

Allied Health Assistant (AHA)

What is an AHA?

An Allied Health Assistant (AHA) is someone who is trained to provide therapy services by implementing a program that has been written by a qualified allied health professional, like an occupational therapist, physiotherapist, or speech pathologist. The allied health professional (AHP) remains responsible for your care and reviews your progress and the AHA's work at regular intervals to ensure that you are getting the highest quality of therapy, and that we are continuing to work towards your goals. At Therapy Alliance Group (TAG), we hire allied health students, usually 3rd or 4th year university students as AHAs, matching you to therapy services faster.

What does therapy with an AHA look like?

AHAs can provide a lot of the same direct therapy services that an occupational therapist, physiotherapist, or speech pathologist can, and they only implement the program that has been provided to them, which is written completely uniquely to you. At TAG, we train our AHAs in how to address specific goals using specific approaches, but the structure of your appointment session or the specific activities you complete can be flexible, and are as diverse and unique as our clients!

Is there any intervention AHAs can't do?

Because AHAs are implementing a program which is pre-written by a qualified allied health professional, they aren't able to shift the focus of your session to new goals. Changing goals requires a review of your plan by the allied health professional. Additionally, AHAs can't provide caregiver coaching or training because of the specialist professional knowledge required to do this effectively.

Can AHA be combined with other types of services?

Yes! AHA can provide mobile services (limits do apply), telehealth services, intensive blocks of therapy (for example coming to daily AHA appointments over the school holidays), and possibly others! AHA can also be a part of a key worker service. Speak to your clinician if you're wondering about other particular service types being delivered by an AHA.

What therapies can I access through AHA?

You can access occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and speech pathology services by AHA. Additionally, because of how we plan and prepare our AHA programs, you can access multiple disciplines through AHA, even having the same AHA deliver all of your therapies! This could mean you see the same AHA multiple times a week for different goals, or it could mean you see the one AHA and they work on goals for multiple disciplines during each appointment.

What are the benefits of AHA therapy?

There can be multiple benefits of accessing therapy delivered by an AHA. Key among them is delivery of the same high quality intervention you expect, typically at a lower overall cost than appointments with an allied health professional. See for more information: How do AHA service agreements differ to therapy directly with an allied health professional?

Additionally, our AHA's can often facilitate more frequent appointments than our allied health professionals, including multiple appointments within one week where this is indicated. Further, our AHA's also often have more flexibility to provide mobile services.

How do AHA service agreements differ to therapy directly with an allied health Professional?

Because AHA services are delivered via a pre-prepared, completely individualised and unique program, AHA services do have some differences including in our service agreement. For NDIS purposes, AHA services are considered a "Program of Supports". Some of the key differences in AHA services are:

- Lower per-hour rate for all work completed by an AHA (refer to Fee Schedule)
- Cancellation fees apply where cancellations are provided with less than 2 weeks notice
- All AHA programs include regular AHP time for program creation, note reviews and program review (refer to Fee Schedule)
- All AHAs are trained by the AHP in the created program. This training lasts one hour at their respective hourly rates
- The length of an AHA session is one hour

How long can I access AHA services?

You can continue to see AHA services for as long as it is clinically appropriate to your goals and you wish to continue it! A single program of supports will typically run from 12 - 24 weeks, although some may be slightly shorter or longer based on individual needs. After this time our overseeing AHP will review and update your program if needed, but if AHA is still meeting your needs, you can still continue with the service.

Who can benefit from AHA?

Anyone who needs regular intervention or therapy, who has goals which are likely to be stable for at least 12 weeks, and with a semi-flexible schedule. Because we employ allied health students as our AHAs, from time to time AHA availability can change based on placements and class timetable changes.

Unsure if this describes you? Speak with your clinician to discuss whether AHA services might be right for you.

Who might AHA not be suitable for?

AHA might not be a suitable service delivery model if:

- Your goals change more regularly than roughly 12 - weekly
- Parent or caregiver training, coaching, support, or problem solving is a key component of your intervention needs or plan
- You don't have any flexibility within your schedule around days or times. Note that you don't need to have short notice flexibility, you would be advised in advance of any changes to availability.

If this describes you, consider if Student Services might be right for you.

Unsure if this describes you? Speak with your clinician to discuss whether AHA services might be right for you.

Additional information

As AHAs at TAG are university students, availability is subject to their university timetable, meaning if their timetable changes at the start of a semester, so may their working hours as an AHA.

Being university students means our AHAs are also required to undertake university placements. This may or may not affect you. Placements can run for several weeks so it is possible there may be no sessions during that time. However, depending on the length of the AHA's university placement, additional sessions may be added after the end of your program.

If a session falls on a public holiday, that appointment will be added to the end of your program.