

Take action! How to make a complaint about a mental health professional in Canberra.

YOUR COMPLAINT OR FEEDBACK MATTERS

You have a right to make a complaint about a mental health professional. This can:

- help fix a problem in your mental health care
- stop it from happening again
- 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 professional.** Sometimes a conversation can solve a problem before it gets worse. Expect the person to listen, answer your questions, and suggest solutions.
- 2 Talk to a person in charge.** If the person is part of a team, or is employed by a service, 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 service's complaints and feedback process.** Every mental health service in Canberra – whether it is 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, help you make a complaint, investigate, support you through the process and arrange conciliation – this is where everyone involved works together to resolve the problem.
 - Act on complaints about anyone who works for a health service, or who offers a service for your health or wellbeing.
 - Help you work toward an explanation, apology, refund or other financial outcome, or a change in how a health service does things.

If your complaint is about a registered health professional, the Commissioner will share information with Ahpra. Ahpra may also take action.
- 5 Contact the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency** Ahpra investigates complaints about registered health professionals. These include: doctors (including GPs and psychiatrists), nurses, pharmacists, paramedics, psychologists, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers.

Ahpra is the only agency that can stop these health professionals from working, or place limits on what they can do. Ahpra can act if the person is harming patients or placing them at risk, or their judgement is impaired. Ahpra can also act if someone is pretending to be a member of one of these professions but is not qualified.

Ahpra may refer you to the Health Services Commissioner. Ahpra investigates every complaint and keeps a record of the outcome. Very few complaints result in a professional's registration being cancelled or suspended.

Phone 1300 419 495 or use the online form at www.ahpra.org.secure.force.com/notification

CAN I WAIT UNTIL I FEEL BETTER?

Yes. You can make a complaint at the time, or if it is not urgent you can wait until you feel better. Within two years is best, this makes it easier for services to investigate and act.

WHAT IF THEY DO NOT HAVE TO REGISTER WITH AHPRA?

Some health professionals do not have to register with Ahpra. They register with a professional association instead. These include:

- mental health social workers
- counsellors
- psychotherapists
- some allied health professionals including speech pathologists and exercise physiologists
- most complementary or alternative therapists

You can make a complaint to the person, their manager, the service they work for or to the ACT Health Services Commissioner. You can also contact their professional association to make a complaint.

Visit www.hcca.org.au/takeaction for more information.

WHAT ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE INVOLVED IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE?

Many other professionals provide services or support to mental health consumers. They include:

- Case workers
- Support workers
- Personal care attendants
- Receptionists
- Administration staff
- Police officers

You can raise a concern or make a complaint to the person, their manager, or the organisation that employs them. You can also contact the ACT Health Services Commissioner for free advice and help to make a complaint.

CAN SOMEONE I TRUST MAKE A COMPLAINT FOR ME?

Yes. Anyone can make a complaint or give feedback about a problem in mental health. But staff may not be able to share information about the problem and what they do about it unless you give the person permission to make the complaint for you. If you can't give permission, staff may be able to share information with someone who has a close relationship to you. For example, the person may be your guardian, nominated person, legal representative, or you may have named them in your Advance Consent Direction or Advance Agreement.

Someone you trust can also make a complaint to the ACT Health Services Commissioner. The Commissioner has the power to investigate a problem raised by any member of the public.

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

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

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

Ahpra: Phone 1300 419 495 or Website www.ahpra.gov.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

Carers ACT: Services, advocacy and information for carers living in the ACT. Phone 02 6296 9900 or email 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



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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