

## **COMPLAINT HANDLING**

**Definition of a complaint:** Anything that a Family Day Care stakeholder thinks is unfair or unreasonable and which makes them unhappy with the service. Exceptions would be breaches of law or regulations that are handled by the police, DEC's, The Ombudsman's Office and registration policies respectively.

### **AIM:**

- To improve quality, standards and procedures within the scheme.
- To provide opportunities for consultation, evaluation and review of the service operation and delivery of the education and care program;
- To develop and maintain a clear process for making and managing complaints;
- To communicate the option and process of making a complaint;
- To handle complaints diligently and confidentially and with consideration to the rights of each person.

### **RATIONALE:**

The parties will be protected against defamation provided the complaint is reported and dealt with in accordance with the established procedures and is not intentionally malicious or frivolous.

Any staff/committee member who carries out complaint resolution in accordance with our policy is also protected.

Each complaint will be dealt with in a fair, prompt and confidential manner.

All parties need to feel equally protected.

Resolution of complaints shall be handled as simply and efficiently as possible. Any notes made while working through a complaint are to be placed in a purpose specific file.

Family Day Care stakeholders are advised of their right to complain.

### **PROCEDURES:**

#### **Verbal Grievance Procedure**

For any verbal complaints received, the complainant must give permission for a staff person to speak to the person/s being complained about.

**Step 1** Complaints will be taken by co-ordination unit staff and recorded on a 'Complaint Record Form'.

**Step 2** Relevant staff member to establish that the parties involved have made a concerted attempt to settle the matter themselves, if applicable.

**Step 3** Complaint to be brought to the attention of the relevant party/ies within seven days of receipt of the complaint.

**Step 4** If the issue cannot be resolved, it is then referred to the scheme manager.

**Step 5** If a verbal issue is unable to be resolved, then the complainant should put their concerns in writing.

If recurrent complaints are received, then it will be at the discretion of the scheme manager to refer the issue to the management committee.

If a complaint is made against the scheme manager then the complaint will be referred to the person delegated by the management committee.

## **WRITTEN GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

### **TIER ONE – CO-ORDINATION UNIT ROLE**

- Step 1** On receipt of a written complaint, the scheme manager/delegated staff person will record the complaint on a “Complaint Record Form”
- Step 2** The scheme manager/delegated staff person will establish that a concerted attempt had been made by the parties involved to settle the matter themselves.
- Step 3** Relevant party/ies must be visited within seven working days by the scheme manager/delegated staff person. The relevant party may have a support person present if they wish.
- Step 4** The ‘Complaint Record Form’ will be made available to both parties.
- Step 5** Co-ordination Unit to offer mediation with concerned parties.
- Step 6** If the complaint is not resolved at this stage, inform all parties involved that this matter will be presented at a special grievance sub-committee meeting. At this meeting all parties will be given the opportunity to submit a written report and/or attend with support person to address the grievance sub-committee.

### **TIER TWO - MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ROLE**

- Step 1** Only if the complaint could not be resolved at the co-ordination unit level, should this issue be referred to the grievance sub-committee.
- Step 2** On receipt of the complaint, the grievance sub-committee will meet within 28 days to discuss the matter and make a decision. Relevant parties will be given the opportunity to present either oral or written reports with the right to have a support person in attendance.
- Step 3** Within seven (7) working days of the consultation with the grievance sub-committee, both parties will receive a written reply regarding the outcome of the complaint.
- Step 4** If either party is still not satisfied with the grievance sub-committee decision, then they have the right to appeal to the management committee within fourteen (14) working days.

**If a complaint is received that relates to the health, safety or well-being of a child in care, permission by the complainant for the scheme to address the complaint is not required.**

## **GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

A grievance is a formal expression of dissatisfaction about a situation, usually by an individual, but can be initiated by a group of people. The aim is to resolve problems that arise as close to the source as possible, with graduated steps for further discussions and resolution at higher levels of authority, as necessary.

Any person who has concerns regarding any stakeholder of the scheme, should report those concerns to the scheme manager immediately. If anyone feels that their concerns have not been satisfactorily addressed, these concerns may be put in writing to the management committee.

Grievance procedures are based on the principle of natural justice and it is recognised as good business sense to have effective grievance procedures. An effective grievance procedure should allow the following outcomes:

- \* A peaceful method of conflict resolution
- \* Quick and effective results
- \* Improved communications and working relationships

### **Features of an effective grievance procedure**

- \* Grievances should be fully described by the person with the grievance.
- \* The person/s against whom the grievance/complaint is made should be given the full details of the allegation/s against them.
- \* The person/s against whom the grievance/complaint is made should have the opportunity and be given a reasonable time to put their side of the story before resolution is attempted.
- \* Proceedings should be conducted honestly, fairly and without bias.
- \* Proceedings should not be unduly delayed.

Stakeholders are encouraged to deal with the grievance promptly, initiate discussion quickly and investigate all the facts. Discussions should be held in a non-threatening atmosphere. Be consistent. If you have acted incorrectly or inappropriately – say so! Then fix the problem. Decide your response/action and give a full explanation. This allows the matter to be finalised.

These guidelines for effective grievance procedures are guidelines only. Scheme policies, especially those relating to child protection override the above.

These procedures should be read in conjunction with the scheme's Complaint Handling Policy.

**Source:** *Community Justice Centre literature; How to deal with conflict*

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**COMPLAINT RECORD FORM**

Date: ..... Type of Complaint: Verbal/Written/Tier 1/Tier 2/External

Name of person making the complaint:.....

Address:.....

Phone:..... Fax:.....

Name of Staff member completing the report:..... Position:.....

Complaint description:.....

.....

The complainant has given permission for details of the complaint to be discussed with the person being complained about. ( YES / NO ) with the following restrictions, *if applicable*.

.....

Possible solutions negotiated with client:

1.....

2.....

3.....

4.....

Solution chosen: .....

**ACTION PLAN**

Action:..... Staff:.....

Date Completed:..... Additional Comments:.....

Outcome/resolution:.....

.....

=====

Signed: ..... Date:.....  
(Person making the complaint)

I would like to make the following comments about the way my complaint was handled:-

.....

.....