



Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS)

WHAT IS SIRS?

The Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS) is a system for recording, reporting & managing incidents occurring in the provision of care that cause, or could have caused harm to an aged care consumer. It was established in residential aged care in mid-2021 as a response to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. SIRS was extended to in-home community aged care in December 2022.

WHAT IS AN INCIDENT IN SIRS?

An incident is anything that happened or should have happened but didn't that:

- occurs in connection with providing care and services to a consumer
- has, or could reasonably be expected to have caused (e.g. a near miss) harm to a consumer or another person.

WHAT TYPES OF INCIDENTS MUST BE REPORTED UNDER SIRS?

There are eight types of incidents that aged care providers must report to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission under SIRS:

- unreasonable use of force with a consumer
- unlawful sexual contact or inappropriate sexual conduct including sexual assaults, acts of indecency, taking or sharing of intimate images of the client, unnecessary touching of the genital, anal or breast areas, sexual grooming
- neglect of a consumer, the failure to provide the necessities of life, like food, water, shelter, adequate warmth
- psychological or emotional abuse causing distress to the consumer
- unexpected death when a worker is present and caring for the consumer
- stealing or financial coercion or threats by a staff member

- inappropriate use of physical or chemical restraints
- unexplained absence from care (e.g. a client goes missing from a day activity centre or while out in the community with a volunteer or worker).

HOW AND WHEN ARE SERIOUS INCIDENT REPORTED UNDER SIRS?

There are two levels of priority in SIRS reporting:

- Priority 1 incidents must be reported to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (ACQ&SC) within 24 hours of the aged care provider learning of the incident. Priority 1 incidents are often also reported to the Police
- Priority 2 incidents must be reported to the ACQ&SC within 30 days.

WHAT IS A PRIORITY 1 INCIDENT?

Priority 1 incidents that must be reported within 24 hours include:

- all incidents involving unlawful sexual contact or inappropriate sexual conduct
- any physical or psychological injury or discomfort where the consumers needs to see a doctor, nurse, allied health professional (e.g. a physiotherapist, counsellor) or attend a hospital
- an unexpected death
- unexplained absence from care
- any incident where there are reasonable grounds

for reporting it to the Police (e.g. physical or sexual assault, serious crime like theft or fraud)

- where the provider is unsure about the impact of the incident on the consumer (e.g. the provider thinks the consumer may need medical treatment but the consumer doesn't agree to it).

WHAT SHOULD A VOLUNTEER OR WORKER DO WHEN THERE IS A SERIOUS INCIDENT?

The most important thing is to be honest, even if it means admitting making a mistake. A volunteer or worker should also report near misses. A near miss is something the worker did or didn't do that almost and could have gone wrong but luckily didn't. A near miss can act as a warning to fix something to prevent the incident happening in the future.

When there is a serious incident or near miss, the volunteer or support worker should:

- immediately report the incident or near miss to their supervisor or, if out-of-hours, to the management person on duty
- record:
 - a description of the incident (what happened) and the harm it caused or could have caused to the consumer
 - the date, time and place of the incident
 - the names and contact details of anybody directly involved including any witnesses.

