



Information Sheet

Managing a complaint

Complaints provide individuals with the opportunity to provide feedback on a service received, and they enable an organisation to reflect and review how a service was delivered.

There are two outcomes that can be derived from a complaint: redress for an individual where something has gone wrong, and broader system improvements which benefit others who access an organisation's services in the future.

Effective complaints management can assist both the individual making the complaint, through timely and quality outcomes, and the organisation, through tracking systemic issues and supporting continuous improvement programs for services delivered.

As part of delivering effective health services, you should consider how to proactively and effectively manage complaints.

Preparing the organisation

To effectively address consumer concerns at a local level, you will need to consider:

- Producing a complaints management manual and training staff in its use. You may also consider developing a dedicated complaints team or person.
- Ensuring staff are well-informed and have easy access to policies, procedures, guidelines and legislation.
- Providing staff with customer service training (e.g., how to manage difficult conversations).
- Ensuring complaint forms are easily accessible to consumers. You could use our complaint form for guidance when developing one for your business.
- Providing complaint facilities online where possible.

- Developing a database to capture complaint information.
- Ensuring staff are aware of external complaint resolution entities, such as HaDSCO, and professional associations that can assist.

Managing complaints over the phone or in person

This is often the quickest way to resolve a complaint. You will need to consider:

- Scheduling an appointment with the consumer. This will ensure you have enough time to consider their concerns and prevent any interruptions to your discussion.
- Ensuring that the meeting place is private to allow the consumer some discretion and safety to engage.

Managing complaints in writing

Encourage the consumer to lodge their complaint in writing if it is complex. This is because:

- It can help them organise their thoughts and submit a clear and concise complaint.
- It ensures all the important information is provided to you.
- It allows the consumer time to plan and reflect.
- It allows you time to thoroughly review the complaint, gather relevant documents, consult with other staff members and provide a detailed response.



Other points to remember

- Respond promptly. Responding late can lead to further resentment or escalation.
- Maintain regular communication throughout the complaint process. You may also want to consider whether translation services are needed to ensure clear communication with the consumer.
- Allow the consumer to have a support person with them during meetings or calls (e.g., a friend, family member or representative).
- Avoid technical language.
- Listen, empathise and acknowledge the consumer's concerns, and be honest and open when discussing the key issues raised.
- Refer to any relevant guidelines, codes of conduct, policies or procedures when explaining events and answering questions.
- Keep clear and accurate records of the complaint, the process used to manage it and the outcome.
- Provide a service which is culturally informed.

Need more information?

Contact HaDSCO on (08) 6551 7620 or email mail@hadsco.wa.gov.au. Our office is open from 8:30am to 4:30pm, Monday to Friday.

Support services for providers

If you are feeling overwhelmed, anxious, afraid or concerned during the complaints process, reach out and speak with someone who can help.

Lifeline

Phone number: 13 11 14

Call Lifeline 24/7 for crisis support and suicide prevention services. Text support is also available at 0477 13 11 14.

Beyond Blue

Phone number: 1300 224 636

Call Beyond Blue 24/7 for advice, referral and support from a trained mental health professional.

MensLine Australia

Phone number: 1300 789 978

Call MensLine 24/7 for telephone and online support for men with emotional health and relationship concerns.

13YARN

Phone number: 13 92 76

13YARN is a 24/7 national crisis support line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Drs4Drs

Phone number: (08) 9321 3098

Drs4Drs promotes the health and wellbeing of doctors and medical students across Australia.