



RACGP
Royal Australian College
of General Practitioners

Standards for health services in Australian prisons

Patient feedback addendum

The *Standards for health services in Australian prisons* (2nd edition) (Prison Standards) encourage quality improvement and enable health services to identify opportunities to make changes that will improve patient safety and care.

This document has been written for health service providers at Australian prisons and is intended to accompany the Prison Standards and the RACGP *Patient feedback guide* (the Guide).

Why collect patient feedback?

Patient feedback focuses on the whole patient experience when receiving care from a health service. It is as important in a prison health service as it is in any other healthcare setting.

Patient feedback focusses on the whole patient experience. It cannot be considered to be the same as a complaints mechanism. (See [Difference between patient feedback and your complaints mechanism](#)).

Patient feedback can be used to:

- improve the quality of healthcare provided by your health service
- improve other aspects of your health service (eg access and communication)
- provide constructive feedback to your staff
- demonstrate that you value your patients' views and needs.

Collecting and responding to feedback means your patients are more likely to have better experiences

at your health service, which in turn leads to positive experiences and outcomes for them (ie they are more likely to follow the advice and treatment provided).

Patient feedback highlights the importance of effective health service delivery. Collecting and responding to feedback from patients who receive care at health services provides a sense of ownership for individuals in prison and a mechanism to contribute to the quality of healthcare they receive.

Patient feedback indicators in the Prison Standards

Patient feedback is addressed in Criterion QI1.2 of the Prison Standards.

Indicators

QI 1.2▶A Our health service provides opportunities for feedback from patients and other relevant parties in accordance with the RACGP's *Patient feedback guide*.

QI 1.2▶B Our health service analyses, considers, and responds to feedback.

QI 1.2▶C Our health service informs patients and other relevant parties about how we have responded to feedback and used feedback to improve quality.

How to meet the patient feedback requirements of the Prison Standards?

The explanatory notes of Criterion Q11.2 detail how a health service can meet this criterion.

The RACGP developed the *Patient feedback guide* principally for use in general practice. However, you can broadly apply the Patient feedback guide when collecting patient feedback by adopting a common-sense approach to its application in the prison setting.

This document provides information to contextualise some details in the *Patient feedback guide* for use in this setting. Adapting the Patient feedback guide for prison health services

To translate and implement the advice of the *Patient feedback guide* in prison health services, the following notes provide additional direction when used in this setting.

General notes for health services in prisons using the *Patient feedback guide*

- Where the Guide refers to general practitioners (GP), your health service can interchange this with 'a member of the clinical team'.
- Reference to 'home visits' can be considered as 'visits to living quarters'.
- The *Patient feedback guide* makes frequent reference to the 'communication and interpersonal skills of clinical and administrative staff'. Your health service could consider the role of non-health service staff who support the health service operation (eg custodial staff who accompany individuals to the health service), and whether feedback related to those staff is suitable.
- You could invite participation in patient feedback activities by advertising in your facility that individuals are welcome to provide feedback on the health service.

References in the Patient feedback guide to the following are not applicable for health services in prisons:

- phone and SMS contact
- cost of services
- online versions of a questionnaire (in regard to questionnaires being sent to patients to complete)

- benchmarking and commercially available patient feedback tools.

Methods for collecting patient feedback at your health service

As per Criterion Q11.2 of the Prison Standards, your health service must collect patient feedback using a method outlined in the Patient feedback guide. The primary methods of collecting feedback are questionnaires, focus groups or interviews. Refer to **Section 2** of the Patient feedback guide.

In the prison setting, methods that may be useful for feedback collection include:

- language specific focus groups
- distribution of translated questionnaires (and non-verbal resources where needed) to all individuals in prison (noting the importance of obtaining feedback from those who have not attended the health service recently, or at all, and why they have not)
- multilingual questions or surveys in the waiting room
- other patient feedback methods, as outlined in **Section 2** of the Patient feedback guide.

Questionnaires

If using a questionnaire to collect patient feedback, the *Patient feedback guide* states that 377 questionnaires is the ideal number of questionnaires to achieve statistically valid results on patient feedback data. While the RACGP maintains that a greater number of surveyed patients will provide more effective feedback for the health service, it also acknowledged that in some prison settings this may not be attainable.

In order for your health service to determine what number of patient surveys it needs within an accreditation cycle, you can access the **Raosoft Sample size calculator**. This tool allows your health service to select a sample size, based on your facility's population, and see what margin of error exists. Your health service should not accept a margin of error greater than 5%.

Appendix 1 includes a modified questionnaire suitable for health services in Australian prisons.

Focus groups

Focus groups can provide patients with an opportunity to speak about issues that are important to them.

The Guide suggests you limit focus groups to between five and ten participants in order to optimise participation and avoid receiving either too little or too much feedback. The Guide also states that focus groups must consist of patients who regularly see a particular clinical team member (Refer to [Section 4: Conducting focus groups](#))

While these factors are optimal for an effective focus group, the patient population size in a prison facility may not allow for groups this size, or for all attendees to be the patient of the same practitioner. Therefore, while a focus group should aim for the target requirements of the Guide, a group of fewer patients (eg three patients) will still provide the service with valuable feedback that it can use to improve care.

Because individuals in prison may be living together or in close proximity, there is a risk that information provided in a focus group is identifiable, which may lead to a breach in confidentiality. Staff facilitating a focus group must be aware of this risk when forming focus groups and determining the appropriate questions.

When conducting a focus group, it is essential that you have addressed all [six of the patient feedback themes](#), as per the [Patient feedback guide](#), as per the Patient feedback guide. You could adapt the questionnaire provided in [Appendix 1](#), which meets the accreditation requirements for your focus group.

Interviews

Your health service may choose to interview patients for feedback. Interviews may be particularly useful for patients who have limited literacy skills and can allow patients to express their experience in their own words. The Patient feedback guide provides advice on this method in [Section 5: Conducting interviews](#).

Identification of cultural and linguistic diversity

The identification of cultural and linguistic diversity through patient feedback is essential to enable effective care provision, especially given the cultural diversity inherent to the prison population.

Collecting information about a patient's cultural heritage will help your health service to provide the most appropriate care. The cultural background of a patient can be an important indicator of clinical risk factors and can help practitioners to provide relevant care. Asking for this demographic detail through your patient feedback process allows you to see whether particular concerns affect patients of some cultural backgrounds more than others within your health services' patient community.

Ensuring patients understand patient feedback

Your patients' right to understand any information provided to them by your health service extends to understanding patient feedback methods. Your health service has a professional obligation to communicate effectively and to understand your patient's concerns. When delivering information to and collecting feedback from a patient, consider the patient's level of health literacy and therefore their ability to understand the information and respond effectively.

Assessing the health literacy of patients and providing information based on that assessment can help to increase a patient's awareness and facilitate their understanding of patient feedback. For more information about health literacy and building a patient's health literacy, refer to [Criterion C1.3 – Informed patient decisions](#) in the Prison Standards.

Your health service needs to ensure that patient feedback resources (eg invitation to provide feedback and patient feedback questionnaire) are culturally appropriate and translated. This might be a questionnaire translated in the patient's preferred language or having an interpreter available or present during a focus group or interview.

You must only collect patient feedback responses if the patient has been informed of all aspects of the activity, including reason, duration, topics to be discussed, how confidentiality will be maintained, who will be present and possible compensation, and the patient has given their consent. Refer to ethical considerations in [Section 1](#) of the Patient feedback guide for more information.

You must advise patients who provide feedback to your health service that identifiable information will not be shared with the custodial service or any non-health service personnel (including custodial staff).

Ensuring a representative sample

Patients must be randomly selected in order to achieve a representative sample (refer to methods for ensuring you achieve a representative sample in [Section 1](#) of the *Patient feedback guide*).

To achieve a representative sample from your health service, consider:

- different age groups
- genders
- ethnicities
- the average length of time in prison.

Difference between patient feedback and your complaints mechanism

The application of patient feedback places emphasis on the broader patient experience of receiving health care at your health service. The patient feedback mechanism explores your patients' experience with the health service across six themes. This includes their experience communicating with health service staff, accessing an appointment, and receiving appropriate information from the clinician during the consultation. For more information, see the patient feedback themes and questions in [Section 1](#) of the Guide and [Appendix 1](#)).

While complaints might be a part of patient feedback, they are of no more importance to patient feedback than other aspects of the patient experience. While a patient might complain through your patient feedback method, the focus of the feedback mechanism should be much broader (see patient feedback themes and questions in [Section 1](#) of the *Patient feedback guide* and [Appendix 1](#) for an idea of how broad patient feedback can be).

Complaints resolution forms part of your health service's business operation systems and is

addressed in Indicator **C3.1 ► D Our health service has a complaints resolution process** in the Prison Standards. This is independent of patient feedback for quality improvement.

Appendix 1: The RACGP's patient feedback questionnaire for health services in Australian prisons

Using the questionnaire

The questionnaire provided in this appendix can be used by health services in Australian prisons to collect patient feedback, as required in Criterion Q1.2 of the *Standards for health services in Australian prisons* (2nd edition).

You must collect:

- feedback based on six themes (as outlined throughout the questionnaire below) that address different aspects of patients' experiences at your health service
- the demographics of the patients.

You are not required to use all of the questions suggested in the questionnaire, provided you meet the minimum requirement of three topics under each patient feedback theme.

Disclaimer

The information set out in this publication is current at the date of first publication and is intended for use as a guide of a general nature only and may or may not be relevant to particular patients or circumstances. Nor is this publication exhaustive of the subject matter. It is no substitute for individual inquiry. Compliance with any recommendations does not guarantee discharge of the duty of care owed to patients. The RACGP and its employees and agents have no liability (including for negligence) to any users of the information contained in this publication.

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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands and seas on which we work and live, and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and future.

ID-4825

Questionnaire

Access and availability

Q1. Making an appointment and waiting to see a clinician at your last visit

Statements	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent	N/A	Don't know
Please rate each statement							
It was easy to contact the health service for my needs							
Medical request forms are easy to read and fill out							
Once a medical request form was submitted, it didn't take long for me to see a clinician							
I received reminders of my appointment							
The waiting room was comfortable							
Do you have any comments you would like to make about making an appointment and waiting to see a clinician?							

Communication and interpersonal skills of administrative staff

Q2. Your experience with health service staff at your last visit

Statements	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent	N/A	Don't know
Please rate each statement							
I felt that staff were respectful, courteous and polite							
I felt staff made me feel comfortable during my visit							
Staff were considered my needs when making an appointment							
Do you have any comments you would like to make about your experience with reception staff at your last visit?							

Communication and interpersonal skills of clinical staff

Q3. Your experience of the interpersonal skills of the clinician at your last visit

Statements				Very good			Don't know
Please rate each statement	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	N/A		
I felt the clinician understood my personal circumstances							
I felt I had enough time to talk about the things that were important for me							
I felt that the clinician cared about me as a person							
I felt comfortable voicing my concerns							
I felt I was not rushed during my consultation							
I understood the purpose of tests and treatments							
Do you have any comments you would like to make about your experience with clinical staff at your last visit?							

Q4. Your experience of the way clinicians communicated with you at your last visit

Statements				Very good			Don't know
Please rate each statement	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	N/A		
I felt that the clinician had enough time to listen to what I had to say							
The clinician helped me understand my medical condition							
The clinician explained the purpose of tests and treatment							
I was involved in decisions							
I understood what to do when I left the health service							
My decision to seek alternative treatment was accepted							
My personal issues were adequately discussed							
I was guided on how to correctly take medicines							
I was allowed to have the final choice about tests							
I was allowed to have the final choice about treatments							
I felt the clinician really listened to what you had to say							

Q4. Your experience of the way clinicians communicated with you at your last visit

Do you prefer to use an interpreter when you visit the health service?	Yes	No
Was an interpreter offered during your visit to the health service?	Yes	No
Do you have any comments you would like to make about the way clinicians communicated with you at your last visit?		

Provision of information

Q5. Your experience of the information given to you by clinicians at your last visit

Statements							
Please rate each statement	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent	N/A	Don't know
I was given useful information about my condition							
I was given useful information about my treatment							
I was given information about my medicines							
I was given information about side effects of any treatment							
I was given information about how to stay healthy							
I was given information about how to prevent future health problems							
I was provided with useful written information							

Do you have any comments you would like to make about the information given to you by clinicians at your last visit?

Privacy and confidentiality

Q6. Your experience of privacy at your last visit

Statements				Very good	Excellent	N/A	Don't know
Please rate each statement	Poor	Fair	Good				
There was privacy in the waiting area							
There was privacy when I was being examined							
I was able to discuss personal issues that were sensitive							
I understand that medical records are kept private in the health service							
I was asked if it was ok for someone else to be present at the appointment							
Do you have any comments you would like to make about your experiences of privacy at your last visit?							

Continuity of care

Q7. Your experience of the way your clinician worked with other healthcare professionals at your last visit

Statements				Very good	Excellent	N/A	Don't know
Please rate each statement	Poor	Fair	Good				
Staff were aware of my medical history at the health service							
The clinician was aware of the advice I received from other health professionals							
There is a clear and easy process for me to request to see visiting services (eg physiotherapists, psychologists)							
Other health professionals have the right amount of my health information							
Do you have any comments you would like to make about the way your clinician worked with other healthcare professionals at your last visit?							

Ongoing experience at the health service

Q7. Thinking about all of your visits to the health service during the time you have been at the prison facility

Statements	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent	N/A	Don't know
Please rate each statement							
Quality of primary care provided to you							
Quality of mental health care provided to you							
Suitability of health service opening hours							
I am able to see a doctor when I need urgent care							
I am able to contact the health service							
My test results are provided to me in an easy to understand way							
I receive timely response to my feedback (including complaints)							
Do you have any comments you would like to make about your experience with the health service?							

Patient demographics

Are you?			Have you been to another health service in the last year? (eg in the community, at another prison facility)				
Male	Female	Non-binary	Yes	No			
Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent?				Did some talk to you about using an interpreter?			
Yes	Both	No	Prefer not to say	Yes	No	Don't know	
What is your age?			What languages do you commonly speak?				
15 – 24 years		65 years or over		English		Vietnamese	
25 – 44 years		Don't wish to say		Arabic		Hindi	
45 – 64 years				Farsi		Other	
				Tamil			

How long have you been at the prison facility?		How many times have you visited this health service over the past 12 months?	
0 – 3 months	1 – 2 years	Only this visit	11 or more
3 – 6 months	2 years or more	2 – 5	Not sure
6 months – 1 year	Not sure	6 – 10	
Was this visit for yourself or someone you are caring for?		What is the highest level of education you have reached?	
Self		Some primary school	
Someone else		Completed primary school	
		Some high school	
		Completed high school	
		Currently studying for a degree or diploma	
		Completed a trade or technical qualification	
		Completed a degree or diploma	
		Postgraduate degree	

Open ended question

If you could change one thing about this health service, what would you change?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Please place your completed questionnaire in the secure box at reception.