



Information Sheet:

Improving health, disability and mental health services through complaint resolution since 1996

The Health and Disability Services Complaints Office is an independent Statutory Authority providing an impartial resolution service for complaints relating to health, disability and mental health services in Western Australia and the Indian Ocean Territories.

2021 marks the 25th anniversary of the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office (HaDSCO). Since opening on 16 September 1996, it has received over 50,000 complaints, resulting in over 1,200 service improvements.

There have also been apologies, explanations, fee refunds and other restorative actions, with over 1,100 redress outcomes achieved over the last five years.

Originally called the Office of Health Review, the Office was established under landmark legislation, the *Health Services (Conciliation and Review) Act 1995* which was created to improve the quality and accountability of the Western Australian health system.

The Act provided an entirely new concept and way of thinking about the handling of health complaints, recognising the importance for all parties to be involved in the resolution process and allowed deficiencies in the health delivery system to be identified and improvements and changes implemented.

In 1999 the responsibility for handling complaints about disability services was transferred to the Office.

Following a review of the Act, the revised *Health and Disability Services (Complaints) Act 1995* came into effect in 2010. This resulted in the Office having access to negotiated settlement as a resolution option, as well as a name change for the agency to what it is now known, the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office.

With the implementation of the *Mental Health Act 2014* the Office also took on the responsibility of managing mental health complaints.

In 2021, with the implementation of the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019*, HaDSCO can receive complaints about the voluntary assisted dying process, which is one of the safeguards provided in this important piece of legislation.

In the first year of operation, the Office received 671 complaints. Today HaDSCO receives over 2,800 complaints a year.





HaDSCO takes a resolution-based approach to managing complaints. The focus is to resolve complaints as informally as possible in a timely and efficient manner.

Who can make a complaint?

A complaint can be made by:

- The person who used the service.
- A relative, representative or carer.
- A representative of a person who died.
- A carer, about a failure to comply with the *Western Australian Carers Charter* as set out in the *Carers Recognition Act 2004*.

Providing a complaints service

HaDSCO provides an impartial service for all parties to a complaint. This is achieved by:

- Ensuring our services are accessible and confidential.
- Treating all parties with respect and courtesy.
- Listening to both sides of the story and clarifying the issues of the complaint and outcomes being sought.
- Applying a fit for purpose approach to reach resolution which respects the diversity of consumers and providers.
- Assisting the parties to meet face to face to facilitate conciliation discussions with HaDSCO staff being present as a neutral party to encourage reaching an agreement.

Outcomes

Through the complaints process we can:

- Facilitate resolution between the parties.
- Provide an avenue for concerns to be heard and understood.
- Assist to rebuild trust between the parties and encourage individuals to reconnect into the health, disability or mental health systems.
- Provide a mechanism to allow for understanding of what transpired when poor health outcomes have occurred.
- Identify redress and restorative action for individuals, as well as system improvements which have far reaching benefits for others in the future.
- Add value by contributing to improve health, disability and mental health services through complaint resolution.

- Over 50,000 complaints received since 16 September 1996.
- Over 1,200 service improvements have resulted through the work of the Office.
- Over 1,100 redress outcomes achieved over the past five years.

Supporting improvement through complaint resolution

Complaints and enquiries: (08) 6551 7600

Free call: 1800 813 583 (free from landlines)

Admin: (08) 6551 7620

Email: mail@hadsco.wa.gov.au

Web: hadsco.wa.gov.au



Interpreter Service: 131 450 - tisonational.gov.au

National Relay Service: 1800 555 660 - relayservice.wa.gov.au

