

List of Complaints Websites by State

Victorian Government Health
Information

Australian Capital Territory Human
Rights Commission

Health Complaints Commissioner,
Tasmania

NSW Health Care Complaints
Commission

Northern Territory Health and
Community Services Complaints
Commission

Health and Disability Services
Complaints Office, Western Australia

South Australia Health and Community
Services Complaints Commission

Office of the Health Ombudsman,
Queensland

Massage Association of Australia Ltd (MAA)

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2/1-5 Station Street
Moorabbin Vic 3189

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*Information contained in this brochure was resourced from
the Office of the Health Ombudsman QLD website.*

Managing a complaint

(Recommended by the OHO Queensland)

Here are some steps therapists can take to manage complaints quickly and prevent them escalating.

Have a complaint process

- You, or the organisation you work for, should have a process to receive, investigate and attempt to resolve complaints.
- Explain to the client how you will manage their complaint. Responding appropriately can restore trust and prevent a minor grievance from escalating.
- If you feel you can't—or it's not suitable to—manage the complaint, supply the contact details of a person who can (for example, a more senior or experienced staff member or a client liaison officer).
- Outline the complaint management process and how the complaint will be actioned.
- Give a clear timeframe in which the complaint will be addressed.
- Remember, everyone has the right to make a complaint free from harassment or intimidation.

Listen

- Invite the person to talk face-to-face – encourage them to bring along a support person or advocate if they wish.
- Listen carefully and respond sensitively.
- Most clients greatly value the opportunity to talk about what happened and present their view.

Clarify

- Clarify with the client the issues they are concerned about.
- Find out what could resolve their concerns.

- Consider the use of an interpreter.

Understand

- Acknowledge the client's feelings, concerns and experience, even though you might disagree. Acknowledge any distress the client may be feeling.
- Many complaints arise from miscommunication or misunderstood communication. Acknowledge this without dismissing the client's point of view.
- Try to understand the situation from the client's perspective.

Explain

- An open discussion and an explanation of what happened will often resolve concerns.
- Avoid technical language, jargon and clichés, and explain medical terms.
- Try not to be defensive.

Reassure

- Clients are often worried that if they complain, there will be a negative impact on their future care. Reassure them that this won't be the case.
- Offer reassurance the complaint will be kept confidential.

Timeliness

- Respond to the complaint as soon as possible, even if it is just to explain the process and timeframe.
- Stick to the timeframe given.
- Keep the complainant informed.
- Give the reasons for any delay.

Finalise

- Provide a full response so the client can see their complaint has been taken seriously.

- Explain the steps you took.
- Acknowledge areas of disagreement, or varying accounts without dismissing the client's view.
- Outline what happened, any error that occurred, how it happened and any policy or procedure changes you are making to prevent it happening again.
- Be sympathetic. Apologise if appropriate.
- If you and the complainant are unable to resolve the concerns, contact the complaints Ombudsman or Health Commissioner in your state. They are there to help.

It's important if you're approached by a client with a complaint, that you take the time to listen to their concerns and consider how you might be able to address them.

Often people just want a clear explanation of what happened. Some complainants want an acknowledgement that something went wrong, even if the incident was unavoidable or unforeseeable. They may seek an apology, or to see a service improved to prevent the situation occurring again.

Sometimes, complainants may want to see someone held accountable or be seeking compensation.

Experience suggests that people make a complaint because they *genuinely* feel that something was unsatisfactory with the health service provided to them.

As a result, complaints provide an opportunity for you to view your service from the client's perspective and to look for opportunities to improve.