

## Help sheet no. 31

### Accessing health professionals

Health professionals can assist residents by providing specialist assessment, advice and therapy to meet individual needs. Their advice should be sought during initial assessment and through ongoing reviews. The key is to contact health professionals as a preventative measure, rather than when a situation becomes too difficult to improve.

Not all health professionals, however, have aged care or physical activity or food service expertise. Don't be afraid to ask specific questions of dietitians, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and others about their experience before deciding to engage them in your facility.

### Residents and HACCC services

Some HACCC services are accessible by Supported Residential Service (SRS) clients. These include:

- dietitians
- physiotherapists
- occupational therapists
- day activity programs
- other allied health staff.

People living in retirement villages and independent living units can also access these services.

### Engaging a dietitian

HACCC-funded dietitians are available to review eligible individual residents' dietary needs. However, publicly funded (as in HACCC) dietitians are not available to review the menus of private organisations.

HACCC-funded dietitians are usually located in community health centres, community rehabilitation centres or home-based allied health services. Residents in retirement villages or SRSs can also access services of dietitians (and other allied health professionals) at the local community health centre or community rehabilitation centre if they are able to attend the centre.

Commonwealth subsidised facilities need to access allied health and specialist staff privately.

### Effectively using allied health professional's time

It is important that residents have access to individual assessment and advice of an allied health professional when required. The allied health professional can provide detailed clinical assessment and the most appropriate advice for optimum care. This is particularly so for residents who often have complex health issues and needs.

However, allied health professionals are usually only available for a limited time (for example, on a sessional basis). Staff of the facility have the responsibility for providing daily care for all residents.

Allied health staff may be employed on staff of the facility or may be brought in on a sessional basis. Allied health staff can make a significant contribution to assessment, review and care planning for individual residents. They may also provide individual therapy or treatment.

To maximise the input and budget of allied health staff it's also possible to engage them to train staff in the facility.

For organisations that regularly access professionals, it is not always necessary to increase therapy hours to improve outcomes for residents, just use the same hours differently from time to time.

### Contacts

The following lists some relevant allied health associations and professional organisations.

- **Australian Physiotherapy Association – (Victorian)**

6/651 Victoria Street

Abbotsford 3067

Ph: (03) 9429 1799

Fax: (03) 9429 1844

[www.physiotherapy.asn.au](http://www.physiotherapy.asn.au)

- **Dietitians Association of Australia (Victoria)**

1/8 Phipps Close

Deakin, ACT 2600

Ph: (02) 6282 9798 or

Accredited Practising Dietitians  
hotline 1800 812 942

Email: [vic@daa.asn.au](mailto:vic@daa.asn.au)

[www.daa.asn.au](http://www.daa.asn.au)

- **Australian Association of Occupational Therapists (Victoria)**

PO Box 1286

Nth Fitzroy 3068

Ph: (03) 9481 6866

Fax: (03) 9481 6844

[www.ausot.com.au](http://www.ausot.com.au)

- **Speech Pathology Australia**

2nd floor

11-19 Bank Place

Melbourne 3000

Ph: (03) 9642 4899

Fax: (03) 9642 4922

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~sppathau>

- **Australasian Podiatry Association - (Victoria)**

Suite 26

456 St Kilda Road

Melbourne 3004

Ph: (03) 9866 5906

Fax: (03) 9866 2094

[www.podiatryvic.com.au](http://www.podiatryvic.com.au)