

Accessing the Disability Support Pension (DSP): a brief introduction

What is the DSP?

The DSP is a Centrelink payment providing financial support if you have a physical, intellectual or psychiatric condition that stops you from working, or if you are permanently blind.

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/disability-support-pension>

Am I eligible?

You must:

- be between 16 and age pension age (currently 65)
- have been an Australian resident for at least 10 years (of which no break in residence for at least 5 years)
- meet the income and assets tests
- have a permanent and diagnosed disability or medical condition, that means you can't work or refrain to work for at least 15 hours per week in the next two years
- need an impairment rating of 20 points or more
- You may also need to show you have completed a program of support – we will look at all of these in more detail

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/disability-support-pension/eligibility>

STEP ONE: Collecting medical evidence

Collect as much documented medical evidence from health professionals:

1. Verification of the duration of the ME/CFS
2. The deterioration of your well-being
3. Documentation of ongoing medical treatment/s to support the claim
4. A statement that your level of functional ability restricts your capacity to work to LESS than 15 hours per week

Start keeping a daily journal of:

5. the professionals that you have visited
6. the frequency and supports needed to manage access to these appointments
7. Assessment of the home for equipment
8. Any supports you receive including NDIS/ Aged Care for Under 65 package.

STEP TWO: Undertake a job capacity assessment, program of support as requested by Centrelink

- You may be asked to attend a **Job Capacity Assessment** which assesses how your condition affects your ability to work. A qualified health or allied health professional employed by Centrelink completes the assessment. There is no charge for this service
- You can bring a friend/family member or advocate with you
- A program of support (POS) helps people with a disability to prepare for, find and keep a job. It may include job preparation and job search, work experience and training or injury management
- A program of support will uncover whether your condition prevents you from undertaking any work (this may be different work to that you did previously) or study of 15 hours or more per week for the next 2 years
- This is referred to as the CITW (Continuing Inability to Work)

Common challenges

- DSP eligibility is hinged on your condition being **permanent**
- Some DSP assessors may view ME/CFS as impermanent due to the fluctuating nature of symptoms (for some)
- There are inconsistencies from specialists/GPs around the permanence of ME/CFS and the use of largely ineffective 'evidence-based' treatments such as GET and CBT. Please note that these can make your condition worse and are no longer considered best practice
- We recommend you **refer to your ME/CFS as Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME)**
- Avoid using Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) as it is often misunderstood and confused with Chronic Fatigue

STEP THREE: Appeals

- If Centrelink rejects your claim, ask them why.
- Centrelink may tell you that you need to get more treatment or to complete 18 months in a [program of support](#). You may put in a new claim after you have completed these tasks.
- There is no limit to the number of DSP applications you can make.
- If you think that Centrelink's rejection of your claim is wrong, you can ask for the decision to be reviewed within 13 weeks.

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/enablers/reviews-and-appeals>

If you are rejected for DSP you could also apply for Newstart

At Emerge Australia, we lobby and advocate to improve the situation in Australia (and internationally) for people with ME/CFS. We do not offer one on one advocacy, however, we have many resources to offer to support those in the community including those who are working to access the NDIS. These resources include the GP education training we are currently working on rolling out and also the newest addition to the Emerge Australia team, a telehealth nurse, who can assist with a health care plan.

If you have more questions, contact us on the information line and we will connect you to the resources you need.

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For more information including webinars and detailed PowerPoint slides please contact us.

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