

Consumer and Carer Rights and Responsibilities

South Eastern Sydney Illawarra Health has in place a Consumer and Carer Rights and Responsibilities Charter which reflects our commitment to ensuring that those who use our services and their carers have: choice and control over their illness, access to information, privacy and confidentiality, quality services and complaint remedy.

Rights

Consumers have the right to:

- Health care that is delivered with courtesy and respect
- Know who is treating them
- Have their privacy and confidentiality respected
- The choice to be treated as a public or private patient and to have the difference explained prior to treatment where possible
- Access to an interpreter
- Have their spiritual and religious beliefs respected and to see a chaplain or pastoral carer in their faith
- Give consent to treatment. If a consumer is too sick to give consent a person close to them may be asked to do. If the consumer is not capable of making a decision, or needs assistance to do so, the parent/carer/guardian must be consulted
- Refuse the treatment offered
- Leave hospital or stop using a service at any time unless the treatment is required by law, eg some infectious diseases or mental health conditions
- Be involved in planning their care, treatment and discharge from hospital
- Receive information about their condition, treatment, risks and effects
- Ask questions, be given time to consider options, and ask for a second opinion
- View their medical records, have the content explained to them and apply for a copy of the record
- Have the role of family members in their care acknowledged
- Have the people of their choice with them
- Have the right to make a comment or complaint.

Carers have the right to be:

- Consulted and included in the care provided to a consumer including their discharge, if the consumer agrees. Approval does not apply to patients who are children or who are incapable of making a decision
- Informed about where to obtain support with their caring role
- Notified when the person they care for is being discharged from hospital.

Note: Carers of patients less than 16 years must always be consulted.

Responsibilities

When using health services provided by SESIH

consumers should:

- Give health workers as much information as possible about their health
- Ask questions about their health and the care and treatment they are receiving
- Be respectful and considerate to staff, other patients, clients, residents, consumers and carers
- Let health workers know if they are not going to follow the treatment prescribed and accept responsibility for this decision
- Keep appointments and let health workers know if they can't attend or are running late for an appointment.

When caring for someone who is using health services provided by SESIH, **carers should:**

- Let health staff know who is, or will be, providing care to the consumer/patient
- Inform health staff of any issues that may affect the ongoing care of the consumer and/or the caring relationship
- Be respectful and considerate to staff, other patients, consumers, residents and carers.

Privacy and confidentiality

Privacy and confidentiality will be maintained unless the consumer's right to privacy and confidentiality is affected by one of the following:

- If being told about reports or requests could place the consumer, staff or children at risk
- Where there is a risk that the consumer will harm themselves or attempt suicide
- When the law requires health staff to:
 - ▮ Report concerns about children who are at risk of harm, abuse or neglect to the Department of Community Services (DOCS)
 - ▮ Provide information about a child to DOCS to help with an investigation
 - ▮ Provide information (under subpoena) for use in legal action eg Family, Children's or Criminal Courts
- Where the patient/consumer/resident is not able to give a history of illness or consent to a procedure, such as in an emergency. In this case, health staff will need to talk to a family member, friend or carer to get information to allow them to provide the best care possible.

Who are consumers and carers? The term consumer refers to everyone who uses a SESIH service eg inpatients, outpatients, clients and residents. A carer can be a parent, guardian, spouse/partner, a child including those younger than 18 years, relative or friend.

More information

If you have a question about your rights and responsibilities, or that of someone you are caring for, speak to the nursing unit or service manager. Complaints can also be directed to the clinical practice improvement unit, which is independent of the hospital and can provide an objective and independent assessment of a complaint or patient care issue.

The SESIH Consumer and Carers' Rights and Responsibilities Charter can be downloaded from www.sesiah.health.nsw.gov.au