DUTY OF CANDOUR

When a patient experiences significant harm, they have the right to an apology and an explanation from the health service. This open and honest process is called Duty of Candour.

What is significant harm?
Significant harm is a serious event that:
- happened when a patient was under the care of a health service
- caused harm that the health service did not expect or intend

This includes:
- moderate harm
- severe physical harm or death
- long periods of psychological harm.

Significant harm is also called a serious adverse patient safety event, or SAPSE.

A registered health practitioner, such as a doctor or registered nurse, will confirm if an event has caused significant harm.

What does Duty of Candour mean when significant harm happens?
The health service will offer you, your family or your carer some information. The information must include:
- an apology
- what happened and why
- what the health service did at the time and after the event
- what the health service is doing to prevent similar events from happening again.

If you think you have experienced significant harm and the health service hasn’t started a Duty of Candour process, contact the service.

You can ask them to review the event.

For more information, you can contact:


Safer Care Victoria