

What is the Aged Care Assessment Service?

The Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS) is available to people over 65 years of age, or younger people who have an age related condition. ACAS usually includes the following aged care professionals:

- ▣ geriatricians (doctors specialising in aged care)
- ▣ community nurses
- ▣ social workers
- ▣ occupational therapists
- ▣ physiotherapists
- ▣ and sometimes neuropsychologists.

ACAS provides the following services:

- ▣ Specialist aged care assessment.
- ▣ Information about and referral to community services.
- ▣ Referral to health professionals and specialist clinics.
- ▣ Information about respite care and how to organise it.
- ▣ Information about residential care and the process involved.
- ▣ Information about support for carers.
- ▣ Completion of the assessment forms that are essential to access residential respite, residential care and certain community care packages.

Why arrange an assessment?

ACAS works in partnership with carers and families in supporting their older family member. An assessment is the starting point. It helps determine the information, advice and assistance that may be available to you.

"It was the ACAS assessment that turned things around for us."

Usually one ACAS team member will visit your family member at home to talk about their health, social and personal needs. They will also speak to you about your caring role. From this, they will make suggestions that may improve your family member's health and wellbeing, or advise on community services and respite care that may assist. They can also help you to identify when caring at home may no longer be possible and provide information on residential care.

Carers say that the benefits are:

- ▣ Being connected to major service providers.
- ▣ Receiving information about care and support available.
- ▣ Confirming that you are not imagining things.
- ▣ Being able to access residential respite care.
- ▣ Receiving information and advice on your family member's condition and the changes that could be expected in the future.
- ▣ Being able to contact ACAS again for advice or information.



How to arrange an ACAS assessment

Your family member's GP can organise this for you. Alternatively, phone 1800 500 853 for the details of [the local ACAS](#) and contact them directly. There is no cost involved for assessments.

If your family member is currently in hospital, speak to the treating doctor or social worker who may be able to arrange an assessment with the aged care team at the hospital.

How to make the most of an ACAS assessment

Advice from carers:

- ▣ Get ACAS involved early - they can give you preventative advice rather than just addressing the problems.
- ▣ Ask lots of questions and ask for advice - particularly about the residential care process which can be very confusing.
- ▣ If you are uncomfortable talking about your family member in front of them, ask to also speak separately with the ACAS team member - or do this discreetly by walking them to their car or phoning the following day.
- ▣ Ask for an interpreter if this is needed or would help.
- ▣ Have a support person with you - another set of eyes and ears.
- ▣ Some questions can feel a little intrusive. Know that they have a purpose and are not intended to pry into your private affairs.
- ▣ Be aware that ACAS needs to complete assessment forms - sometimes this feels like the major focus point.
- ▣ Make sure you have the name and contact details of the person who visited so that you may contact them again.

Why you might choose to contact ACAS again

Every situation is different. Sometimes carers contact ACAS again for advice, support or re-assessment when the situation at home changes. Sometimes they phone ACAS hoping to learn of additional community support services that might assist.

Commonly though, carers contact ACAS again to have their family member's assessment forms renewed. You will be given a copy of the assessment forms after the initial assessment visit - these forms are usually valid for 12 months and depending on your situation, may need to be renewed.

Current forms are required if your family member is to be referred to a community care package, access residential respite care or progress with residential care. It is usually the carer's responsibility to contact ACAS and request a review visit. It's a good idea to put a note on your calendar to contact them a month or two prior to the forms running out.

Further information:

- ▣ The [Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre](#) - ph: 1800 242 636*. Information, support and advice for people caring for a family member or friend. You can also request the above information sheets be sent to you - or find out about other information sheets in this series.

*Free call except from mobile phones. Mobile calls at mobile rates.

We do our best to keep these links up to date, but the internet changes all the time. If you can no longer access any of the above resources, please go to our [Internet Troubleshooting Guide](#), or email us at website@carersvic.org.au