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2. Take action! How to make a complaint about a health professional in the ACT

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

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

When you make complaint, or give feedback:

- You have a right to a transparent, timely response
- Your treatment must not be negatively affected.

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.

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.** Ask to speak to the person in charge. This might be a senior doctor or nurse, a manager or team leader.
- 3 Use the complaints and feedback process.** Every 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.** They 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 to resolve the problem.

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.

The Commissioner can help with a complaint about:

- any health professional in the ACT
- any health service in the ACT
- anyone who offers a service for your health or wellbeing in the ACT.

The Commissioner's office can help you work towards an explanation, an apology, a refund or other financial outcome, or a change in how the health professional or the service they work for operates.

If your complaint is about a **registered health professional**, the Commissioner will share information with Ahpra. Ahpra may also take action.

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Contact the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra). They investigate complaints about registered health professionals.

Ahpra cover: Doctors, Nurses and Midwives, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers, Dentists, Radiation Practitioners and Radiographers, Physiotherapists, Chiropractors, Occupational Therapists, Optometrists, Osteopaths, Paramedics, Pharmacists, Psychologists, Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Podiatrists.

Ahpra is the only agency that can stop these health professionals from working, or limit what they can do. This is the **only** outcome Ahpra can achieve. They can take this action if there is evidence the person is providing unsafe care, harming or putting patients at risk, or their judgement is impaired.

Ahpra can also act if an unqualified person is pretending to be a registered health professional.

Ahpra may refer you to the Health Services Commissioner. To find out more about Ahpra's role and how Ahpra handles complaints, visit www.ahpra.gov.au

What about health workers that do not have to register with Ahpra?

Some allied health professionals do not have to register with Ahpra. They may register with a professional association instead. Some examples are speech pathologists, dietitians, exercise physiologists, and most complementary or alternative therapists.

Any health care workers that do not need to register with Ahpra or another body still need to follow the [Code of Conduct for Health Care Workers](#). A health care worker is anyone who provides a service in the ACT to someone for any of these purposes:

- a. assessing, recording, maintaining or improving the physical, mental or emotional health, comfort or wellbeing of the service user;
- b. diagnosing or treating an illness, disability, disorder or condition of the service user.

Some examples are massage therapists, Chinese medicine practitioners, nutritionists, doulas, disability care workers, aged care workers and counsellors.

Under the Code of Conduct:

All health care workers must	All health care workers must not
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide safe and ethical health care• Get your consent for treatment• Keep good records and protect your privacy• Minimise harm and take action if something goes wrong• Have the right insurance• Co-operate with your other health practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mislead you about their work or qualifications• Put you at risk because of their own health problems• Practice when using drugs or alcohol• Make false claims about curing serious illnesses like cancer• Take advantage of you financially• Tell you not to see other health practitioners

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. Some professional associations have a list of their members on their websites, or you can call the association to check whether the person is a member. There is more information about professional associations in the Directory.

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.

Important contacts

ACT Health Services Commissioner

Phone: 02 6205 2222

Email: HRCIntake@act.gov.au

Ahpra

Phone: 1300 419 495

Online: www.ahpra.gov.au

Aged, Disability and Carer Advocacy Service: individual advocacy for older people, people with disabilities and carers.

Phone: 02 6242 5060

Email: adacas@adacas.org.au

Advocacy for Inclusion: short-term individual advocacy for people who identify as having a mental illness or disability.

Phone: 02 6257 4005

Email: info@advocacyforinclusion.org



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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