



Australian Government

Department of Health, Disability and Ageing



Volunteering in aged care mandatory training

Consultation discussion paper

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Executive summary

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (the department) propose a Mandatory Training Manual (the manual) for volunteers in aged care. The initiative supports legal requirements under the new *Aged Care Act 2024* (the new Act).

This training does **not** apply to Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS) volunteers. ACVVS training requirements are outlined in the National Guidelines on the [ACVVS Webpage](#)

Why this training matters

- New legislation means volunteers must be appropriately trained
- Volunteers need to be aware of, and follow responsibilities and obligations under the new regulatory model
- Training helps volunteers support older people safely, respectfully, and inclusively.

Key proposal elements

- The manual will outline minimum training requirements for all aged care volunteers
- Training is mandatory for volunteers working with providers in registration categories 4, 5, and 6
- Training is highly recommended for all volunteers.

Training goals

- ensure volunteers are appropriately trained to confidently support older people in a safe and respectful manner
- promote consistent training across the sector
- make training accessible and inclusive.

Training module topics

- Code of Conduct for Aged Care (the Code)
- Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS)
- complaints and feedback
- elder abuse awareness and advocacy pathways
- understanding diversity and inclusion.

Who the training is for

- all volunteers engaged with registered aged care providers in all funded settings.

Next step

- A consultation survey is open to gather feedback from interested parties.



1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this paper

This paper introduces the proposed manual and seeks feedback from volunteers, volunteer managers, providers who engage volunteers, and any other interested stakeholders.

The training aims to establish clear, minimum training requirements to ensure volunteers are well prepared for their role in supporting older people in aged care.

The training supports compliance with:

- the new Act
- the Aged Care Quality Standards (Quality Standards).

We invite interested parties to provide feedback via a survey. Submissions may also be emailed to agedcarevolunteer@health.gov.au.

Alternatively, you may call My Aged Care on 1800 319 209 to provide your views over the phone.

Submissions will be open for eight weeks.





2. Context for consultation

2.1 Background

Prior to the introduction of the new Act, commencing 1 November 2025, there are no mandatory training requirements for volunteers in aged care.

Until this date, providers **must** continue to meet the training obligation under the Quality Standards.

Under the new Act, aged care worker (including volunteer) training will be legislated as a condition of registration for providers in registration categories 4, 5 and 6.

The Quality Standards include a dedicated outcome to support effective human resource management (outcome 2.9), which emphasises the importance of providing aged care workers (including volunteers) with suitable training, supervision and support.

Providers in registration categories 4, 5 and 6 can demonstrate how they meet this requirement by providing accessible training programs and resources to support volunteers to undertake their role safely and confidently.

Although providers registered in categories 1, 2 and 3 are not subject to audits against the strengthened Quality Standards, it is still expected that they will deliver the same quality standards for care and support.

Therefore, it is **highly recommended** all volunteers undertake the proposed training, regardless of the provider's registration category.

Training ensures volunteers:

- provide person-centred and rights-based support
- are aware of safety protocols and compliance requirements to keep older people in a safe environment, free from mistreatment and harm
- have the confidence to undertake the volunteer role
- respect and support older people from diverse backgrounds and life experiences.



The proposed training is based on:

- **Royal Commission Recommendation 44.b:** Volunteers should receive appropriate training.
- **The new Act:** Training is a legal requirement for all aged care workers, including volunteers.
- **Quality Standards** Outcome 2.9: Providers must ensure volunteers are trained and supported.
- **Statement of Rights:** Older people have the right to care from qualified and skilled workers.

Training helps volunteers understand safety protocols, legal responsibilities, and meet the unique needs and preferences of older people.

3. Proposed training details

3.1 Aims and objectives

The **manual** will outline minimum training requirements for all aged care volunteers to:

- ensure older people are cared for in safe environments
- equip volunteers with the skills and confidence needed for their roles
- promote respect for diversity and inclusion
- support consistent training across the sector
- accommodate volunteers' individual learning needs and preferences
- support volunteer managers and providers in delivering training to volunteers.

The proposed manual builds upon the existing suite of best practice resources, training links and guidance handbooks currently available for volunteers and volunteer managers at [Volunteering in aged care | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care](#).



3.2 Details of the training manual

Training manual overview

The manual will guide and support volunteer managers and providers by outlining:

- training objectives and goals
- core components of each module
- support strategies for volunteers
- resource links.

Providers **must** maintain detailed records of volunteer training in accordance with regulatory requirements under legislation including dates, content, and attendance. This includes induction training, ongoing education, and any specialised modules relevant to the volunteer's role.

The mode of training offered should be adapted to suit the volunteer and be both accessible and inclusive. Some volunteers will prefer to complete online training, while others may prefer offline, printed copies of training materials and resources. Others may prefer in-person training or group sessions. Where possible, provide training in a mode that suits the volunteers' needs and preferences.

Some ideas to support volunteers include:

- allowing access to a computer or other device
- working through the learning materials together, either online or in written format
- providing the information in their preferred language
- creating a buddy system to help volunteers during the training
- giving clear instructions about what is expected
- being flexible and open to preferred modes of learning
- asking for feedback and adjusting accordingly, if necessary.





3.3 Who is the training for?

The training is mandatory for all volunteers engaged with a registered aged care provider in a funded aged care setting.

Additional role-specific training may be required for certain volunteers. For example, a kitchen volunteer would require training in safe food handling, whereas a volunteer driver may require training in safe driving practices. These additional requirements should be determined by the provider or volunteer manager, commensurate with the role the volunteer is undertaking.

For further information, and to access aged care volunteers and volunteer managers training, visit the Volunteering in Aged Care [webpage](#).

4. Training module suite

4.1 Overview

The department will provide a suite of five core training topics, available on the aged care volunteer webpage, free for all volunteers and volunteer managers.

Training module topics

- Code of Conduct for Aged Care (the Code)
- Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS)
- complaints and feedback
- elder abuse awareness and advocacy pathways (*under development*)
- understanding diversity and inclusion (*under development*).

The training will be supported by a suite of on-line and downloadable learning materials.

The self-paced modules will be available in a variety of modalities to allow for flexible learning:

- short online module
- short video (with subtitles)
- factsheets
- transcripts (to be available in languages other than English).

Each of the modules should take up to 15 minutes to complete. Volunteers are not required to undertake them all at once.

Continuous feedback mechanisms and improvements will take place, to ensure the contents of the training suite remain current and appropriate.



4.1 Code of Conduct for Aged Care

The Code of Conduct for Aged Care (the Code) is part of aged care reforms aimed at ensuring the safety and wellbeing of older people. It outlines how aged care providers, responsible persons and workers (including volunteers) must behave and treat people receiving aged care. Volunteers must always act in a respectful, kind and consistent manner, in alignment with the Code.

Core components

- What is the Code?
- What are some examples of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours?
- What are a volunteer's responsibilities?
- Where can volunteers find more information?

This module introduces volunteers to the Code and is intended for information only. It includes a short video, a fact sheet and a transcript. You can access the training on the [ACQSC's website](#).

4.2 Volunteers and the Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS)

The Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS) aims to reduce abuse and neglect of older people receiving government-funded aged care services.

Volunteers are not required to report incidents under SIRS. However, it is important that they are aware of what constitutes a serious incident. If one occurs, they should inform their volunteer manager, or another staff member, as soon as possible.

Core components

- defining SIRS
- recognising the eight reportable incident types under SIRS
- recognising an incident versus a near miss
- understanding incident management systems (IMS)
- understanding what to do if a volunteer becomes aware of an aged care incident.
- understanding ACQSC's role
- identifying where volunteers can find resources to support themselves and the older person.

To find out more about SIRS, and to access free training for volunteers, visit the [ACQSC's website](#).



4.3 Volunteers and complaints

The new Statement of Rights encourages older people to share their feedback, including making complaints if they feel their provider has not upheld their rights.

Older people may ask volunteers for information or advice about who to contact or where to find guidance on raising concerns or making complaints. To support them effectively, volunteers must understand and follow the aged care complaints process.

Core components

- older people's rights and responsibilities
- who to contact if an older person has a concern or complaint
- the ACQSC's role in complaints handling
- where volunteers can find resources to support themselves and the older person.

To find out more about the complaints and feedback process, and to access free training for volunteers and volunteer managers, visit the ACQSC's website.





Under development

The following modules are proposed and currently **under development**. They will be like the existing training provided by ACQSC, as described above.

4.4 Awareness of elder abuse and advocacy pathways

The Statement of Rights places the rights, dignity, and needs of older people at the centre of care. Equipping volunteers with knowledge about elder abuse and independent aged care advocacy pathways will help protect older people and create a safe and caring environment.

Core components

Understand the following:

- elder abuse and its meaning
- the five main forms of elder abuse, risk factors and warning signs
- reporting requirements for elder abuse
- how volunteers can help prevent elder abuse
- referral pathways for an older person experiencing elder abuse
- what constitutes advocacy in aged care
- aged care rights
- the National Aged Care Advocacy Program (NACAP) and the support it provides to older people
- information volunteers can provide about advocacy to an older person, if needed. understand where volunteers can find resources to support themselves and the older person.



4.5 Understanding diversity and inclusion

The new Act recognises some older people may have unique needs due to their backgrounds or life experiences.

Quality Standard 1.1 places a strong emphasis on recognising and responding to the **individual and unique needs and preferences**. Quality Standard 1.2 reinforces the need to uphold the rights of each older person in line with the Statement of Rights.

To ensure care is safe, respectful, inclusive, and person-centred, aged care services must be:

- safe and equitable
- culturally appropriate and trauma-aware
- accessible and responsive to individual preferences.

Core components

Understand the following:

- diversity and inclusion
- why respecting and meeting the unique needs and preferences of older people is important
- perceived or actual barriers that may prevent people from accessing needed aged care services
- communication methods volunteers can use to enhance the older person's care experience
- where volunteers can find resources to support themselves and the older person.

Where to next?

We invite you to have your say on this proposal.

Your feedback is essential. It will help shape volunteer training and policy development to ensure it meets the real needs of volunteers supporting older people in aged care.

Have your say—complete the survey today:

https://healthau.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4TLMq5mDyklrGqG



If you would like to provide additional comments, you can contact us at agedcarevolunteer@health.gov.au.