

# Open disclosure – what to expect if you experience harm during health care?



## What is open disclosure?

Every day thousands of people receive health care. Sometimes things go wrong which cause unintentional harm to you or someone you care for. In health care, this is known as an **incident**. Your healthcare provider (such as a doctor or nurse) should talk with you about it as soon as possible.

**Open disclosure** is the discussion with you, your healthcare provider and the people you may choose to support you (such as your family, carer or friend) about an incident that caused harm whilst receiving health care.

Open disclosure includes:

- Apologising to you for what went wrong
- Explaining the known facts
- Listening to your experience
- Explaining how it may affect you and your care
- Explaining the steps being taken to prevent it happening again.

Open disclosure can take place over one or more discussions.



## Open disclosure and your healthcare rights

The [Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights](#) explains your rights during open disclosure.

This includes the **right** to:

- Be told what went wrong with your health care, how it happened, how it may affect you and what is being done to make your care safe
- Share your experience and participate to improve the quality of care and health services
- Ask questions and be involved in open and honest communication
- Provide feedback or make a complaint without it affecting the way you are treated.



## You can start the open disclosure process

If you think you have been harmed, you can talk with your healthcare provider or the health service manager. Some health services have a patient representative or advocate you can talk to.

### Some things you can say to start the process are:

- *I feel that something has gone wrong with my care and I was harmed. Is there someone I can talk to about it?*
- *I wasn't expecting this to happen. I would like to talk to someone about my concerns.*
- *Can I have more information about your open disclosure process and who to contact?*

### How can you make a complaint?

The complaints process is a **separate process** to open disclosure. If the open disclosure process does not meet your needs, you can make a complaint through the health service feedback and complaints system.



## How can you learn more about open disclosure?

If you would like to know more about open disclosure, the following resources may be helpful:

- Preparing and participating in open disclosure discussions fact sheet: [www.safetyandquality.gov.au/preparing-OD-factsheet](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/preparing-OD-factsheet)
- Open disclosure of things that don't go to plan, a booklet for patients beginning the open disclosure process: [www.safetyandquality.gov.au/OD-booklet](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/OD-booklet)
- Australian Open Disclosure Framework: [www.safetyandquality.gov.au/AODF](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/AODF)

### Questions?



Scan this QR code to access open disclosure frequently asked questions (FAQs).

For more information please visit: [www.safetyandquality.gov.au/open-disclosure](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/open-disclosure)