



Speak-up ADVOCACY GUIDE

SOLVING EVERYDAY
ISSUES AND BEING YOUR
OWN BEST ADVOCATE



Problems with your disability support or care service?

Organisations that provide disability support or care services are called service providers.

You should expect your disability support or care services to be delivered by an organisation which is well run, has skilled friendly staff who respect your choices, responds to your needs and looks after your safety and wellbeing.

If your service provider can't meet these expectations, you also have the right to change to another service provider, at any time.

It's OK to speak up and to make a complaint. Speaking up will help make the service better for you and other people. Most service providers want to give you a great service and to know what they can do better.

Your service provider should let you know about how you can raise concerns and make complaints. This guide gives you steps to follow and some practical tips to help you get started talking with your service provider.

STEP ONE: What is the problem?

Being clear in your mind about the problem will help you when talking to your service provider. Write down the problem in one or two sentences, before you talk about it with your service provider.



- Be specific. For example, if you are concerned about your support workers changing a lot, note down the number of changes. For example, 4 different workers over 1 week.
- A problem shared is a problem halved. Talking it through with a friend, family member or someone you trust can help you be clear about your issue and how best to approach it.

STEP TWO: What would you like to happen?

After getting clear about the problem think about what you would like the outcome to be. This will help keep you and the service provider focussed on what's important to you.



- Work out what is most important to you. It will help you know what you should focus on.

STEP THREE: Know your rights and what's expected of you

Find out what you are entitled to and what you can expect. You should have an agreement with the service provider about what they will do and how they will do it. What does the agreement say?

TAKE IT STEP BY STEP



STEP FOUR: Find out how you can raise issues or make a complaint

Service providers must have a way that their clients can make a complaint. Some will have a dedicated complaints team, or you might need to raise the issue with a Team Leader or Service Manager. Look at your service provider's website or ask your support worker to provide you with the information.



- Your support or care worker may not be able to pass on your complaint to the right area, so do not rely on this. It's better if you raise the problem directly with the complaints team or management.

You might be thinking that you are at step four and have still not done anything to fix the problem. But you have. Preparing is important. Now you are ready to talk to your service provider directly.

STEP FIVE: Make a phone call

Contact the person or team you have identified in Step 3. Here is a simple way to start the conversation.

"My name is _____ and I am one of your clients. I would like to talk about a problem I am having with my services."



- Be patient but be persistent. If they don't get back to you within a few days to talk about the issue, call again.
- Keep calm and be polite. Most people want to help when you are respectful and patient.
- Use the speaker phone. Have someone with you when you make the call. A friend, family member or someone you trust can help with taking notes or help to explain the problem or situation.
- If English is not your first language, ask for a qualified interpreter to help you speak with your service provider. All service providers must provide an interpreter when needed.

What to do during the phone call

- Take names and notes. It's important that you note down the full name and position of who you speak to. That way if you need to call again, or your advocate needs to follow up, you know who to speak to. Taking notes will help you keep track of what was discussed, what will happen next, and when. You can also ask them to send you an email, so you have their contact information.
- Focus on how to solve the problem. Be clear about what you would like them to do to fix it.
- If you are not making any progress on the phone, ask for a meeting.

STEP SIX: Hold a meeting

Sometimes you need to meet face to face. It might not be a problem that can be fixed over the phone, or more time is needed to understand the issues.



- A friend, family member or a person you trust can help with the discussion or talk about it with you after the meeting.
- Take notes. You may need to use this information later if you or your advocate have to take the problem further.

STEP SEVEN: Keep check

If the changes or actions you have agreed to have not been done you will need to follow up. Call again and explain that you are not happy with progress. Ask for an update or if you can speak with someone else about the issue.

STEP EIGHT: Take it further

If your service provider does not respond to the problem, or you are not happy with their response, you can contact:

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission for issues about services under the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Phone: **1800 035 544**. Website: www.ndiscommission.gov.au

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission for issues about Australian Government funded aged care services. Phone: **1800 951 822**. Website: www.agedcarequality.gov.au

Important Information

You can call **000** at any time if you are in danger or you are being hurt. If you are experiencing violence, abuse or neglect it's important you talk to someone. It can be a family member or friend, support person, disability advocate, or a police officer. You can also call **1800RESPECT (1800 737 732)** or the National Elder Abuse Helpline **1800 353 374**.

www.adaaustralia.com.au/speak-up



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