



Service Delivery Framework

2023

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About this Framework

This Service Delivery Framework (the Framework) has been developed to support national consistency and the promotion of good practice in the delivery of the National Aged Care Advocacy Program (NACAP) across the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN).

The Framework is designed to provide a high level, national reflection of OPAN principles and processes, with the expectation that they will be customised by OPAN member organisations at the jurisdictional level in response to local needs.

It also provides OPAN members with a model for delivering a nationally consistent service which enables the consumer experience to be similar nationwide, whilst still responding to local issues and needs.

This revised Service Delivery Framework replaces the 2019 edition of the Framework as well as the National Elder Abuse Prevention and Advocacy Framework 2018.

This Service Delivery Framework is closely aligned with the National Aged Care Advocacy Framework (the NACAP Framework) which was developed in 2018 to guide the delivery of a high quality and nationally consistent NACAP.

The NACAP Framework outlines objectives, guiding principles, program activities, target groups and the mechanisms to ensure that program activities remain consistent, accessible, flexible, innovative and of a high quality.

The NACAP Framework suggests a nationally standardised, operationally efficient and highly connected NACAP can be achieved through a unified approach to how NACAP services are:

- defined and described
- accessed and delivered
- measured and reported
- marketed and communicated
- engaged in quality improvement.

OPAN's Service Delivery Framework provides guidance on national consistency against these key points.



About OPAN

About OPAN

History

The National Aged Care Advocacy Program (NACAP) is funded by the Australian Government under the Aged Care Act (1997) (the Act).

OPAN is the primary grant recipient for the NACAP and subcontracts services to nine state and territory member organisations.

OPAN member organisations include:

Australian Capital Territory: ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Services (ADACAS)

New South Wales: Seniors Rights Service (SRS)

Northern Territory: Darwin Community Legal Service (DCLS)

Northern Territory Central: CatholicCareNT (Central Australia)

Queensland: Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia (ADA Australia)

South Australia: Aged Rights Advocacy Service (ARAS)

Tasmania: Advocacy Tasmania

Victoria: Elder Rights Advocacy (ERA)

Western Australia: Advocare



About OPAN (Continued)

OPAN was formed in March 2017, following the 2015 Department of Social Services *Review of Commonwealth aged care advocacy services* (the Review). Prior to the Review, the nine state and territory organisations, that now form OPAN had been delivering the National Aged Care Advocacy Program (NACAP) independently in their respective jurisdictions for over 20 years.

The Review highlighted opportunities to increase national consistency in aged care advocacy and recommended that a new aged care advocacy program should, wherever possible, seek to build on existing expertise and networks.

In response to the Review, the nine state and territory-based organisations originally delivering the NACAP came together in 2016 and entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU was developed with the intention of fostering greater coordination, relationship building and the sharing of organisational knowledge and expertise between the organisations and to provide a national voice for aged care advocacy. Collaboration between the nine state and territory organisations was further formalised in 2017, with each organisation agreeing to the establishment of a federation of organisations, OPAN.

OPAN was formed as a non-profit organisation limited by guarantee and Australia's peak body for aged care advocacy support. This move supported OPAN in successfully applying for the first national tender for the National Aged Care

Advocacy Program (2017 -2020). The provision of high quality and nationally consistent aged care advocacy services was a key feature of this tender and the associated workplan.

In 2021, the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety acknowledged the crucial function of aged care advocacy, positioning OPAN as a critical service provider to support older people as they age. The Australian Government adopted the Royal Commission's recommendation¹ to boost advocacy services by increasing the funding allocated to the NACAP in the 2021/22 federal Budget and inviting OPAN to be the sole tender for NACAP grant funding.

With a new influx of funding, OPAN and the nine member organisations entered a period of significant expansion and workforce growth. Between 2021 and 2023, NACAP expansion saw the aged care advocates workforce increase significantly and the introduction of new advocacy roles including the Financial Advocacy Officers and Advocate Community Network Development Officers. Today, OPAN's member organisations employ over 200 aged care advocates.

As OPAN grows, we remain committed to delivering a high quality and nationally consistent National Aged Care Advocacy Program.

1. Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (2021). Final Report: Care, Dignity and Respect. Recommendation 106. Retrieved from <https://agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/final-report>

About OPAN (Continued)

Governance

OPAN's governance structure supports a consultative approach to decision-making for OPAN initiatives, including national consistency measures. The OPAN Board of Directors comprises of up to one representative from each OPAN member organisation and features an independent chairperson to provide an unbiased perspective and advice to decision-making.

Three committees have been established to provide assistance to the Board of Directors in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities. These committees include the:

- OPAN Finance Audit and Risk Committee
- OPAN Governance and Performance Committee
- OPAN Data Governance Steering Committee

In addition to these committees, three advisory groups have been formed to ensure consultation and input into the development of NACAP projects. These groups include the:

- Advocacy, Operations, and Practice Advisory Group
- Policy and Systemic Advocacy Advisory Group
- Communications, Marketing, and Education Advisory Group

Representation on the committees and advisory groups varies and may include representatives from OPAN member organisations, the National Older Persons Reference Group (NOPRG), OPAN staff, and external parties, as needed.

The NOPRG was established in 2019 to ensure that OPAN hears directly from, and engages with, older people across Australia. This diverse group is made up of older people from across Australia. The functions of the NOPRG include:

- providing strategic advice, from a consumer, carer and community perspective, in relation to aged care policy, including systemic reforms and changes
- identifying issues and priorities that would improve the delivery of OPAN activities and aged care advocacy services
- participating in consultations facilitated by OPAN, by Government, or other relevant bodies
- bringing the views, issues, and experiences of those that are accessing aged care services or who are past or current carers of those accessing aged care
- engaging with their networks and communities to bring a broader perspective to discussions.

Vision

A society where older people are heard, informed and respected and where they enjoy and exercise their human rights.

Purpose

To facilitate an environment that promotes the human rights of older people and the ability for all older Australians to live well and be respected.

Guiding principles and code of conduct

OPAN has identified nine core principles that guide the delivery of all NACAP services. These principles also provide the framework for OPAN's Aged Care Advocates Code of Conduct which describes the values and behaviours expected of advocates delivering information and advocacy supports under the National Aged Care Advocacy Program (NACAP).

1. Rights based

Advocacy services are guided by relevant rights-based principles and legislation and aim to advance the human rights of older people, particularly those seeking and receiving aged care services, and those who are marginalised and most vulnerable.

This means Aged Care Advocates will:

- act with respect for people's rights to freedom of expression, self-determination, and decision-making in accordance with applicable laws and conventions
- promote and enhance the rights of older people seeking or receiving aged care services
- support older people to understand their aged care rights and raise and address concerns when it appears that these rights have been breached
- seek to balance the right to autonomy with the right to dignity of risk by providing information on available safeguards for preventing and responding to abuse and/or neglect.

2. Person centred and directed

The older person is always placed at the centre of the advocacy process, with advocates adopting a supported decision-making approach and acting at the direction of the older person requesting a service.

This means Aged Care Advocates will:

- support older people to make informed decisions and be involved in decision-making processes to the greatest extent possible, even when substitute decision-makers are involved
- refrain from making decisions on behalf of an older person
- ensure that the advocacy supports they provide align with the older person's expressed views and preferences
- be transparent about the limitations of advocacy support
- not impose their own views, values, and preferences upon the older person they are supporting
- act with respect for the privacy, dignity, and confidentiality of the older person, in line with any applicable laws.

Guiding principles and code of conduct (Continued)

3. Independent

Services are independent of aged care service provision and free from any real or perceived conflict of interest.

This means Aged Care Advocates will:

- disclose, and take reasonable steps to remove or manage any conflict of interest. This applies to any actual, reasonably perceived, or potential conflicts of interest that are either financial in nature, concern relationships with others, or involve personal beliefs or attitudes that influence the impartiality of supports provided
- not accept a gift, reward, or benefit that is intended to, or appears to be aimed at influencing decisions or behaviour.

4. Accessible and equitable

Advocacy services are accessible to all potential service users, at all stages of their aged care journey, with strategies in place to overcome barriers to access for those with diverse characteristics and life experiences.

This means Aged Care Advocates will:

- act in a way that treats older people with dignity and respect and values their diversity
- be proactive in removing the barriers preventing older people with diverse characteristics and life experiences from accessing and actively engaging in the advocacy process
- advocate for the rights of individuals to have their language and communication needs met through interpreters, translated materials, assistive devices, and alternate communication strategies.

5. Informed by best practice

Service delivery is guided by contemporary best practice approaches and is delivered by a knowledgeable, skilled, and professional advocacy workforce.

This means Aged Care Advocates will:

- conduct themselves in a professional and responsible manner and maintain clear professional boundaries
- provide high quality advocacy supports to older people in accordance with OPAN Core Service Delivery Processes and Practice Guidelines
- be committed to maintaining knowledge and skills by actively engaging in professional development opportunities.

6. Capacity building

Services embed a strong emphasis on proactive/preventative advocacy by strengthening the capacity of older people and their representatives to self-advocate.

This means Aged Care Advocates will:

- provide older people with information and resources to support self-advocacy
- recognise the existing skills of clients and support them to develop the confidence to advocate for themselves.

Guiding principles and code of conduct (Continued)

7. Partisan

Advocacy services are partisan, with advocates clearly positioned on the side of the older person, supporting them to raise and have their voice heard, and seek resolutions that align with their views and preferences.

This means Aged Care Advocates will:

- provide independent information on the legislative responsibilities of aged care providers, but not advocate on behalf of aged care providers
- not assume the position of a mediator.

8. Partnerships

Advocacy services maintain constructive, positive relationships with key stakeholders to allow for collaborative approaches to advancing and upholding the human rights of older people, whilst maintaining the independence of the NACAP.

This means Aged Care Advocates will:

- act with integrity, honesty, and transparency
- promote an environment that encourages respect and trust and engages with advocacy clients, carers, and other professionals, fairly, objectively, and in a courteous manner at all times
- with the consent of the older person, recognise carers, family members, family of choice, and other representatives as partners in care as well as partners in advocacy.

9. Continuous quality improvement

Advocacy services have strong governance and management systems that ensure services are designed for safety, effectiveness, and efficiency and to contribute to other quality assurance mechanisms within the aged care system through analysis of the systemic trends which emerge through individual advocacy work.

This means Aged Care Advocates will:

- actively seek feedback on the advocacy supports they have provided
- promote processes for making a complaint about advocacy supports.



NACAP services defined

NACAP services defined

OPAN is funded under the National Aged Care Advocacy Program to deliver a specific suite of services – information, individual advocacy, education and events. These services have clearly defined service offerings, scope and eligibility criteria.



Information and advocacy

Eligibility for information and advocacy

Individuals eligible to receive general NACAP information, individual advocacy include:

- people **receiving** Australian Government funded aged care services
- people **seeking** to receive Australian Government funded aged care services
- **families or representatives** of the above².

Information

OPAN defines information provision as an episode of activity where information is provided, specific to an individual's needs. The scope of information that can be provided under NACAP includes topics such as:

- understanding, accessing, and interacting with the aged care service system
- the rights and responsibilities of Commonwealth funded aged care recipients
- options and potential strategies for raising and addressing concerns about aged care services
- identifying, preventing and responding to the abuse of older persons
- aged care complaints processes
- advocacy supports available under the NACAP.

In many cases, the provision of information can strengthen the capacity of an individual and/or their representative to self-advocate and raise and resolve issues or concerns independently. OPAN has developed a **Self-advocacy toolkit** to equip older people with the skills, information and resources they need to understand their rights and speak up for better aged care.

Information can be provided in any format including face-to-face, on the phone, email or other methods. Information provision may also involve referral to other organisations more appropriately placed to support an individual.



2. with the consent of the older person, OPAN recognise carers, family members, family of choice, and other representatives as partners in care as well as partners in advocacy.

NACAP services defined (Continued)

Advocacy

Advocacy is defined as the process of supporting a person to:

- understand and exercise rights
- make informed decisions
- have their voice heard, and views and wishes considered.

In the context of the NACAP, advocacy support is provided to eligible individuals to assist in addressing specific issues related to government-funded aged care services. This may include providing advocacy support to individuals so they:

- can effectively interact with the aged care system
- better transition between aged care services
- are enabled and empowered to make informed decisions about the care they receive

- can exercise their right to choice in accessing and receiving aged care services
- have their aged care rights better understood, recognised and upheld
- have their aged care needs better met
- increase their capacity to self-advocate
- can resolve problems or complaints with aged care providers in relation to the aged care services they receive
- know their aged care rights and responsibilities
- are not subjected to abuse within the aged care system
- can address issues that impact their ability to live in their own homes, with the aim of preventing premature admission to aged care facilities and focussing on wellness and reablement.



NACAP services defined (Continued)

OPAN also employs Financial Advocacy Officers to provide specialist information and advocacy support related to aged care fees and charges.

Individual focused advocacy support may involve:

- taking the time to listen and understand the views and wishes of older people
- informing older people of their rights and responsibilities under the Charter of Aged Care Rights
- providing information to older people and their families/representatives to assist them to explore their options and make informed decisions
- assisting in clarifying advocacy goals and developing strategies for addressing an issue or concern
- providing information which might enhance an individual's capacity to self-advocate
- providing practical assistance such as help to write a letter, organise meetings with aged care providers and accompanying a person to meetings
- supporting individuals to speak up for their rights and prompting and reinforcing the expressed views and interests of a person
- connecting people with other organisations more appropriately placed to support an individual.

Advocacy does not involve case management, counselling or mediation.



NACAP services defined (Continued)



Education

An education session is defined as a proactive activity delivered to a group (more than one person) on a planned date, with the intent of increasing knowledge and understanding amongst the group.

OPAN is funded under the National Aged Care Advocacy Program to deliver education sessions addressing two key topics – Advocacy and Aged Care Rights and the Abuse of Older People.

Advocacy and aged care rights education sessions provide a range of information on topics related to advocacy and aged care including:

- the Charter of Aged Care Rights
- the role of advocacy in supporting consumers to access and interact with the aged care system
- how advocacy can support people who are unhappy with their aged care services.

Education sessions on the abuse of older people explore topics such as identifying and responding to abuse and strategies for preventing abuse.

OPAN members deliver these education sessions in their local jurisdictions.

In addition to these education sessions, OPAN delivers online, self-paced, NACAP education programs targeted at aged care workers and health professionals. These sessions include Talk to Us First, the Abuse of the Older Person: eLearning Program for Health and Aged Care Professionals and the Responding to and preventing sexual assault in Residential Aged Care: Facilitators course.

Eligibility for Education

Advocacy and aged care rights education sessions are targeted at people seeking and receiving aged care services in both the community and residential care settings, and their families, friends and representatives.

Education sessions on the abuse of older people have a broader target audience which includes people seeking and receiving aged care services in both the community and residential care settings, and their families, friends and representatives, aged care staff and volunteers and other health professionals.

NACAP services defined (Continued)



Events

An event is defined as an awareness raising, relationship building, or engagement activity delivered with the aim of developing community networks that will increase referrals for NACAP information, advocacy and education services. Events are typically delivered by the Network's Advocacy Community Network Development Officers.

Eligibility for Events

Events can be delivered in any non-aged care setting. The target audience for events include:

- general public
- community groups (Probus, Lions, Rotary)
- faith-based organisations
- community organisations and staff (non-aged care)
- private entities (pharmacists, hairdressers etc.)
- Local Government (libraries, community centre staff and customers etc.)
- organised local networks (non-aged care)
- Commonwealth government bodies (Primary Health Networks (PHNs), Services Australia staff).



NACAP services defined (Continued)



Systemic advocacy

OPAN defines systemic advocacy as influencing and working towards long-term change to legislation, policies, and practices impacting on the rights and interests of older people.

OPAN utilises its role as the peak body for individual aged care advocacy to inform systemic advocacy and to contribute to consultation opportunities relating to aged care reforms. OPAN's systemic advocacy

is informed by qualitative and quantitative data received from OPAN member organisations, engagement with the National Older Persons Reference Group, and various internal advisory groups. OPAN and the OPAN members participate and contribute to many external aged care advisory group meetings, forums, and conferences and are proactive in developing position statements and policy submissions. In many instances, OPAN's systemic advocacy will occur in collaboration with others key stakeholders.



Accessing NACAP services

Accessing NACAP services

NACAP services can be accessed via a range of avenues available at both the local and national levels. These avenues include phone, web forms, email, and connecting with NACAP services in the community.

OPAN practices a 'no wrong door' policy. This means that no matter where or how individuals contact OPAN, they will always be connected with the member organisation best placed to support them and will not have to continue to repeat their story as part of this process.

Phone

OPAN has a national free call number **1800 700 600**. This national number operates from 8:00am to 8:00pm Monday to Friday, and 10:00am to 4:00pm on Saturdays.

During standard business hours, calls to the national 1800 700 600 number are connected directly with local OPAN member organisations.

OPAN national contact centre solutions answer calls to the national number outside of standard member organisation business hours, during periods of increased demand and in circumstances where an OPAN member organisation is not available (i.e., state/territory public holidays).

OPAN member organisations may identify some individuals who could benefit from connecting with their local organisation via their direct phone number.

Web forms

The OPAN website features several online forms that can be completed by people seeking to receive information, advocacy support, or education. The forms, once submitted, will automatically be directed to the most appropriate organisation within OPAN or to the OPAN National Secretariat. In line with commitments made in the Core Service Delivery Process (refer to page 26), the relevant member organisation will make contact and complete an intake assessment for people seeking NACAP services within three business days. Member organisations also have their own websites, which may offer alternative web forms direct to the organisation for those seeking support.



Accessing NACAP services (Continued)

Connecting with NACAP in the community

OPAN expanded its community reach between 2021 and 2023, establishing multiple points of access throughout Australia, including in rural and remote locations. Currently OPAN has over 60 points of access. Whilst not all points of access have a physical drop-in site, they do ensure that the NACAP has an established and ongoing presence within more regional communities.

Additionally, OPAN was funded to introduce a new role - Advocacy Community Network Development (ACND) Officers. The ACND role is responsible for organising and delivering events in local communities with the aim of increasing awareness of the NACAP and ultimately connecting people with NACAP services.

The ACNDs specifically target communities outside the aged care sector that may not be aware of the NACAP, including diverse community groups.

Refer to the definition of 'Events' on page 16 for further information.

The increased points of access and introduction of the ACND positions mean there are more OPAN member representatives on the ground in regional and remote communities, delivering education, connecting with people in person, and linking people seeking support back to NACAP services.

Artist: Uncle Mick Adams



Accessing NACAP services (Continued)

Equity of access

The NACAP Framework outlines that advocacy services must be accessible to people living with dementia, a mental health condition or experiencing mental ill health, disability, cognitive decline, and those who identify as being from one or more of the following diversity groups³:

- people from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds
- people who live in rural or remote areas
- people who are financially or socially disadvantaged
- people who are veterans of the Australian Defence Force or an allied defence force including the spouse, widow or widower of a veteran
- people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless
- people who are care leavers (which includes Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants, and Stolen Generations)
- parents separated from their children by forced adoption or removal
- people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI).

OPAN has several strategies in place to support equity of access amongst these target groups. These strategies include:

- facilitating access to the following services when supporting people to engage over the phone or in person, at any stage of the advocacy process:
 - Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)
 - Aboriginal Interpreter Service (AIS)
 - Kimberley Interpreting Service (KIS)
 - National Relay Service.
- offering and providing access to specialist advocates including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocates, CALD advocates, LGBTI advocates, and Financial Advocacy Officers, where available
- facilitating supported decision-making throughout the advocacy process
- applying flexibility to the Core Service Delivery Process to ensure the diverse needs of individuals are met when seeking and receiving NACAP services (refer to page 26)
- providing advocacy support in settings and formats that are respectful of individual and community preferences
- ensuring the distribution of NACAP services across aged care planning regions and delivering planned outreach trips to rural and remote communities
- tailoring NACAP education content and delivery methods to meet the needs of specific groups
- networking, collaborating and maintaining good working relationships with relevant industry bodies, local community leaders and organisations supporting NACAP target groups.

3. Identified in the Aged Care Act 1997 as “Special Needs Groups”

Accessing NACAP services (Continued)

In addition to these strategies, OPAN has also developed a practice guideline on providing advocacy support to people with diverse characteristics and life experiences.

This practice guideline aims to support advocates to:

- provide nationally consistent rights based, culturally responsive and trauma informed advocacy support to older people with diverse characteristics and life experiences
- collect nationally consistent data on advocacy support provided to people with diverse characteristics and life experiences
- identify useful resources, training opportunities and referral pathways.

Networks and linkages

In line with the *NACAP Framework*, OPAN aims to build and maintain effective networks and linkages with relevant stakeholders at the local, state/territory, and national levels. These connections assist OPAN in maximising the reach and understanding of NACAP, establishing referral pathways and supporting service access.

Networks and linkages include, but are not limited to, the following stakeholders and services:

- My Aged Care contact centre and associated assessment organisations, including Aged Care Assessment Teams (ACATs) and Regional Assessment Services (RAS)
- Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
- approved providers of Commonwealth funded aged care services
- peak organisations representing aged care providers
- organisations representing aged care consumers including those from special needs groups, as defined under the Act
- the National Aged Care Alliance (NACA)
- organisations representing people with disability, including funded providers of the National Disability Advocacy Program
- relevant Australian Government funded programs (Care Finders, the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme, Financial Information Service/Aged Care Specialist Officers in Services Australia etc.)
- the broader community and health sectors, including PHNs, GPs, hospitals, and allied health professionals
- community legal, public advocacy, and guardianship services.



Accessing NACAP services (Continued)

OPAN has established formalised arrangements with some of the key stakeholders listed above.

OPAN has worked collaboratively with the Department of Health and Aged Care to establish the Agent role on the My Aged Care Service and Support Portal. As Agents, advocates can support consenting clients to engage with My Aged Care and access timely information about their progress within the My Aged Care system.

OPAN has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (the Commission). The MOU describes how the Commission, OPAN and OPAN's members

will work together both nationally and in jurisdictions to facilitate the resolution of concerns, issues and complaints about Australian Government funded aged care services. This MOU promotes engagement and information sharing wherever possible to support the Commission, OPAN, and its members in undertaking their respective functions. The Commission has established a system for prioritising calls from OPAN members within their contact centre. This supports OPAN to provide individuals with timely support to engage with and lodge complaints with the Commission. OPAN has also developed a practice guideline to support national consistency in advocacy engagement with the Commission.



NACAP service delivery

NACAP service delivery



Information and advocacy

OPAN has developed a core service delivery process to support the nationally consistent delivery of information and individual advocacy support under the NACAP.

The process should be adopted by any OPAN member organisation staff providing intake, information, or advocacy support, including:

- Aged Care Advocates (including intake and specialist advocates)
- Financial Advocacy Officers
- Specialist Intake Officers at the OPAN National Call Centre

OPAN member organisation staff may be responsible for delivering specific elements of the process, or the entire process from start to finish.

OPAN has developed practice guidelines to further refine national consistency in the delivery of information and advocacy support. OPAN's current suite of practice guidelines addresses the following topics:

- demand management
- consent to advocate
- engaging with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
- providing advocacy support to people with diverse characteristics and life experiences.

The development of new practice guidelines is ongoing with new topics planned for release each year.

All services should be delivered in line with the OPAN guiding principles and code of conduct (refer to page 8). NACAP services are free, confidential, independent and person centred and directed.



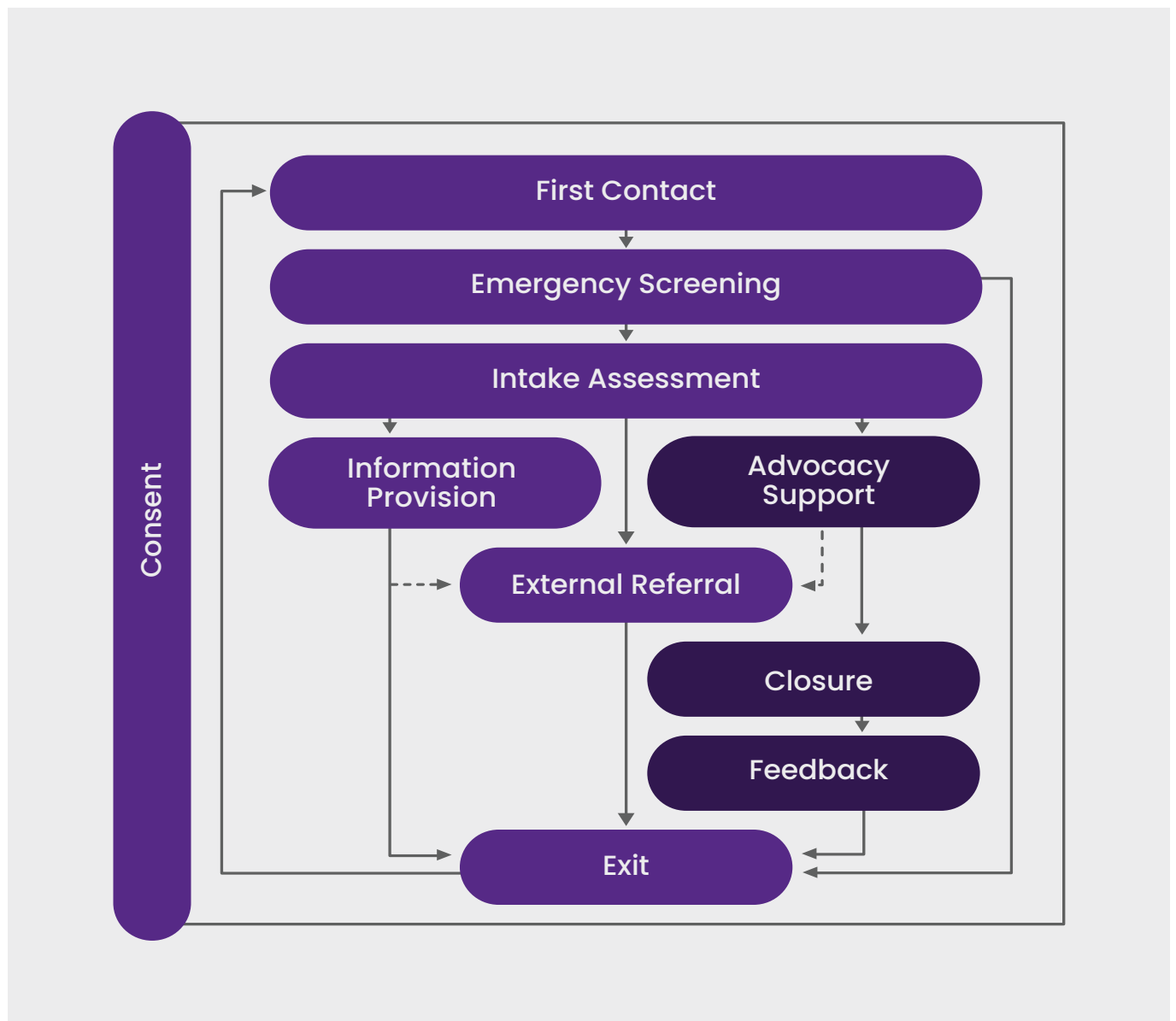
NACAP service delivery (Continued)

Core Service Delivery Process

There are 10 key elements in the Core Service Delivery Framework:

- consent
- emergency screening
- information provision
- advocacy support
- feedback
- first contact
- intake assessment
- external referral
- closure
- exit.

The order of these elements can be applied flexibly to accommodate individual circumstances.



NACAP service delivery (Continued)

Consent

Consent should be sought at the commencement of the client engagement and then before any actions are taken on behalf of the person. Actions requiring consent throughout the core service delivery process may include but are not limited to:

- recording contact details
- referring to other services
- acting as an advocate for the client
- speaking to others on behalf of the client
- sharing the client's information with others
- receiving information about the client from other relevant agencies.

The *Consent to Advocate Practice Guideline* provides further guidance on how consent can be obtained, documented, limited, and withdrawn. It also addresses consent in circumstances where clients are subject to serious risk of imminent harm.

First contact

First contact occurs when the initial interaction is made between an individual making an enquiry and an OPAN member representative.

Emergency screening/ external emergency referral

During first contact, an assessment should be made as to whether the individual is at immediate risk of serious harm. OPAN members do not provide emergency or crisis services, however, if an individual is at immediate risk of serious harm, they may:

- advise the individual to call 000
- access emergency services on behalf of the individual
- address the individual's needs and escalate service response
- arrange another time to speak with the individual when it is safe to do so.



NACAP service delivery (Continued)

Intake assessment

During an intake assessment, an OPAN member representative will work collaboratively with an individual to facilitate the following assessments:

- 1. Assessment of support needs:** Identify, discuss, and implement strategies that may help enable them to engage more effectively at intake and during the provision of information and advocacy support. Strategies may include engaging interpreters, utilising communication aids, engaging supported decision-makers, or providing access to specialist advocates (i.e. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocates).
- 2. Scope assessment:** Identify if the individual is seeking support for an issue that is within the scope of NACAP. Out-of-scope issues will be provided with a referral to a more appropriate service, external to the NACAP.
- 3. Issues assessment:** Once it has been determined that the individual is seeking support for an issue within the scope of NACAP, a more in-depth assessment of the individual's concern can be conducted to determine how NACAP services may assist and the individual's desired level of support. Pathways may include a combination of information, referral, self-advocacy and individual advocacy support.

- 4. Priority of access assessment:** Where waiting lists for advocacy support exist, individuals may undergo a priority of access assessment. *The Demand Management Practice Guideline* includes a *Priority Access Matrix for Advocacy Support* to help guide the assessment of an individual's priority access rating.

The matrix considers the individual's presenting issues and circumstances and ensures that clients with high-level needs and/or experiencing disadvantages are provided with high-priority access to the NACAP.

The time between an individual making first contact with an OPAN member organisation and receiving an intake assessment should be no more than **three working days**.



NACAP service delivery (Continued)

Information provision

This includes information about advocacy, the aged care system, aged care rights and responsibilities, aged care complaints processes, and other services.

The provision of information can help an older person to make informed decisions about how to approach an issue of concern. In some cases, access to relevant information may be all an individual needs to begin self-advocating. Information provision may also result in external referral to other organisations more appropriately placed to support an individual.

External referral

External referral may be necessary when it is determined that an issue is more appropriately dealt with by an alternative agency. External referral may occur following initial assessment, or during information provision or advocacy support.

Referrals may be accompanied by additional information or a warm referral, with the consent of the client. In some circumstances, OPAN member representatives may need to liaise with external services directly or on behalf of an individual to ensure that the referral is appropriate and that the roles and expectations of the external service are clear.



NACAP service delivery (Continued)

Advocacy support

An individual that has requested advocacy support and has been allocated an advocate to assist them with their concerns will be referred to as an advocacy client.

Advocates will discuss with clients how best to engage with them whilst providing advocacy support. Options may include over the phone, face-to-face meetings, via text, email, or video call, or a combination of these methods.

Advocates will arrange an initial meeting with clients to start gathering information and provide the client with an opportunity to tell their stories in their own words.

During this initial meeting, an advocate's role is to:

- listen to the client's concerns
- provide the client with information on their rights, and options to address their concerns (as needed)
- discuss the client's advocacy goals and preferred advocacy actions
- document the agreed advocacy goals and actions in an advocacy plan.

Advocacy support can involve a range of actions to support clients to access or resolve issues and concerns with government-funded aged care services. Advocacy actions may include but are not limited to:

- research
- information provision
- supported decision-making
- support to self-advocate
- support documenting concerns/ complaints

- support drafting correspondence
- support communicating and meeting with aged care providers
- support engaging with relevant government services and statutory bodies such as My Aged Care, Services Australia and the Commission
- continuing support during the Commission's complaints processes
- referrals.

The scope of agreed advocacy actions, the person responsible for implementing each action, and any associated timeframes will be documented in an Advocacy Action Plan, which will be regularly reviewed and updated during the provision of advocacy support.

In the initial meeting and throughout the service delivery process, advocates will be transparent about the level of support they can provide and note any potential limitations associated with the achievement of the client's desired outcomes.

Advocates will also provide clients with information on how they can provide feedback or make a complaint if they are unhappy with the advocacy support they receive.

During the advocacy support process, if it becomes evident that the client's needs may be addressed more appropriately by another organisation, service or program, the clients will be provided with information about alternative external services and be offered support to transition to the other service if needed.

NACAP service delivery (Continued)

Closure

The conclusion of advocacy support generally will occur for one or more of the following reasons:

- the client's issue/s of concern has been resolved
- there have been no advocacy actions for the advocacy case for more than 30 days
- all advocacy options have been explored and the advocacy issue/s cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the client
- the client withdraws from advocacy support.

Feedback

Feedback will be sought from the client on their experience receiving advocacy support. This may occur as part of case closure or after case closure, with the client's consent. The feedback sought will align with the National Aged Care Advocacy Program Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks. Outcomes of a successful advocacy experience may include the client and/or their representative:

- having increased confidence to self-advocate and make informed decisions about the care they receive
- exercising their aged care rights
- having their presenting issues addressed
- experiencing improved engagement and communication with aged care providers
- being connected to relevant services
- planning to access advocacy support in the future if needed
- recommending NACAP services to others.

Exit

Case closure and exit from the service may occur simultaneously, and prior to formal feedback being sought. Clients who exit a service may access advocacy services again if their needs change.



NACAP service delivery (Continued)



Education

OPAN member organisations are responsible for booking and delivering education sessions on advocacy and aged care rights and the abuse of older people in their state or territory.

Education sessions are often tailored to the individual needs of each group and may be delivered using face-to-face, online, or other methods. These sessions can also be tailored to meet the needs of special needs groups, as identified under the Aged Care Act (1997).

OPAN members typically contact the aged care providers within in their state/territory every 12 months to offer an education session, however, in the absence of any legislation requiring aged care providers to accept NACAP education, there are many residential care facilities that decline to accept this offer.

NACAP Education Guidelines have been developed to encourage national consistency in the:

- booking and delivery of NACAP education
- promotion of NACAP education
- processes for responding to, and escalating concerns about providers repeatedly declining education.



Events

The delivery of events is guided by the *Advocacy Community Network Development Program Guidelines*. The guidelines set out five key types of events:

1. small group meetings with individual organisations
2. small group meeting with groups of organisations
3. network meetings and communities of practice
4. presentations at public events such as exhibitions, conferences, and shows
5. public stalls at exhibitions, conferences, and shows.

Events may be standalone or utilise existing community resources such as opportunities in local libraries, retirement villages, shopping centres, and expos. Events cannot be delivered in aged care settings. The delivery of events can be flexible to meet the unique needs of local communities.



NACAP data and reporting

NACAP data and reporting

Data

OPAN recognises that data is a valuable asset that:

- offers important insights into the issues facing older people who are seeking and receiving aged care services
- supports OPAN to identify NACAP service gaps and informs opportunities for NACAP growth and service redesign
- provides evidence of OPAN's achievement of service outcomes and reach
- supports OPAN to contribute, with credibility, to systemic advocacy in relation to the aged care system and its reform program.

The *OPAN NACAP Minimum Data Set (MDS) Data Dictionary and Guidelines* have been developed to assist OPAN members to collect nationally consistent data to inform performance reporting. The *MDS Data Dictionary and Guidelines* provide clear definitions, counting rules, and guidance to support consistent data collection for items related to NACAP service activities, client information, presenting issues, and service outcomes.

A mandatory online MDS training course has been developed to support OPAN staff who are engaged in the delivery of NACAP services to understand the NACAP MDS and its application.

MDS requirements have been integrated into the data systems used by both OPAN and OPAN members to operationalise the collection of nationally consistent data.

A Salesforce Community of Practice (CoP) has been established to bring together OPAN's Salesforce and Data Administrators. This CoP provides a forum to discuss updates on OPAN's data maturity and journey towards national consistency, share successes, innovations, or challenges they are experiencing locally with their Salesforce platforms, and establish cross-state connections to help facilitate growth opportunities.

The *OPAN Data Governance Framework* guides the management of OPAN's data and sets minimum standards for handling the MDS. The *Data Governance Framework* demonstrates OPAN's commitment to improving data maturity, and data capabilities, and supports OPAN to achieve its core functions.

The Data Governance Framework also documents OPAN's data vision and data principles (Refer to Box A). The data governance principles are supported by relevant OPAN and OPAN member policies and procedures. A Data Governance Steering Committee provides strategic oversight of the implementation of the key elements of the Data Governance Framework, including data guidelines, data quality, data security, and data use and sharing.

NACAP data and reporting (Continued)

Reporting

OPAN's qualitative and quantitative data provide valuable insights into the role of and demand for advocacy services, as well as consumer experiences of the aged care service system. It is critical that the government, the aged care sector, and the broader public have access to these insights as they may help to inform policy development and necessary systemic reform. OPAN has formal processes in place for reporting on these matters. In addition to these formal processes, clear pathways have been established to ensure that OPAN members can report real-time emerging issues to OPAN that can be escalated to the Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC) as needed.

Performance reporting

OPAN is required to provide the DoHAC with a NACAP performance report on a biannual basis. OPAN member organisations inform this reporting process by submitting quarterly performance reports to OPAN.

OPAN strategically seeks reports from OPAN members on a quarterly basis to ensure timely identification of:

- concerns relating to the achievement against key performance indicators
- increased demand for NACAP services
- emerging policy issues requiring systemic advocacy at the national level.

OPAN has established a standardised quarterly reporting template to capture qualitative and quantitative data from OPAN members. The data supplied quarterly is extracted from quality checked Salesforce reports from each OPAN member's systems. *A Guide to Completing NACAP Reporting* has been developed to support OPAN members to understand their reporting requirements and ensure national consistency in performance reporting across OPAN.

Presenting Issues Report

On an annual basis, OPAN releases a NACAP presenting issues report. This publicly available report is informed by the qualitative and quantitative data collected across OPAN. The report provides insights into the number and types of issues that present in advocacy casework throughout the year and offers recommendations for addressing common policy concerns within the aged care system.



NACAP data and reporting (Continued)

Box A: Data vision and principles

Data vision	to advance the human rights of older Australians through safe and effective use of data as a valued asset in our decisions.
Data principles	
We are community-centred	We actively and respectfully engage with older people, their family and representatives, and the community to understand their needs and concerns about the data we capture, protect and use on their behalf.
We are transparent and accountable	We provide clear, accessible information to older people and the community about how we collect, manage and use data. When things go wrong, we respond quickly, are honest, and learn from our mistakes.
We are skilled and capable	Our staff have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and capabilities to work with data and understand their roles and responsibilities to ensure safe and high-quality data capture, use, and sharing.
We make data trusted and secure	We have clear data collection guidelines and make data quality known to manage data integrity, consistency, and quality across the data lifecycle to ensure its security and value.
We share and use data safely	We share and use data ethically and safely to benefit older people and the community and ensure the privacy and confidentiality of individuals in accordance with our legislative and policy requirements.

Marketing and communications

Marketing and communications

Clear and consistent promotion of OPAN and NACAP service offerings are essential to ensuring older people understand and access NACAP services. Marketing and communication about OPAN and the NACAP occur at both the national and state/territory levels. This approach increases the reach of OPAN's communications and allows communications to be tailored to local needs.

OPAN primarily focuses on increasing awareness at the national level, adopting strategies that increase high-level awareness amongst the general public and across the broader aged care sector. OPAN strategies include the delivery of national webinars, newsletters, and eLearning campaigns, along with targeted activities aimed at increasing OPAN's presence in national mainstream media and relevant industry journals. OPAN is also proactive in seeking opportunities to promote NACAP services in national communication campaigns led by the Department of Health and Aged Care, the Commission and other relevant peak bodies within the aged care industry. OPAN member organisations adopt similar strategies but maintain a focus on opportunities to promote and engage with stakeholders, including the media, within their local jurisdictions.

The OPAN Communications, Marketing, and Education Advisory Group guides the development and use of consistent messaging across the national and state/territory levels. Strategies supporting national consistency across marketing and communication efforts include:

Key messaging: OPAN and the Communications, Marketing, and Education Advisory Group have worked collaboratively to develop key messages for use across the network. These key messages aim to support a consistent approach in the way OPAN's service offerings are described in marketing and communications.

Co-branding: Print advertising is co-branded where possible to support joint exposure and recognition of OPAN members. The *News For You* resource is an example of success in this area. News for You is a print newsletter that is delivered to people living in residential aged care homes three times a year. These newsletters are co-branded separately with each OPAN member organisation to ensure that residents can easily identify and connect with the OPAN member organisation in their state/territory.

Stakeholder kits: Stakeholder kits are developed and shared by OPAN to ensure key messages for national marketing campaigns are consistent. More recently, OPAN has explored the use of media stakeholder kits to ensure that OPAN members are across key OPAN media releases and are supported to adapt key messaging for local media opportunities.

Marketing and communications (Continued)

Cross-promotion: OPAN and member organisations frequently cross-promote communications shared on social media. For example, OPAN member organisations frequently share promotional posts about upcoming OPAN webinars, and OPAN regularly shares posts made by OPAN members demonstrating the role and value of advocacy services. This helps to develop an awareness of the connection between OPAN and its state and territory member organisations.

OPAN is committed to using the voice of older people in marketing and communication wherever possible and relevant. Key principles and values underpinning OPAN's marketing and communication initiatives include:

- inclusive and respectful language
- simplified explanation of advocacy and its benefits
- images and experiences of older people
- older people speaking for themselves or featured in written case studies
- adherence with accessibility standards
- informed by relevant social research.



Engaging in quality improvement

Engaging in quality improvement

OPAN's quality improvement initiatives are focused on the outcomes and experiences of the people receiving advocacy services. The people receiving advocacy services need to be assured of a consistent and high standard of service, no matter where they live or what service they are receiving. OPAN is continuously working towards achieving this goal by listening to the feedback of people who receive advocacy services, working with OPAN members to strengthen services, measuring performance against a consistent set of service outcomes and quality standards, and investing in a quality workforce.

Quality standards

OPAN is committed to designing and implementing a set of quality standards that are purpose built for advocacy services and are flexible in meeting the competing regulatory demands of OPAN member organisations.

OPAN commenced its journey towards this goal in 2018. At this stage, six of the nine OPAN members already had some form of external accreditation process in place, and OPAN supported the remaining three members to achieve external accreditation against a set of recognised community not-for-profit standards.

OPAN member organisations continue to maintain this external accreditation whilst OPAN works collaboratively with relevant stakeholders to develop a validated auditable standard for aged and disability advocacy services within Australia.

In 2019, OPAN released the National Aged Care Advocacy Program (NACAP) Standards. These standards were accepted by the

Department of Health and Aged Care in 2020. The NACAP Standards were developed to guide the quality assurance processes of OPAN member organisations and set out consistent minimum requirements for the delivery of NACAP services.

The NACAP Standards featured six key areas of focus.

- 1. Agency governance and service operations:** covering management processes, data governance, human resource management, and professional development.
- 2. Design and access of advocacy services:** covering service scope, planning, and design, the provision of information about advocacy services, and access to advocacy services, including equity of access to people in hard to reach groups.
- 3. Quality service delivery:** covering principles of practice, core service delivery processes, service user feedback and complaints, and service coordination with other agencies.
- 4. Promotion of the rights of individuals in target populations:** covering working with individuals, activities of rights promotion, and education delivery.
- 5. Working with others to contribute to systemic advocacy:** covering service collaboration and networking with services and other groups.
- 6. Service evaluation and quality improvement:** covering advocacy program logic, outcomes measurement, and continuous service improvement.

A self-assessment tool was developed, and a mapping study was conducted to see if it might be possible for OPAN members delivering advocacy services across multiple funding programs to have all their services audited at the same time.

OPAN identified that some member organisations were having to undergo multiple third-party accreditation audits. For example, several OPAN members receive funding to deliver the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP), and disability advocacy services funded by state/territory governments were required to undergo regular third-party audits against the National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS) as well as state/territory government quality requirements. It was also noted that these accreditation processes were not covering their full range of funded activities and were not specifically auditing against standards that measured the quality of advocacy (with the exception of the NACAP Standards).

The mapping process also revealed very strong equivalence between the NACAP Standards, and the following standards used by some OPAN members:

- NDIS Practice Standards
- Queensland Investment Corporation (QIC) Health and Community Services Standards
- Australian Service Excellence Standards (ASES).

Despite this equivalence, it was identified that several OPAN members would still be required to undertake multiple quality audits, as the NACAP Standards had not formally been recognised as a validated auditable standard within Australia.

In response to this challenge, OPAN made a commitment to approach and work with the disability advocacy sector to develop a nationally recognised, advocacy-specific standard and accreditation system, with quality criteria specific to the delivery of advocacy services in both the aged care and disability sectors.

OPAN is currently working with Standards Australia, the primary non-government standards development body in Australia, and a range of relevant stakeholders, to draft an aged and disability advocacy standard. It is expected that this new purpose built aged and disability advocacy standard will be finalised by early 2024, with staged implementation across 2024/2025.



Engaging in quality improvement (Continued)

Monitoring and evaluation

Several monitoring and evaluation frameworks have been developed to provide a complete picture of the NACAP service offerings. These include an overarching framework for the NACAP and several subsections to capture different areas of service activity including:

- information and advocacy
- abuse of older persons – information and supported referral
- education
- Advocacy Community Network Development (ACND)
- home care and aged care cost (Financial Advocacy).

Each of the frameworks includes a Program Logic Model, identification of relevant theoretical frameworks, evaluation questions and outcome measures and data collection requirements to assess the process, impact and overarching value of these programs.

Evaluation questions and outcome measures for the ACND and Financial Advocacy have been integrated into OPAN systems nationally. Work to implement the outcome measures into systems for the remaining programs should be in place by the end of 2023.



Engaging in quality improvement (Continued)

Complaints and feedback

OPAN and the OPAN member organisations are committed to being open and responsive to all feedback, including complaints. OPAN recognises that complaints are a valuable driver for continuous quality improvement and takes complaints seriously. OPAN commits to treat those making complaints with confidentiality, respect, and without retribution.

Each OPAN member organisation has individual policies and procedures relating to complaints and feedback.

In line with OPAN's *External Complaints Management Policy* and procedures, complaints regarding the Aged Care Advocates Code of Conduct and/or the services provided by an OPAN member will generally be referred for resolution to that OPAN member in the first instance.

It is expected that the OPAN member will undertake reasonable representations to all parties involved, with a particular focus on ensuring the wellbeing of the older person is paramount. If the complaint is unable to be resolved, or a subsequent complaint is made to OPAN regarding the same scenario, the complaint may be managed by OPAN, in consultation with the OPAN member. This may involve OPAN acting as an intermediary, OPAN managing the complaint directly, OPAN working with an alternate OPAN member or members, or a referral to OPAN's Complaints Subcommittee. Complaints can also be directed to an external complaints management process if needed.



Engaging in quality improvement (Continued)

Workforce

A *National Advocate Professional Development Strategy* (the Strategy) has been developed to ensure aged care advocacy clients across the nation have access to a consistent and high-quality workforce.

The Strategy recognises that the professional development of the aged care advocacy workforce is the shared responsibility of OPAN and the OPAN member organisations.

OPAN member organisations, as the direct employers of aged care advocates, are responsible for:

- onboarding and orientation to their organisation
- ensuring staff complete, understand and apply mandatory OPAN training, the *OPAN Service Delivery Framework* and practice guidelines
- ongoing professional development across areas of core skills and knowledge
- Workplace Health and Safety training requirements.

Professional development responsibilities of OPAN members may also include:

- individual professional development plans
- providing access to Employee Assistance Programs and professional/clinical supervision
- mentoring/buddy programs
- leadership development opportunities.

One of the primary functions of OPAN is to support the delivery of high-level, best practice, and nationally consistent aged care advocacy. OPAN also plays an important role in fostering connection and the sharing of knowledge and experiences across the OPAN membership.



Engaging in quality improvement (Continued)

The professional development responsibilities of OPAN include:

- development and promotion of nationally consistent and best practice approaches to delivering NACAP services
- delivery of the NACAP orientation program
- development and monitoring of mandatory OPAN training supporting national consistency
- supporting engagement and knowledge sharing across OPAN members through the facilitation of national meetings, networking groups, and forums
- maintenance of a Learning Management System to support national training initiatives and a national knowledge base
- supporting knowledge development on national aged care system reform.

Initiatives that have been successfully implemented by OPAN include:

NACAP orientation program: An orientation program was developed and went live on OPAN's new learning management system, the Advocacy Academy, in November 2021. The orientation program forms part of the advocate onboarding process and must be completed by all new advocates delivering NACAP activities. The program has been developed to support new aged care advocates develop the skills and knowledge to provide high-quality and consistent advocacy support to older people.

Advocate Knowledge Hub: The knowledge hub is an information management system that provides advocates with easy access to a range of useful resources to support advocacy casework and nationally consistent practice.

National aged care advocate meetings: Bi-monthly national aged care advocate meetings provide advocates from across OPAN with the opportunity to connect, share knowledge and experiences, and discuss systemic advocacy issues that require a national approach. Each meeting features a topic of focus as well as dedicated time for discussion of emerging issues in advocacy casework.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocate meetings: This networking group, meets bi-monthly and brings together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocates from across OPAN, including those working for OPAN member organisations in programs other than aged care (i.e., disability, mental health).

OPAN provides an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocates to connect and share their knowledge and advocacy experiences. Member organisations also aim to raise the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to OPAN and influence positive change in advocacy practice and the aged care service system.

Engaging in quality improvement (Continued)

Communities of practice: Communities of practice have been established with the aim of improving the consistency and quality of practice through shared learning and problem-solving and by providing a channel for mutual support. Communities of Practice encourage:

- learning from each other
- sharing strategic help with common issues and challenges
- acting as a 'brains trust' to bounce ideas off each other
- sharing success stories
- drawing on other practitioners' experiences to improve individual practice.

Communities of practice have been established for Financial Advocacy, Aged Care Network Development, and Salesforce administrators.

Workforce capability

In 2020, OPAN commissioned Curtin University to conduct research⁴ exploring the professional development opportunities for aged care advocates, as well as the skills, competencies and training required to work effectively in the role. This research informed the development of an *Aged Care Advocates Capability Statement* which identified that aged care advocates come from a variety of backgrounds and require a broad range of skills, knowledge, and attributes to work effectively in their role.

With the advocacy workforce continuing to grow, OPAN has recognised the need to build on the work of Curtin University and develop a framework to support advocates to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes required to progress from novice advocate to expert advocate.

As part of the *National Advocate Professional Development Strategy*, work has commenced on the development of an Aged Care Advocate Capability Framework that will take into consideration the varying levels of knowledge and experience that individuals bring to the advocate role and will support them to reflect on their practice at all stages of their advocate career and plan for their professional development.



4. Developing the OPAN workforce: Exploring the skills, attributes, knowledge, professional development, and training requirements for effective aged care advocacy



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