



Code of Conduct for Aged Care

Case studies for workers
and providers



Code case studies

The following scenarios have been designed to inform and educate providers and their workers¹ about the 8 elements of the Code of Conduct for Aged Care (the Code).

Providers and their workers can use these scenarios to explore:

- the 8 elements of the Code
- behaviour that is **consistent** and **not consistent** with the Code.

The scenarios have been prepared to assist providers and workers to understand and comply with the Code.

The introduction of the Code reflects the expectations of the Australian community that older people are treated as individuals with dignity and respect. The Code reinforces the rights of aged care consumers to make decisions about their care, have their wishes respected and live a life free of harm, with dignity and autonomy.



Note: All examples are based on real life experiences, but do not represent actual aged care consumers.

¹ For the purpose of this document, the term worker is used to refer to aged care workers and governing persons of an approved provider.



Element A

Act with respect for people's rights to freedom of expression, self-determination and decision-making in accordance with applicable laws and conventions.

Example behaviour **consistent** with element A

A later start for Nina

Nina receives a cleaning service twice weekly of a morning. She asks her care worker Pete if she could have the service later in the day to allow her more time to rest and enjoy her breakfast. Pete calls his manager to pass on her request. He tells Nina a service coordinator will be in contact with her shortly to arrange a new time for her service. Pete documents Nina's request in his communication notes.

In this case study, Pete's **conduct is consistent** with element A of the Code.

It is important to help consumers make their own choices about the care and services they receive.

Example behaviour **inconsistent** with element A

Slava's mobilisation

Slava resides in a residential aged care service. She has trouble moving around and uses a wheelie walker to move about the service and garden. The service manager believes Slava is at risk of falling when she uses the wheelie walker independently. The manager has directed aged care workers to remove the wheelie walker from Slava's room to ensure she doesn't use it without supervision.

Slava asks for the wheelie walker to be returned, saying without it she feels confined to her room and is not able to enjoy time in the garden. The service manager declines, stating the provider's policy is to remove fall risk hazards.

In this case study, the service manager's **conduct is inconsistent** with element A of the Code.

Alternative outcome

The service manager should discuss with Slava the risks and ways she could be supported to enjoy the garden safely. This would be consistent with the Code's requirements to respect Slava's self-determination and decision-making.



Element B

Act in a way that treats people with dignity and respect, and values their diversity.

Example behaviour **consistent** with element B

Joe's meal preferences

Joe has reported to the care worker (Jess) that he is vegan. Jess has communicated Joe's food requirements to the manager and kitchen workers. This information is updated on Joe's care plan.

Jess also checked that the café within the facility has vegan options, so Joe can continue to enjoy a snack from the café when his family comes to visit.

In this case study, Jess' **conduct is consistent** with element B of the Code.

It is important to respect social, cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds by informing the management and kitchen workers about food requirements.

Example behaviour **inconsistent** with element B

Tim's care needs

Tim receives four weeks' respite care in a residential aged care service under a Level 4 Home Care Package. Tim requires assistance to get out of bed and to walk. While resting after lunch, Tim presses the call button. When the aged care worker attends, Tim asks for help to go to the bathroom urgently. The worker turns off the call bell and replies, 'I'm sorry, I'm too busy for that; you will have to go in your pad,' and quickly leaves.

In this case study the worker's **conduct is inconsistent** with element B of the Code.

Refusing to help consumers use the bathroom is not treating them with dignity or respect.

Alternative outcome

The worker should respond in a way that upholds the importance of Tim's request and maintains his dignity.

To meet Tim's needs the worker should:

- attend to Tim as a matter of priority
- communicate with Tim in a respectful manner
- raise the issue of competing priorities with his manager.

When possible, the worker could also call for further assistance from a co-worker to manage competing needs.



Element C

Act with respect for the privacy of people.

Example behaviour **consistent** with element C

Geoff's privacy

Geoff has mentioned to the Registered Nurse (RN) that he does not want his wife to know his ex-wife came to visit him in the aged care facility.

The RN replied, 'It's your right to have whoever you choose to visit you and it's not my place to inform other people about your visitors'.

The RN's **conduct is consistent** with element C of the Code.

It's important to keep personal information safe in line with privacy policies, the preferences of consumers and privacy laws.

Example behaviour **inconsistent** with element C

Consumer's information

Graeme, an administration officer, is photocopying a new consumer's personal information at the reception area desk of a service. Graeme is called away and leaves the consumer's file on the front desk next to the visitor's sign in book, instead of locking the files away. When he comes back, Graeme discovers another consumer and his visiting relative reading the documents.

In this case study, Graeme's **conduct is inconsistent** with element C of the Code.

Graeme has failed to respect a consumer's right to privacy by not keeping the information safe.

Alternative outcome

Graeme should have locked the confidential personal information in a desk.



Element D

Provide care, supports and services in a safe and competent manner, with care and skill.

Example behaviour **consistent** with element D

Stacey reports unsafe equipment

Care worker Stacey was about to use a wheelchair and noticed the footplate was broken. Stacey organised a replacement wheelchair for the consumer, then took the broken wheelchair to the maintenance area with a 'do not use' sign. She reported this to her manager and completed an online report in the Incident Management System (IMS).

Stacey's **conduct is consistent** with element D of the Code.

By taking the broken wheelchair to the maintenance area and reporting this in the IMS, Stacey has helped avoid the risk of harm to consumers from using unsafe equipment.

Example behaviour **inconsistent** with element D

Lana's care

Lana is receiving a level 4 Home Care Package and requires the dressing on her wound to be changed every two days by a RN.

Lana's daughter raises a concern with Lana's personal care worker that the wound appears to have worsened. The worker tells the daughter wounds often look more serious than they are and offers to change the dressing herself.

When the daughter questions whether the worker can change the dressing, the worker says she either does it now or Lana will have to wait until next week when the RN can visit.

A week later, Lana is treated in hospital for an infection, and the hospital identifies the wound had not been properly dressed as directed.

In this case study, the worker's **conduct is inconsistent** with element D of the Code.

Aged care workers should not be providing care, support or services outside their delegation or scope of practice. Doing so may risk the health and safety of consumers.

Alternative outcome

The worker should have spoken with their manager to arrange a wound assessment by an RN as soon as possible and ongoing wound care in line with wound management directions.



Element E

Act with integrity, honesty and transparency.

Example behaviour **consistent** with element E

Mark requesting training

Care worker Mark has been asked to assist with setting up a Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy (PEG) feed. Mark is not familiar or experienced with PEG feeds and he does not feel confident to undertake this task. Mark spoke to the RN about this situation and requested help to undertake the task at the time. Following this, Mark requested further training to increase his knowledge and skills.

Mark's **conduct is consistent** with element E of the Code.

Mark understands the limits of his skills and in requesting training has been transparent about his competencies, skills and experience.

Example behaviour **inconsistent** with element E

Medication error

While completing her medication round, the RN realised she had mistakenly given one consumer's medication to another consumer. Consequently, both consumers received the wrong medication. Despite being aware of the error, the RN notes on each consumer's medication chart that they had received the correct medication and did not alert anyone to the error.

In this case study, the RN's **conduct is inconsistent** with element E of the Code.

Integrity, honesty and transparency are crucial to developing the trust-based relationships required for high-quality care delivery.

While mistakes and near-miss incidents can happen, acting with integrity means that such errors are recorded and openly disclosed to the provider and consumers. A medication error such as this may have serious consequences and cause serious harm if left unmonitored.

Alternative outcome

The RN should have followed the provider's policy and procedures for medication errors, including reporting in the IMS and speaking openly about the mistake with the consumers, their families and representatives.



Element F

Promptly take steps to raise and act on concerns about matters that may impact the quality and safety of care, support and services.

Example behaviour **consistent** with element F

Irene reports concerns

Care worker Irene overheard a provider's podiatrist² shouting and swearing in a frustrated manner at a consumer during treatment. Irene reported this immediately to her manager George. George managed the situation by advising the podiatrist that verbal abuse is not tolerated, and his behaviour was not consistent with the Code. He encouraged the podiatrist to offer an apology to the consumer and documented the events in their IMS.

Irene's **conduct is consistent** with element F of the Code.

It's important to speak up and report concerns to providers to reduce the risk of harm to consumers. This requires awareness of your responsibilities under the Code and other relevant legislative requirements.

Example behaviour **inconsistent** with element F

Kanin requires access to safe, quality care

Kanin receives a Level 3 Home Care Package. The care worker who assists with showering notices a wound on Kanin's lower leg is looking red and swollen. He asks Kanin if his leg is hurting and suggests he should get it looked at by a doctor. Kanin advises the community nurse is looking after it and it is fine.

The care worker is reassured by Kanin's response and does not mention it to his manager or document his observations.

In this case study, the worker's **conduct is inconsistent** with element F of the Code.

Element F of the Code focuses on early identification of and response to risks that may impact safe care delivery. When workers become aware that care needs are not being met, they should raise this with the provider so their behaviour is consistent with the Code.

Alternative outcome

The worker should have alerted Kanin's care manager to his observations as a matter of priority. The care manager could then liaise with the relevant treating professionals and manage the situation appropriately to ensure Kanin's health and safety is upheld.

² As the podiatrist is directly employed by the service, they are expected to follow the Code.



Element G

Provide care, supports and services free from:

- i. all forms of violence, discrimination, exploitation, neglect and abuse
- ii. sexual misconduct

Example behaviour **consistent** with element G

Faye's wound care

During a medical round at a residential aged care service, the medical officer enters Faye's room and asks her to get out of bed to see the stitches on her back.

Faye becomes agitated and wants the provider's medical officer³ to come back in 45 minutes after Faye has showered and had breakfast. The medical officer gets frustrated, walks up to Faye's bedside and starts tugging at the back of her dressing gown to get to her stitches. Faye calls out and tells the medical officer to stop. The medical officer leaves out of frustration and doesn't come back to Faye during his round.

Faye makes a complaint to the service manager, who speaks with the medical officer about their behaviour and documents the event in their IMS. The medical officer reflects and realises they had acted inconsistently with the Code by trying to force a procedure onto Faye. They apologise to her.



Note: While the medical officer's **initial conduct was inconsistent** with the Code, recognising this was inappropriate behaviour and apologising for it (and improving interactions in the future) is **consistent** with element G of the Code.

Example behaviour **inconsistent** with element G

Safe care for Devon

James is a subcontracted gardener and attends to Devon's lawns and backyard fortnightly as part of a home care package. James sees Devon undressing through a back window one afternoon and takes photos of her. Devon doesn't realise until James starts sending these photos to her mobile, suggesting he and Devon spend more time together next time he visits. Devon is frightened about what will happen next time James attends.

By taking photos of Devon without consent and making suggestive comments, James' **conduct is inconsistent** with element G of the Code.

It is important for workers and providers to be aware of their responsibilities under the Code in addition to other relevant legislative requirements. It is also the provider's responsibility to ensure consumers are provided with guidance on how to recognise and report misconduct.

Alternative outcome

As a subcontractor for an approved provider (as with any other workers), James must maintain behaviour consistent with the Code while working for Devon and other consumers. Devon should report James' misconduct and the provider must take all appropriate steps, including documenting the event in their IMS.



Element H

Take all reasonable steps to prevent and respond to:

- i. all forms of violence, discrimination, exploitation, neglect and abuse
- ii. sexual misconduct

Example behaviour **consistent** with element H

Belinda reports concerns

Belinda is a care worker in a residential aged care facility. While passing a resident's room, Belinda hears knocking from the other side of the door.

The consumer, Miles, is non-verbal and wanders throughout the service. Belinda realises Miles has been locked in his room from the outside. Workers are not permitted to lock residents' doors except in an emergency. Belinda opens the door and finds Miles distressed. Belinda offers Miles words of comfort, apologising for what's happened.

Belinda reports to the facility manager that Miles has been locked in his room. They document the events in their IMS consistent with the expectations to respond to suspected instances of abuse.

The behaviour Belinda demonstrated is **consistent** with both elements G and H of the Code.

It's important to identify what violent, abusive, and neglectful practices look like and to seek advice from your manager if you are unsure. Reasonable steps must be taken to prevent and respond appropriately. Be aware of responsibilities under the Code and other relevant legislative requirements, such as under the SIRS.

Example behaviour **inconsistent** with element H

Tabitha is entitled to safe care

Tabitha tells the service's Occupational Therapist (OT) that she is unhappy because she has been visited by one of the male consumers during the night. He has been getting into bed with her. The OT doesn't think the allegation is likely to have happened given Tabitha's long history of poor recall and tendency to 'tell stories'. The OT doesn't tell the provider or any of the other workers.

The behaviour the OT demonstrated is **inconsistent** with element H of the Code.

Failing to respond to the allegations appropriately is inconsistent with the Code.

Alternative outcome

The OT should have reported Tabitha's allegation to the provider and the events documented in their IMS.



Need more information?

For more information, you can access the following documents available on the Commission website.

- [Code of Conduct for Aged Care – worker guidance](#)
- [Code of Conduct for Aged Care – provider guidance](#)

Contact

If you have questions or concerns about the Code, you can talk with your employer (aged care provider) or contact the Commission:

Online: [online contact form](#)

Email: info@agedcarequality.gov.au

Phone: 1800 951 822 (free call)

Web: agedcarequality.gov.au

Write: Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
GPO Box 9819, in your capital city



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The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to Elders both past and present.

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