

What can I do if I'm not happy with my aged care services?

By Carol Hillman, COTA SA volunteer Peer Educator

Raising concerns

If you have a concern about the aged care or service you or someone else is receiving, it is important to talk about it. Service providers rely on feedback to improve their service, so, if you are not happy with a service you receive, try to talk with your service provider first. It may be something that can be resolved easily.

Sometimes complaints cannot be resolved by the service provider, or you might not feel comfortable raising your concern with them. If you want help to raise your concern, you can have an advocate work with you to resolve the matter. The government funds advocacy services under the Older Persons Advocacy Network. You can also make a complaint to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission on 1800 951 822 or www.agedcarequality.gov.au

Advocacy

Advocacy services are free, confidential and independent.

Advocates can listen to your concerns, give you information about your rights and responsibilities, and speak up for you if you want them to. They will discuss your options in taking action, and support you at any stage through the complaints process. In South Australia, the Aged Rights Advocacy Service provides these services. 8232 5377 or www.sa.agedrights.asn.au

Why are complaints important?

It is important that the care and services you are receiving meet your individual needs, taking into account your lifestyle choices and cultural, linguistic and religious preferences.

The care may not be what was expected or it may not be the most appropriate service for you.

A problem may escalate if no-one speaks up and your complaint can help other people, too. You may not be the only person to have a similar concern and you may not be the only person to benefit from changes resulting from your complaint.

Just as positive feedback can reinforce things that work well, complaints help service providers improve the quality of care and services they provide.

You have the right to have complaints investigated fairly and confidentially, and to have appropriate steps taken to resolve issues of concern. It is absolutely vital that you establish and maintain control over your own situation.

What are the barriers to making a complaint?

Difficulty in raising concerns:

- fear of losing the service or being disadvantaged in any other way
- fear of retribution
- fear of being a burden
- not wanting to get someone in trouble
- not wanting to be seen as a trouble-maker

Who can raise a concern?

Anyone can, and this includes the person receiving aged care, partners, family members, friends, carers, health and medical professionals, volunteers and aged care staff.

In conclusion, you have the right to raise concerns easily and without fear of how you will be treated, your concerns should be taken seriously and handled fairly and in a timely way.