



# Volunteers in aged care

## Serious Incident Response Scheme



A fact sheet for volunteer managers in aged care

**The Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS) helps prevent and reduce the risk of incidents of abuse and neglect in aged care services subsidised by the Australian Government.**

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (the Commission) is the national regulator of aged care services in Australia. Our purpose is to protect and enhance the safety, health, wellbeing and quality of life of people receiving Australian government-funded aged care and services.

We do this by:

- granting approvals for providers to deliver aged care services
- monitoring aged care services performance and compliance with the Aged Care Quality Standards
- handling complaints
- overseeing approved providers, their workers and volunteers' behaviour with the Code of Conduct for Aged Care
- managing the Serious Incident Response Scheme, also known as the SIRS.

The SIRS helps reduce the risk of abuse and neglect for older people who receive aged care.

Under the SIRS, providers must manage and take reasonable action to prevent incidents with a focus on the safety, health, wellbeing and quality of life for older Australians. Aged care providers must also notify the Commission when reportable incidents happen in their service.

## What do your volunteers need to know?

### **If your volunteers become aware of an incident in aged care, they should:**

- make sure everyone is safe and call for help if needed
- follow your service's incident management policies and procedures
- Tell you or another staff member about the incident as soon as they become aware
- support the older person to understand who they can reach out to, such as:
  - a staff member at your service,
  - the Commission
  - an advocacy service such as the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN).

## What if your volunteers tell you about an incident

### **Your service must have an incident management system in place that allows staff to:**

- record details of incidents
- take steps to reduce the likelihood that similar incidents will happen again in the future
- continuously improve the services that are provided
- report incidents to the Commission if required.

It is important that you understand your role in managing incidents. This may involve directly recording the details of the incident yourself, or letting the provider know so that they can take the next actions.

**Everyone in aged care has the right to feel safe. Let's stay safe together.**



## There are 8 types of reportable incidents involving older Australians that must be reported to the Commission.

**Aged care providers must notify the Commission when reportable incidents happen in their service.**

8 types of incidents that are reportable are:	Some examples
1. Unreasonable use of force	Hitting, pushing, shoving, or rough handling.
2. Sexual contact or inappropriate sexual touching	Sexual assault, stalking, making sexual advances or unwanted sexual touching.
3. Psychological or emotional abuse	Yelling, name calling, ignoring, threatening gestures, or refusing access to care or services as a means of punishment.
4. Unexpected death	Reasonable steps weren't taken by the provider to prevent a death, the death is the result of care or services provided by the provider or a failure by the provider to provide care and services.
5. Stealing or financial coercion by a staff member	Coercion of a older person to change their will to their advantage or stealing valuables from a older person.
6. Neglect	Withholding personal care, untreated wounds, or insufficient assistance during meals.
7. Inappropriate use of restrictive practices	Restraining or using a sedative medication to control behaviour in a way that is not consistent with legislation.
8. Unexplained absence from care/ missing person	When a resident in residential care goes missing without explanation and there are reasonable grounds to contact the police. Or an older Australian goes missing while care or services are being provided, and there are reasonable grounds to report that fact to the police.

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**Write**

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