



Open Disclosure Framework

1. Introduction

Illawarra Diggers has adopted the Australian Open Disclosure Framework Principles and Processes and the Open Disclosure Framework and Guidance from the Australian Government Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

Open disclosure is the open discussion that an aged care provider has with consumers when something goes wrong that has harmed or had the potential to cause harm to a consumer. Open disclosure refers to the practice of communicating with a consumer when things go wrong, addressing any immediate needs or concerns and providing support, apologising and explaining the steps the provider has taken to prevent it happening again. Open disclosure may also involve the consumer's family, carers, and other support people and representatives when a consumer would like them to be involved.

Honest and timely disclosure to consumers is not only ethically, morally and professionally expected but also the first stage in promoting and fostering an environment and culture that, through honest discussion, encourages learning needed to improve care and services.

As such, it underpins the organisational culture and behaviours needed for continuous learning and service improvement in partnership with consumers and the building of trust in aged care services.

2. Open Disclosure and the Aged Care Quality Standards

Open disclosure is a requirement under the Aged Care Quality Standards. There are two specific references to open disclosure in the Standards:

- **Standard 6:** Feedback and Complaints, requires providers to use an open disclosure process when things go wrong.
- **Standard 8:** Organisational governance, where clinical care is provided, organisations are required to have a Clinical Governance Framework which includes open disclosure.

More generally, a number of the Standards are applicable when considering the value of open disclosure. For example, open disclosure is relevant to the requirement that providers treat consumers with dignity and respect (under **Standard 1**), to undertake ongoing assessment and planning for care and services in partnership with the consumer (under **Standard 2**), and to effectively manage high-impact or high-prevalence risks associated with the care of each consumer (under **Standard 3**).



3. Principles of Open Disclosure

1. Dignity and Respect

Open disclosure is underpinned by recognising each consumer's right to be treated with dignity and respect. This is essential to each person's sense of self and supports quality of life. It means communicating respectfully and recognising and respecting a consumer's individuality in all aspects of care and services. It means providing timely information in a form and language that is understood to help consumers to exercise control, make informed choices, and get the most from their care and services.

Related documents:

- Privacy and Dignity Policy
- Choice and Decision Making Policy

2. Privacy and Confidentiality

The consumer's privacy must be maintained consistent with privacy law and the consumer's wishes. A discussion with the consumer and/or their representative may determine what information they are comfortable to have shared – and with whom. This should be done before any personal information is shared about something that has gone wrong.

Related documents:

- Privacy and Dignity Policy
- Privacy – Personal and Health Information Policy
- Confidentiality Agreements

3. Transparency

Consumers need three key pieces of information communicated to them when harm or potential harm – a 'near miss' – has occurred as a result of their care and services. First, they need to know what happened and understand what immediate action has been taken to address the harm to themselves, second, they need to know what changes will be made to decrease the likelihood that such an event will happen again; and third, they need an apology.

Related documents:

- Organisational Governance Guide
- Clinical Governance Framework

4. Continuous Quality Improvement

Open disclosure is an important part of quality improvement. An organisation with a culture of learning and continuous improvement will place a high value on



monitoring, analysing and reporting information about the quality and safety of care and services. This means information gained through practising open disclosure is seen as an opportunity to identify where things have gone wrong, to understand why – through active inquiry - to understand any systemic causes and to take positive steps to prevent such an event from happening again

Related documents:

- Continuous Improvement Policy
- Feedback and Complaints Management Policy

4. Elements for Open Disclosure

1. Identify when things go wrong

Practising open disclosure begins with identifying when something has gone wrong that has harmed or had the potential to cause harm to a consumer.

2. Address immediate needs and provide support

Following identification that something has gone wrong take immediate action to address any actual or potential harm. This should include ensuring that adverse effects arising from what went wrong are ameliorated and future potential harm is prevented.

3. Acknowledge and apologise or express regret

Acknowledging and apologising or expressing regret when things go wrong is part of open disclosure. It is not about saying someone is at fault. Open disclosure may occur over the course of several discussions.

4. Find out and explain what happened

It is important for a provider to gather all necessary information to find out and understand what has happened if something has gone wrong. The required inquiry and analysis can be done in different ways, depending on the nature and scale of the harm.

5. Learn from the experience and make improvements

Open disclosure gives providers the opportunity to learn, to find and act on things they could improve about their current systems, practice or culture. Practising open disclosure will foster a culture of learning and quality and safety.

Related documents:

- Continuous Improvement Policy
- Feedback and Complaints Management Policy



5. Organisational Enablers

Open disclosure is an integral part of organisational governance. To enable effective open disclosure including clinical governance, an organisation needs to have strong clinical governance arrangements in place.

Related documents:

- Clinical Governance Framework
- Clinical Governance Framework Chart
- Organisational Chart

1. Leadership and Culture

Strong leadership is critical for effective use of open disclosure. Leaders are responsible for promoting a culture of safe, inclusive and quality care and services that is embedded in all aspects of organisational life and owned by everyone.

Related documents:

- Planning and Leadership Policy
- Organisational Chart

2. Consumer Partnerships

Partnerships with consumers are the foundation of effective open disclosure. Partnerships are based on mutual trust and respect within a culture that supports open communication and learning.

Related documents:

- Care Plans Policy
- Clinical Care Policy

3. Organisational Systems

A systematic approach is needed to ensure instances of harm or potential harm to consumers are consistently identified, and that open disclosure is practised appropriately. Providers need to ensure that policies, processes and procedures that support effective open disclosure are built into the way an organisation operates, particularly its governance, risk management and improvement systems.

Related documents:

- Continuous Improvement Plan
- Continuous Improvement Policy
- Feedback and Complaints Management Policy
- Feedback Register
- MANAD Electronic Management System



4. Monitoring and Reporting

Ongoing monitoring and review processes are important to understand the effectiveness of open disclosure, outcomes for consumers, and to identify any areas for improvement. Open disclosure is part of the organisation's broader focus on clinical quality and safety performance that needs to be monitored and reported regularly to the provider's governing body.

Related documents:

- Adverse Event Records
- Continuous Improvement Plan
- Internal Audit System
- Internal Reporting Systems
- Self-Assessments against the Aged Care Quality Standards

5. Effective Workforce

Effective open disclosure relies on the provider's workforce, and, where relevant, visiting practitioners.

Related documents:

- HR Policies and Procedures Manual
- Education and Staff Development Policy

6. Communication and Relationships

Communication underpins effective open disclosure. It is also linked to each of the other enablers. Good communication processes are needed to establish the culture of openness, partnership and learning that supports open disclosure.

Related documents:

- Vision, Mission and Values Statement
- Planning and Leadership Policy

6. When should open disclosure be used

Illawarra Diggers must practise open disclosure when something has gone wrong that has caused harm or had the potential to cause harm to a consumer. Harm may be physical, psychological or social resulting in loss of quality of life, impairment, suffering, injury, disability or death. This is the definition of harm used in this framework.