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 HACC services

Some HACC 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

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

HACC-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
  [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

- **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](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