



Complaints and Grievances – Policy

It is the objective of this policy to ensure that complaints and grievances are resolved fairly, confidentially and quickly by negotiation and discussion between the parties.

SpringDale Neighbourhood Centre Inc. recognises that from time-to-time people may have complaints or grievances that need to be resolved. We believe it is important that people using a service or program are able to make a complaint if they feel that their rights have been infringed, if the Centre has not done or provided what was agreed or if they have been treated unfairly in any way.

The Centre is committed to open, fair and constructive resolution of difficulties where all parties are heard and treated equally, good relationships are maintained as far as possible and a positive result is achieved for all parties.

Any person who has dealings with SpringDale Neighbourhood Centre Inc. has the right to:

- have complaints and grievances resolved swiftly
- have complaints and grievances heard, recorded and dealt with in a fair and systematic way
- have their privacy respected
- be informed of their right to be represented at all stages by an advocate of their choice
- outcome of the complaint will be in writing and given to all parties concerned

Serious allegations will be addressed within 24 hours or as practicable, and in the instance of a serious complaint about a worker or committee person, that person shall not have contact with the individual making the complaint.

This is part of our induction process and is displayed on the office wall, on website and a copy is available from the office.

The Coordinator / President must keep a sealed record of all complaints to respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties and this is to be kept for 7 years.

Procedures:

An individual with a complaint or grievance can approach:

- the program coordinator, Tutor or Group Leader in charge of the program in which he or she has an interest or complaint
- the Centre Coordinator
- a member of the Committee of Management

- an advocate of their choice to raise the matter with either the Coordinator or the Committee of Management

The person receiving the complaint shall:

- record initial contact
- determine the level of severity
- supply the person making the complaint with a copy of this Grievance Policy
- ensure that the complainant has a copy of the complaint

Level 1:

Complaints involving misunderstandings, communication breakdowns or which can be resolved quickly to the satisfaction of the individual. In this case, the person notified of the complaint shall meet with the individual and attempt to resolve the grievance with the party concerned. The parties must meet and if possible resolve the dispute. If it cannot be resolved at this point, the process shall move to level 2.

Level 2:

Complaints involving conflict between service users and/or between service users and workers; or Level 1 complaints, which have not been satisfactorily resolved.

In the case of a complaint at Level 2, the person notified of the complaint shall inform the Centre coordinator and shall meet with the Centre coordinator and the person with the grievance in an attempt to resolve the issue. In the event that the complaint relates to the coordinator, the meeting shall involve the person with the complaint, the person who received the complaint and a member of the Committee of Management. If the complaint cannot be resolved at this point, the process shall move to level 3.

The procedures addressing Level 1 and 2 complaints must be completed within 14 days or as practicable of all parties becoming aware of the complaint.

If the parties are unable to resolve the dispute at that level, or a party fails to attend the meeting, then the parties must within 10 days or as practicable move to level 3.

Level 3:

Complaints involving serious allegations of harassment, unprofessional conduct, abuse, mistreatment, or infringement of rights.

In the case of a complaint at **Level 3**, a meeting shall be held involving the person with the complaint and/or their advocate, the Centre Coordinator, a representative of the Committee of Management and an independent mediator.

The mediator must be;

- a person chosen by agreement between parties or in the absence of agreement:
 - In the case of a dispute between a member and another member, a person appointed by the Committee or

- In the case of a dispute between a member and the Committee, a person who is a mediator appointed or employed by the Dispute Settlement Centre or Victorian Department of Justice

A member of the Committee of Management can be a mediator.

The mediator cannot be a member who is a party to the dispute.

The mediator must:

- Give all parties every opportunity to be heard.
- Allow due consideration by all parties of any written submission.
- Ensure that natural justice is accorded to the parties to the dispute throughout the process.

Complaints at Level 3 will be addressed within 24 hours or as practicable, and in the instance of a serious complaint about a worker or committee person, that person shall not have contact with the individual making the complaint, or attend the centre.

The meeting between these parties shall make every effort to achieve a mutual decision in regard to the grievance. If an agreement cannot be reached the parties may seek to resolve the dispute in accordance with the relevant law.

Minutes of processes Level 1, 2 or 3 to be listed in the Incident Log and filed appropriately.

References

- *Code of Conduct code of ethics Policy SpringDale Neighbourhood Centre*
- *Access and Equity – Policy SpringDale Neighbourhood Centre*
- *Guide to dispute*