

**Home
and
Community Care**

**National Service
Standards**

**Guidelines
for
Assessors**

Pilot draft January 1997

Introduction

The National Service Standards of the Home and Community Care (HACC) program are intended to provide the basis for a nationally consistent approach to quality in HACC funded services. Agencies must be assessed against each of the standards. Rating options for each standard are met, partly met and not met. These guidelines are presented as a guide to rating agencies against the standards. In general, for a "met" rating all of the points listed under the standard should be in place. Some of the points listed under each standard are more essential to meeting a minimum requirement than others. Hence, for a "partly met" rating some of the less essential criteria may not be in place but the core requirement for minimally meeting the standard should be evident. In a standard containing several questions a "met" rating would be appropriate where all questions had been answered adequately; a "not met" rating would be appropriate if a minimum requirement under any of the questions was not met.

Where an agency intends to implement a program or policy which will bring it in line with a standard but does not yet have it place, assessment should take into account only what is currently in place. A forward action plan is included at the end of the Instrument where details of the tasks to be done by the agency to fully implement the standards should be listed.

It is recognised that agencies must operate within the resources made available to them by Governments and this should be taken into account in monitoring the implementation of these standards.

The HACC National Service Standards apply to agencies representing a broad range of service types, size, locations, and contexts, and serving a wide range of clients with differing needs and resources. For this reason, standards cannot be prescriptive. These guidelines are intended to provide assistance in reaching rating decisions for agencies, recognising that there will always be a trade off for such guidelines between generalisability (their capacity to apply to all agencies) and specificity (the level of detail that can be given to assist in scoring agencies against the standards).

As the HACC target group includes frail aged people, younger people with disabilities, and the primary carers of both of these groups of people, the word 'consumer' in the HACC National Service Standards can be taken to refer to any or all of these groups of people.

In line with privacy and confidentiality principles, client records should not be individually identified in completing this Instrument.

For agencies for whom HACC funding relates to only some consumers it is only necessary that the agency's responses relate to how they serve these consumers. However, if service provision to HACC funded and non-HACC funded consumers is not readily distinguished answers may relate to both groups without discrimination between the two.

Objective 1: ACCESS TO SERVICES

To ensure that each consumer's access to a service is decided only on the basis of relative need.

1.1 Consumer Outcome: Assessment occurs for each consumer.

When consumers first begin using a service, their needs should be comprehensively assessed to determine their priority in relation to the needs of other consumers.

What proportion of your consumers were formally assessed when they first began receiving services from your agency?

- An agency should demonstrate that all of its new clients have been comprehensively assessed. This assessment may have been carried out either by the agency or by an agency with which they cooperate in coordinated case management. The calculation of proportion of clients assessed should indicate that the agency can confidently account for those clients in their care who have not received an assessment. The actual calculation of the proportion is not so important as their ability to identify the clients who have not been assessed.
- Where an agency does not routinely comprehensively assess the needs of all clients, an explanation should be provided for why the agency does not do this. For example, it may be that some single service agencies such as those providing meals or transport may accept clients referred by other agencies who have undertaken a full assessment of the clients' needs. Some agencies may not immediately undertake a formal assessment of a client where such an assessment would be unduly stressful or intrusive for the client, for example, when the client is trying the service for the first time, or when clients access the service in the circumstance of a crisis. In this case the agency should indicate the approximate length of time between when a client applies to the agency or begins receiving services and when assessment occurs.
- A "not met" rating against this standard would be appropriate if any client is not assessed and there is no valid reason for why this did not occur. A "met" rating against this standard would be appropriate if all clients are assessed, or if the agency can give reasonable account for those clients who are not assessed.
- Other factors which should be considered in rating the agency against the standard include whether the assessment is suitably comprehensive for the service provided (cross reference with standard 1.2) and whether client assessment occurs in a timely manner. Agencies are only required to indicate the time between application or commencement with the service and assessment if they have clients who have not yet been assessed and who require an assessment.

(Note: reassessments dealt with under Objective 4)

Objective 1: ACCESS TO SERVICES

To ensure that each consumer's access to a service is decided only on the basis of relative need.

- 1.2 Consumer Outcome:** Consumers are allocated available resources according to prioritised need.
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How does your agency prioritise need?

How does your agency allocate available resources?

- The agency should be able to demonstrate that it has clear and comprehensive assessment criteria which are used as the basis for determining the ongoing relative need and priority of each consumer, and that policy consistently accords with practice.
- The assessment tools should be appropriate to the agency's target group and to the services provided by the agency. In general they should take into account the consumer's severity of disability, including the difficulties they experience with tasks of daily living, their requirements for medical or nursing help, the safety of their physical environment, their geographical isolation, their financial disadvantage, their cultural background, their social contacts and the availability of a carer. They should also consider the carer's level of need, taking note of the physical and psychological and financial condition of the carer, the social support available to the carer, and their competing commitments such as employment.
- The reasons for refusing services to potential consumers should be documented, and should consistently comply with agency guidelines.
- Agencies which refuse services to potential consumers due to resource constraints should demonstrate that waiting lists, if kept, are reviewed in order to reprioritise consumer access to services as necessary.
- Response times between referral and service delivery and between initial assessment and service delivery should be appropriate to clients needs.

Objective 1: ACCESS TO SERVICES

To ensure that each consumer's access to a service is decided only on the basis of relative need.

- 1.3 Consumer Outcome:** Access to services by consumers with special needs is decided on a non-discriminatory basis.
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How can your agency demonstrate that access to services by special needs groups occurs on a non-discriminatory basis?

- The agency should demonstrate that it promotes and practices a policy of non-discrimination in access to services by consumers with special needs. Bearing in mind the agency's target group, special needs groups which should be covered in checking for non-discriminatory practices include:
 - a) people of non-English speaking background and, where appropriate, sub-groups within the larger ethnic groups;
 - b) people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent;
 - c) rurally isolated people;
 - d) people with dementia; and
 - e) financially disadvantaged people.
- Information in regard to the number of consumers with special needs accessing the service should be collected, and where numbers appear disproportionately low in comparison to those in the community, the agency should demonstrate that it has explored the reasons for this and is attempting to address them where appropriate.
- To receiving a "met" rating on this standard where appropriate the agency should be able to demonstrate that it has links with other service providers whose target groups are those in special needs groups and that the agency cooperates with these through such processes as referral.
- To meet this standard at the minimum level the agency should demonstrate that its services are accessible to all identifiable groups within the target population, taking into account issues such as the appropriateness of information, and service design/delivery practices.

Objective 1: ACCESS TO SERVICES

To ensure that each consumer's access to a service is decided only on the basis of relative need.

- 1.4 Consumer Outcome:** Consumers in receipt of other services are not discriminated in receiving additional services.
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How does your agency ensure that consumers in receipt of other services are not discriminated in obtaining further services from your agency?

- A consumer's receipt of other services may impact on the assessed need of that client, in other words, resources may appropriately be directed at those with least access to other resources, however, an agency should demonstrate that it follows a consistent and equitable approach to assessing relative need.
- To meet this standard at its minimal level the agency should be able to demonstrate that it has a clear definition of consumer's relative need and that this definition takes into account the other services that the consumer receives.
- Some agencies may not take into account the other services a consumer receives. The appropriateness of this will be dependent on the agency's role in the case coordination of the client and the type of service they provide. For example, for an agency providing respite to be unaware of other related services the consumer is receiving suggests some deficiency in the agency's assessment of need. Obversely, agencies providing meals may have no need to collect information on other services the consumer receives since meals are provided to all who are eligible without discrimination.
- Where clients are refused a service from the agency on the basis of the delivery of services to them by other agencies, the agency should be able to demonstrate that this refusal is based on a comprehensive assessment of the clients needs while taking into account the amount and type of care provided by other agencies.

(Note: information provided by the agency in relation to consumer outcome 1.2 is also relevant in relation to this outcome.)

Objective 1: ACCESS TO SERVICES

To ensure that each consumer's access to a service is decided only on the basis of relative need.

- 1.5 Consumer Outcome:** Consumers who reapply for services are assessed with needs being prioritised.
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How does your agency ensure that a consumer's previous refusal of a service does not prejudice future attempts to access your agency's services?

- Where a consumer declines an offer of service, or the agency refuses a service to a potential consumer, information should be provided to that person about when, and under what circumstances, the person could reapply for service. A "not met" rating would be appropriate where the agency can not provide evidence that consumers are informed of their right to reapply for services.
- Information should be provided to consumers about their right to refuse a service. A "not met" rating would be appropriate where the agency can not provide evidence that consumers are informed of their right to refuse services.
- To receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should have written policies and procedures to ensure that a consumer's refusal of a service does not affect their future access.
- The agency should have clear guidelines for ensuring that consumers understand the reason for refusal of a service. An agency that cannot demonstrate that it adequately explains reason for refusal to consumers should receive a "not met" rating against this standard.
- Where an agency keeps a waiting list for services, to receive a "met" rating against this standard, it should adequately inform clients of how this process works.

Objective 2: INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION

To ensure that each consumer is informed about his or her rights and responsibilities and the services available, and consulted about any changes required.

2.1 Consumer outcome: Consumers are aware of their rights and responsibilities.

How does your agency ensure that consumers are aware of their rights and responsibilities?

- The agency should explain the means by which it ensures that consumers are made aware of their rights and responsibilities. It is expected that, to meet this standard at its minimal level, the agency will both provide the consumer with a written copy of their rights and responsibilities, and explain these to the consumer verbally.
- The agency should periodically remind consumers of their rights and responsibilities. If the agency does not do this it should not be rated as "met" against the standard.
- The agency should be able to demonstrate that staff and volunteers are also made aware of issues relating to consumer rights and responsibilities. Where an agency adequately informs clients of their rights and responsibilities but makes no provision for staff and volunteer training in relation to these, the agency should receive a "partly met" rating against the standard.
- A "not met" rating against this standard should be given if the agency makes no provision to allow relevant special needs groups to understand their rights and responsibilities. These may include people from non-English speaking backgrounds and Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders as well as those with physical or intellectual disabilities.

Objective 2: INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION

To ensure that each consumer is informed about his or her rights and responsibilities and the services available, and consulted about any changes required.

2.2 Consumer outcome: Consumers are aware of services available.

How does your agency ensure that consumers are informed about available services?

- The agency should explain the means by which it ensures consumers are aware of services available, from itself and from other agencies. Consumers should be made aware of what services are available from the agency either in writing or through verbal explanation.
- As consumer needs change over time it is important to regularly remind them of services available from the agency. To receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should keep consumers informed of services available by regular reminders.
- How much information is provided to consumers about services from other agencies may depend upon the needs of consumers, however the agency should be equipped to provide this information when necessary. To this end, the agency should be aware of other support services available in the region.
- The agency should demonstrate that when assessing consumers' needs, relevant information is provided to consumers in regard to the service options which they may choose from. This should include presenting consumers with options in relation to service delivery, not only in regard to the types of services available but the choice of staff and choice of service delivery times.
- Where appropriate, staff should also be aware of the service choices available for consumers.
- To receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should make provision to allow special needs groups to be aware of services available. These include people from non-English speaking backgrounds and Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.

Objective 2: INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION

To ensure that each consumer is informed about his or her rights and responsibilities and the services available, and consulted about any changes required.

- 2.3 Consumer outcome:** Consumers are informed of the basis of service provision, including changes that may occur.
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How does your agency ensure that consumers are informed about the basis of service provision, including any changes that may have to occur?

- To meet this standard at a minimal level the agency should clearly advise all consumers, upon commencement, how it has reached its decision about what services the agency will provide to them and for how long.
- To receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should indicate that consumers were involved in making decisions about the service provided to them.
- Information about service provision should be provided in a manner which is consultative and allows the consumer to have a voice in questioning and altering the service provision decisions. As such, to meet this standard at a minimal level consumers should be aware of their right to appeal a service provision decision.
- The agency should clearly discuss any changes to service provision with consumers, and explain, in writing where appropriate, the changes to be made and the reasons for them.
- The agency should advise its consumers of its fee system and how charges, if any, will be applied to the consumer.
- Where an agency ends a service to a consumer, a "met" rating would be appropriate if the agency informed consumers of any available alternative services and informed consumers of the circumstances in which the agency may again be able to assist him or her.
- To receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should indicate that it responds to consumer requests for changes to service provision in a timely manner.

Objective 3: EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT
To ensure that consumers receive the benefit of well-planned, efficient and accountable management.

3.1 Consumer outcome: Consumers receive appropriate services provided through the processes of ongoing planning, monitoring and evaluation of services.

What information on the level of need in your community does your agency collect?

- The agency should demonstrate that it makes an assessment of need in the community it is intended to service. This may include investigation of the unmet need in the community and estimation of future need but should, at the very least involve a study of the characteristics of those currently accessing its services, those on waiting lists and those being turned away from the service.
- The agency should also be able to show that it consults with consumers through forums, surveys or other methods of receiving information about consumer need, in this way ensuring that the services it provides are relevant and appropriate.
- The ability of an agency to gain information on the level of need in the community will depend upon factors such as the resources available to it and the strength of its service network. What can be expected from an agency in relation to this standard will vary according to these factors but, at a minimum, all agencies should be able to demonstrate that they have been resourceful in obtaining this information within their means.

How can you show that your agency builds this information into service development?

- The agency should demonstrate that it regularly reviews this information and evaluates its services in relation to this information. This may take place in planning workshops and staff meetings from which minutes may be available.

How can your agency show that as a consequence of service evaluation, services are changed or modified?

- The agency should be able to demonstrate how services have been changed or modified as a result of service evaluation. This may involve following up on decisions made at planning workshops and staff meetings.
- At a minimum, the agency should be able to demonstrate that it has a review system to measure the effectiveness of service changes.

Objective 3: EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT
To ensure that consumers receive the benefit of well-planned, efficient and accountable management.

3.2 Consumer outcome: Consumers receive services from agencies that adhere to accountable management practices.

How can your agency show that it involves consumers in service management?

- To meet this standard at a minimal level the agency should demonstrate that it actively encourages the involvement of consumers in agency management and provide details of how this is done. For example, consumer advisory groups or participation on the management board.
- The extent of consumer involvement in management may depend upon many factors, such as the level of disability of the consumers. For very disabled consumers, involvement in agency management may only be practically addressed through consumer surveys. To receive a "met" rating the agency should demonstrate that it has considered consumers' circumstances when seeking their involvement in service management.

How can you show that your agency practices accountable management?

- This question is directed at aspects of organisational level management rather than at the level of management of services to individual clients. At the broadest level, the agency should show how it monitors its activities and evaluates whether it is meeting its organisational objectives, including those set out in the Funding and Service Agreement. This should include monitoring the quality of services purchased by the agency from a third party.
- The agency should demonstrate that it follows appropriate financial management/accounting procedures and maintains appropriate records. In circumstances where these are compiled at another branch of the organisation, the agency should provide detail of the information it sends on.
- The agency should demonstrate that it complies with relevant State/Territory and Commonwealth award and legislative requirements, including those related to the premises occupied by the agency (building access and safety issues and leasing requirements).
- The agency should demonstrate that it has developed comprehensive policies to guide decision making and service delivery practices within the agency, and that these are adequately conveyed to staff.
- The agency should demonstrate that it clearly conveys the lines of responsibility and accountability to all staff, including volunteers.

Objective 3: EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT
To ensure that consumers receive the benefit of well-planned, efficient and accountable management.

3.3 Consumer outcome: Consumers receive services from appropriately skilled staff.

How does your agency ensure that staff are appropriately skilled/competent to carry out services for consumers?

- The agency should demonstrate that it has procedures in place to ensure that staff with appropriate skills are recruited. An agency that cannot demonstrate that staff are selected with careful thought to the tasks they must perform and the clients they serve should be rated as "not met" against this standard.
- To receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should be able to provide duty statements and selection criteria for staff which are appropriate to the roles they must perform and evidence that staff are recruited in accordance with these.
- The agency should describe other criteria it uses to determine the suitability of staff to perform certain roles within the organisation, for example, results of police checks or ability to speak a second language.
- The agency should be able to demonstrate its approach to ensuring ongoing skill development of staff, for example, training needs assessments and provision for study leave. An agency that does not make any provision for this should receive a "not met rating".
- To receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should demonstrate that it has strategies in place to ensure that staff:
 - a) remain abreast of current issues in service delivery, for example, infection control, occupational health and safety;
 - b) are aware of issues relevant to non-English speaking background people, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, rurally isolated people, and financially disadvantaged people;
 - c) are trained in dealing with people with dementia, memory loss and similar disorders; and
 - d) are aware of their responsibilities in regard to client rights.
- Where volunteers are active in service delivery, to receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should be able to show that training is available to volunteers which is appropriate to the tasks they undertake.

Objective 4: CO-ORDINATED, PLANNED AND RELIABLE SERVICE DELIVERY

To ensure that each consumer receives coordinated services that are planned reliable and meet his or her specific ongoing needs.

- 4.1 Consumer outcome:** Each consumer receives ongoing assessment (formal and informal) that takes all support needs into account.
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How does your agency ensure that it regularly monitors consumer needs? How often does your agency conduct formal reviews of clients and how is the time for formal review determined?

- The agency's policy in regard to the frequency of formal reassessment should be outlined, together with an explanation of why this reassessment interval is deemed appropriate.
- A description of the comprehensiveness of the reassessment process should also be provided.
- The agency should demonstrate that the interval between reassessments is appropriate to the client group and that a substantial proportion, if not all clients are reassessed within the determined period. Where the agency cannot demonstrate that this is done a "not met" rating would be appropriate.
- To receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should also demonstrate that it takes advantage of its contact with clients to informally reassess or monitor their needs.
- The agency should demonstrate that any information it gains through either formal or informal reassessment is used to ensure that the services it provides to consumers continue to be appropriate. As such, where an agency largely relies on informal reviews if it cannot demonstrate that it has a determined process for dealing with this information appropriately it should receive a "not met" rating.
- Changing care needs of consumers should be reflected in amended service delivery or care plans.
- The management of client information should be such that staff and, where appropriate, volunteers are kept informed of changes to client service delivery or care plans.

**Objective 4: CO-ORDINATED, PLANNED AND RELIABLE
SERVICE DELIVERY**

To ensure that each consumer receives coordinated services that are planned reliable and meet his or her specific ongoing needs.

- 4.2 Consumer Outcome:** Each consumer has a service delivery/care plan which is tailored to individual need and outlines the service he or she can expect to receive.
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How do you inform clients and staff of the individually tailored service or care which clients should receive?

- The agency should demonstrate that the services delivered to consumers are determined by the consumer's needs and preferences.
- To receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should demonstrate that these service delivery or care plans have been thoroughly discussed with consumers before implementation, and that consumers have been given options, within service constraints, from which to choose.
- The agency has met this standard to a minimum level if both consumers and staff are kept informed of changes to service delivery or care plans.

Additional question overleaf....

Objective 4: CO-ORDINATED, PLANNED AND RELIABLE SERVICE DELIVERY

To ensure that each consumer receives coordinated services that are planned reliable and meet his or her specific ongoing needs.

- 4.2 Consumer outcome:** Each consumer has a service delivery/care plan which is tailored to individual need and outlines the service he or she can expect to receive.
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What proportion of your consumers have an individually tailored and negotiated plan?

- To be ranked as fully meeting this outcome, all clients should have a service delivery or care plan which details, in writing, the services which he or she will receive, when they will be provided and for how long, and the fees, if any, which apply.
- The calculation of the proportion of clients who have an individually tailored and negotiated plan should indicate that the agency can confidently account for those clients in their care who have not received such a plan. Hence the actual calculation of the proportion is not so important as their ability to identify the clients who have not received a care plan.
- A "not met" rating against this standard would be appropriate if any client did not have a care plan and there is no valid reason for why this did not occur. A "met" rating against this standard would be appropriate if all clients had a care plan, or if the agency can give reasonable account for those clients who did not have one. Another factor which should be considered in rating the agency against the standard is whether client care plans are prepared in a timely manner.
- In assessing an agency against this standard it is necessary to consider the intent of the program. For some programs a comprehensive care plan may be inappropriate. In addition, for some services which are delivered on a one-off or crisis basis, a written agreement may not be practical. In these circumstances, verbal agreements may be sufficient, but these should also provide information to consumers about the service which they can expect to receive, and the basis upon which it is delivered.
- Where the agencies does not have a service delivery or care plan tailored to individual need they should be able to demonstrate why it is reasonable that this has not been done. For instance, care plans may not have been drawn up for clients serviced in a crisis situation, or another agency may be case managing the client.

Objective 4: CO-ORDINATED, PLANNED AND RELIABLE SERVICE DELIVERY

To ensure that each consumer receives coordinated services that are planned reliable and meet his or her specific ongoing needs.

4.3 Consumer outcome: Consumers cultural needs are addressed.

How does your agency ensure that consumer's cultural needs are taken into account when providing care/support?

- In relation to consumer outcome 4.2, the agency should have provided evidence that individual preferences and needs of consumers have been considered, and where possible, met. The agency should be able to show that this information is collected at the time the consumer begins receiving services from the agency.
- To meet this standard to a minimal level the agency should provide evidence that it has specific processes and practices in place which will ensure that consumers' cultural, linguistic and religious needs are addressed. For example, information available in languages other than English, use of interpreters, and staff training in cultural issues.
- To meet this standard to a minimal level the agency should have procedures in place for indicating to staff what the individual client's needs and preferences are in relation to their cultural background. For instance, this may be indicated in the client's care plan.
- Evidence that the agency's services are structured in such a way as to promote access to special needs groups, provided in consumer outcome 1.3, should also be considered in ranking the agency against this standard.
- To receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should be able to demonstrate that it actively encourages the participation of consumers of non-English speaking backgrounds or who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. This may involve such measures as promoting the voice of these consumers in how their services are delivered or promoted.
- If the agency does not provide services tailored to certain cultural groups it should indicate why this is not done or how it coordinates with other agencies that target these groups.

Objective 4: CO-ORDINATED, PLANNED AND RELIABLE SERVICE DELIVERY

To ensure that each consumer receives coordinated services that are planned reliable and meet his or her specific ongoing needs.

- 4.4 Consumer Outcome:** The needs of consumers with dementia, memory loss and related disorders are addressed.
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How does your agency ensure that the special needs of consumers with dementia, memory loss and similar disorders and their carers are taken into account?

- People with dementia and those with related disorders have additional needs which agencies should take into account. At a minimal level this should be reflected in the development of care plans which recognise the individual circumstances and background of this person. Where appropriate, physical environments should be conducive to maintaining independence and quality of life and services should be appropriately modified to take into account their spiritual, emotional, social, cultural, physical, intellectual and psychological needs.
- To receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should be able to show that it accommodates for people of non-English speaking backgrounds who have dementia, for example by using interpreters with a understanding of this group.
- To meet this standards to a minimal level agencies with clients with dementia and similar disorders should have protocols in place to identify an appropriate person to act as an advocate for the person with dementia. Where possible, this person should be the client's choice and the client's consent to share information with this person should be obtained. This key person should be consulted in the development of care plans and kept informed of service provision arrangements and changes that occur to this.
- To receive a "met" rating against this standard staff and, where appropriate, volunteers should receive training and information about the additional needs of this group of consumers. Staff should also be aware of the protocols the agency follows to refer people suspected of having dementia for appropriate assessment.
- To receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should be able to show that it responds to the additional stress placed on carers of people with dementia and similar disorders. It should be able to show that carers of those with dementia or similar illness are informed of the additional care options available to them, including respite and local support groups. In addition, the needs of carers should be taken into account when planning services for the person with dementia.

Objective 4: CO-ORDINATED, PLANNED AND RELIABLE SERVICE DELIVERY

To ensure that each consumer receives coordinated services that are planned reliable and meet his or her specific ongoing needs.

- 4.5 Consumer outcome:** Consumers receive services which include appropriate coordination and referral processes.
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Describe the referral process used by your agency, including factors taken into consideration, and any follow up action taken by your agency.

- The agency should show that consumers are involved and informed of the referral process. Client preferences and care needs should be the principle factors taken into consideration when making referrals.
- Follow up for both clients referred to the agency and clients referred on to other agencies should occur. Agencies that follow up on clients referred to it by other agencies, but do not follow up on its own clients when they are referred to another service should receive a "partly met" rating.
- To receive a "met" rating on this standard, the agency should be able to demonstrate that assessment or reassessment of its consumers occurs in such a way that it is able to identify client need and eligibility for HACC services even where the agency itself may not be able to assist. Where another body, with whom the agency is cooperating performs this task the standard should be considered as met.
- To receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should be able to indicate that it follows up on referrals made to it by other agencies in a timely manner.

Additional question overleaf....

Objective 4: CO-ORDINATED, PLANNED AND RELIABLE SERVICE DELIVERY

To ensure that each consumer receives coordinated services that are planned reliable and meet his or her specific ongoing needs.

- 4.5 Consumer outcome:** Consumers receive services which include appropriate coordination and referral processes (cont'd).
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How does your agency cooperate with other agencies in order to meet consumer needs? Where appropriate - How is case coordination determined in your service system - how can you show that this happens?

- The agency should demonstrate that it works with other agencies to coordinate service delivery at the regional level by participation in activities such as regional HACC coordination meetings.
- Coordination of service delivery at the individual level could be demonstrated by:
 - a) comprehensive assessments, as demonstrated against outcome 1.1, which take into account all support needs resulting in referrals to other agencies where appropriate;
 - b) maintenance of a comprehensive list of other agencies in the area, which is regularly updated in regard to coordinators' names and service activities, to ensure the appropriateness of referrals made;
 - c) demonstration of a cooperative approach to assessment by utilising assessments made by other agencies, or by carrying out joint assessments with other agencies, in order to reduce the burden on potential consumers; and
 - d) demonstration that the agency takes steps where multiple agencies are involved to identify the primary service provider for each consumer, and adopts a case management role, in consultation with the other providers, where it identifies itself as the primary service provider, or ensures that another agency has taken on this role. The agency should also demonstrate that it does not give up such a role without consultation with the other service providers involved with that consumer.
- A "met" rating would be appropriate where the agency can demonstrate that it informs other agencies of the services which it provides, and that it takes steps to obtain information and feedback from other agencies

**Objective 5: PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCESS TO
 PERSONAL INFORMATION**

To ensure that each consumer's rights to privacy and confidentiality are respected, and he or she has access to personal information held by the agency.

- 5.1 Consumer outcome:** Consumers are informed of the privacy and confidentiality procedures and understand their rights in relation to these *procedures*.

How does your agency ensure that consumers are informed of your privacy and confidentiality procedures and how does it ensure that consumers understand their rights in relation to these procedures?

- At a minimum, the agency should demonstrate that it provides information about privacy and confidentiality procedures in writing to consumers, and that it explains these procedures to consumers at the time of their commencement with the service.
- Where standard written information is not appropriate to the consumer the agency should be able to demonstrate that it makes provision to inform these consumers about privacy and confidentiality procedures. This should include taking into account the needs of those with communication difficulties, including those from a non-English speaking background.
- To receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should demonstrate that it is proactive in periodically reminding all consumers of these procedures.
- To receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should have given staff and volunteers sufficient training about clients rights in relation to privacy and confidentiality, and staff should understand how these client rights effect their work practices. For instance: through secure storage of personal and service delivery records, including data obtained during assessment; though limiting access to each consumer's records without hindering the consumer's own access to those records; through safe and secure destruction of consumer records in line with State/Territory requirements; and through conducting interviews with clients in private.

**Objective 5: PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCESS TO
 PERSONAL INFORMATION**

To ensure that each consumer's rights to privacy and confidentiality are respected, and he or she has access to personal information held by the agency.

5.2 Consumer outcome: Consumers have signed confidentiality release forms.

How does your agency ensure that the release of consumer information occurs with the consent of the consumer or their advocate or legal guardian?

- The agency should demonstrate that it has procedures in place to ensure that consumer's agreement is gained before information about that person is passed on to another agency or person.
- To be ranked as "met", the agency should have obtained written consent (for example, by having clients sign a confidentiality release form) or, if more appropriate, the agency should have obtained verbal consent at the time a referral or other exchange of information is being considered.
- Where an agency has consumers sign a confidentiality release form at the time of assessment the standard should only be rated as "partly met" if the agency can not also show that consumers are informed of who information will be released to on the basis of this form.
- Where written or verbal consent was not obtained there should be a reasonable explanation for why this was not done prior to information release.

**Objective 5: PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCESS TO
 PERSONAL INFORMATION**

To ensure that each consumer's rights to privacy and confidentiality are respected, and he or she has access to personal information held by the agency.

5.3 Consumer outcome: Consumers are able to gain access to their personal information.

Does your agency enable consumers to access their personal information upon request?

- Where the agency holds client records it should demonstrate that it has a policy on granting access to this personal information by consumers, and that consumers are clearly advised of this. An agency that does not do both of these things should be rated as "not met" against this standard.
- To be rated as "met" against this standard consumers should be informed of the types of personal records kept by the agency and of the legal responsibility of the agency to safeguard this information but allow the consumer or the consumer's representative access to it when desired.
- The agency should demonstrate that it has procedures in place to determine whether a person is an appropriately authorised representative of a consumer and should be granted access to that consumer's records.

Objective 6: COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES

To ensure that each consumer has access to fair and equitable procedures for dealing with complaints.

6.1 Consumer outcome: Consumers are aware of the complaints process.

How does your agency ensure that consumers are aware of the complaints process?

- To meet this standard at a minimal level the agency should demonstrate that it provides information about the complaints process to consumers, and that it explains these procedures to consumers at the time of their commencement with the service. Such information should include details of who to contact in the agency and what position of authority they hold.
- To receive a "fully met" rating against this standard the agency should also demonstrate that it takes some action to periodically remind all consumers of these procedures.
- To receive a "fully met" rating against this standard consumers of the agency should be made aware of how they can express their informal concerns to the agency about the service they received.
- To receive a "fully met" rating against this standard the agency should make provision to allow special needs groups to be aware of the complaints process. These include people from non-English speaking backgrounds and Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.

Objective 6: COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES

To ensure that each consumer has access to fair and equitable procedures for dealing with complaints.

- 6.2 Consumer outcome:** Each consumer's complaint about a service, or access to a service is dealt with fairly, promptly, confidentially and without retribution.
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How can your agency demonstrate that consumer complaints are dealt with fairly promptly confidentially and without retribution?

- To meet this standard at a minimal level the agency should demonstrate that it has a complaints process, which is clearly conveyed to consumers (evidenced in consumer outcome 6.1), which is designed to be fair and enable a timely response, eg the person affected by a decision should be informed of all facts against him or her and given an opportunity to put his or her case, the decision maker should act fairly and without bias, and the decision making process should occur within a specified time frame.
- The agency should explain its processes for ensuring confidentiality and non-discriminatory treatment of consumers who make a complaint.
- To receive a "fully met" rating against this standard the agency should be able to outline the process by which 'informal complaints' or concerns are dealt with, again demonstrating that it is fair, timely, treated confidentially, and does not result in discriminatory treatment of the client involved.
- To receive a "fully met" rating against this standard staff should be aware of both the formal and informal procedures for dealing with consumer complaints and should received training in resolving complaints and disputes.

Objective 6: COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES

To ensure that each consumer has access to fair and equitable procedures for dealing with complaints.

6.3 Consumer outcome: Services are modified as a result of 'upheld' complaints.

How can your agency demonstrate that services have been modified in response to upheld complaints? Please give examples.

- To meet this standard at a minimal level, where an agency has received formal complaints and upheld them, it should demonstrate that these were handled in a timely manner and that the outcome of these complaints was fair to consumers.
- To receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should have sought feedback from the client or advocate about the procedures followed in resolving the complaint and consider whether there is any need to review or amend the procedures.
- The agency should indicate that relevant consumers are consulted during and after the modification of service in response to the complaint.
- To avoid a "not met" rating against this standard the agency should be able to demonstrate that when a complaint was upheld it has reviewed its access and/or service delivery practices with a view to making improvements in the service and avoiding any future similar complaints.
- To receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should also demonstrate that any 'informal complaints' or concerns are effectively and appropriately resolved, and that this is done in a timely manner.

Objective 6: COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES

To ensure that each consumer has access to fair and equitable procedures for dealing with complaints.

- 6.4 Consumer outcome:** Each consumer receives assistance, if requested, to help with the resolution of a conflict about a service that arises between the frail elderly person or younger person with a disability and his/her carer.
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How can your agency demonstrate that it offers assistance to help with the conflict about a service between a client and his/her primary carer?

- While some agencies may not have formal policies relating to this issue, to avoid a "not met" rating against this standard the agency should be able to demonstrate that it has a clear and appropriate way of dealing with such situations. In general:
 - a) agencies should encourage early, open discussion of any potential difficulties;
 - b) the use of advocates should also be encouraged, preferably at an early stage. The agency should provide advice to this effect; and
 - c) referrals to advocacy or counselling services should be arranged if requested.
- To receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should indicate that it makes use of specific protocols concerning abuse or conflict situations.
- To receive a "met" rating against this standard the agency should be able to demonstrate that it is aware of the special needs of some groups in relation to this standard, for example, consumers with dementia and their carers.

Objective 7: ADVOCACY

To ensure that each consumer has access to an advocate of his or her choice.

- 7.1 **Consumer outcome:** Each consumer has access to an advocate of his/her choice.
- 7.2 **Consumer outcome:** Consumers know of their right to use an advocate.
- 7.3 **Consumer outcome:** Consumers know about advocacy services - where they are and how to use them.
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How does your agency ensure that consumers know of their rights to use an advocate and have access to an advocate of their choice?

- To meet this standard at a minimal level the agency should demonstrate that it provides information to consumers at the time service delivery begins about what an advocate is, how to obtain one, and their right to use one.
- To be ranked as "met" against this standard the agency should also demonstrate that it takes some action periodically to remind all consumers about advocacy, and in particular, takes steps to convey this information to consumers who may appear to have a particular need for it.
- If the agency is one which provides advocacy services for consumers, it should ensure that clients are aware of their rights in relation to these services, including the option to obtain an advocate from another service if desired.
- To avoid a "not met" rating against this standard the agency should be aware of the types of service provided by advocacy groups in their area.
- To be ranked as "met" against this standard the agency should have established links with advocacy groups in their area and staff should similarly be aware of these services. Inviting advocacy agencies to speak to staff and consumers may be one demonstration of establishing such links.

Objective 7: ADVOCACY

To ensure that each consumer has access to an advocate of his or her choice.

7.4 Consumer outcome: The agency involves advocates in respect to representing the interests of the consumer.

- To avoid a "not met" rating against this standard the agency should demonstrate that it has policies and procedures in place to encourage the use of an advocate where that is the wish of the consumer.
- The agency should demonstrate that it does, in fact, include advocates in representing the interests of consumers. Evidence provided in relation to outcomes 7.1-7.3 that consumers who appear to have a need for an advocate are provided with information about advocacy, is relevant in this regard.
- To be ranked as "met" against this standard the agency should have taken steps to inform and train staff on the involvement of advocates.