

Client Complaints and Grievances Policy

HelpStop is committed to handling and resolving client complaints in a confidential, fair and timely manner.

Procedure

Types of Complaints

There are many factors that influence a client's decision to make a complaint. There is also a range in the types of complaints that can be made. Examples of factors and types of complaints include:

Service delivery complaints:

- dissatisfaction with service provision
- communication breakdown
- stress and fatigue
- incidents of conflict
- breach in client confidentiality.
- accuracy and timeliness of information
- inappropriate behaviour of staff and volunteers
- poor maintenance of facilities and equipment
- client abuse, harassment, discrimination and neglect
- cultural issues

Governance complaints:

- financial mismanagement
- fraud
- procedures followed not in accordance with the organisation's constitution or organisational policies.

Complaints of potentially criminal nature:

- If the complaint has criminal implications, such as fraud or abuse, then the Police should be notified immediately.

Methods of complaint:

There are two ways clients may choose to make a complaint to the HelpStop:

- verbal – face to face or by phone
- written – formal letter, e-mail, fax.

Anonymous complaints:

- Some clients may wish to remain anonymous in making their complaint. This should be respected and the complaint investigated.

Responding to complaints:

- All client complaints should aim to handle and resolve every complaint immediately, wherever possible, using the following process:

Verbal complaints:

- All Board members, Members, Volunteers and employees that receive a complaint must:
 - listen carefully and respond to the client in a polite and respectful manner
 - clarify your understanding of the complaint and ask the client how they would like the complaint resolved. Wherever possible, try to resolve the complaint at the time.
- If the circumstances do not allow the complaint to be resolved immediately, direct the complaint to the Customer Care Team Leader/Manager.
- If the Manager is unavailable, the complaint should be directed to the staff member with the most appropriate skills to handle the matter, e.g. Workplace Health and Safety Officer (WHSO) or Dispute Resolution Committee or for serious occurrences contact immediately any Board Member.
www.helpstop.org.
- If the client wishes only to speak with the Manager, arrange a meeting between the Manager and the client at a time that is mutually convenient.
- Advise the client that they may submit the complaint in writing. See *Client Complaint Form*.
- Follow the process for written complaints below.
- Record complaint in the *Client Complaint Log*.

Written complaints:

- All complaints of a serious nature, e.g. corruption, fraud, harassment, etc. should be submitted in writing and referred to the Manager for investigation. If the complaint involves the Manager or the client feels that the Manager is not the appropriate person to handle the complaint, refer the matter to the CEO or Chairman of the Board.
- Upon receiving a written complaint, the Manager or Dispute Management Committee should aim to provide a response within ten (10) working days.
- The response may include the following:
 - confirmation that the complaint has been received and the matter is being investigated
 - an understanding of the complaint
 - suggested actions for resolving the complaint
 - complaint process, including the estimated timeframe for resolution
 - client satisfaction and right to appeal
 - contact name and number.

Appeals and seeking outside assistance

- If the complaint involves the Manager, the matter can be referred to the Dispute Management Committee.
- If the complaint cannot be resolved internally, an option could be to seek support from The Community Justice Centre is a Northern Territory Government service that offers free dispute resolution services at local venues across the Territory.

2B1 CASCOM Centre, 13 - 17 Scaturchio Street, Casuarina NT 0810

cjc@nt.gov.au, PO Box 41964, Casuarina NT 0811

Free call: 1800 000 473

If the client lives in an alternative location there are Dispute Resolution Services available in every state.

See Dispute Resolution Services section in HelpStop's Policies and Procedures manual.