

## 3 Take Action! Information about health complaints for carers, family and friends.

Sometimes things go wrong in health care. This can happen even in the best health services. Carers, family and friends don't have to put up with a problem. You can take action.

**You have a right to give feedback and to make a complaint.** This can:

- Help fix the problem
- Stop the same thing from happening to someone else, and
- Improve health care for everyone.

**You can support the person you care for to take action.** They have the right to choose how involved they want you to be in decisions about their care.

**You can also make a complaint or give feedback about their care** if they are too unwell or have given you permission. The service will ask for proof that they have been given permission to share private information with you about the person's care or the complaint.

You can also give feedback or make a complaint about how **you** were treated as a carer, friend or family member.

**If you need an interpreter** call the free Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450.

### Know your rights.

**When you make a complaint or give feedback:**

- your concerns must be addressed in a transparent, timely way
- the care that the person you support receives must not be negatively affected.

You have a right to share your experience to improve the quality of health care.

**You have these rights wherever you get health care.** They are part of the Australian Charter of Health Care Rights.

## TAKE ACTION!

### Choose The Option That Feels Right to You.

- 1 Talk to the health professionals.** Sometimes a conversation can solve a problem before it gets worse. Expect them to listen, answer questions, and suggest solutions.
- 2 Talk to a person in charge.** Ask to speak to the person in charge. This might be a senior doctor or nurse, a manager, or a team leader.
- 3 Use the complaints and feedback process.** Every health service in Canberra – whether it's public, private or run by a community organisation - must have a feedback and complaints process and make information about it easy to find.
- 4 Contact the ACT Health Services Commissioner.** The Commissioner's office can give you free advice and help you make a complaint. They can investigate, support you through the process and arrange conciliation - this is where everyone involved works together to try and resolve the problem.  
**Phone:** 02 6205 2222 - Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm  
**Email:** [HRCIntake@act.gov.au](mailto:HRCIntake@act.gov.au)

## Good to know

### How soon should I take action?

You, or the person you care for, can make a complaint or give feedback at the time, or later. If the problem is not urgent, you can wait until the person you care for feels better. Within two years is best, this makes it easier for services to investigate and act.

### Can I make a complaint for the person I care for?

**Yes.** Anyone can raise a concern, or make a complaint, about a problem in a health service. But staff may not be able to share information about the problem and what they do about it unless the person you support has given permission for you to make a complaint for them. The service may ask for evidence that you have permission. For example, they may ask the person you support to sign a form.

If the person you support for can't give their permission, staff may be able to share information with you if you have a close relationship. For example, you might be their next of kin, legal guardian, primary carer, or hold Enduring Power of Attorney.

You can also make a complaint or report a problem to the ACT Health Services Commissioner. The Commissioner has the power to investigate a problem raised by any member of the public.

## Quick tips

You and the person you care for can:

- 1 **Take a few minutes to think about what you want.** This may be an explanation, an apology, a refund, or to make sure the same thing doesn't happen to someone else. It's OK if you don't know.
- 2 **Be as clear as you can.** What happened, when, where and who was involved? Is it a problem with treatment, medication, how people talked to you, their attitude, your privacy, or something else?
- 3 **Make a list.** Making a list of the things you want to talk about can help you say everything you want to. Make sure you start with the most important things first.
- 4 **Focus on what matters most to you.** The people you make the complaint to are more likely to focus on it too. This will help keep the conversation on track to resolve the issue.
- 5 **Stay calm.** This makes it easier for people to understand what went wrong and what they can do to respond to the problem. Take someone you trust with you. They can help you remember what you want to say.
- 6 **Keep a record.** Who did you speak to, when, and what did they say they would do? Having a record can help you remember what happened if you talk with other people about the problem later. Make sure you record their name and contact details.
- 7 **Don't give up.** You can ask the service for an update, or an estimate of how long it will take. Contact the ACT Health Services Commissioner if you are unhappy with the response.
- 8 **Get support.** You can:
  - Find out whether an individual health advocate can help you. Contact the advocacy services at the end of this Tip Sheet to find out more.
  - Connect with Carers' ACT for information and services for carers in the ACT.
  - Contact the ACT Health Services Commissioner for free advice and assistance.

## Important contacts

### ACT Health Services Commissioner

**Phone:** 02 6205 2222 or

**Email:** [HRCIntake@act.gov.au](mailto:HRCIntake@act.gov.au)

**Aged, Disability and Carer Advocacy Service** offers individual advocacy for older people, people with disabilities and carers.

**Phone:** 02 6242 5060 or

**Email:** [adacas@adacas.org.au](mailto:adacas@adacas.org.au)

### Ahpra

**Phone:** 1300 419 495

**Advocacy for Inclusion** can provide short-term individual advocacy to people who identify as having a mental illness or disability.

**Phone:** 02 6257 4005 or

**Email:** [info@advocacyforinclusion.org](mailto:info@advocacyforinclusion.org)

**Carers ACT** provides services, advocacy and information for carers living in the ACT.

**Phone:** 02 6296 9900 or

**Email:** [carers@carersact.org.au](mailto:carers@carersact.org.au)



If you or someone you care about is experiencing a mental health crisis, contact Access Mental Health on 1800 629 354 or 6205 1065 for immediate assistance. For telephone support phone Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636.

This fact sheet provides general information that is accurate at the time of publication. It is not professional medical or legal advice. This work is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA license



Jan 2024