

CONSUMER FACT SHEET 2: ACCREDITATION OF HEALTH SERVICES IN AUSTRALIA

About this fact sheet

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) has developed a series of fact sheets for consumers and carers about the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards (second edition). This fact sheet explains how health service organisations become accredited through the Australian Health Service Safety and Quality Accreditation (AHSSQA) Scheme. It follows on from Consumer fact sheet 1: Introduction to the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards (second edition).

What is accreditation?

Accreditation is an evaluation process that involves assessment by qualified external peer reviewers to assess a health service organisation's compliance with safety and quality standards. There is also a focus on continuous quality improvement strategies that promote safe and high quality healthcare. Awarding accreditation to a health service organisation provides assurance to the community that the organisation meets expected patient safety and quality standards.

In Australia, all public and private hospitals, day surgeries and most public dental practices must be accredited.

To become accredited, health service organisations must pass external assessments to show they have implemented all of the requirements of the NSQHS Standards. The assessments are conducted by independent accrediting agencies, approved by the Commission, as part of the Australian Health Service Safety and Quality Accreditation (AHSSQA) Scheme. The Commission coordinates national accreditation processes via the AHSSQA Scheme.

What can I expect from an accredited health service?

When you or someone you care for visits a health service organisation, you expect to receive care that is safe. Accredited health service organisations have demonstrated through an independent review that they have implemented the NSQHS Standards.

The fact that a health service organisation has been accredited does not guarantee that no one will ever experience unsafe care, but it ensures safety and quality systems that promote safe care are in place. These systems help to ensure risks are identified and managed.



How do health services become accredited?

To become accredited, a health service organisation:

- Conducts a self-assessment to determine if each of the actions in the NSQHS Standards are being met
- Participates in an on-site assessment conducted by an independent accrediting agency, approved by the Commission
- Takes steps to address shortcomings in cases where the accrediting agency has found actions related to specific NSQHS Standards that have not been met.

When a health service organisation has shown it meets all of the NSQHS Standards, it is awarded accreditation.

You will be able to identify accredited health service organisations by a certificate or accreditation award that states they have been assessed against the NSQHS Standards. Certificates are often hung in the front entrance or in public waiting areas of a health service organisation.

What happens if an action in the NSQHS Standards is not met?

If an action is not met at the first assessment by the accrediting agency, the health service organisation has 90 days to make improvements. If at the final assessment the action is still not met, the health service organisation will not be awarded accreditation. All actions must be met to achieve accreditation.

If a health service organisation is not awarded accreditation, various sanctions may apply depending on the extent and the type of actions that were not met. Any health service organisation that does not achieve accreditation must undergo full assessment within 12 months to continue to be able to operate.






Consumer involvement in the accreditation process

As a consumer, you have the opportunity to be involved at several points in the process. A health service organisation may encourage you to be involved in a variety of ways, including by:

- Seeking your advice about safety and quality issues through complaints or feedback processes
- Asking if you would like to be interviewed about your experience as a consumer of the health service organisation, or about your involvement in the organisation's improvement processes, as part of the assessment process
- Asking if you would like to review the health service organisation's safety and quality systems or processes of care on an ongoing basis, as a consumer representative appointed to a quality improvement committee.

You may also be interested in undertaking training to become an assessor who reviews an organisation's systems and processes against the NSQHS Standards from the consumer perspective.

If you are interested in becoming a consumer assessor (also called a surveyor), you can contact an approved accrediting agency for more information. A list of approved accrediting agencies is on our website: <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Contact-details-for-accrediting-agencies-approved-to-assess-health-service-organisations-against-the-NSQHS-Standards.pdf>



If you are concerned about a safety or quality issue at a health service organisation, you can:

- Share your feedback with a clinician or other staff member of the health service organisation in person
- Write your feedback down on a feedback form
- Contact the health service organisation's consumer advocate or patient liaison officer to help you resolve any concerns
- Contact your state and territory's health complaints authority if you do not receive a response, or if you are not happy with the response you receive. These are listed below.

ACT Human Rights Commission

Web: www.hrc.act.gov.au/complaints

Phone: 02 6205 2222

SA Health and Community Services

Complaints Commissioner

Web: www.hcsc.sa.gov.au

Phone: 1800 232 007

NSW Health Care Complaints

Commission

Web: www.hccc.nsw.gov.au

Phone: 1800 043 159

TAS Health Complaints

Commissioner

Web: www.healthcomplaints.tas.gov.au

Phone: 1800 001 170

NT Health and Community Services

Complaints Commission

Web: www.hcsc.nt.gov.au

Phone: 1800 004 474

VIC Health Complaints

Commissioner

Web: www.hcc.vic.gov.au

Phone: 1300 582 113

QLD Office of the Health

Ombudsman

Web: www.oho.qld.gov.au

Phone: 133 646

WA Health and Disability Services

Complaints Office

Web: www.hadsco.wa.gov.au

Phone: 1800 813 583

Further information

To find out how to be involved in your health service organisation's accreditation process contact your health service organisation.

For more information about the NSQHS Standards and accreditation, visit our website: www.safetyandquality.gov.au.

