



Reportable incidents: Unexplained absence from care

Serious Incident Response Scheme

A fact sheet for providers of residential care and flexible care in a residential aged care setting

The Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS) is a new initiative to help prevent and reduce the risk of incidents of abuse and neglect in residential aged care services subsidised by the Australian Government.

Under the SIRS, all incidents and near misses should be recorded in a provider's incident management system (IMS) to ensure a timely and appropriate response that minimises impact, supports those affected and reduces the risk of recurrence.

There are eight types of reportable incidents that must be recorded in a provider's IMS and reported to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (the Commission).

This fact sheet covers the reporting of incidents relating to an unexplained absence from care.

What is an unexplained absence from care?

This means the absence of a consumer from a residential aged care service in circumstances where there are reasonable grounds to report the absence to police.

The Commission must be notified when:

- a consumer is absent from the service, and
- the absence is unexplained (i.e. the consumer is missing from the service and you are unaware of any reason for their absence), and
- there are reasonable grounds for reporting the absence to the police, whether you have reported the absence to the police or not.

How to respond to and report absence from care

Whenever a consumer is absent without explanation, you must record it in your IMS and the consumer's care plan. This will help to understand and manage the consumer's behaviours and wandering patterns.

If a consumer is absent from care and there are reasonable grounds to report it to the police, it is expected that you will report an unexplained absence to the police within a reasonable timeframe so an appropriate response and actions can be taken to locate the consumer.

You must also report the incident to the Commission as soon as reasonably practicable, and within 24 hours of becoming aware of the incident.



When responding to an incident involving an unexplained absence from care, you should provide support and information to the consumer's family and representatives about the actions you are taking to respond to the incident.

Absent consumers who return

If a consumer returns to their service before you become aware they were missing, there is no requirement to notify the Commission. However, in circumstances where the police are aware of the consumer's absence or where the police were involved in returning the consumer to their service, the absence must be notified to the Commission.

All unexplained absences must be reported to the Commission within 24 hours.

How can I find out more?

The Commission has published a suite of fact sheets relating to each type of reportable incident. To access these fact sheets and detailed guidance relating to the SIRS and incident management systems, visit agedcarequality.gov.au/sirs

Last updated: 17 June 2021



Phone

1800 951 822



Web

agedcarequality.gov.au



Write

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
GPO Box 9819, In Your Capital City