

Training Fact Sheet for Complaints Handling

Role: Complaints Coordinator / Practice Manager

Purpose: To ensure efficient, transparent, and patient-focused handling of complaints in the clinic.

Key Responsibilities

- Coordinate the **complaints resolution process**.
 - Act as the **primary contact** for receiving, investigating, and resolving complaints.
 - Maintain documentation, ensuring compliance with privacy legislation.
 - If necessary, consult with relevant stakeholders, including clinicians, staff, patients, and external bodies.
 - Promote a culture of continuous **quality improvement** based on feedback.
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Complaints Handling Policy Overview

Definition of a Complaint

- Any expression of dissatisfaction regarding the services provided.
- Complaints can be verbal, written, formal, or informal.

Patient Rights

- All patients have a right to:
 - Register a complaint.
 - Expect a timely, respectful, and fair resolution.
 - Provide complaints anonymously if desired.
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Complaints Process

Step

Action Required

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| 1. Receiving the Complaint | - Listen actively and empathetically.- Record the complaint (verbal or written).- Offer a formal complaint form if necessary. |
| 2. Documenting | - Document details in the Complaints Register .- Ask if the patient wishes to remain anonymous.- Record it in the patient's file if it is clinical. |
| 3. Acknowledging | - Acknowledge receipt via phone or written letter.- Inform the complainant of the next steps and investigation timeline. |
| 4. Investigating | - Investigate the complaint.- In clinical matters, consult with relevant clinical or legal advisors. |
| 5. Resolving | - Meet with staff as required to address the issue.- Discuss resolutions with the complainant.- Aim for a mutually beneficial outcome . |
| 6. Follow-Up | - Document outcomes and actions.- Communicate changes or improvements made as a result.- Review process in staff meetings. |
| 7. Escalating | - If unresolved, provide the contact details of the Health Complaints Commission (HCC) or other appropriate bodies. |
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Recording Complaints

- Maintain a **Complaints Register**.
 - Include:
 - Date received
 - Patient name (or anonymous)
 - Details of complaint
 - Actions taken
 - Outcome and follow-up
 - Regularly review the register to identify trends and common issues for **Quality Improvement**.
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Handling Verbal Complaints

1. Move the discussion to a **private area**.
 2. Acknowledge the patient's concerns and listen carefully.
 3. Keep calm and professional.
 4. Document all details promptly.
 5. Provide reassurance that the matter will be investigated.
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Mandatory Requirements

- Complaints must:
 - Be managed promptly and documented.
 - Be resolved wherever possible within the clinic.
 - Comply with **laws, policies, and privacy legislation**.
 - Be escalated to external bodies when unresolved.

External Contacts

- **Health Complaints Commission (HCC):** Contact details should be available in the clinic information materials.
 - **National Privacy Commissioner:**
 - Privacy Hotline: **1300 363 992**
 - Website: privacy.gov.au
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Quality Improvement Initiatives

- Keep a **suggestion box** in the waiting area.
 - Use **electronic surveys** for additional patient feedback.
 - Categorise complaints into:
 - **Formal** and **Informal**.
 - **Verbal** and **Written**.
 - Regularly review complaints to implement **quality improvements**.
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Best Practices

- Acknowledge the patient's **right to complain**.
 - Provide an open, constructive, and transparent response.
 - Address complaints promptly to prevent escalation.
 - Ensure complaints do not adversely affect patient care.
 - Offer an apology when appropriate.
 - Regularly train staff on the complaints process.
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Further Information

- **Quality Accreditation Resources:** Relevant accreditation bodies or quality improvement frameworks.
- **RACGP Toolkit (Managing Quality):** racgp.org.au
- **Customer Complaints Management:** Guidance at business.gov.au

Remember

Handling complaints effectively improves patient trust and highlights areas for improvement in your clinic.

"Patient complaints are growth opportunities."