

Preparing and participating in open disclosure discussions

INFORMATION
for consumers
and carers

What is open disclosure?

Every day thousands of people receive health care. Sometimes things go wrong which cause unintentional harm to you or someone you care for. In health care, this is known as an **incident**. Your healthcare provider (such as a doctor or nurse) should talk with you about it as soon as possible.

Open disclosure is the discussion with you, your healthcare provider and the people you may choose to support you (such as your family, carer or friend) about an incident that caused harm whilst receiving health care.

Open disclosure includes:

- Apologising to you for what went wrong
- Explaining the known facts
- Listening to your experience
- Explaining how it may affect you and your care
- Explaining the steps being taken to prevent it happening again.

Open disclosure can take place over one or more discussions.



Open disclosure and your healthcare rights

The [Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights](#) explains your rights during open disclosure.

This includes the right to:

- Be told what went wrong with your health care, how it happened, how it may affect you and what is being done to make your care safe
- Share your experience and participate to improve the quality of care and health services
- Ask questions and be involved in open and honest communication
- Provide feedback or make a complaint without it affecting the way you are treated.



What support can you access?

You have the **right** to access the support you need during open disclosure. This may include:

- Translators
- Interpreters
- Indigenous Liaison Officers
- Counsellors
- Trained patient support people such as consumer representatives, peer workers, social workers or advocates
- Payment of out-of-pocket expenses for things such as transport, meals, or parking.

Translation and Interpreter Services are available 24 hours 7 days: Phone 131 450.

What can you expect from the open disclosure process?

The open disclosure process is outlined below. The order and steps may vary depending on the severity of harm you experience, your circumstances and needs.

Q An incident happens

Your healthcare provider should:

- Tell you as soon as possible
- Provide you with safe care
- Apologise to you for what went wrong
- Explain the known facts
- Explain how it will affect you and your care.

[In agreement with you, and depending on the severity of harm (i.e. a minor incident) the process may end here.]

Q Start an open disclosure process

Your healthcare provider should:

- Explain the open disclosure process
- Explain your healthcare rights
- Provide you with a contact person you are comfortable with
- Organise discussions as soon as possible, and agree on the time, place and who attends.

Q Open disclosure discussions

Your healthcare provider should:

- Apologise to you for what went wrong
- Explain the known facts
- Listen to your experience
- Explain how what went wrong may affect you and your care
- Explain how they are investigating what went wrong
- Explain the steps they are taking to prevent it from happening again
- Agree on a plan of ongoing care
- Agree on an open disclosure plan and what you would like to achieve from future discussions.

Q Follow up discussions

Your healthcare provider should:

- Provide updates on any further investigations
- Provide feedback on health care improvements made.

Q Complete the open disclosure process

Your healthcare provider should:

- Ask if your needs were met
- Provide you with documentation about your discussions, the opportunity to provide feedback and your follow-up options
- Let you know that if your needs were not met you can make a complaint.



Throughout the process you can expect to:
Have open and honest communication
Be treated with empathy, respect and consideration
Be heard
Have the support you need
Have your questions answered



How can you prepare for open disclosure discussions?

It may be helpful to write down:

- Your timeline of events
- Your questions and concerns in relation to:
 - what went wrong
 - how it happened
 - how it may affect you and your care
- Anything else you would like to talk about during the open disclosure discussion.

Some other things to think about are:

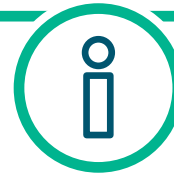
- Who you would like with you for support during the discussions
- How the health service can help meet your needs
- If you would like to have a second opinion about your health care.



What if the open disclosure process does not meet your needs?

The complaints process is a **separate process** to open disclosure. If the open disclosure process does not meet your needs you can:

- Discuss your concerns with your healthcare provider or health service senior management such as the Practice Manager or Service Manager
- Make a complaint through the health service feedback and complaints system. Some health services will have a complaints officer you can talk to
- Contact your state or territory health care complaints agency or health department if you feel unable to talk to your health service, or if you are not satisfied with their response
- Talk to a lawyer about the harm you experienced.



How can you learn more about open disclosure?

If you would like to know more about open disclosure, the following resources may be helpful:

- Open disclosure of things that don't go to plan, a booklet for patients beginning the open disclosure process: www.safetyandquality.gov.au/OD-booklet
- Australian Open Disclosure Framework: www.safetyandquality.gov.au/AODF

Questions?



Scan this QR code to access open disclosure frequently asked questions (FAQs). For more information please visit: www.safetyandquality.gov.au/open-disclosure

Add your health service contact details here:

Name:

Position:

Phone:

Other support phone: