

Important words and definitions

Access

Being able to use or get something. For example, a wheelchair user would have access to a clinic if there is a ramp outside of the clinic and not only stairs.

Accountable

Having to answer for and be responsible for your actions, words and attitudes.

Anonymity

Keeping your identity a secret through not giving your name or personal information.

Complainant

The person making a complaint.

Complaint

A statement that you are unhappy or dissatisfied with a service that you have received.

Complaints process

The steps you can take to protect and claim your human rights by telling someone else about your complaint and asking them to do something about it.

Confidentiality

Keeping your personal information secret from the public and the media. For example, not having the details of your complaint disclosed to the public or any person who is not involved in the complaint process.

Direct discrimination

When you are treated differently and unfairly because of who you are or what you do. For example, being treated differently and unfairly because you are: living with HIV, transgender, gay, a sex worker, a woman, a person with a disability, or a drug-user.

Ethics

A set of rules and standards that say what is right and wrong. Doctors and nurses have professional ethics that state what is right and wrong in healthcare.

External complaints processes

When you take a complaint to an outside body like a professional council or a human rights commission.

Healthcare facility

A place where you can get healthcare services, such as a clinic, hospital or doctor's office.

Healthcare services

All the services that a person needs to be healthy, for example: accessing medicines, tests, treatments, rehabilitation, surgery and operations, emergency medical treatment, reproductive healthcare, dental work, and any special services for people with disabilities.

Healthcare user

A person who uses healthcare services – also called "patient".

Healthcare worker

A person who works in healthcare services. This includes professional healthcare workers like doctors, nurses, midwives, pharmacists and specialists, as well as non-professional healthcare workers, for example: people responsible for administration, security or cleaning, community health workers, counsellors, volunteers or medical students.

Human rights

All the rights and freedoms you have as a human being and based on your human needs – they are usually set out in a constitution, bill of rights or charter of rights.

Indirect discrimination

A practice, policy or rule that applies to everyone in the same way but has a worse effect on some than others.

Informed consent

Freely giving your agreement to something after hearing and understanding all the information you need.

Interim order

When a complaints body or court makes an order for something to happen in the meantime until the case is finally decided, such as protecting you from harm during the complaints process.

Internal complaints processes

Making a complaint within a health facility, such as a hospital or clinic.

Key populations

Groups of people who are seen to be particularly vulnerable to HIV and lack access to adequate healthcare. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) considers men who have sex with men, sex workers and their clients, injecting drug users and transgender persons as the 4 main groups at risk of being exposed to HIV and at risk of discrimination, stigma and unfair treatment in their societies.

LGBT

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons.

MSM or men who have sex with men

Males who have sex with males, but who do not necessarily see themselves as being gay or bisexual.

Negligence

Failing to behave reasonably when you have a duty to do so. For example, a healthcare worker is negligent if they fail to behave like a reasonable health worker to make sure that a healthcare user receives proper treatment.

Ombudsman / ombudsperson

An independent office set up to monitor and investigate complaints and human rights abuses.

Paralegals

People with legal skills, knowledge and experience who assist with making complaints, and other legal and human rights issues, for example: in community-based advice offices, NGOs and human rights bodies. Paralegals are not trained lawyers.

Reasonable accommodation

Taking reasonable and fair steps to make sure people with special needs enjoy equal rights and services. For example: reasonable accommodation for a deaf healthcare user may be to have someone at the clinic who can help communicate through sign language.

Remedies

The solution to a human rights abuse and the result of a complaints process investigation, for example: compensation, an apology, being suspended from practising as a nurse.

Sexual orientation

Your sexual identity that describes the gender of people you are generally attracted to. For example: identifying as a heterosexual ("straight"), homosexual (lesbian or gay), and bisexual person.

Stigma or stigmatising

Negative labelling or attitudes towards someone because they are seen as belonging to a particular group.

Transgender

People who identify themselves or express their gender in a way that is different to their biological sex when they were born. For example, you may have been born as a female but you see yourself as a man. Some transgender people have surgery or hormone therapy to change their appearance.

Unfair discrimination

Being treated differently in an unfair or abusive way.

Violation

Doing something that is not allowed by the law, or not respecting someone's human rights.

Vulnerabilities

Vulnerabilities are factors and conditions that put people at risk of human rights abuses. They include things like a person's age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, social or economic status, HIV status or a disability. They can also include any other social, cultural, political, legal or economic factors or practices that leave people disempowered or at risk of human rights abuse.