



Local Area Coordination

- Supporting people with disability in their communities



Family, friends, community—a good life

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About disability

People with disability are important members of our community. Disability can be experienced by anyone at any stage of their life and can be a result of a sensory, neurological, physical, intellectual, cognitive or psychiatric impairment or a combination of these. Some disabilities are hidden, while others may be visible.

The Disability Services Commission's vision for Western Australia is that people with disability are valued, welcomed and included in their local communities.

Achieving this vision involves promoting and valuing active citizenship, providing support, and working in partnership with people with disability as they pursue their goals and dreams for a good life. It also involves working with individuals, families, carers, service providers and the wider community.

What makes a good life is a personal and individual matter but most people would agree it includes opportunities for valued relationships, a secure future, choices, contributions and challenges.



Local Area Coordination

Local Area Coordination has been supporting West Australians with disability since 1988. Local Area Coordinators (LACs) work throughout metropolitan and regional areas of the State. LACs have local knowledge and can help people with disability plan for and achieve a good life. They also assist people to plan, organise and access supports and services as well as provide information as needed.

LACs work with family members and others involved in supporting people with disability, helping to further strengthen their caring role. In addition, LACs work to help make local communities more inclusive and welcoming. This is achieved through education, advocacy and partnerships with local community members, businesses, government and non-government organisations.

LAC support is available to people with intellectual, physical, sensory, neurological and/or cognitive disability who are under the age of 65 at the time they apply for Local Area Coordination support. Each LAC works with between 50 and 65 people with disability, providing support that is personalised, flexible and responsive.



Local Area Coordinator role

LACs develop partnerships with people with disability, their families and carers to identify needs and goals, and plan for the future.

LACs help strengthen the capacity of communities to include people with disability as valued citizens.

The following are just a few examples of typical LAC activities.

Build and maintain effective working relationships

- An LAC regularly visits the family home to discuss issues of importance to the person with disability and their family.
- Spending time at the community centre, an LAC meets with local people and groups to facilitate inclusion of people with disability in initiatives and events held in and around the community.
- LACs provide the Commission with information about trends and issues of importance for people with disability in their area. Private details are not provided.

Provide accurate and timely information

- During the first few meetings with the parents of a child with disability, an LAC provides an overview of the Commission and its programs.
Information about supports and services available from other agencies is also provided.
- Following a family's move to an area, contact is made with an LAC. Over a period of time the LAC links the family with various information resources that include support groups and social networks—formal and informal.
- An LAC arranges for an experienced interpreter to explain guardianship issues to the elders of a remote Aboriginal community. This assistance allows the family and the community to make decisions about a guardianship application for a young man with a cognitive impairment.





Provide support and assistance to identify goals, strengths and needs

- Parents planning the transition of their young son into the school system are provided with assistance from their LAC. Through a series of home visits, and an important visit to the local school, the LAC helps prepare an action plan which deals with all the issues associated with starting school.
- An LAC links the parents of a young man with a severe intellectual disability, who lives in a country town, with a small voluntary organisation that provides assistance in using planning techniques. This assistance enables the family to plan effectively to meet their son's goals and needs.
- A man with disability talks about one day living in his own home. The man, his parents and the LAC develop a plan which includes some long-term strategies that help identify and access local networks. These aim to strengthen his opportunities to achieve independent living while maintaining his family connections.

Promote self-advocacy and provide advocacy support when necessary

- A man with a degenerative neurological condition believes he is being discriminated against by the body corporate where he lives. He calls on his LAC for advocacy assistance because he wants to raise his concerns at the next meeting. Together they discuss disability rights and the best way to present his concerns.
- An LAC assists a woman with a physical disability who is having problems gaining the services she needs from a local home and community care agency.

The LAC provides information about the agency and the eligibility criteria for its services. This information helps the woman determine the best approach to use with the agency. The LAC attends a subsequent meeting and offers assistance where necessary.
- On a regular basis, a family with a child with multiple disabilities travels from a small country town to Perth for specialist appointments. The parents have had

difficulty getting the medical practitioners to coordinate appointments that would minimise their time spent travelling. The LAC successfully advocates on behalf of the family, ensuring future appointments are better coordinated.



Help develop personal and local community networks that provide ways to meet goals and needs

- An LAC uses her local community knowledge to link the parents of a teenager with autism with a football club in their area.

Through this connection, arrangements are made for the young man to join in activities that help foster friendships with his team mates.

Participation in team activities also helps develop life skills and greater confidence in dealing with a range of social situations.

- Parents who have a child with disability meet their LAC to discuss how immediate and extended family members can support the child.
- An older woman with an intellectual disability lives alone. Having recently moved into the area, she has become socially isolated.

An LAC gets to know her and finds out she is interested in craft work and attending church.

Consequently, the LAC arranges for her to join a local church and craft groups where she makes new friends who visit her and are able to provide support when needed. She also finds a valuable role in the church group.

Help access supports and services to meet goals and needs

- A family with an adult daughter with disability has recently moved into a new area. Over time, an LAC provides the family with information about local formal support services. The young woman with disability is also assisted to connect with local educational organisations that provide information to help her plan her future studies.
- LACs in a country region develop a support person register. This enables disability service agencies and other organisations to collaborate on the recruitment, selection, and training of support people.
- Following a period of discussion and planning, an LAC assists the ageing parents of a young man with severe and multiple disabilities to apply for funding to purchase support services.





Build inclusive communities through partnerships and collaboration

- As a member of a local government committee, an LAC highlights issues that restrict mobility and community participation by people with disability. He arranges for a young woman with a physical disability, who is keen to take on a community leadership role, to take his place on the committee.
- As a result of active involvement in a local youth committee, an LAC has established some good connections with local churches. Consequently, the LAC brings together a youth worker, a church member and a music teacher who is experienced in working with young people with disability. Together this group establishes a music workshop program which is open to all young people in the area.
- LACs within a district work with people with disability, their families, local organisations and individuals to form a community access and inclusion group.

The group aims to build on existing strengths to help make their local communities more inclusive and welcoming for people with disability. The committee includes not-for-profit groups, government agencies, local government councillors, business people and volunteers.

Finding an LAC in your area

Details about how to find an LAC in your area are available on the Commission's website.

Visit www.disability.wa.gov.au and search for 'Your local support directory'.

Alternatively, phone **9426 9352** or freecall (country) **1800 998 214**.

Local Area Coordination principles

- As citizens, people with disability have the same rights and responsibilities as all other people to participate in and contribute to community life.
- People with disability and their families have natural authority and are best placed to be their most powerful and enduring leaders, decision-makers and advocates.
- Access to timely and accurate information enables people to make appropriate decisions and to have greater personal control in their lives.
- Families, friends and personal networks are the foundations of a rich and valued life in the community.
- People with disability have a lifelong capacity for learning, development and contribution.
- The lives of people with disability and their families are enhanced when they can determine their preferred supports and services and control the required resources, to the extent that they desire.
- Government and community agencies complement and support the primary role of families, carers and communities in achieving a good life for people with disability.
- Partnerships between individuals, families and carers, communities, governments, service providers and the business sector are vital in meeting the needs of people with disability.
- People with disability and their families are in the best position to determine their own needs and goals, and to plan for their future.



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