



## CLINICAL POLICY & PROCEDURES MANUAL

**Approved:** Executive Team

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August 2013  
May 2017

Introduction

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## Complaints

### Policy

Each child or parent receiving services at Vanier has the right to express concerns if dissatisfied with the services provided, or if he or she feels that his or her rights have been violated including alleged harassment of any form (see Administration Manual - Anti-Harassment, 4-35). Written information regarding the complaints procedure is provided at the time of the Intake process. Community professionals can also express concerns when they feel that the services provided to a client have not been satisfactory, or if they feel there have been difficulties working with the professional staff at Vanier. Other members of the community can also express concerns, depending on the nature of their contact with the agency.

Concerns are addressed in a progressive manner within the organization, and efforts are made to engage in mutual problem solving at each step of the procedure. Concerns are heard and addressed as quickly as possible in each step of the procedure. Concerns will be handled according to the following steps. If a person at a higher step is the first person to receive a concern, then the person receiving the concern has discretion to refer the issue to an appropriate person at a lower step or to address the concern immediately. In the event that the person who would normally receive the concern at a particular level is absent, the process moves to the next step. In exceptional circumstances, the Executive Director can elect to by-pass earlier steps in the Complaint Procedure, where the nature of the complaint is judged to be very serious in nature.

### Definition

For the purposes of this policy, a *Formal Complaint* is a concern that meets one or more of the following criteria:

- 1) the person expressing the concern has requested a formal complaint process with a view towards resolving the concern (not merely expressing dissatisfaction or making a request for an exception from standard operating procedures); or
- 2) is escalated to the Director level (Step 3) because it was not resolved at an earlier step or has gone directly to an external complaint (Step 5); or
- 3) is judged by the person receiving the concern or by any manager to whom it is escalated to be of serious enough nature to be processed as a Formal Complaint.

## **Tracking of Formal Complaints**

All Formal Complaints are tracked in a central log maintained by the Executive Assistant. The first manager who becomes aware of a Formal Complaint is required to complete the Complaint Form (Form Ref # Gen. 108). This form will record details of the complaint, the type of complaint, actions taken, and outcome (including whether the complaint was referred outside of the agency). This form is provided to the Executive Assistant when the complaint is resolved, or closed by the Executive Director. The Director of Quality Improvement provides annual summaries of this log to the Value Team, Executive Team, and the Board.

### **Procedure**

#### **Step 1**

The person expressing a concern indicates verbally or in writing, the nature of his or her concern.

The staff member receiving the concern must respond within five working days of receiving the complaint.

In Step 1, the primary worker, or other staff member involved will attempt to resolve the problem directly. If the person expressing the concern does not wish to interact directly with the staff member involved, the process can move directly to Step 2. The process is documented in the form of a case note that includes the following information: The nature of the concern, persons involved in problem-solving, steps taken to resolve the problem, the outcome of the process, and any further action necessary.

If the problem cannot be resolved at Step 1, the staff member notifies his or her Supervisor to initiate Step 2, and notifies the person expressing the concern that the matter will move to Step 2.

If a concern meets the definition of a Formal Complaint, then the staff member receiving the complaint will inform his or her Supervisor, regardless of the outcome of the complaint. The Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the complaint is tracked properly.

#### **Step 2**

The Supervisor contacts the person expressing the concern, and arranges a telephone or face to face interview. Contact must be attempted within five working days of being notified that Step 2 is to begin. The Supervisor can elect to interview staff, and to review any relevant documentation, to assist in reaching a resolution. If mutual problem solving is not successful, the Supervisor can make a recommendation to the person as to how the matter can be settled. The process is documented in the form of a letter to the person expressing the concern. The same information required in recording at Step 1 is included in the letter.

If the problem cannot be resolved at Step 2, the concern is escalated to a Formal Complaint. The Supervisor notifies the Director responsible, and the person making the complaint that Step 3 will be initiated. The Supervisor provides the Director with the formal Complaints Form.

#### **Step 3**

The Director arranges an interview with the person expressing the complaint. Contact is attempted within three working days of being notified that Step 3 has begun. The same methods are used as in Step 2. The letter is sent to the person making the complaint, and the Director adds his or her notes to the Complaint Form.

If the problem remains unresolved after Step 3, the Director notifies the Executive Director that Step 4 should begin, and informs the person making the complaint that the final stage of the Complaint Procedure has been reached.

#### **Step 4**

The Executive Director contacts and interviews the person making the complaint. Contact is attempted within two working days of being notified that Step 4 has begun. The Executive Director makes efforts to resolve the difficulty with the person expressing the complaint, whenever possible. If this does not produce a resolution, the Executive Director makes a final decision and presents it to the person making the complaint, and sends a letter to that person. The Executive Director adds his or her notes to the Complaint Form. The Executive Director informs the Board of Directors of any complaint that reaches Step 4.

#### **Step 5**

Persons who are expressing a complaint are encouraged to make use of the agency's internal Complaint Procedure, Steps 1 - 4. If the person chooses not to do this, he or she may request that his concerns or complaints be reviewed outside of the agency. This outside review can be initiated by the person, in writing to any of the following:

The local office of the:

#### **Ministry of Children & Youth Services**

Program Supervisor  
217 York Street  
London, Ontario N6A 1B7  
(519) 438-5111, Ext. 3149

**OR**

#### **The Office of Child & Family Services Advocacy**

Ministry of Children & Youth  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Suite 503  
250 Davisville Ave.  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1G2  
(416) 325-5669

**OR**

#### **The Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children & Youth**

401 Bay Street, Suite 2200  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 0A6  
Phone (416) 325-5669 or toll free 1-800-263-2841  
Fax: (416) 325-5681 TTY: (416) 325-2648  
Email: advocacy@provincialadvocate

A child 12 years of age or older who is in residence may object to his or her placement by requesting a review of his or her placement by contacting:

#### **Community Services Coordination Network**

171 Queens Ave., Suite 750  
London, Ontario N6A 5J7  
(519) 438-4783