

Information sheet: the complaint resolution process

The Health and Disability Services Complaints Office (HaDSCO) is an independent statutory authority providing an impartial resolution service for complaints relating to health or disability services provided in the State of Western Australia. This service is delivered in four stages and this information sheet provides an overview of these.

Stage one: initial enquiry

Individuals wishing to make a complaint about a health or disability service contact HaDSCO to discuss their concerns. Depending on the nature of the complaint and the outcomes sought HaDSCO will either:

- send the person a complaint form to complete or direct them to the online complaint form
- encourage the concerns to be raised directly with the provider, which in many cases allows speedy resolution
- refer the complaint on to a more suitable organisation if HaDSCO is unable to deal with it.

Stage two: complaint assessment

Until a complaint is received in writing HaDSCO cannot take any further action. After a complete complaint form is received, the complaint is assessed to identify whether it can be dealt with by HaDSCO. If so, the most appropriate method for resolution is identified.

In order for HaDSCO to assess a complaint, the complaint must:

- be submitted in writing
- include the name of the person who received the service (the consumer)
- include the name of the person who is making the complaint and their relationship to the consumer (if they are not the same person)
- include the date the service was received
- include details of any action taken to resolve the complaint directly with the service provider
- include signed authorisation statements allowing the Director to take action on the complaint.

Based on the information provided, HaDSCO's Assessment Team will recommend a complaint is either rejected, accepted or referred. If the complaint relates to a registered health practitioner, HaDSCO is required by

law to notify the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) of the complaint. HaDSCO and AHPRA then agree on the most appropriate way to manage the complaint.

Complaints that are accepted by HaDSCO will progress to stage three: complaint management.

Stage three: complaint management

If a complaint is accepted into the HaDSCO resolution process, the complaint is assigned to a case manager who discusses the issues raised with all parties.

During complaint management the complaint may be processed through negotiated settlement or conciliation. Negotiated settlement involves an exchange of information between parties via a case manager. This may be conducted over the telephone or in writing and generally does not involve a face to face meeting.

Conciliation usually involves all parties engaging voluntarily in face to face meetings to discuss the complaint; this is conducted by a trained conciliator. More information about these processes is available online at hadsco.wa.gov.au. It is important participants understand their rights and obligations during this important stage. All parties for example are expected to adhere to the confidentiality requirements of the Health and Disability Services (Complaints) Act 1995.

The aim of the complaint management phase is to assist both parties to reach an agreement. The HaDSCO process facilitates communication between the parties and assists participants to reach an agreed resolution.

Stage four: complaint closed

Once the process is complete, a brief report or final letter containing details of any outcomes that were agreed is provided to the complainant and service provider.

HaDSCO will review the causes of complaints and make service improvements suggestions. In addition, HaDSCO might offer service providers information about effective complaint resolution practices.

HaDSCO: Supporting improvement through complaint resolution

hadsco.wa.gov.au