



# What is the SIRS?

## Serious Incident Response Scheme

A fact sheet for aged care consumers

**As an aged care consumer, you have the right to safe and quality care and to live without abuse or neglect.**

The Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS) is a new Government initiative to help reduce the risk of abuse and neglect for people living or staying in a residential aged care home.

The scheme requires aged care providers to identify, record, manage, resolve and report all serious incidents that occur, or are alleged or suspected to have occurred, in a residential aged care service.

Underpinning the SIRS is a requirement for residential aged care providers to have in place an effective incident management system – a documented set of protocols, processes and standard operating procedures – to manage all incidents, respond to incidents, and take steps to make sure they do not happen again. The incident management system covers a broader range of non-reportable incidents and include incidents that involve staff or visitors.

### Why is the SIRS important?

The SIRS requires every residential aged care service to adopt a systematic approach to minimising the risk of, and responding to, serious incidents involving residents.

The SIRS underscores the vital importance of an incident management system in helping every residential aged care service to effectively manage risks to their residents.

The SIRS also introduces explicit obligations for providers to report a broader range of serious incidents to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (Commission) than is currently required under compulsory reporting obligations. This includes reports of all incidents that are alleged or suspected to have occurred, or witnessed, between consumers of an aged care service, including where the consumer who commits the incident has a cognitive or mental impairment (such as dementia).

### How will you benefit from the SIRS?

The SIRS will reduce the risk of abuse and neglect for people living in residential aged care homes.

SIRS and the requirement for providers to have an effective incident management system in place will:

- reduce the chance of you being subject to abuse or neglect in aged care
- help you access support sooner and on an ongoing basis if a serious incident affects you
- reduce the likelihood of the serious incident happening again.

## When will the SIRS commence?

Subject to the passage of legislation through the Federal Parliament, from 1 April 2021, residential aged care providers must report all 'Priority 1' incidents within 24 hours.

'Priority 1' incidents include those that cause or could reasonably have caused physical or psychological injury or illness requiring some form of medical or psychological treatment. Instances of unexplained absence from care and any unexpected death of a consumer are always to be regarded as Priority 1 reportable incidents. From 1 October 2021, all 'Priority 2' incidents – reportable incidents that do not meet the criteria for 'Priority 1' – must also be reported within 30 days.

## How does the SIRS relate to other requirements your aged care provider must meet?

The SIRS will sit alongside, and complement, other requirements that aged care providers must meet.

All providers must comply with the [Aged Care Quality Standards](#) which detail the standards of care a person can expect as an aged care consumer. For example:

### Standard 8 – Organisational Governance

Requires approved providers to have in place effective risk management systems and practices that enable them (among other things) to manage high-impact risks associated with the care of consumers, and to identify and respond to abuse and neglect of consumers.

### Standard 6 – Feedback and Complaints

Requires approved providers to demonstrate that an [open disclosure](#) process is used when things go wrong in providing care for consumers.

A provider is also legally required to help consumers understand their rights under the [Charter of Aged Care Rights](#).

Taken together, the above requirements reinforce the importance of aged care providers having an effective incident management system in place.

## What is an incident management system?

An incident management system is a set of processes and procedures used to prevent, manage and respond to incidents. This system should support an aged care provider and their staff to take appropriate action when there is an alleged, suspected or witnessed incident.

Appropriate action includes:

- action to remove consumer/s from harm and to reduce or address the impact on any consumer/s
- contacting and meeting with consumers, their family and representatives to discuss the incident and explain the response to prevent reoccurrence
- identification and immediate internal reporting of the allegation, suspicion or witnessed incident, with appropriate escalation to senior staff of serious incidents
- documenting the incident
- further investigation by the provider if warranted
- reporting to external authorities within statutory timeframes, including the police and the Commission.

## What is a reportable incident under the scheme?

A reportable incident includes any of the following:

<b>Serious incidents include those where consumers experience:</b>	<b>Examples:</b>
Unreasonable use of force	<i>hitting, pushing, shoving or rough handling.</i>
Unlawful sexual contact or inappropriate sexual conduct	<i>sexual threats or stalking, or sexual activities without consent.</i>
Neglect	<i>withholding personal care, untreated wounds, or insufficient assistance during meals.</i>
Psychological or emotional abuse	<i>yelling, name calling, ignoring a consumer, threatening gestures or refusing a consumer access to care or services as a means of punishment.</i>
Unexpected death	<i>in the event of a fall, untreated pressure injury, or when the actions of a consumer result in the death of another consumer.</i>
Stealing or financial coercion by a staff member	<i>if a staff member coerces a consumer to change their will to their advantage, or steals valuables from the consumer.</i>
Inappropriate physical or chemical restraint	<i>where physical or chemical restraint is used without prior consent or without notifying the consumer's representative as soon as practicable; where physical restraint is used in a non-emergency situation; or when a provider issues a drug to a consumer to influence their behaviour as a form of chemical restraint.</i>
Unexplained absence from care	<i>this occurs when the consumer is absent from the service, it is unexplained and has been reported to the police.</i>

Under the SIRS, an allegation, suspicion or witness account of any of the above serious incidents must be reported to the Commission.

## What is the role of the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission?

The Commission will be responsible for administering the SIRS and will receive serious incident reports from aged care providers. The Commission will have the power to take regulatory action where appropriate to address non-compliance with provider responsibilities, and will have new powers to issue compliance notices for suspected non-compliance with SIRS obligations.

The Commission will publish information regularly on the operation of the SIRS, and this information will be expanded over time.

For more information about SIRS, visit [agedcarequality.gov.au/sirs](https://agedcarequality.gov.au/sirs)

## How can I make a complaint about my aged care home?

If you feel comfortable, we encourage you to raise your concern with the staff or managers of the service first as this is often the best way to have your concern resolved. All aged care providers are required to have a complaints system in place.

Alternatively, the Commission provides a free service for anyone to raise a concern about the quality of care or services provided to people receiving Australian Government funded aged care.

Find out more at [agedcarequality.gov.au](https://agedcarequality.gov.au) or call **1800 951 822**.

## Accessing the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN)

Sometimes making a complaint on your own can be difficult. There are several options for support to make a complaint.

OPAN supports older persons and their representatives to effectively access and interact with Australian Government funded aged care services and have their rights protected.

OPAN can be reached on **1800 700 600** or by visiting [opan.com.au](https://opan.com.au).



### Phone

1800 951 822



### Web

[agedcarequality.gov.au](https://agedcarequality.gov.au)



### Write

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