



A GUIDE FOR CONFERENCE MEMBERS

Purpose of a Case Worker

The Case Worker service is designed to provide structured, mid-term support for Companions whose needs are complex and cannot be addressed through material aid, financial assistance, advocacy by a Conference, or referral to a single service.

Case Workers work alongside Companions to identify goals, coordinate services, advocate where appropriate, and support longer-term change. They do not provide housing, crisis accommodation, emergency financial assistance, or make decisions about Conference support.

When Should I Refer a Companion to the Case Worker?

Before making a referral, ask:

“Is the person willing to engage?”

Case Work is a voluntary service.

A referral should only be made when the Companion:

- Understands what the service is
- Consents to the referral
- Agrees to engage with the Case Worker
- Is willing to participate in planning and follow-up support

If a person is not interested in engaging or is only seeking immediate material assistance, a referral may not be appropriate.

“Is the person's situation complex?”

Case Work is generally most effective when a Companion has co-existing needs.

Examples include a combination of any of the following:

- Homelessness or at risk of homelessness
- Mental health concerns
- Family and domestic violence
- Alcohol or other drug concerns
- Justice system involvement
- Social isolation
- Poor physical health
- Multiple agencies involved with no clear coordination
- Repeated crises despite ongoing support
- Significant advocacy requirements

These situations often require ongoing coordination that extends beyond what a Conference can reasonably provide.

When a referral may **NOT** be appropriate

A referral may not be suitable if the person's needs can be met through:

- One-off financial assistance
- Food, vouchers or material aid
- A straightforward referral to a single service
- Information only
- Emergency housing enquiries
- Requests for public housing applications only
- Requests for rental properties only

Being homeless on its own does not automatically mean a person requires a Case Worker.

Many people who are homeless or experiencing housing stress can be more appropriately assisted through FIRST Canberra and may be referred to specialist homelessness services.

Managing expectations

Before making a referral, please explain that:

The Case Worker cannot:

- Provide housing
- Guarantee accommodation
- Fast-track public housing applications
- Provide emergency accommodation
- Guarantee financial assistance
- Override decisions made by Conferences or government agencies

The Case Worker can:

- Help identify goals
- Coordinate services
- Advocate where appropriate
- Support applications and referrals
- Assist people to navigate complex systems
- Work alongside Companions experiencing multiple barriers

Making these expectations clear, helps avoid disappointment and ensures Companions understand what support is available to them.

A simple referral test

Consider referring when **three or more** of the following apply:

- ☐ The person has multiple co-existing needs (refer to page 2).
- ☐ The person's needs cannot be resolved through one-off assistance.
- ☐ Several services are involved or need to be involved.
- ☐ The person would benefit from advocacy or coordination.
- ☐ The person is willing to work with a Case Worker over a period of time.
- ☐ The Conference has provided support, but ongoing complexity remains.

If you answered "yes" to most of these questions, a referral is likely appropriate.

If you're unsure

Please contact the Case Management team to discuss the Companion's circumstances before making a referral.

A conversation before referral is often the best way to determine whether Case Management is the right service or whether another support pathway would achieve a better outcome.

Making a referral

Once you are confident that you would like to refer the Companion to the Case Worker, please complete the 'Referral Form – Case Work Team' as well as the 'Consent to Share Information' and you have sought approval from the Conference President. These forms are to be emailed through to caseworkerACT@vinnies-cg.org.au.