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Take action! Tips for making a health complaint

Making a complaint or giving feedback about how a health care service could do things better can be hard, but it helps to make health care better and safer for everyone.

If you need an interpreter call the free Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450. TIS can help you when you are talking to people about a complaint or giving feedback about your health care.

Take a few minutes to think about what you want

Sometimes people want:

- An explanation of what happened
- An apology
- Someone to hear their side of the story
- A change in how the health service does things – so that the problem doesn't happen again
- A financial outcome, for example a refund.

You may want more than one thing.

It's OK if you don't know. Problems in health care can be complicated. You don't have to have all the answers.

The ACT Health Services Commissioner can give you free advice and talk about your options.

Be as clear as you can about what happened

This can make it easier to write or talk about what happened. It can help the service understand what needs to be fixed.

Take a moment to think about:

- What happened?
- When?
- Where?
- Who was involved?
- Why are you unhappy?

Talking about the problem

If you make a verbal complaint, or are talking with people from the health service about what happened:

- Focus on what's most important to you - other people are more likely to focus on it too. This can help keep the conversation on track to resolve the issue.
- Stay as calm as you can
- Say what you want to happen
- Be direct, polite and avoid personal attacks
- Make sure you get the name of the person you speak to and their contact details.

You can:

- Write down what you want to talk about before you go, to help you remember. Work out what are the most important things you want to say and check your list before the discussion finishes.
- Ask someone you trust to go with you – they can give you support and help remember what was said or take notes.
- Ask the person you talk to what will happen next and when it will happen.

Making a written complaint

If you're writing a letter or an email:

- Try to be direct, clear and polite.
- Focus on what's most important to you – other people are more likely to focus on it too.

If you know, include:

- Dates, times and names of people involved.
- A timeline of events - this helps the service to understand what happened.
- Anything you have done to solve the problem – for example, any staff you spoke to and what they did or agreed to do.
- Copies of relevant documents – don't send the originals, as you might need them.

Keep a record

Keeping a record can help if you need to talk with other people about the problem later.

If you speak to people about the problem, you can write down:

- Who you spoke to, and their job title
- The date and time you spoke
- Their telephone or email contact in case you need to follow up
- What they said they would do, and when by.

You can also keep a record of:

- Letters or emails you send
- Letters, emails, invoices or other information the health service gives you.

Important contacts

ACT Health Services Commissioner

Phone: 02 6205 2222 or

Email: HRCIntake@act.gov.au

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

Phone: 02 6242 5060 or

Email: adacas@adacas.org.au

Carers ACT provides services, advocacy and information for carers living in the ACT.

Phone: 02 6296 9900 or

Email: carers@carersact.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.

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