

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 / Online 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 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

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 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.

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

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.

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

Take action! How to raise a concern about your mental health in-patient care

You have a right to give feedback or make a complaint about your care in a mental health in-patient unit.

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 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.

AM I AN IN-PATIENT OF A MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE?

If you stay overnight in hospital, or another service, you are an in-patient. Mental health in-patient services in the ACT include:

- Canberra Hospital - Mental Health Short Stay Unit, Adult Mental Health Unit, Adult Mental Health Day Service and Adolescent Mental Health Unit and Ward 12B
- University of Canberra Hospital - Adult Mental Health Rehabilitation Unit
- Dhulwa Secure Mental Health Unit
- Calvary Public Hospital - Acacia Ward and the Older Persons Mental Health Inpatient Unit
- Calvary Private Hospital – Hyson Green
- Gawanggal Extended Care Unit
- Adult Step Up Step Down service and Youth Step Up Step Down service
- Overnight care for your mental health provided in any other area of a hospital

TAKE ACTION!

CHOOSE THE OPTION THAT FEELS RIGHT TO YOU.

- 1 **Talk to the health professionals treating you.** Sometimes a conversation can solve 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 of your care. This might be a senior doctor or nurse, 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. **This is usually best for non-urgent problems.**
- 4 **Contact the ACT Health Services Commissioner** for free advice and help to make a complaint. The Commissioner can investigate, support you, 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
Make a complaint online: hrc.act.gov.au/complaints

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.

ACT Official Visitor Scheme

Official Visitors make sure mental health facilities respect the rights, dignity and quality of life of people in their care. They can visit you in the facility, hear your concerns, help you make a complaint and work with the service to fix the problem. Phone 1800 150 036 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm); TTY 1800 424 183 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm); Online ovs.act.gov.au or email ovs@act.gov.au. Staff may be able to help if you want to contact an Official Visitor outside of business hours.

CAN I WAIT UNTIL I FEEL BETTER?

Yes. You can make a complaint at the time, or when you feel ready. If the problem 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.

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 have given permission to the person who makes the complaint. 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 can investigate a problem raised by any member of the public.

PLAN AHEAD

Yes. You have the right to decide what kind of care you want if you become 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 or contact the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network on 02 6230 5796.

WHAT IF I'M GETTING SICKER?

If your health is getting worse while you are an in-patient, you or someone you trust should talk to the staff. If that doesn't help, ask to talk to someone in charge. If you're still getting worse, in some hospitals you can call the CARE for Patient Safety Program for a clinical response. At Canberra Hospital call 02 6244 3337, at University of Canberra Hospital call 02 6244 3337, and at Calvary Public Hospital call 02 6201 6717.

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 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.

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

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



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

Take action! Advocacy

How to improve the mental health system in the ACT

A problem in one person's mental health care can be a sign of a bigger issue in the mental health system. You have a right to share your experience and ideas to improve mental health care. You can be an advocate for yourself, for others, and for a better mental health system.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO IT ON YOUR OWN.

When people work together to improve mental health care services, laws, policies and practices, it is called systemic advocacy. There are lots of ways to get involved in advocating for better mental health care. Start by contacting one of the organisations below.

ACT MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMER NETWORK

The ACT Mental health Consumer Network is the Peak Body for Mental Health Consumers in the ACT. The Network is run by consumers, for consumers. A consumer is anyone who identifies as having lived experience of mental illness or a psychiatric disorder, or has personally used a mental health service for their own mental health needs.

The Network is funded by ACT Health to do systemic advocacy to help improve mental health services and programs so that they work for all people when they need them. The main way the Network does this is through training and supporting consumers to become Consumer Representatives. Consumer Representatives talk about the needs, experiences and perspectives of mental health consumers to government and the community. They work to improve mental health care by:

- Participating on government and non-government committees
- Participating in and assisting with research programs
- Lobbying government and mental health service providers about gaps in services; and
- Facilitating education programs for consumers and the broader community.

Phone: 02 6230 5796

Email: actmhcncn@actmhcncn.org.au

Drop in: 10am to 1pm Thursday at Griffin Centre Level 2, Room 11, 20 Genge Street Canberra City ACT 2601

More information: www.actmhcncn.org.au

CARERS ACT

Carers ACT is a not-for-profit organisation and the peak body for carers in the ACT. Its purpose is to support, connect and empower carers to maintain their caring role and personal wellbeing.

Carers are partners, spouses, children, family, friends or neighbours who assist someone who lives with disability, is frail with age, or has an ongoing mental or other illness. Carers provide informal, unpaid help with daily living activities.

Carers ACT offers a range of supports and services for carers, such as short-term replacement care when you need a break, counselling, educational workshops, social and therapeutic activities and advocacy.

Phone: 02 6296 9900

Email: carers@carersact.org.au

More information: www.carersact.org.au

MENTAL HEALTH CARERS VOICE

The Mental Health Carers Voice Program works to create a better mental health system nationally and in the ACT. Mental Health Carers Voice is the peak body for mental health carers in the ACT and works closely with carers to make positive changes to the mental health service system. They do this by making sure that the perspectives, concerns and ideas voiced by mental health carers and their families are heard by decision-makers.

Mental Health Carers Voice is auspiced by Carers ACT.

Phone: 02 6296 9900 and ask for Mental Health Carers Voice

Email: mhcarers@carersact.org.au

More information: <https://mhcv.org.au>

ADVOCACY FOR INCLUSION

Advocacy for Inclusion (AFI) is funded to represent all people with disability in the ACT. AFI provides individual disability advocacy, support for self-advocacy, systemic advocacy and training.

Phone: 02 6257 4005

In Person: Visit Room 2.02 Griffin Centre, 20 Genge St, Canberra City 2601

More information: www.advocacyforinclusion.org

HEALTH CARE CONSUMERS' ASSOCIATION

The Health Care Consumers' Association (HCCA) is the peak health care consumer organisation in the ACT. HCCA works to improve the quality and safety of health services, and advocates for health equity for people living in the Canberra region. HCCA works to improve the quality and availability of health services. It supports consumers to identify health care priorities and advocates for them to ACT Government and health services.

Phone: 02 6230 7800

Email: admin@hcca.org.au

More information: www.hcca.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



January 2022 Review Date: February 2024

Take action!

Health care complaints and feedback matter

Mental health care in Canberra is usually very safe and of high quality. But things can go wrong, even in the best mental health services.

YOUR COMPLAINT OR FEEDBACK MATTERS

You might face a problem with your treatment, medication, the cost of tests and treatments, how staff of a service interact with you or talk with you, your privacy or your medical record.

You can take action by making a complaint or giving feedback. This:

- Lets a health service know about a problem
- Gives the service information about what they need to improve
- Can help the people involved understand what matters to consumers and patients

EVERY HEALTH SERVICE MUST HAVE A COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK PROCESS

1

Every health service in the ACT – whether public, private or run by a non-government organisation - must have a process for complaints and feedback.

2

They must also make information about how you can make a complaint or give feedback easy for you to find and understand.

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

You might feel unsure whether you want to make a complaint or give feedback.

It's good to know that you have a right to take action.

- You have a right to make a complaint or give feedback.
- You have a right to a transparent and timely response.
- Your treatment must not be affected.

You have these rights wherever you get health care and for whatever type of health care you get.

They are part of the Australian Charter of Health Care Rights.

In the ACT you also have additional rights as a mental health consumer. These are set out in the ACT Charter of Rights for People Experiencing Mental Ill Health or Mental Disorder. You can find it here: <http://www.actmhc.org.au/>

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

ACT Health Services Commissioner

The ACT Health Services Commissioner is part of the ACT Human Rights Commission and can offer advice, help you make a complaint, investigate and arrange conciliation – this is when 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

Website: <https://hrc.act.gov.au/complaints/>

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.

UNSURE WHETHER YOU WANT TO MAKE A COMPLAINT?

YOU MIGHT THINK

IT'S GOOD TO KNOW

Maybe what happened to me is OK

If it didn't feel OK to you, it isn't OK.
You have a right to health care that is safe *and that makes you feel safe*.

I don't know if my complaint will make a difference

Complaints and feedback give services information they need to improve the care they offer.
A complaint or feedback can:

- Help fix the problem
- Stop the same thing happening again
- Make health care better for other people

Staff might treat me differently if I make a complaint.

You have a right to be treated the same, or better, if you give feedback or make a complaint. The health service **must not** treat you worse or discriminate against you if you make a complaint.
The ACT Health Services Commissioner can take action if staff treat you differently because you gave feedback or made a complaint.

I may have to see the same health professional again in the future.

Good health services and health professionals **want** your feedback – good or bad. Feedback or complaints let them know what they are doing well and what could be done better.

The problem is too big for me to fix

You have a right to share your experience to improve health care.
Consider getting involved with a consumer or carer organisation that advocates for better health care for everyone. They may be able to help you work to make specific changes to improve the system.

Not all of my care was bad.

No problem is too small to raise. Good health services want to fix problems – big or small.
You can give feedback about what was good as well as what could have been better.

I can't do this on my own.

You don't have to.
Someone you trust can support you or make a complaint for you if you give them permission, such as your nominated person, carer, family or friend.
The ACT Health Services Commissioner can give you free advice and help you to make a complaint.
You may be able to get help from a health advocate, such as ADACAS or Advocacy for Inclusion. Some community services offer this for free to people who can't advocate for themselves or who need support.

ADVICE FOR DIFFERENT PEOPLE

You can find out more about making a complaint or giving feedback in different settings in the fact sheets that are part of this Take Action series.

1. Is there a problem with your mental health care?
2. How to make a complaint about a mental health professional in the ACT
3. How to raise a concern about In-patient mental health care
4. Mental Health Care Complaints – Information for carers, nominated persons, family and friends
5. Advocacy - How to improve the mental health system in the ACT

To find a copy of the fact sheets, you can go to www.hcca.org.au/takeaction



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