

Quick Guide:

Designing and Implementing an Effective Call Triage System

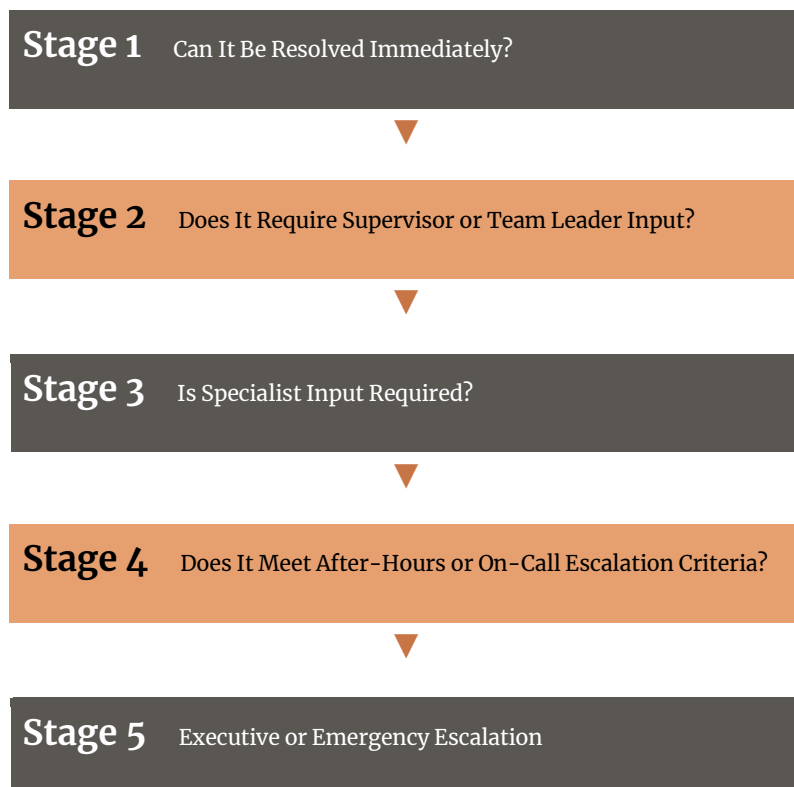
What is Call Triage?

A call triage system ensures enquiries, incidents and requests are directed to the most appropriate person at the right time. Effective triage reduces unnecessary escalations, improves response times, supports staff efficiency, and ensures senior leaders are only involved when required. During the ARIIA Flagship 1 Project, call triage was implemented alongside workforce initiatives to streamline communication and strengthen workforce sustainability.

Benefits of Call Triage

- ✓ Reduces interruptions to senior staff including RNs on the floor.
- ✓ Improves response times by directing enquiries to the right person, the first time.
- ✓ Creates clearer role responsibilities and escalation pathways.
- ✓ Supports workforce wellbeing by reducing unnecessary after-hours calls.
- ✓ Enhances consistency of communication with residents, families and staff.

Stage-Gated Call Triage Model



Stage 1: Can It Be Resolved Immediately?

Decision Question

Can the staff member receiving the enquiry resolve the issue using existing information, procedures or resources?

Examples

General enquiries • Routine service requests • Basic information requests •
Non-urgent operational matters

Action → Resolve and document if required.

Stage 2: Does It Require Supervisor or Team Leader Input?

Decision Question

Does the issue require additional knowledge, approval or operational coordination?

Examples

Staffing queries • Service delivery concerns • Minor complaints • Routine clinical questions

Action → Escalate to Team Leader, Supervisor or delegated responsible person.

Stage 3: Is Specialist Input Required?

Decision Question

Does the enquiry require expertise beyond the local team?

Examples

Clinical deterioration concerns • Quality and safety matters • Complex resident or family complaints •
HR, finance, facilities or specialist service issues

Action → Escalate to the relevant subject matter expert or specialist team.

Stage 4: Does It Meet After-Hours or On-Call Escalation Criteria?

Decision Question

Could delaying a decision create risk to people, operations, compliance or service continuity?

Examples

Significant incidents • Serious clinical concerns • Regulatory notifications • Major staffing shortages •
Critical operational disruptions

Action → Contact the designated on-call person using established escalation processes.

Stage 5: Executive or Emergency Escalation

Decision Question

Is there immediate risk to safety, significant service disruption or potential organisational impact?

Examples

Emergency situations • Serious injury or illness • Critical regulatory events • Media or reputation risks •
Business continuity incidents

Action → Activate organisational emergency and executive escalation procedures.

Implementation Checklist

- Define escalation criteria
- Develop decision-support guides
- Create contact directories and escalation pathways
- Train all staff involved in receiving calls
- Test the triage process using practical scenarios
- Monitor call volumes and escalation trends
- Regularly review staff feedback and process effectiveness
- Update resources based on lessons learned

Suggested Measures of Success

Measure	Example Indicator
Efficiency	Reduction in unnecessary escalations
Workforce Wellbeing	Improved staff satisfaction
Consistency	Increased compliance with escalation pathways
Capability	Improved staff confidence managing enquiries
Service Experience	Positive feedback from residents and families
Sustainability	Reduced after-hours burden on senior leaders

Key Message

A well-designed call triage system ensures the right issue reaches the right person at the right time. Using a stage-gated approach promotes consistency, supports workforce wellbeing, strengthens decision-making and enables senior leaders to focus on matters requiring higher-level intervention.