

HOW TO RAISE COMPLAINTS EFFECTIVELY

When should I raise a complaint?

It is best not to allow complaints to accumulate or to simmer.

Raise any complaints immediately with the provider or as soon as you become aware of any issues that need addressing. The more time that elapses between the onset of a complaint and the time you raise the issue the more difficult it may be to resolve.

Note: you may forget specific details of the complaint such as dates and times the incidents occurred and even names of individuals involved so write down these details as soon as possible.

RAISE COMPLAINTS IMMEDIATELY.

With whom should I raise my complaint?

You have a right to raise a complaint with any staff member. However, you should be aware that some staff might not have the authority to make certain decisions to resolve your complaint.

If the issue is minor, the nurse on duty may be able to resolve your concern immediately.

If the issue is of a more complex nature you may need to approach the charge nurse, unit manager, manager or Director of Nursing (DON) to arrange a convenient time to raise your complaint.

Arranging a meeting time will give you an opportunity to raise your complaint without feeling rushed and without feeling that you have not been heard. A pre arranged meeting time also enables the staff member to concentrate fully on your complaint.

MAKE SURE YOUR COMPLAINT GOES TO THE RIGHT PERSON.

What am I complaining about?

You will need to be clear about the issue/s that you wish to raise.

Example: If you are complaining about care issues you should consider the following:

- a) What aspect of the care are you referring to i.e. toileting, continence management?
- b) How often has this issue occurred?
- c) When has this issue occurred?
- d) Is this an issue with all staff or does it only happen with one particular staff member?

It may be prudent to keep a diary of when issues have arisen e.g. dates, times etc.

Do not generalise or make personal comments about staff or their competencies.

If the complaint involves care issues, ask for the resident's care plan to be available at the meeting. This will enable the parties to review the document and make any amendments if required.

Note: It may be helpful to ask for a copy of the care plan prior to your meeting. This will provide you with the opportunity to familiarise yourself with the care that has previously been agreed to be provided to the resident.

BE CLEAR ABOUT THE FACTS.

Are you raising more than one complaint / issue?

Keep all the issues separate, and write down all the issues before your meeting.

Note: If you try to remember everything without writing it down you may forget to mention it during your meeting. (Some meetings can be quite stressful).

Are you making a complaint?

Ensure you are clear whether you are raising issues to just inform the provider of what is going on or that you are raising a complaint and expect the provider to have the complaint addressed and that you also expect appropriate feedback.

If you raise a verbal complaint with a staff member you must ensure that the staff member you are speaking with is aware that you are raising a complaint. Inform the staff member that you want your complaint investigated, followed up and resolved and that you expect feedback about this.

If you put your complaint in writing ensure you include on the complaint form your name, phone number and address. Keep a copy of the complaint for yourself.

Document when you lodged the complaint with the provider and either the name of the staff member you handed it to or whether you placed it in the complaints box etc.

For a written complaint you should receive confirmation of receipt of your complaint within 48 hours (longer if you lodge it over the weekend). This could be in the form of a letter, via phone or in person.

Be aware that the resolution of a written complaint will usually take longer, usually expect at least seven days and even longer for some complex complaints to be investigated and resolved.

BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT YOU EXPECT.

Resolution of complaint

Be prepared to offer solutions on how to resolve your complaint.

If you lodge a written complaint, you may want to include suggestions to resolve your complaint on the complaint form.

Ensure that your suggestions are realistic and achievable.

Consider the resolutions put forward by the provider and whether they will meet the needs of the resident. You should be given details of the steps taken by the provider to ensure that the same issues do not recur. These may include improving systems within the facility and staff training and education.

Set time frame to review agreed outcomes.

For complex complaints and care matters, it is always advisable to arrange a review date on your agreed action plan.

The review date will enable all parties to assess how the agreed action plan is proceeding and whether the outcomes are meeting the needs of the resident.

AGREE TO A TIME FRAME FOR RESOLUTION.

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Empowering older Victorians

Elder Rights Advocacy is the registered business name of Residential Care Rights Inc. (ABN 63 367 539 827) which is part of the National Aged Care Advocacy Program - an Australian Government Initiative.

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