



SIRS notification example response

Unexplained absence from care

February 2022

These case studies cover a range of examples to provide **general guidance** to assist approved providers on the content and form of information that may be included in a notification to the Commission. They are intended to be illustrative but not exhaustive of approved provider reporting requirements. Any similarities to an actual reportable incident or individual is purely coincidental. The case studies do not constitute legal advice or other professional advice. Approved providers should seek legal or other professional advice on their legislative requirements, as appropriate.

SIRS notification example response

Unexplained absence from care

A good-quality incident notification requires more than simply transcribing the details taken from progress notes about the incident or copying text from the provider's incident management system. It is important that the person making the notification is familiar with what happened, has applied a problem-solving approach to understanding the causes and risks involved and has a good understanding of how the response to the incident will be managed.

Here is an example response to questions in the MyAgedCare portal for reportable unexplained absence from care.

Web portal question	Answer
Type of incident	Unexplained absence from care
Victim first name	Arthur
Victim last name	Menzies
Select the most relevant incident type	Unexplained absence from care
Please select the appropriate level of cognition of the victim	Moderate cognitive impairment
Does the care recipient reside within a secure unit?	Yes

SIRS notification example response – unexplained absence from care

Following are the MyAgedCare portal questions and examples of possible responses. The blue numbers relate to the tips box on the pages following these questions on what details to include in your response.

Web portal question	Answer
<p>Please provide a detailed description of the incident.</p> <p>In your SIRS report please provide a detailed description of the incident that has occurred or is alleged or suspected to have occurred.</p>	<p>Example response:</p> <p>On 15 August 2021 at 13:07 Arthur Menzies (consumer) was reported missing by Personal Care Worker (PCW) Rachel Watson. 1,2</p> <p>The absence was immediately reported to the Facility Supervisor Wendy Robinson, when Arthur could not be located for lunch. 1,2,4</p> <p>Arthur has a moderate cognitive impairment, and Arthur's son is his nominated representative. Arthur has been noted missing on two previous occasions. 5</p> <p>When unable to locate Arthur a full facility search was conducted, and the police were notified. During the facility search it was noted that the back gate was left open, and the lock was broken. Maintenance closed the gate and placed a temporary lock on the gate until it could be fixed. 6</p> <p>A phone call was received at 13:18 by a 'Good Samaritan' who located Arthur about 900 metres from the facility at the local shops wandering around. 1,2,3,4,7</p> <p>PCW Rebecca Smith drove to pick up Arthur and return him to the facility with no notable injuries. 1,7,8</p> <p>Upon return Arthur was assessed by Registered Nurse (RN) Jennifer Lu, where no physical injuries were noted. 1,8,11</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring will take place to ensure there is no physical injury, harm, or discomfort that was not present at the initial assessment. 11</p>

Web portal question	Answer
<p>Harm Did the consumer suffer physical impacts? Level of physical impact. Did the consumer suffer psychological impacts? Level of psychological impact.</p>	<p>Example response:</p> <p>When first located by PCW Rebecca Smith, it was observed that Arthur was agitated and disorientated and did not want to get into the car. On a quick assessment there were no noticeable injuries. 8, 9</p> <p>Upon arrival at the facility, Arthur was assessed by the RN Jennifer Lu, with nil physical injuries reported. 11</p> <p>Arthur’s family representative was contacted to notify them of the incident, and then a phone call to the police was made to inform them that Arthur has now been located and returned to the facility. 1, 7</p> <p>Arthur did not want to eat lunch when he returned and went to his room and was quieter than his usual self. The Chaplain went to check on Arthur and stayed with him until his son arrived at 17:00 to encourage Arthur to eat supper. 1, 9, 11</p>

In response to the above questions, you should consider the following:

- 1.** Who was directly involved in the incident (include full names)?
- 2.** What time and date the incident occurred (or was alleged or suspected to have occurred)?
- 3.** Where at the service did the incident occur (or was alleged or suspected to have occurred)?
- 4.** Who else saw the incident (include their name, position, and contact details)?
- 5.** What is the level of cognitive impairment of the consumers directly involved in the reportable incident? (e.g., Dementia substance-induce cognitive impairment, developmental disorders).
- 6.** What was happening immediately before the incident occurred?
- 7.** What occurred immediately after the incident? (your answer to this question must describe any actual harm that was caused to the consumer AND any harm that could reasonably have been expected to have been caused to the consumer).
- 8.** Details of actual harm caused (type of seriousness of injury/illness, symptom and/or clinical observations).
- 9.** Describe the consumer's response (This could include any observed behaviours such as crying, shaking, throwing things, not speaking, not wanting to be around other people, or doing usual activities).
- 10.** Explain how and why any behaviour identified is different from the person's usual behaviour.
- 11.** Describe any medical and/or psychological treatment provided.
- 12.** Include enough information so that a person who wasn't there can understand what happened.



When assessing and describing what harm an incident ‘could reasonably have been expected to have caused’.

(When considering whether an incident could reasonably have been ‘expected to have caused’ discomfort, physical or psychological injury, it is important to think about the general vulnerability of aged care consumers. Would it be reasonable to expect the incident would have caused discomfort, physical or psychological injury to other consumers in your service, such as instances where a consumer has medical or psychological limitations.)

Note: when you provide clear and comprehensive information early on, it is less likely that the Commission will need to ask for further details, or require you to conduct an investigation, or in some cases, directly investigate the matter itself.

Web portal question	Answer
<p>What specific action(s) has been and will be taken in response to the incident to ensure the immediate AND ongoing safety, health, well-being, and quality of life of the consumer affected by the incident?</p>	<p>Example response:</p> <p>The police were notified when Arthur could not be found (police Report Number QJ573672) and later informed that Arthur has since been located and has returned to the facility. 1</p> <p>Arthur’s representative was notified, and his son Brendon informed staff that he would come in at 17:00 to check on his father, and to encourage him to eat dinner. 2,3</p> <p>Upon his return Arthur was assessed by RN Jennifer Lu, with nil physical injuries reported. The Chaplain stayed with Arthur until his son arrived at 17:00. An email has been sent to all staff about keeping the back gate locked and reporting any broken or faulty locks to the maintenance team, and 30-minute sight checks are now in place for Arthur. 2,3</p> <p>The broken lock on the gate has been reported to the supervisor and replaced. A review of Arthur’s pain, lifestyle, and care plans are to be conducted to identify triggers for his behaviour. 4</p> <p>Dementia Services Australia (DSA) has been contacted, and lifestyle activities such as walking and gardening have been commenced as Arthur enjoys being in the garden. A GPS tracker has been recommended and ordered for Arthur with Brendon’s consent. 1,4,6,7</p>

In response to the above question, you should consider the following:

- 1.** Whether the incident was reported to a relevant authority (e.g., coroner, AHPRA).
- 2.** How the consumer was treated and supported immediately after the incident (consider both physical and psychological treatment and/or support). This could include whether external health advice was sought such as onsite or offsite counselling session.
- 3.** Whether the consumer's representative was immediately contacted regarding the incident; for e.g., to discuss and review support needs or to be involved in the management and resolution of the incident.
- 4.** Any assessment or planning changes; for e.g., development or update to a risk management plan for the consumer and subject of allegation (if also a consumer).
- 5.** Any immediate or planned changes to the duties/supervision of any staff members.
- 6.** Whether you assessed immediate risk to other consumers affected or who could have been affected by the incident.
- 7.** Whether you have used the outcome of any incident assessment, analysis, or investigation to identify/ implement actions to improve the safety, health, well-being, and quality of life to all consumers.

Web portal question	Answer
<p>What specific action(s) has been taken or is planned to manage or minimise the risk of re-occurrence of this or a similar incident in the future?</p>	<p>Example response:</p> <p>Arthur has wandered from the facility on three occasions prior to the present incident. 30 minute sight checks are now in place, and a behavioural support plan commenced. An email was sent to all staff about the importance of keeping the premises secure and locking the back gate. Additionally, a sign was placed on the fence requesting 'Please lock gate' 1, 2</p> <p>An additional email was sent to all staff to remind them to report any faulty locks to maintenance for urgent repairs. 1, 3</p> <p>A referral was made to Dementia Services Australia, and they recommended a GPS tracker. Arthur's representative was consulted about the findings of the investigation and the recommended actions. 3, 4</p> <p>Quotes are being sought to update the facility's surveillance system so in the event of re-occurrence footage can be viewed. Upon receipt of quotes, management will decide whether upgrading the surveillance system is an appropriate and proportionate strategy. 3, 4, 6</p> <p>Our Incident Management System has been updated regarding the gate to ensure all consumers' representatives have been notified of the updated safety protocols. 5, 6</p>

In response to the above question, you should consider the following which may refer to the relevant aspects from your Incident Management System:

- 1.** The actions you have taken or plan to take to identify the causes of the incident (e.g., assessment, used problem solving methodology, root causes analysis, internal/external investigation, other methods).
- 2.** Describe what further actions are proposed in response to the incident. Include any open disclosure actions taken or proposed.
- 3.** Describe what actions have been taken or are being taken to reduce the risk of a similar incident occurring in the future.
- 4.** Whether the incident has been assessed to determine whether it could have been prevented or caused less harm, and the outcome of that assessment.
- 5.** The preventative measures, including remedial actions that have been put in place to identify and manage similar risks. For example, details on planned updates to your processes and procedures to ensure the risk of re-occurrence of this or a similar incident, including near misses, in the future is minimised.
- 6.** Describe the observable differences the Commission, consumers, family members and staff will be able to see as a result of changes made.
- 7.** Describe how you are embedding changes within the service and how you are measuring the effectiveness of the changes.
- 8.** Describe how you have 'closed the loop' by analysing any incident trends to identify and address any systemic issues.



Reminder:

If further information is available to you, then please ensure any Priority 1 notifications

are updated within five days with the further relevant information once incident analysis or investigation is complete.

The information is to be provided in the form located on the Commission website:

agedcarequality.gov.au/sirs/provider-resources#approved-forms

The purpose of this document is to give practical guidance to providers when making reports about serious incidents via the SIRS tile on the My Aged Care Provider Portal.

We have chosen four of the most important questions from the portal to help demonstrate the type of information that should be included in a notification.

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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