



5: The ACFI and Allied Health Professionals

The ACFI is the new Aged Care Funding Instrument to be used for determining the level of care payments for residents in aged care homes. From 20 March 2008, the ACFI replaces the RCS as the method of determining residential care subsidies.

The new method is simpler with fewer basic funding categories, and two new supplements that will ensure funding is better matched to the needs of people with dementia and those with complex health care needs.

The time spent by aged care homes assessing residents for the purposes of funding will significantly reduce.

Key principles of the ACFI

The ACFI has been designed to focus on the core measurable needs that best explain the differences in resident care costs. To this end the ACFI:

- does not look at care plans or ongoing care documentation
- involves an assessment of the person's 'usual care needs'
- has tightly specified assessment and documentation requirements
- produces a discrete 'ACFI Appraisal Pack'

Structure of the ACFI

The ACFI contains twelve questions related to care needs. Some of the questions have specified assessment tools. The details of the required assessments are in the ACFI User Guide and ACFI Assessment Pack.

The ACFI also collects information in two categories of diagnosis - Mental and Behavioural Disorders and Medical Conditions.

The outcome of questions 1 to 12 is a rating of A, B, C, or D. The outcome of the diagnosis questions is a record of diagnosed disorders.

What are the funding categories?

There are three categories, or 'domains', of funding:

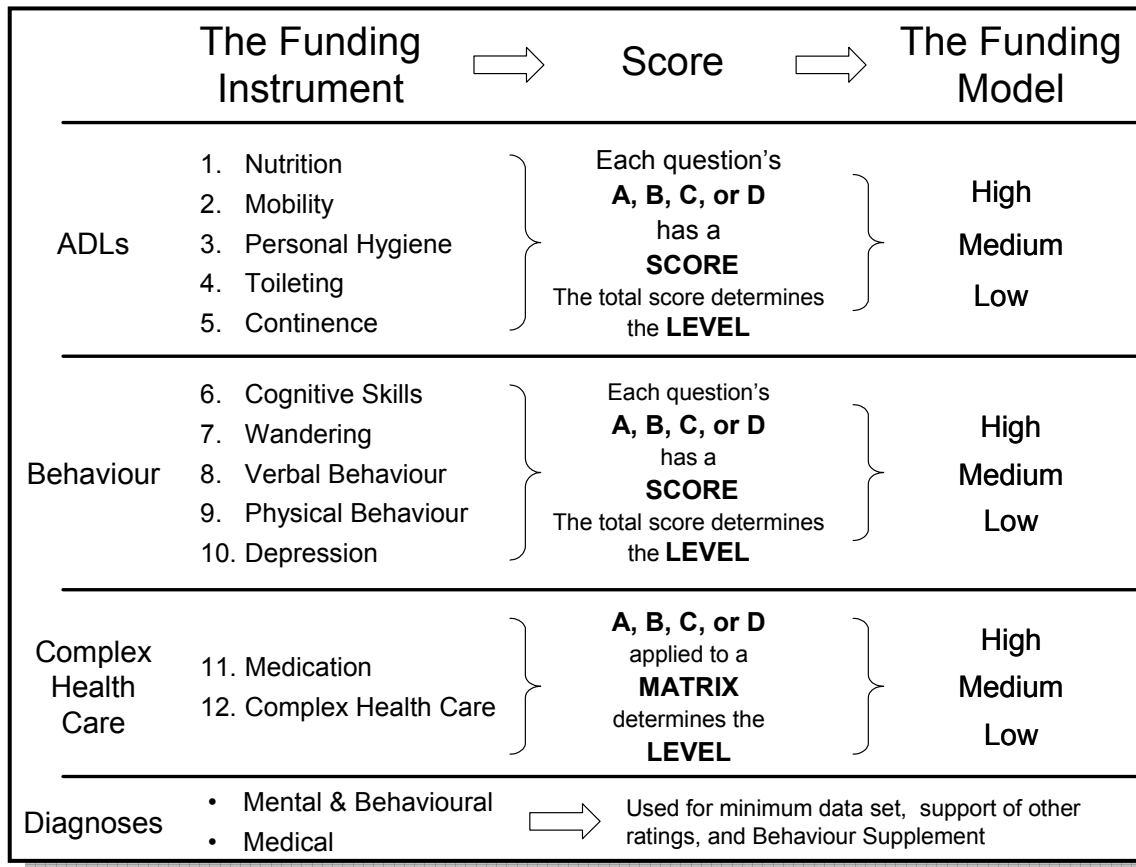
1. Activities of Daily Living
2. Behaviour Supplement
3. Complex Health Care Supplement

Each of the funding domains has *three funded levels* - Low, Medium and High.

How does the ACFI work?

The ACFI uses information from 12 questions and 2 categories of diagnosis to place a resident in the Low, Medium, or High category of each of the three funding domains. No funding will be provided for a domain if the resident has no or minimal assessed care needs.

The relationship between the questions and the funding domains is shown in the illustration below.



The ACFI and Allied Health Services

As stated above, the ACFI has been designed to focus on the core measurable needs that best explain the differences in resident care costs, and to allocate funding to services on this basis. Funding is allocated to the service based on the ACFI assessments of core impairments and complex health care needs. The ACFI does not measure what is planned or provided. Rather, it measures assessed care needs using standardised assessments.

While this is a change from the previous RCS system, there is no change in the responsibilities of providers to meet the therapy and other needs of residents.

The Accreditation Standards under the Aged Care Act 1997 require approved providers to ensure that optimum levels of mobility and dexterity are achieved for all residents and that residents are assisted to achieve maximum independence. The Accreditation Standards also require that residents are referred to appropriate health specialists in accordance with their needs and preferences. The Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency will continue to monitor aged care homes to ensure that the expected outcomes under the Accreditation Standards are met.

Approved providers must also meet the Specified Care and Services Provision under the Act which require that low care residents who are assessed as needing therapy or other allied health services are assisted in obtaining these services. High care residents assessed as needing such services must be provided with these services at no cost to the resident.

The introduction of the new funding instrument will not change these approved responsibilities. The agency continues to assess and monitor quality of care.

There are some specific areas of note in the ACFI for allied health professionals.

The Activities of Daily Living Domain

The activities of daily living domain is determined by ACFI questions one to five: Nutrition, Mobility, Personal Hygiene, Toileting and Continence.

Allied health professionals may have a key role in contributing to the assessment process for the completion of the ADL questions as described in the ACFI User Guide:

For the Activity of Daily Living questions, the completion of the checklist is to be based upon contemporaneous assessment or alternatively upon a previous assessment undertaken in the preceding six months if that assessment is consistent with current dependency of the resident and provides the information required to complete the checklist. No evidence is required to be filed.

(ACFI User Guide p.9)

ACFI 12: Complex health care

The complex health care question lists a set of complex health care procedures and their respective documentary requirements. Each of these requires a directive. Some also require a diagnosis or an assessment. Depending on the procedure, this may be from an allied health professional.

The following paragraph from the ACFI User Guide explains the requirement for a directive for items in ACFI 12 -

Only the stated procedures or health care needs that have been identified in a directive (that may include an assessment) by a registered nurse including nurse practitioner, or other appropriate medical or health professional, are taken into account.

(ACFI User Guide p.35)

The following paragraph explains the nature and role of the directive -

An allied health professional directive refers to a directive ... that describes the complex health care procedure to be performed and the associated management and/or treatment plan. The allied health professional must be appropriately qualified to develop the directive for that procedure.

(ACFI User Guide p.35)

Note: The list of Allied Health Professionals on p. 35 of the ACFI User Guide is solely for the purposes of identifying those that may give directives for the procedures listed in ACFI 12. It is not a general definition of Allied Health Professional under the ACFI or for any other purpose.

Further information

Further information on the ACFI is contained in the other information sheets and available from the Department of Health and Ageing's web site: www.health.gov.au/acfi

The ACFI User Guide and other documents are available for download at this site.