

# Is there a problem with your mental health care? Take action!

## Mental health care complaints and feedback in Canberra

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

### YOUR COMPLAINT OR FEEDBACK MATTERS

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

- Help fix the problem
- Stop the same thing from happening again, and
- Improve mental health care for everyone.

**You don't have to do it on your own.** You can ask someone you trust to support you, or give them permission to make a complaint for you.

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

### TAKE ACTION!

#### CHOOSE THE OPTION THAT FEELS RIGHT TO YOU.

# 1

**Talk to the health professionals treating you.** Sometimes a conversation can fix the 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 of your care. This might be a senior doctor or nurse, a manager or a team leader.

# 3

**Use the complaints and feedback process.** Every mental 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 office of the ACT Health Services Commissioner offers free advice and can help you make a complaint. They can investigate, support you through the process, and arrange conciliation – this is where everyone involved works together to resolve the problem.

Phone 02 6205 2222 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

Email [HRCIntake@act.gov.au](mailto:HRCIntake@act.gov.au) / Online [www.hrc.act.gov.au/complaints](http://www.hrc.act.gov.au/complaints)

**Take action as soon as you are ready.** You can make a complaint or give feedback at the time, or later. If the problem isn't urgent you can wait until you feel better. Within two years is best, this makes it easier for services to investigate what happened.

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.

## GET SUPPORT

This can make it easier to make a complaint or give feedback.

**Talk to someone you trust.** They can help you think about your options, decide what you want to do, and take action. You can give someone you trust permission to make a complaint or give feedback for you.

**Speak to a health advocate.** An individual health advocate can help you think about options and make a complaint. Some services provide this for free to people who need support. Contact the services listed at the end of this tip sheet to find out more.

**Contact the ACT Health Services Commissioner.** You can get free advice about a problem in your mental health care. You can also get help if you have made a complaint but are not happy with the response.

## QUICK TIPS - MAKING A COMPLAINT



**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 to someone else. It's OK if you don't know.



**Be as clear as you can about the problem.** 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?



**Focus on the issue that matters most to you.** The people you make your complaint to are more likely to focus on it too.



**If you are talking with a health professional about the problem** stay as calm as you can. Take someone you trust with you. They can help you remember what you want to say and take notes.



**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.

## PLAN AHEAD

You have a right to make decisions in advance about the kind of care you want if you are unwell in the future. Complete an *Advance Agreement* and *Advance Consent Direction* and appoint a nominated person while you are well. You can use the *My Rights, My Decision* toolkit to do this. Visit [www.actmhc.org.au](http://www.actmhc.org.au) or contact the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network on 02 6230 5796.

## IMPORTANT CONTACTS

**The ACT Health Services Commissioner** offers free advice, and can help you make a complaint and investigate.  
Phone 02 6205 2222 or email [HRCIntake@act.gov.au](mailto:HRCIntake@act.gov.au)

**ACT Official Visitor Scheme:** An Official Visitor can visit you in a mental health facility, hear your concerns, help you make a complaint and work with the service to fix the problem.  
Phone and TTY 1800 150 036 or email [ovs@act.gov.au](mailto:ovs@act.gov.au)

**The Aged, Disability and Carer Advocacy Service:** 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)

**Advocacy for Inclusion:** Short-term individual advocacy support for 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:** 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)

**The Public Advocate of the ACT:** An advocate regularly visits ACT hospitals, the ACT Civil and Administrative Appeals Tribunal and the Alexander Maconochie Centre, and can meet you there to help you raise a concern about your care. Phone 02 6205 2222 or email [PublicAdvocateReferrals@act.gov.au](mailto:PublicAdvocateReferrals@act.gov.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



January 2022 Review Date: February 2024