

Access to Information for Residents of Aged Care Facilities and Their Representatives

Why is access to information important? There appears to be a link between residents' and their representatives' level of satisfaction with the quality of services provided in residential facilities, and access to information about their rights, entitlements and responsibilities.

With over 146,000 people living in nursing homes and hostels in Australia, information about residential aged care has to be easily accessible so that people are able to participate in decision making about their lives.

Here is a snapshot of key information that you can expect to receive from your facility.

Your Care and Lifestyle

The Charter of Resident Rights and Responsibilities is essential information for residents and their representatives. The Charter states that you have a right to have access to information about your rights, care, accommodation and any other information that relates to you personally, and that this is communicated to you in an appropriate language.

How to Make a Complaint

The Standards say that the resident information given to you when you enter the home must outline the processes for making a complaint - both internal (the in-home complaint process) and external (the Complaints Resolution Scheme). The management of the home should actively seek your views on all aspects of the services provided. This includes feedback on problems, concerns, suggestions or complaints to ensure issues are addressed appropriately and promptly.

Information about your right to access an advocate to support you to explore and rectify issues should also be provided. Your advocate might be a family member, friend or someone from the independent advocacy agency. The Commonwealth Government funds Advocacy agencies in every state and territory. Contact details are at the end of this article.

Your rights and responsibilities

The User Rights Principles state that you or your representative must be told of, and helped to understand the terms of the agreement including your rights and obligations, the services to be provided, and the fees and other charges.

The Standards

The Standards and Guidelines for Residential Aged Care Services reflect the quality of management and services expected of an aged care facility, and give clear statements of expected performance. The standards examine the overall quality of services provided and, in particular, the extent to which an individual resident's needs are met.

Accreditation

To be accredited facilities have to be assessed against the Aged Care Standards by the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency. During assessment for accreditation the management of the facility is required to demonstrate that their system works to deliver quality services. Input from residents and their representatives about their level of satisfaction with the quality of the service, is essential to this assessment.

At the time of accreditation

- the home is required to demonstrate to the Agency how they involve residents and representatives in improving their services:
- homes are required to tell residents and representatives the dates of the site audit and
- are required to allow assessors to meet privately with residents and representatives in absolute confidence.

You can contact your advocacy agency for information on the above or if you need assistance with a concern you have about the quality of care and services in your facility.

The contact details for the advocacy agency in your state will be in your resident information kit or you can call the free National Aged Care Advocacy Line on 1800 700 600 - please note this number is not available in some capital cities. For alternative contact details phone the Aged Care Information Line on 1800 500 853.

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