



What is an effective incident management system?

What is an incident?

Incidents are any acts, omissions, events or circumstances that occur in connection with the provision of care to a consumer and have (or could reasonably have been expected to have) caused harm to a consumer or another person (such as a staff member or someone else involved in the incident).

Based on the above description, an incident has two core characteristics: (1) it (an act, omission, event or circumstance) is connected to the provision of care to a consumer, and; (2) it has caused harm, or could reasonably have been expected to cause harm, to a consumer or another person.

What are a provider's incident management obligations?

Incident management is integral to risk management, continuous improvement, and the delivery of safe and quality care to aged care consumers.

All Commonwealth-funded providers of aged care have responsibilities regarding incident management, including as set out under Requirement 3(d)(iv) of Standard 8 of the Aged Care Quality Standards¹ for “*managing and preventing incidents, including the use of an incident management system*”, under Requirement (3)(c) of Quality Standard 6 to demonstrate that “*an open disclosure process is used when things go wrong*”, and as per the care recipient rights set out in the Charter of Aged Care Rights².

An effective incident management system is a set of protocols, processes and standard operating procedures, in place and maintained, that staff are trained and expected to use. This means providers are responsible for adopting a systematic approach to minimising the risk of incidents occurring, responding appropriately to alleged, suspected and witnessed incidents, and taking action to prevent reoccurrence³.

An effective incident management system will help to prevent incidents, support providers with responding to alleged, suspected or witnessed incidents in a timely manner and, over time, will lift the quality and safety of care and services provided to consumers. This will help to empower management, staff and consumers to drive a continuous improvement process throughout the service.

1 Schedule 2 of the *Quality of Care Principles 2014*

2 Schedule 1 of the *User Rights Principles 2014*

3 Approved providers of residential aged care also have additional specific responsibilities in relation to incident management as detailed within the *Quality of Care Principles 2014*

What is included in an incident management system?

An incident management system comprises the policies, procedures and processes that support the identification, management and resolution of incidents that can occur during the course of delivering care and services to consumers.

The key components of an incident management system are:

1. The policies and procedures about how to identify, respond to, resolve and learn from incidents. These must be documented and made available to consumers, their representatives and the staff.
2. The recording tool that is used to capture information about incidents. Some incident management systems use computer-based electronic tools, while others are paper-based.
3. A staff training program and regular reinforcement on how the system operates, and staff roles and responsibilities.
4. Provider governance and accountability arrangements to provide oversight of the system's operation and ensure its effectiveness in driving continuous quality improvement.

While all incident management systems have the above components in common, the detailed design of each provider's incident management system is likely to be different. This is because an incident management system should be tailored to the service size, location/s, and the types of services provided to its aged care consumers.

As a minimum, all incident management systems, irrespective of how incidents are recorded, should include the information in the table on page 3.

What are the benefits of effective incident management systems?

There are many benefits arising from a provider's implementation of an effective incident management system. An incident management system:

- supports providers to deliver safe, quality care and services for consumers
- supports providers to identify risks to consumers and put strategies in place to mitigate risk and prevent incidents

- boosts the trust and confidence of people receiving aged care (and their family or representatives) that the care and services provided will keep consumers safe and promote their wellbeing
- supports a 'blame free' culture with a focus on understanding, learning and improvement
- informs care assessment and planning
- can identify areas where training and development are needed for staff.

As stated above, an effective incident management system also supports providers to meet their broader responsibilities under the *Aged Care Act* and/or in funding agreements and program manuals – including to uphold the Charter of Aged Care Rights and meet requirements of the Aged Care Quality Standards.

Where should I start?

A good starting point is to conduct a gap analysis and understand whether you have each of the four key components of an incident management system identified in this document:

1. documented policies and procedures
2. a recording tool (filled in by hand or using a computer)
3. a staff training program
4. a governance/oversight arrangement.

If your gap analysis indicates that you are missing any of these components, you should give priority attention to putting them in place now. Also, when assessing the contents of any existing policies and procedures, make sure your documents address all the issues identified in the table on page 3.

How can I find out more about incident management systems?

Further information about the requirements relating to incident management systems can be found in the **Effective incident management systems: Best practice guidance** available for download at agedcarequality.gov.au/sirs/provider-resources.

Incident management system requirements

Procedure	Description
Roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Roles and responsibilities of staff in identifying and managing incidents <input type="checkbox"/> Roles and responsibilities of senior managers and the governing body
How incidents are identified, recorded and reported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> What an incident is and the types of incidents that should be covered <input type="checkbox"/> How incidents should be recorded, including the information to be recorded <input type="checkbox"/> How incidents should be reported internally, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying who incidents are to be reported to • timeframes for internally reporting incidents
When others should be notified of incidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> When and how to notify consumer representatives, or other emergency contacts, of an incident <input type="checkbox"/> When police or emergency services should be notified of an incident <input type="checkbox"/> When government bodies (including the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) or state and territory health departments) should be notified of an incident
How those affected by an incident will be provided with support and assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> How those affected by an incident will be supported and assisted to ensure their health, safety and wellbeing <input type="checkbox"/> How people affected by an incident (and/or their representatives) will be involved in the management and resolution of an incident <input type="checkbox"/> The use of open disclosure processes <input type="checkbox"/> How to provide consumers and their representatives with information about access to advocates
Reviewing and assessing incidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A process for analysing all incidents to determine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what occurred • whether the incident could have been prevented • how well the incident was managed and resolved • what action (if any) needs to be taken to minimise the impact of an incident • what action (if any) needs to be taken to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future • whether other bodies need to be notified of an incident <input type="checkbox"/> The circumstances in which an investigation will be undertaken to establish: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the causes of an incident • the effects of an incident • any operational issues that may have contributed to the incident occurring <input type="checkbox"/> The processes for undertaking such an investigation
When remedial action might be required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The circumstances in which remedial action may be required, including where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an incident may have been prevented (or the severity of the impact lessened) by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – an adjustment to a standard practice or process – some decision or action by a staff member • there is an ongoing risk to consumers, staff or others • a decision or action taken immediately after an incident in order to mitigate impact and ongoing risk has unintended consequences