Commission, and you will find there's a tab that says service providers, click on that tab and that tab then drills down into certain areas. So we've got, if you're a new provider, there'll be a new registration. If you're renewing your provider, there's a renewing registration tab and within there, there are a number of documents.

So, as I said, like key document is the NDIS Practice Standards. But there's also a number of documents in there, which actually map out all the steps in registration from applying through the application form and what's expected of a provider right through to pressing the button to submitting your application. So check out the website, and as I said, if through the application process and when you're applying or once you have applied, just give us a call and we might... Sorry, we will, that didn't come out right. We will be able to help you through that process. When you're looking for an auditor, the website has the approved, NDIS approved quality auditors. Currently there are 15 approved quality auditing bodies.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Yes.

SHERIE AVALOS:
Fiona's one of them. And then there's, so the contact numbers are there to ring them. But there is a step by step process that says, now it's time to ring the auditor. And it also says what you need to be able to give to an auditor so that they can then work out what type of audit they're going to do.

DANIEL KIM:
Nice. Yes. I was also gonna think on top of those resources. On this particular webinar, there's a resources tab that people can get on.

SHERIE AVALOS:
Yes. Fantastic.

DANIEL KIM:
Yes, specifically there's some documents and links for governance and operation management. They give some more examples of evidence that you might already have in place. So make sure you click the light blue button there. Another question is, are you able to provide any information about how a participant can prepare for the audit process? Sounds like a roughly similar kind of question.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Yeah. But how a participant can prepare for an audit process. Yes, really understand what the services that you're providing and be prepared to talk to the auditor about it. Understand that the auditor is going to want to review your file and may actually ask you questions about what they've seen in your file to find out what your experience has been. But it shouldn't be an invasive process. It should be quite comfortable.

DANIEL KIM:
Yep, sure. A follow-up question from something we were talking about earlier. Fiona has mentioned that participants should be invited to the opening and closing meetings of the audit, does this mean all participants or only the ones involved in the audit process?

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
It's a good idea to let your participants know that you are going through an audit, remember that they're automatically included in the audit process. So if they are interested, they're eligible to attend. They don't have to attend. It's not just the participants who have been selected to be sampled. It's all participants.

DANIEL KIM:
Yep. OK. Yes. These are some really good questions that are coming through. Do auditors need an understanding or experience in psychosocial disability to effectively audit psychosocial providers?

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Not an in-depth. It depends on the registration groups that we're assessing. We may need somebody with a technical expertise in a couple of registration groups. However, in general, we're not actually assessing the provider's competence. We're assessing, actually we're not assessing the provider's professional competence in the area that they're registered with APRA in. We're actually assessing how they deliver services and whether they're delivering services in relation to the practice standards requirements.
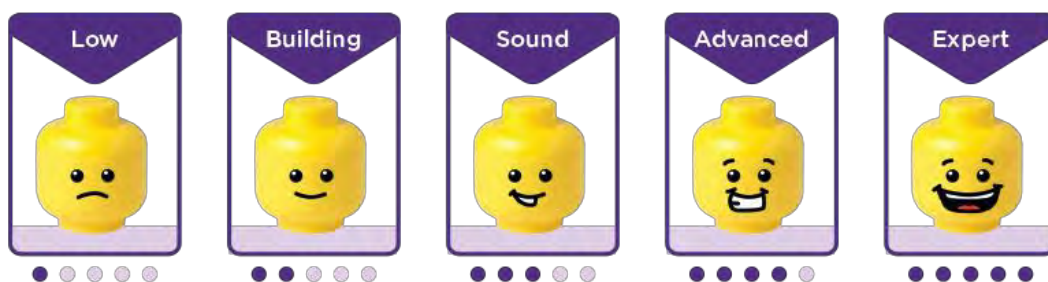
DANIEL KIM:
I think... Thank you. There's, trying to balance the amount of minutes that we have left. We need to slowly start wrapping up. I'm starting to think with the other questions that we haven't

addressed yet, we might get back to you offline. That's probably the best way to deal with it at this stage. Before we close up the webinar, we're gonna do a couple of things.

First of all, remember how we put up a poll at the start of the webinar, we will put up a secondary follow-up poll here and it is, how would you rate your knowledge of the NDIS Practice Standards and registration requirements, having heard this webinar now? And while we wait for those results to come in, I'll let you know what the results were at the start of the webinar. We had nobody hit five or expert. This was at the start of the webinar. 24% were low, 36% were building, 28% were sound, and 12% were advanced. So I'd be really keen to see how they...

Live Polling Question: How would you rate your knowledge of the new practice standards?

SHERIE AVALOS:
Feel like I'm under pressure now. (LAUGHTER)

DANIEL KIM:
We're being audited now.

SHERIE AVALOS:

No, we've been audited.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
No, it's a test. It's not an audit.

DANIEL KIM:
Again, the focus should be on the participants of the webinar and clear learning...

SHERIE AVALOS:
Yes, that's right.

DANIEL KIM:
And then the improvement they're in. So we'll wait for some of the responses to come through and as I can see already, like it's updating in real time. So I won't give you the final thing until it's over, but it's looking like nobody has hit the low ones. So all the people who had hit low, they've moved themselves onto a two or three or four. And I will give you the stats a bit later on, but that's...

SHERIE AVALOS:
Continuous improvement.

DANIEL KIM:

Continuous improvement. That's what we're all about.

SHERIE AVALOS:

That's what we want, feedback, so we can improve.

DANIEL KIM:
Would you like to conclude with one last closing remark each?

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
I would say use the audit as an opportunity to help your business improve so that you can deliver better services to your service users.

SHERIE AVALOS:
I'd just like to say that we're looking forward to receiving your registration and your final audit report so that we can have you as registered providers. My only advice is to digest the NDIS Practice Standards when you're developing your quality management system. Any feedback, the commission's always looking for feedback. So if there's something that you can't find on the website please feedback to us because it might be there or it might help us with our continuous improvement.

DANIEL KIM:
Yes. Excellent. Sherie Avalos and Fiona, sorry, not... Fiona Loughlan, I'm sorry.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
It's OK.

DANIEL KIM:
Making up surnames today. (LAUGHTER) Thank you very much for being on the webinar today. Really enjoyed getting the insights from you.

FIONA AND SHERIE:
Thank you very much.

DANIEL KIM:
And as I'm sure everybody has felt the same way. We've got right now the current total stands at 30% at building, 55% at sound, 15% at advanced. And that's an improvement on every single count and nobody at low.

FIONA LOUGHLAN:
Wonderful.

SHERIE AVALOS:

Thank you very much.

DANIEL KIM:
The audit results are in. That's from us.

SHERIE AVALOS:
Our audit results.

DANIEL KIM:
That's alright. And if you want to better understand the NDIS access or planning or support coordination or plan management or any other matter that would be relevant to peoples living with a mental health condition who may be eligible for some assistance, go to a link. It's on your screen right now. Actually it's not on your screen right now, but the link is reimagine.today re-imagine, one word, dot today.

This link is available actually in the resources library, my apologies, along with the new resource updates from this webinar. Keep an eye out for an invitation to the next webinar, which is gonna impact the second part of the quality indicators for governance and operational management. There's just so much to go through. We can't do it possibly in one or two webinars, taking the whole series of 10. And of course the project manager, Karen Hersey from the MHCC, is keen to hear your feedback. She would love to chat with providers of NDIS psychosocial services about any of these issues in applying the practice standards or new registration requirements. Preparing for an audit, resources you'd like to see in the library for the next webinar or other topics you'd like that could be covered in future webinars.

So, don't be afraid. Get in touch with us, we'll redirect you to a survey link at the end of this webinar. Thank you so much for joining us. Thank you. Thank you, Sherie. Thank you, Fiona. And thank you for joining us in the Learning Cafe, and we'll see you next time.

SHERIE AND FIONA:
Thank you.

<u>Live Poll Results</u>

Pre – Webinar

1 - Low	6	Total number of responses: 29
2 - Building	12	
3 - Sound	7	
4 - Advanced	4	
5 - Expert	0	

Post Webinar

1 - Low	0	Total number of responses: 23
2 - Building	7	
4 - Advanced	11	
5 - Expert	5	
3 - Sound	0	