

# A Question of Quality

## Aged Rights Advocacy Service Inc. (ARAS)

### ACCESSING HOME-BASED SERVICES? YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO A QUALITY SERVICE

# Ask agencies these questions about your rights!

This booklet has been developed for older people and their relatives

## INTRODUCTION

Research undertaken by the Aged Rights Advocacy Service (ARAS) has shown that older people and their representatives want information about their consumer rights in a format they can use.

In response, we felt it was time to put something in writing that we could give to older people who are using, or about to use, services funded by the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program.

If you are using, or about to use, home-based services, you will get a clearer picture of what rights mean to you by asking the questions in this booklet.

While the booklet does not provide the answers, it is a good starting point for people who wish to gather information about agencies that provide home-based services.



## WHAT IS THE HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE (HACC) PROGRAM?

The HACC Program provides a comprehensive range of home and community based services for older people so that they can remain living independently in their own homes.

### Examples of HACC services:

- ◆ **Home Help:** cooking, cleaning, washing and ironing, assistance with shopping, banking
- ◆ **Personal Care:** showering, dressing, toileting
- ◆ **Transport:** to medical appointments, to and from day respite centres
- ◆ **Home Maintenance:** cleaning gutters, installing home security locks and hand rails, fixing tap washers, maintenance of gardens
- ◆ **Respite:** home-based or centre-based respite
- ◆ **Community Nursing:** administering medication, changing dressings
- ◆ **Food:** provided at home or a community centre
- ◆ **Allied Health Services:** physiotherapy, podiatry, occupational therapy, speech therapy.

## ADVOCACY

Everyone has fundamental rights as citizens of Australia. We are all entitled to express our views and uphold our rights. It may be difficult to do this alone as we do not always have the confidence or skills required. It may be more effective to work with a friend or agency to assist us to safeguard our rights.

An advocacy agency can provide advice regarding consumer rights and responsibilities and support to help consumers resolve their concerns or speak on their behalf.

As a HACC consumer, you have the right to involve an advocate of your choice to represent your interests at any time.

You can ask the agency the following questions:

1. Is there an independent agency that can tell me more about my rights as a HACC consumer?
2. Can I have a friend, family member, or independent advocate to represent my interests at any time?
3. Can you provide me with written information about advocacy services?

## PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY

As a HACC consumer you have the right to privacy and confidentiality and to access personal information held by the agency.

You can ask your agency the questions below:

1. Can you provide me with written information about my rights and responsibilities around privacy and confidentiality?
2. Would you give my personal details to another agency without my consent?
3. Where do you keep my personal information? Is it secure?
4. Who has access to my file?
5. Can I access my own file?
6. Is the information you seek directly relevant to provision of the service?
7. If my privacy or confidentiality were breached, what could I do? Who do I talk to?

## RESPECT & DIGNITY

You have the right to be treated with respect and dignity. Staff of agencies need to respect your ideas, choices, decisions, personal items, to listen to what you have to say and to treat you in a respectful manner.

You can ask your agency the following questions:

1. Will the staff treat me with respect and dignity?
  2. Will the staff listen to what I have to say and talk to me clearly and in a respectful manner?
  3. Will staff respect my personal property and only use it with my consent?
  4. What can I do if staff don't treat me with respect and dignity?
  5. Will the staff assist me in the manner I prefer?
- If you are from a non-English Speaking Background:***
6. How familiar is your agency with my cultural background?
  7. Will you respect my cultural and religious beliefs?

## QUALITY SERVICES

You have the right to receive a good quality service that meets your specific needs. An agency needs to advise you about what the service can and can't do.

To measure the quality of your service you can ask yourself the following questions. (A quality service should get a 'yes' response to all questions.)

1. Am I satisfied with the staff who assist me?
2. Are the staff polite? Do they listen to me and respect my privacy? Do they work well?
3. Do the staff treat my ideas, decisions, cultural and religious beliefs with respect?
4. Does the service meet my needs?
5. Is the service flexible?
6. Do I get a regular visit or phone call from the agency to find out if I am happy with the service?
7. Do I receive a written copy of my care plan and other information about the agency?
8. Am I consulted with prior to any changes being made to the service I receive?
9. Does the agency encourage me to speak up if I have concerns about the services I receive?
10. Could I contact someone in the agency to raise concerns without feeling guilty or fearful of repercussion?
11. Does the service encourage me to involve an advocate at any time to help me uphold my rights?

## INFORMATION & CONSULTATION

You have the right to information about the range of services available and what they can provide. This information is essential when determining how best your needs can be met. An agency should also inform you about your rights as a consumer. This information can be provided in writing.

The following questions will help you get useful information about services.

1. What help will the service provide?
2. How often can I receive the service?
3. How long can I expect to receive the service?
4. What will it cost me?
5. Can I get the service after-hours or on the weekend?
6. When will the service commence?
7. Will I have the same staff each time they visit?
8. What will happen if I refuse this service now and ask for it again later?
9. Can I stop the service at any time?
10. How will I be involved in developing my care plan?
11. When do you provide me with a copy of my consumer rights?

### ***If you are from a non-English Speaking Background:***

12. Can I have this information in .....  
(*your language*)?
13. Which other agencies could I contact about this type of service? Does this include private agencies?

## CHOICE AND CONTROL

You have the right to remain in control of all aspects of your life, including your finances. You have the right to make informed choices and to make decisions about services to meet your needs.

You can ask the agency the following questions:

1. How will I be involved in developing my care plan? Can I have a family member involved if I choose to?
2. Will you review my care plan, in consultation with me, if my needs change?
3. Can I request a male or female worker?
4. Can I choose a time that suits me to receive my service?
5. Can I tell my staff person not to chew gum, not to smoke or not to bring a friend?
6. Do you emphasise the importance of punctuality to your staff?
7. Will you consider my comments and suggestions to improve the service?
8. How can I be involved in the planning of, and decisions about, services?
9. Will you inform me in writing of any changes to my service?
10. Can I appeal against these changes and, if so, what is the process for appeal?
11. Can I involve an advocate of my choice to represent my interests at any time?

## COMPLAINTS & DISPUTES

**A complaint is simply a request for assistance regarding a problem. As a consumer you have the right to provide direct and honest feedback about the service you receive without fear of retribution. All HACC-funded agencies should have clear written policies and procedures for handling complaints.**

You can ask the agency the following questions:

- Can I discuss any concerns I have about the service I receive?
- Is there a person in the agency who deals with complaints?
- Do I have to put my concern in writing, or can I explain it over the phone or talk to someone in person?
- Is my complaint kept confidential?
- Does your agency welcome complaints as a form of feedback about services?
- Will I jeopardise my service if I complain about any aspect of it?
- How long will it take for me to get a response to my complaint?
- What will happen if I am not happy with the outcome of my complaint?
- Can I have information on other relevant agencies that can assist me to address my concern?
- Can I access an advocate of my choice at any stage of the complaints process?
- Can I have a copy of your agency's policy and procedures for handling complaints?

## OTHER USEFUL QUESTIONS TO ASK THE AGENCY

Listed below are questions you could ask the agency to find out more about it and the services it provides. This will enable you to make an informed choice about which agency is likely to best meet your needs.

1. How long has the agency been operating?
2. Where is the agency located; what regions do you cover?
3. Who are your clients?
4. Can I have a copy of your mission statement?
5. How many people does your agency employ?
6. Do you use volunteers? If yes, are they trained?
7. Do you do a police record check on your volunteers?
8. What types of services do you provide?
9. Do you have written information about these services *If yes, can you please send me a copy?*
10. How much do you charge for each service or are there any donations involved?
11. How is payment made?
12. Can I have a written agreement for this service?
13. If I have already been given an agreement, can I get someone to assist me in understanding this agreement clearly before I sign it?

*If English is not your first language and you need the assistance of an interpreter, you can ask:*

14. Can I please have an interpreter or family member present?
15. Do you have written information in ..... (your language)?
16. Will you refer me to another agency if you can't provide a service to meet my needs?

**If you would like to know more about your consumer rights, please contact:**

### AGED RIGHTS ADVOCACY SERVICE

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