

Take Action! How to make a complaint or give feedback about mental health care in Canberra.

Information for carers, friends and family.

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

YOUR COMPLAINT OR FEEDBACK MATTERS

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

- help fix a problem in your mental health care
- stop it from happening again
- improve mental health care for everyone.

You can support the person you care about to take action if something goes wrong. They have the right to decide how much they want to involve you in decisions about their care. If they give permission, you can make a complaint or give feedback on their behalf. If they can't give permission, you can be their advocate.

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

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. Sometimes a conversation can solve a problem before it gets worse. Expect them to listen to you and to the person you are supporting, answer questions, and suggest solutions. Ask the person you are supporting if they want you to be there when they speak up about a problem.

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 mental health service in Canberra - whether public, private or run by a community organisation - must have a feedback and complaints process and make information about it easy to find and understand.

4

Contact the ACT Health Services Commissioner. 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 resolve the problem.
Phone 02 6205 2222 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)
Email HRCIntake@act.gov.au / Online: www.hrc.act.gov.au/complaints

How soon should I act? You, or the person you are supporting, can make a complaint at the time, or later. If the problem is not urgent, you can wait until they feel better. Within two years is best, this makes it easier for services to investigate and act.

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.

CAN I MAKE A COMPLAINT FOR THE PERSON I AM SUPPORTING?

Yes. Anyone can raise a concern or make a complaint about a problem in mental health care. But staff may not be able to share information about the problem and what they do about it, unless the person you are supporting has given you permission to make the complaint for them. The service may ask for evidence that you have permission. For example, they may ask the person you are supporting to sign a form, or you may be their nominated person. If they are unable to give their permission, staff may be able to share some information with you if you have a close relationship with the person. You might be their guardian, nominated person, legal representative, or named in their Advance Consent Direction / Advance Agreement.

You can report a problem or 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.







HOW CAN I HELP?

Carers, nominated persons, family and friends can help by:

- Listening, if the person wants to talk about what happened.
- Talking about options and supporting their decision.
- Offering to help, for example to go with the person if they talk with staff about a problem.

QUICK TIPS – MAKING A COMPLAINT

You, or the person you support, can:

-  **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, or aren't sure.
-  **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?
-  **Focus on what matters most to you.** The people you make your complaint to are more likely to focus on it too. This will help keep the conversation on track and make a good outcome more likely.
-  **Stay as calm as you can if you are talking with a health professional about the problem.** 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.
-  **Get support.** Some community services offer individual health advocacy. Find out if they can help you, or the person you support. There are contact details below. Don't give up. You can ask the service for an update, or an estimate of how long their process will take. Contact the ACT Health Services Commissioner if you are

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

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 PublicAdvocateReferrals@act.gov.au



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