



# Reportable incidents: missing consumers

## Serious Incident Response Scheme

A fact sheet for providers of home care and flexible care delivered in a home or community setting



**The Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS) helps prevent and reduce the risk of incidents of abuse and neglect in aged care services that are subsidised by the Australian Government.**

Under the SIRS, all incidents and near misses must be recorded in a provider's incident management system (IMS) to ensure a timely and appropriate response that minimises impact, supports those affected, reduces the risk of recurrence and informs continuous improvement.

There are eight types of reportable incidents that must be recorded in a provider's IMS and also reported to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (the Commission).

This fact sheet covers the reporting of incidents in a home or community setting relating to missing consumers. This reportable incident type is specific to the provision of home services and is different from the related incident type for residential care (unexplained absence).

## What is a missing consumer?

Where a consumer goes missing in the course of a home services provider delivering care and services to a consumer and there are reasonable grounds to report that fact to police, this is a reportable incident under the SIRS.

This incident type is intended to only capture situations where a provider has the consumer in their physical care immediately prior to their absence. For example:

- a staff member has taken a consumer to the shops and the consumer has gone missing during the outing
- a consumer goes missing while in overnight respite, receiving care at a day therapy centre, receiving transport services or on a scheduled outing with the provider
- a consumer goes missing while a staff member is delivering care and services in the consumer's home and there is reason for concern (e.g. the consumer could be harmed if they were wandering alone).

You are not required to notify the Commission of incidents where a staff member arrives for a scheduled visit and the consumer is not present, or where a consumer leaves their home while, for example, home maintenance services are being provided.

However, in such situations where there is no reasonable explanation for the consumer not being present or there is a reason for concern, staff members should alert their provider to the unexpected absence and the provider should follow this up in line with the procedures agreed with and reflected in the care plan for each consumer.

## How to respond to missing consumers

Whenever a consumer goes missing without explanation, you must record it in your IMS and the consumer's care plan. This will help to understand the consumer's behaviour patterns and identify any additional supports they may require.

If a consumer is missing and there are reasonable grounds to report it to the police, you must report the absence to the police within a reasonable timeframe, so an appropriate response and actions can be taken to locate the consumer.

When responding to an incident involving a missing consumer, you should provide support and information to the consumer's family and representatives about the actions you are taking to respond to the incident.



**All reportable incidents of missing consumers are Priority 1 reportable incidents and must be reported to the Commission within 24 hours. Please note that this incident type is referred to as 'unexplained absence' in the My Aged Care Provider Portal.**

## How can I find out more?

The Commission has published a series of fact sheets relating to each type of reportable incident. To access these fact sheets and detailed guidance relating to the SIRS and incident management systems, visit [agedcarequality.gov.au/sirs](https://agedcarequality.gov.au/sirs)

## Examples

What is a missing consumer?	What is not a missing consumer?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any time a consumer goes missing in the course of delivering care and services and there are reasonable grounds to contact the police.</li><li>• A staff member has taken a consumer to the shops and the consumer has gone missing during the outing.</li><li>• A consumer goes missing while in overnight respite, receiving care at a day therapy centre, receiving transport services or on a scheduled outing with the provider.</li><li>• A consumer goes missing while a staff member is delivering care and services in the consumer's home and there is reason for concern (e.g. the consumer could be harmed if they were wandering alone).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Where a consumer is not at home when a provider arrives for a scheduled appointment.</li><li>• Where a consumer leaves their home while home maintenance services are being provided (and there are no reasonable grounds to contact the police).</li></ul>

The above table is not an exhaustive list of examples – it is a guide only. You should assess each incident on an individual basis.

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