

MY DEAF ADVOCACY PLAN FOR WORK



Strategies for identifying and communicating
my needs in the workplace so I can work
safely and at my best

**WORK
EXPERIENCE
PROJECT.**

**Deaf
Children
Australia.**



Deaf Children Australia (DCA) is a nonprofit that promotes the growth and social inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) children and youth. Our transformative programs, events, and resources build confidence and connections, fostering a more inclusive Australian community.

A key area of focus is supporting the transition from school to work and adult life.

Work experience is a great way for young people to explore career paths, gain industry insights and a deeper understanding of paid work, learn job-ready skills, and grow in confidence and independence.

DHH students often face unique challenges that can limit their access to meaningful work experience opportunities without the right support and tools. Yet in Australia, around 83% of DHH students attend schools with limited access to Teachers of the Deaf (TOD) or other specialist services.

DCA's Work Experience Project aims to remove barriers by increasing awareness of the unique needs of DHH students in the workplace, and equipping teachers and careers practitioners with practical tools to empower DHH students to plan for challenges and advocate for their own needs.

Your skills at work



⇒ Work Experience and Supported Work Learning placement are great ways to learn and practice the skills you need to secure future employment and transition into life out of school.

⇒ Placements bridge the gap between education and employment.

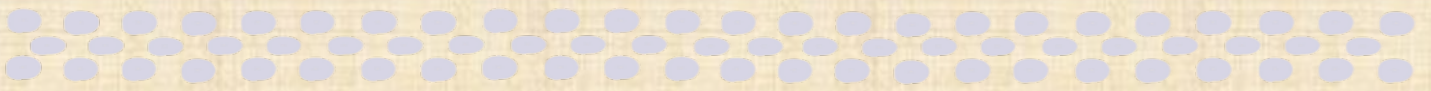
⇒ You gain practical, industry-specific skills and valuable insights into career paths and start building professional networks.

⇒ A work environment offers opportunities to practice your communication, teamwork, problem-solving and time-management skills in a real-world setting.

⇒ You also gain a better understanding of yourself, your needs and preferences.

⇒ This is important because knowing what you need to feel safe and do your best at work makes it easier to identify the support you need, understand your rights and advocate for yourself.





Advocating for yourself at work

At school, teachers, parents and other adults make sure you have the right accommodations in place so you can work safely and at your best.

At work, it's up to you to speak up and ask for the changes you need and explain what works best for you.

This is **self-advocacy**.

Being able to advocate for yourself at work helps you:

Access the accommodations you need so that you can do your job safely and to the best of your ability.

Take more control of your work and feel empowered.

Ensure you are treated fairly and have equal opportunity to succeed.

A big part of advocating for yourself is being able to **identify, explain and negotiate** options for workplace adjustments with your employer. This takes practice and preparation.

To be an effective self-advocate, you must:

⇒ Be aware of what you need to successfully do your work.

⇒ Be able to define your hearing loss and explain your needs to others in an open and respectful manner.

⇒ Know how and when to disclose your hearing loss with your employer, manager or supervisor.

⇒ Problem-solve and offer solutions to resolve challenges and be prepared to negotiate and explore other solutions as needed.

⇒ Work collaboratively with your employer to create and implement communication strategies.

⇒ Understand your rights for reasonable adjustments and what accommodations you can expect in the workplace.

Having an advocacy plan

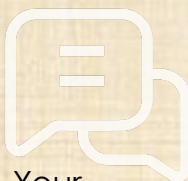
Learning to advocate for your own needs takes **practice** and **planning**.



An **Advocacy Plan** is a tool you can use to reflect on and document your needs and preferences at work. It helps you articulate your strengths and needs in the workplace, consider strategies to address challenges, and decide what to share and how to talk with your employer about being deaf.

My Deaf Advocacy Plan for Work

Use the templates provided to prepare to have meaningful discussions with your employer. Your teacher or careers practitioner can help you with this.



The templates will help you:

⇒ **Identify** and **explain** any challenges you face at work and how you can manage them.

⇒ **Ask** for and get adjustments you need at work to work safely and to your full potential.

You can include information about:

Your goals

Your hearing loss

Your communication needs and preferences

Technology you use

Your challenges and strategies to overcome them

Adjustments you need to work safely and to your full potential

WHS requirements (e.g. Risk Assessment or Personal Safety Plan)

Conversation starters to raise difficult topics with an employer

About me

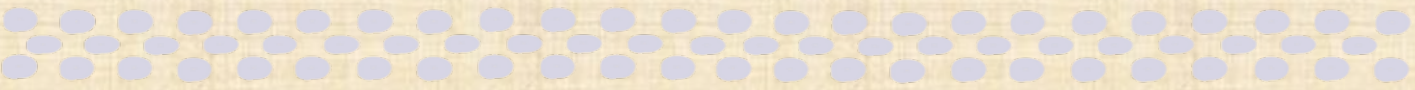
Name			
Preferred Name		Pronouns	
School			
Campus		Year Level	
Email			

Communication and Identity

How you identify and experience being deaf will influence how you talk about it with others. Everyone is unique. Deciding what is appropriate for you will help you control your own narrative.

I am / I describe myself as	☐ Deaf / Culturally Deaf ☐ deaf ☐ hard of hearing ☐ partially deaf ☐ hearing impaired ☐ other: _____ ☐ I don't identify as being deaf
My hearing loss is	☐ Unilateral (single-sided), right side ☐ Unilateral (single-sided), left side ☐ Bilateral (double-sided), both sides
My level of hearing loss is	☐ Mild ☐ Moderate ☐ Severe ☐ Profound

Devices I use to help me hear and communicate	☐ Cochlear implant ☐ Hearing Aid ☐ BAHA ☐ other: _____ ☐ I don't use devices
How devices work to help me hear or communicate	
Languages I use	☐ Auslan ☐ English (oral) ☐ Bilingual (Auslan/English) ☐ Bilingual (Auslan/Language not English) ☐ Bilingual (other languages): _____ _____
To support communication, I need	☐ Auslan Interpreter ☐ Deaf Interpreter ☐ Captions ☐ Communication Support Person: _____ ☐ other: _____
How to book an interpreter	
How to book captions	



My goals and experience

What are your career goals?	
What jobs and industries interest you? Why?	
Where have you have worked before?	
If you worked before, what did you enjoy doing?	
If you worked before, what did you find difficult? Why?	
What are your skills and strengths? How can they help you at work?	
What other experience do you have that will help at work?	
☐ Resume/CV	☐ Letter/email of introduction

My placement

Employer			
Location			
Contact			
Placement type	☐ Work experience ☐ Structured Workplace Learning (SWL)		
Job			
Start date		End date	
Workdays		Working hours	
School contact			
Emergency contact			

What I'll do at work

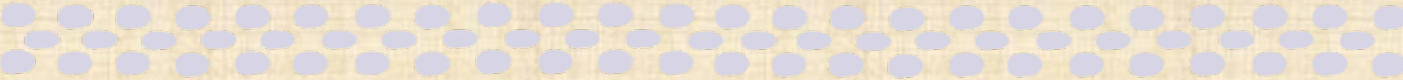
Write down all the tasks you'll do at work.

Be specific! Include meetings and training, events you may attend (e.g. staff lunch), general work tasks, and where you will do each task.

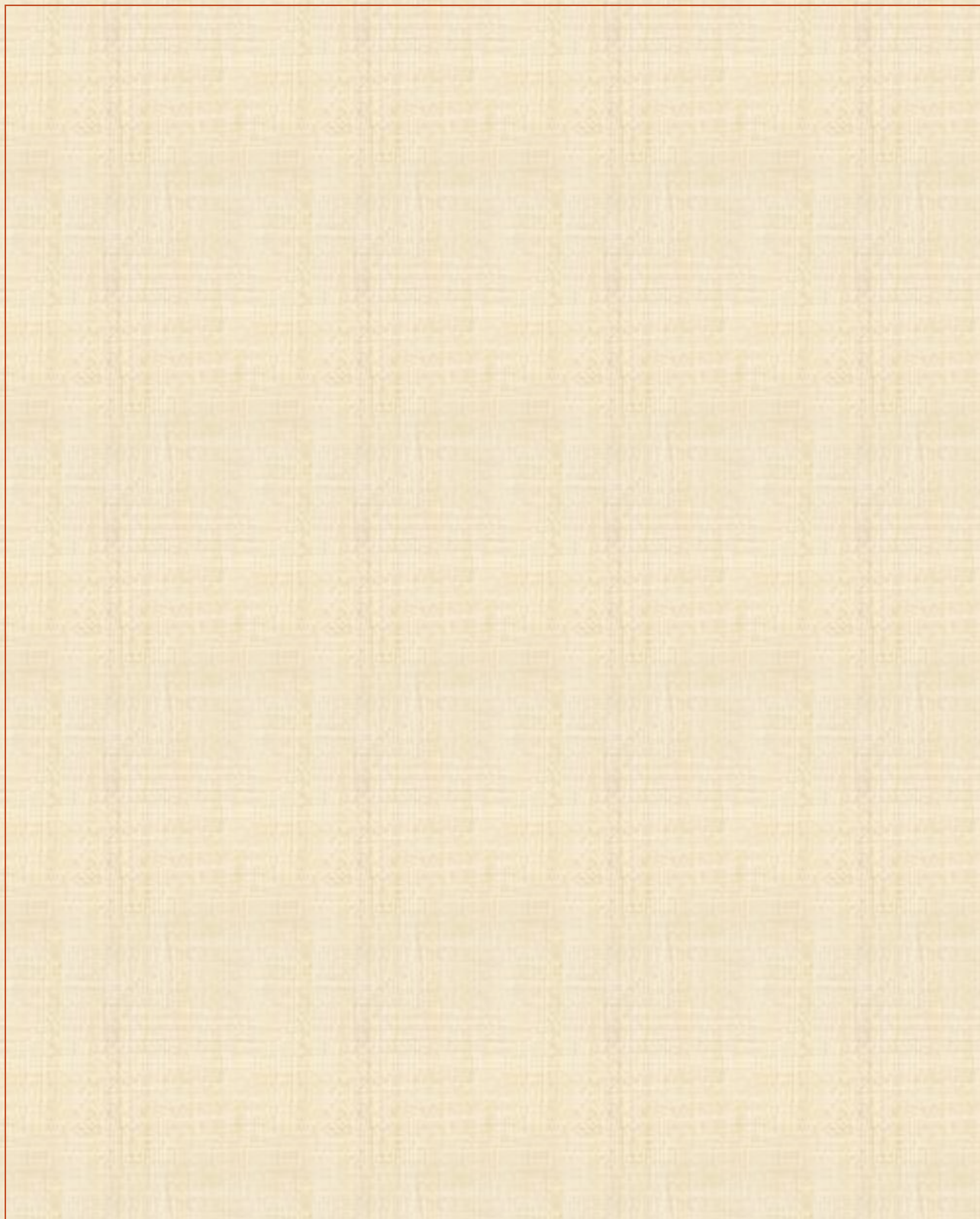
For example:

- ⇒ All staff meetings will be online using Teams
- ⇒ My workstation is a cubicle at the back of the office
- ⇒ I will work at the cash register at the front of store
- ⇒ I will stock shelves in the storeroom

Knowing where and how you will do each task will help you identify any adjustments you need to work safely and to the best of your ability.



My work tasks



Reasonable adjustments



Reasonable adjustments are changes to the work environment or work conditions that allow people with disability to work safely and productively, and to participate fully.

Under the **Equal Opportunity Act 2010**, employers are required to make reasonable adjustments for a person with disability who needs them to take part in the recruitment process or to perform the genuine and reasonable requirements of the job. This includes when someone with a disability is:

Applying for a job.

Offered employment.

A current employee or volunteer.

Adjustments can vary from minor changes to work hours or the performance requirements of the job, to large changes that require specific equipment or structural change to the workplace.

Employers can apply to the **Employment Assistance Fund** to help cover the costs of adjustments.

It is important to know what adjustments you will need to work safely and effectively in each work setting so that you can discuss your needs with your employer.

Can an employer deny my request for an adjustment?

There are no specific rules about what is or isn't a reasonable adjustment because it depends on the situation. However, an adjustment is likely to be **unreasonable** if:

It has a very high cost

It will cause great disruption in the workplace.

An employer can lawfully decide not to make the requested adjustments, if:

⇒ Adjustments needed are not reasonable in their situation.

⇒ The person with the disability could not perform the genuine and reasonable requirements of the job even if the adjustments were made.

For short-term work placements, there may be some limitations to what changes your employer can reasonably make for you. That's why it's important that you understand your needs and **be prepared to work with your employer to implement practical solutions.**

My strategies

Reasonable adjustments can include simple **strategies** that help you overcome challenges so that you can work safely and to your full potential.

2 Think about specific challenges you may have when doing each task at work. Challenges could be safety issues, concerns about social participation, communication or something else that worries you. Your needs are unique to you.

For example, you may:

- ⇒ Prefer video calls or SMS or use a video relay service for voice calls.
- ⇒ Prefer to sit somewhere quiet with good lighting and where you can see people approach.
- ⇒ Experience listening fatigue and need regular breaks to disconnect.
- ⇒ Need to talk about ways to get your attention when you are facing away from someone.
- ⇒ Need a Personal Safety Plan with your employer's input.
- ⇒ Need captions or interpreters to help you get all the information in group meetings or training.
- ⇒ Need notes and slides before meetings or training to prepare or ask for written materials in plain English.

1 Brainstorm ways that you can overcome the challenges you identified. Think about strategies you can put in place at work to help you manage challenges.

Try to think of simple solutions as well as more formal solutions. Remember, your employer may not be able to put everything in place for you for a short-term placement.

For example:

Challenge

I may not be able to follow online meetings with lots of people talking.

Strategies

- I will need captions.
- Asking for slides ahead of the meeting will help me prepare and follow.

Challenge

I may have difficulty communicating with customers if I can't hear them properly.

Strategy

A translation app could help me with short interactions.

Challenge

At my desk, I may miss important information or social interactions because I can't hear people behind me.

Challenge

- A desk facing the room will help.
- Colleagues can tap my shoulder to get my attention.

Challenge

Lipreading takes a lot of concentration and I get tired.

Strategies

- I can talk to my team about deaf awareness.
- I need frequent breaks in meetings.

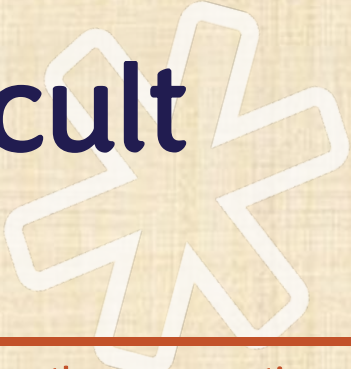


Challenge	Strategy

Other important things to remember

What can I wear at work? Is there a dress code?	
How will I get to work and home each day?	
Technology I need at work (e.g., Apps, tablet, mobile phone, laptop, communication devices)	
What things do I need to travel to work (e.g., money, Miki, communication device/App)	
What do I need to keep devices working at work (e.g., batteries, chargers, power bank)	
What additional things do I need at work? (e.g., money for lunch, a watch, bottle of water)	
Anything else I want to remember	

Having the difficult conversations



Talking with an employer about being deaf or hard of hearing

You have no legal obligation to tell your employer that you are deaf or hard of hearing.

It's against the law for an employer to discriminate against you or treat you unfairly because of disability.

It's up to you how much you share. However, if you need adjustments to your work environment to do your job safely and effectively, it's important that you can talk about your employer about your unique needs and problem-solve solutions to resolve challenges.

Talking to your employer can feel like a big step but taking a little time to plan what you want to say can help the conversation go smoothly and make you feel more confident.

Decide what information you want to share.

Identify your needs.

Consider strategies you can put in place with your employer to resolve challenges.

Try practicing the conversation with someone you trust like a teacher, family member or friend.

Talking to your parents and teachers about the support you need

Your family, teachers or careers practitioners may want to help you succeed in your placement by offering to put in place supports that mirror what you have at school.

This support can make a work placement feel less stressful. But if you always rely on others to figure out what you need, you miss out on the chance to learn how to do it yourself.

Instead, work with your teachers, careers advisors, and support people to create your own plan and find ways to handle challenges.

Remember that doing a work placement is meant to help you learn what you need to transition out of school. These skills include being able to identify your needs and advocate on your own behalf.

This can be a tricky conversation. But it's a good way to practice identifying and advocating for your own needs!

Challenging topics

Listening fatigue

It can be confronting to tell an employer that the strain of hearing and processing sound and lipreading, can leave you mentally, physically, and emotionally exhausted. But listening fatigue is a reality for many deaf or hard of hearing people.

It's important to understand causes and what works well for you to help reduce the risk of listening fatigue.

Start by writing down your triggers and strategies that work for you. This makes it easier to explain to your employer how listening fatigue affects you, in a clear and positive way, and shows that with the right plan in place, it won't get in the way of you doing your job well.



How would you talk about challenging topics with your employer?

Deaf awareness

Not all employers or your colleagues will have experience working with people who are deaf or hard of hearing. They may be unsure about how to best communicate with you or have questions about what support you may need.

Suggesting that you talk to your colleagues about deaf awareness is a great way to get the conversation started and share your experiences as a deaf person. But if this is too confronting, you can suggest more formal training.

You can tell your employer that fostering deaf awareness will:

Build strong relationships and mutual understanding by learning how to communicate with each other where differences exist.

Promote inclusion and accessibility and help to remove barriers.

Foster an understanding Deaf Culture and the positive aspects of deafness.

These benefits don't just apply to workers. They can be applied to relationships with any deaf or hard of hearing person who interacts with the employer. For example, customers.

Audism

Audism is a form of discrimination or prejudice against people who are deaf or hard of hearing. It describes a bias present in attitudes, actions or systems that treat hearing people as 'more capable' than deaf people.

Audism can be present when:

Someone assumes a deaf person can't do something just because they're deaf.

Systems or rules don't consider the needs of deaf or hard of hearing people.

A deaf person thinks they can't do something because of the negative messages they've been told.

Sometimes audism is deliberate but sometimes comments and assumptions are unintentionally biased and stem from a lack of understanding.

Some examples of Audism are:

- ⇒ Talking slower and louder in a meeting instead of providing captions or using an interpreter.
- ⇒ A deaf person feeling ashamed of using sign language or hiding hearing aids (internalised audism).

Recognising and challenging audism matters because audism can limit opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing people in school, at work, and everyday life.

Tackling instances of audism can be extremely challenging.

In Australia it's illegal to discriminate against you because you are deaf or hard of hearing. If you experience discrimination, you should always raise it with your employer.

You could also suggest to your employer that your workplace would benefit from deaf-awareness training.



My plan for a conversation with my employer

Plan a conversation with your employer about being deaf or hard of hearing.

Make sure you practice saying what you have planned. You can practice with a teacher, friend or family member. Practicing will help build your confidence and you may also think of other things you want to add or change.

1. Request a meeting

Write down what you would say in an email, text or in person to your employer, manager or supervisor to arrange a meeting to talk about your skills and needs at work.

⇒ Briefly tell them what you want to talk to them about.

⇒ If you need an interpreter or communication support, you will need to say so.

Example:

I'd like to talk to you about my skills and needs and share some information about my hearing loss.

When would be a good time to meet?

I will bring a communication support person with me.

2. Starting the conversation

Write down how you will start a conversation with your employer.

- ⇒ Thank your employer for their time.
- ⇒ Briefly state what you want to talk about.
- ⇒ Then go into detail. talk to them about.

Example:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk to you about my skills and needs.

I want to share with you some information about my hearing loss and communication needs.

I have some strategies I want to share with you.

3. Explaining your deafness

Think about how you would explain your deafness to an employer. Your explanation might include:

- ⇒ Degree (mild, profound, moderate).
- ⇒ If it affects one or both ears (unilateral or bilateral).
- ⇒ Devices you use and any limitations to their effectiveness.

Example:

I have a moderate to profound hearing loss in both ears.

I use hearing aids to assist with communication, and I lipread to help me fill in words that I might otherwise miss.

If it is too noisy or people talk at once, I may struggle to follow conversations.

4. Explaining support or changes you need at work

Think about when you will need support or the adjustments you need at work. Go back to the challenges you identified and the strategies that will help you manage them.

You should be able to talk clearly to your employer about what works for you and what doesn't. This takes practice!

Don't focus on what you can't do or what is difficult for you. Focus on what you do well and what will help you do your work safely and effectively.

Be open to working with your employer to find solutions that work for both of you.

Example:

Captions in meetings will work well so I don't miss key points.

Getting notes or slides before meetings or training will help me prepare and follow. It's hard to watch presentations while reading captions, lipreading and listening at the same time, and I can't hear if people talk over each other.

Please remind people to speak one at a time.

Example:

I communicate best in person when I can see the person's face.

I can't hear you if you speak behind me or it's noisy.

I sometimes turn off my hearing aids to reduce noise and focus.

If I have my back to you, tap me on the shoulder to get my attention.

Example:

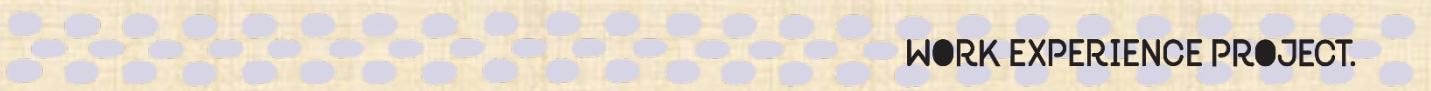
I can't hear on the phone so I will need voice calls to go through a video relay service.

A better option would be video calls for conversations and SMS or email for messages.

Example:

A buddy or a smart watch alert could help alert me to danger if I am not in range of a visual alert. Could we do a sight walk around together?

I can talk to you more about ways I can reduce listening fatigue so I can be at my



5. Ending the conversation positively

End the conversation by thanking your employer for working with you to help ensure you can work safely and do your best at work.

⇒ Emphasise your commitment to being part of the team.

⇒ Encourage open communication for any further questions or concerns.

Example:

I'm excited to be part of the team and appreciate your support and commitment to clear and open communication.

If you have any further questions, just ask. I am happy to talk further with you.

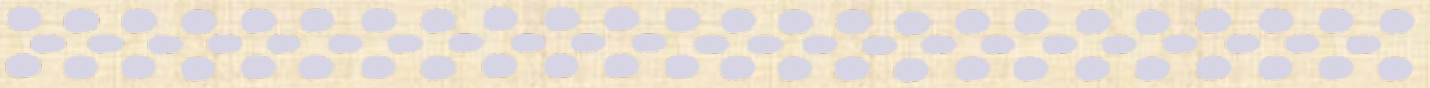
Thank you for your time today.



Post-placement reflection

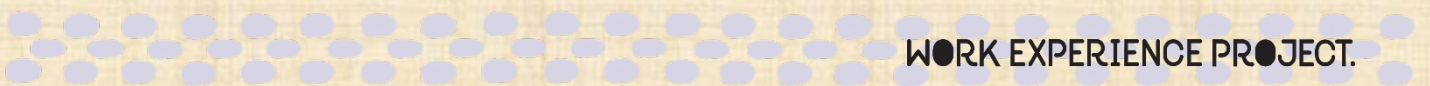
During and after your placement, think about things that are working well and what you could do differently to help you be safe at work and work to the best of your ability.

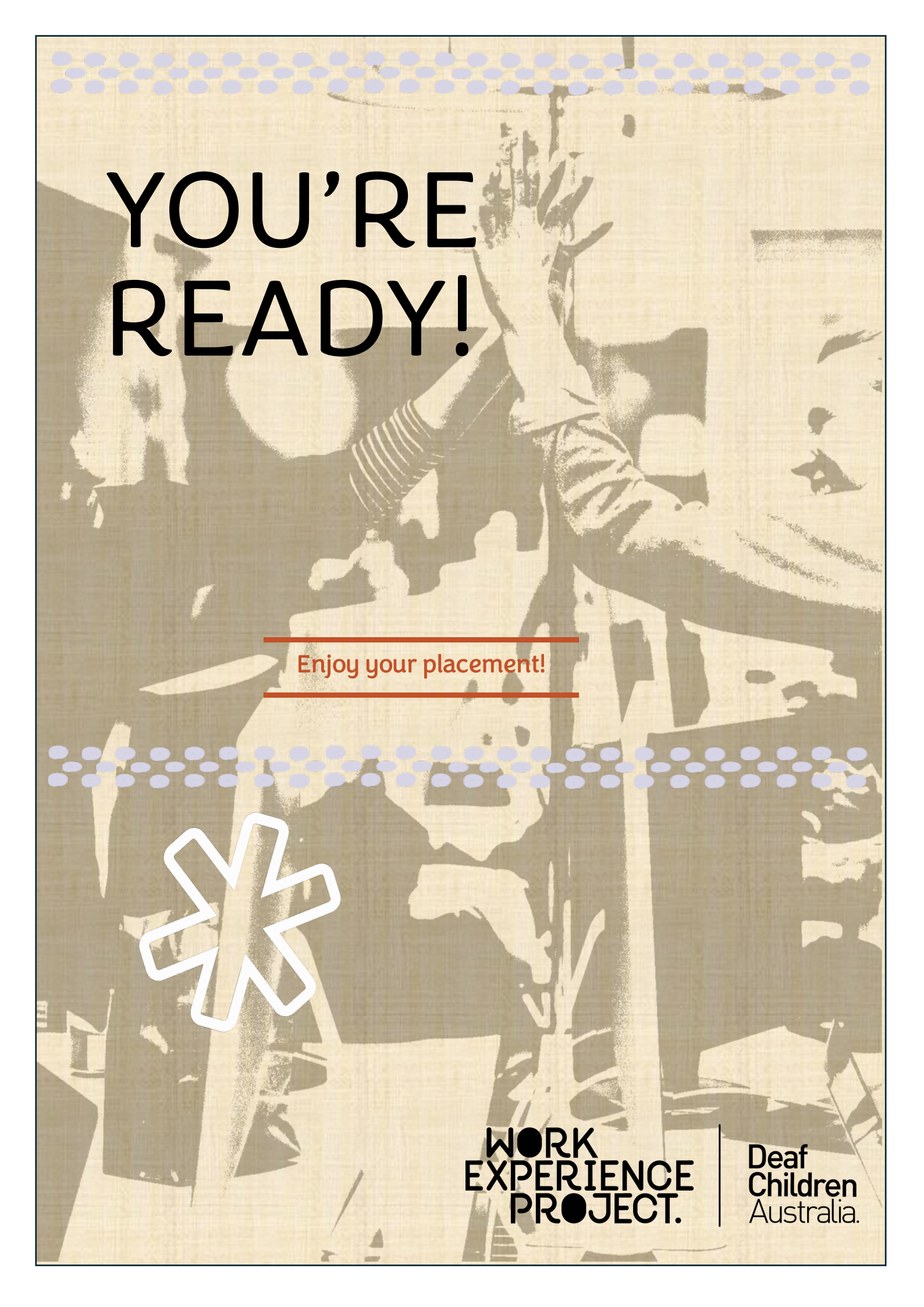
What strategies did you use to resolve challenges? Were they successful?	
What additional support did you need?	
What could you have done differently?	
How did you resolve unexpected challenges?	
What strategies do you need to add to future work plans?	



Additional reflections

Document anything else that you think may be useful to help you plan and successfully complete a work experience placement.





YOU'RE READY!

Enjoy your placement!



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