

# 1 Take action! Health complaints and feedback in the ACT

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

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

- Help fix the problem
- Stop it happening again
- Make health care better for everyone.

When you make a complaint or give feedback:

- Your concerns must be addressed in a transparent, timely way
- Your treatment 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.

**If you need an interpreter** phone 131 450 for the free Translating and Interpreting Service.

## Get support.

- 1 Talk to someone you trust.** They can help you think about your options, decide what you want to do, and support you when you take action. You can also give someone you trust permission to make a complaint or give feedback for you.
- 2 Speak to a health advocate.** An advocate can help you think about options or make a complaint. Some community services offer this for free to people who need support. Contact the services at the end of this Tip Sheet to find out if they can help you.
- 3 Contact the ACT Health Services Commissioner.** You can get free advice, help to make a complaint and support through the process.

**If you need an interpreter,** phone the **free** Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450. You can also phone the health service and ask for an interpreter.

## TAKE ACTION!

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

- 1 Talk to the health professionals treating you.** Sometimes a conversation can fix a problem before it gets worse. Expect them to listen, answer your 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, a nurse in charge, a manager, or a team leader.
- 3 Use the complaints and feedback process.** Every health service in Canberra – whether it's 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 office of the Commissioner 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)

**Take action as soon as you are ready.** Some problems need urgent action. If the problem isn't urgent, you can make a complaint at the time or when you feel better. Within two years is best, this makes it easier for services to investigate what happened and to act.

### Quick tips

- 1 Take a few minutes to think about what you want.** You might want an explanation, an apology, a refund, or to make sure the same thing doesn't happen again. It's OK if you don't know. If you do know, make sure you tell the person you speak to what you want.
- 2 Be as clear as you can.** What happened, when, where and who was involved? Is it a problem with your 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. You can ask someone you trust to take notes so you can focus on speaking.
- 7 Don't give up.** You can ask for an update, or an estimate of how long it will take. Contact the ACT Health Services Commissioner if you aren't happy with the response.

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## Important contacts

### ACT Health Services Commissioner

**Phone:** 02 6205 2222

**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

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

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

**Phone:** 02 6257 4005

**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

**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.

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