

Unregistered Service Providers

*What to expect & what to do if you have concerns
about an unregistered practitioner*

OCTOBER 2008

Web

www.hcscc.sa.gov.au

with direct email link

Telephone Enquiry Service

Mon—Thurs
10am—4pm
8226 8666
SA Country
toll free
1800 232 007

Fax 8226 8620

Mail

PO Box 199
Rundle Mall
Adelaide
SA 5000

Administration & Reception only

Mon-Fri
9am-5pm

P 8226 8652

About hcscc

hcscc is an independent statutory office that helps people to resolve complaints about most health and community services in South Australia. hcscc also investigates serious complaints.

If you are unhappy about a health or community service, try to speak to the service provider first.

If this doesn't work, or you are not happy with their response after 30 days, contact hcscc for help.

What is an unregistered practitioner?

Health and community services are provided by a wide range of different practitioners, registered and unregistered.

Most practitioners provide safe, good quality services ethically. They also understand their obligation to respond to complaints.

In South Australia there are 10 groups of registered practitioners. They include doctors, nurses, dentists, psychologists, pharmacists, physiotherapists, podiatrists, chiropractors, optometrists, and occupational therapists.

Each group has a registration board and is covered by a specific law to protect the public.

Unregistered practitioners are not covered by a registration board or a specific law.

Some unregistered practitioners belong to an association of other similar practitioners.

Many unregistered practitioner associations promote ethical conduct, high standards of practice and accessible complaints processes among their members. Examples of unregistered practitioners include massage therapists, acupuncturists, counsellors, naturopaths and herbalists.

What to expect of an unregistered practitioner

Complaints to hcscc about unregistered practitioners have highlighted a lack of public information to help people to decide if a service being offered by an unregistered practitioner is likely to be safe or good quality.

People need to know what to expect from an unregistered practitioner. People also need to know how to make a complaint if they are not satisfied with the service provided by an unregistered practitioner.

What to ask an unregistered practitioner

Generally if an unregistered practitioner has most of the following you can expect safe, good quality services.

Ask about

- their training and qualifications
- professional association membership
- their code of conduct or practice
- what supervision they receive
- their complaints policy
- their fees and refunds—don't pay large amounts of money up front.

If you have doubts or concerns about what an unregistered practitioner does, ask questions. If you are still concerned, contact hcscc.

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hcsc Telephone Enquiry Service

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10am-4pm
8226 8666
SA country
Toll free
1800 232 007

Web

www.hcsc.sa.gov.au

with direct email link

South Australia does not currently have a law or Code of Conduct for unregistered practitioners. NSW recently adopted a Code of Conduct that describes the legal obligations of an unregistered practitioner.

hcsc encourages people to use the following NSW legal requirements as a guide when considering services provided by an unregistered practitioner.

An unregistered practitioner SHOULD

- be competent and maintain competence in their field of practice
- provide services within their experience or training
- provide evidence to back claims that they can treat cancer, serious illness or their symptoms
- have a clinical basis to diagnose or treat an illness or condition
- prescribe treatments that meet client needs
- understand adverse interactions between their services or treatment and other services or treatment being provided
- refer clients to other practitioners appropriately
- encourage clients to inform their GP of any service or treatment being provided

- keep appropriate records, comply with privacy laws and have appropriate insurance
- provide information to clients about how to make a complaint to them directly and to the independent complaints authority.

An unregistered practitioner SHOULD NOT

- make claims that they can cure cancer or other serious illnesses
- misrepresent their qualifications, training or professional membership
- have a sexual or close personal relationship with a client
- practice under the influence of alcohol, medication or illegal drugs, or while they have a mental or physical illness that could be harmful to clients.

Concerns or complaints about unregistered practitioners

If you have concerns that an unregistered practitioner is a risk to public safety please contact **hcsc**.

If you have a complaint about something that is not a safety risk, try to speak to the practitioner.

Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.hcsc.sa.gov.au

If an unregistered practitioner does not respond to your complaint, or responds poorly, hcsc may be able to help.

