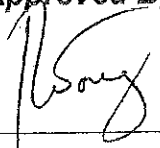




POLICY: COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK POLICY & PROCEDURES				
Policy #: QAM 3-M	Section: Program Services, Standards and Guidelines	Effective: Dec., 18, 2012	Revised: Dec., 18, 2013	Approved By: 

POLICY STATEMENT:

Sudbury Developmental Services recognizes the right of each person receiving services, family members, and guardians to question decisions and actions carried out by our organization, staff member, or if they believe they have not been treated fairly or respectfully. SDS encourages individuals to bring their questions and concerns forward so that they may be dealt with positively and appropriately.

This policy process is an important part of providing quality support that is responsive to people's needs and that supports continuous improvement in service delivery. The information received through a complaints/feedback process can assist SDS to take steps to better support individuals and/or improve administrative practices.

In working to resolve complaints, all SDS staff is guided by the following principles:

Person-Centered

- The concerns and interests of a person with a developmental disability, persons acting on their behalf and the general public will guide the complaints resolution process, regardless of who is making the complaint.

Right to Be Heard

- A person with a developmental disability will be supported to participate fully in the complaints process. The person will be given every opportunity to have their independent views heard, respected and considered.

Administrative Fairness

- Every person with a developmental disability, persons acting on their behalf, and the general public has a right to understand why and how a decision was made and will be provided with and given the opportunity to respond to the reasons for a decision and to the fullest extent possible, the information relied upon to reach that decision. Persons will be given information about the next stage in the process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of discussions.
Additionally, anyone making a complaint must be assured that there will be no retaliation from any person employed by SDS regardless of how the complaint is made, to whom it is directed, or the eventual outcome.

Right to Advocacy and Support

- A person with a developmental disability have the right to involve an advocate, relative, or friend to support them through the complaints process

Policy Compliance

- All decision making with respect to complaints must comply with SDS policies and procedures

SDS shall receive, document and review all feedback, and attempt to resolve all complaints. Wherever possible, the agency shall make reasonable efforts to resolve or address the matter to the mutual satisfaction of both the person who has made the complaint and the agency.

SDS shall take all complaints seriously, and review and investigate all matters. The agency is not, however expected to attempt to resolve complaints that it may determine to be frivolous and vexatious.

Sudbury Developmental Services shall ensure that a person who submits a complaint or provides feedback is not at risk of having his/her services and supports negatively impacted or withdrawn, as a consequence of submitting the complaint/feedback.

This Complaints/Feedback process Policy shall comply with reporting requirements set out in the Service and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008 and its regulations.

SDS shall ensure that, where necessary, a complaint/feedback is:

- Reported to the police (i.e. as in the case of alleged, suspected, or witnessed abuse that may constitute a criminal offence, as required by Ontario Regulation 299/10 regarding quality assurance measures made under the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008.
- Reported to the Ministry of Community and Social Services as a serious occurrence through the ministry's serious occurrence reporting process (based on the nature of the complaint/feedback)

SDS will keep records of the types of complaints received, and use the information collected to inform the quality assurance committee. This may include revisions to policies and procedures, responding to persons with a developmental disability, persons acting on their behalf, and the general public changes to practice or in-depth review of potentially systemic issues.

STANDARD

A review of the complaints/feedback received in a complaints/feedback process can assist SDS in identifying issues and mitigating a risk to the organization where it may fail to meet expectations of the public, persons receiving service, people acting on behalf or persons receiving supports and services, ministries and stakeholders.

SDS will make sure that this Complaints/Feedback process is readily available and easily understandable (plain language) to all persons with a developmental disability, persons acting on their behalf, and the general public who come into service with the agency and who wish to submit a complaint or provide feedback, and set out the way in which the agency will provide a response to the complaint/feedback in a timely manner. SDS will provide a copy of this policy to any person who requests it.

- The Complaints/Feedback may be submitted in writing, or provided verbally to an agency representative.

- The process for investigating the matter will be free of conflict of interest that may arise between the person who makes the complaint or provides feedback, and those who may be involved in the review, documentation, investigation, resolution and notification/confirmation. SDS will also ensure that the review process is free of any coercion or intimidation or bias, either before, during or after the review.
- SDS will ensure that anyone involved in the investigation is not directly involved with any person or program involved in the complaint. Please refer to the Prevention of Abuse & Harassment Policy (#3-4) and the Whistleblower Policy (#7-71).

This policy and procedure regarding the process for receiving and addressing feedback and complaints about the services and supports SDS provided may be received from:

- An individual with a developmental disability who receives services and supports from the agency
- A person acting on behalf of the individuals with a development disability who received services and supports from the agency
- The general public

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to set up a process to receive and address complaints and other feedback about the services and supports that SDS provides.

The Complaints/Feedback process is an important element of SDS's approach to quality assurance, to continuously improve its ability to provide high quality supports and services.

The agency's complaints/feedback process is separate and apart from the other means to express concern, either at the local level, or more broadly, such as the Ombudsman of Ontario or the Human Rights Commission.

This policy includes a process to elicit feedback and to resolve and respond to complaints regarding the agency and the services and supports it provides, from individuals with a developmental disability, persons acting on their behalf, and the general public.

DEFINITIONS

Feedback may be positive or negative (including complaints) and is related to the services and/or supports that are provided by SDS. Feedback may be solicited (such as information and comments collected through a satisfaction survey or a comment box) or unsolicited (such as a letter from a person or family member about the services and supports that the agency provides). Feedback may be formal (like the survey or letter noted above) or informal (such as a verbal complaint expressed to a staff person).

Complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction related to the services and/or supports that are provided by SDS. A complaint may be expressed by a person with a developmental disability who is receiving services and supports from SDS, or a person acting on their behalf, or by the general public, regarding the services and supports that are provided by the agency. A complaint may be made formally (such as a letter written to the agency) or informally (such as a verbal complaint expressed to a staff person). A complaint does not include feedback on matters unrelated to the agency and the services and supports that it provides.

TRAINING/IMPLEMENTATION

- SDS will provide training to employees and others as required to implement this policy.
- New employees will be trained on Complaints/Feedback Process Policy during the orientation process. Documentation of training will be kept in the employee's personnel file.

COMMUNICATION

SDS will make sure that the policy is available in a language and manner and with the level of support that the person with a developmental disability needs.

All staff will review the policy annually at their evaluation and sign the acknowledgement stating they have done so and understand.

All policies are available in the One Stop electronically.

People receiving services

SDS will make sure that this Complaints/Feedback process is readily available and easily understandable (plain language) to all persons with a developmental disability. All people receiving services will be notified of the policy and amendments of this policy at initial intake throughout orientation and as refresher training on a yearly basis.

General public

This complaints/Feedback process policy will be posted on the agency's public website.

EVALUATION

In order to promote continuous quality improvement, SDS shall conduct a review and analysis of the complaint and feedback received to evaluate the effectiveness of its policies and procedures, on an annual basis.

The agency shall also conduct a review and analysis of the complaints and feedback received to consider the need to revise any other policies and procedures that the agency may have in place.

SDS shall share information about its complaints/feedback process, and/or about complaints/feedback, as part of the ministry's risk assessment process, upon request by the ministry.

COMPLAINT AND FEEDBACK PROCEDURE

PROCEDURE:

- SDS requires that complaints/concerns/issues are addressed as they arise and resolved, whenever possible, in an effort to provide quality services to the persons that we support.
- Complaints are resolved in a progressive manner.
- The complainant is first required to speak with the SDS employee with whom the complaint is directed toward.
- Where resolution cannot be achieved at this level, the complainant has the right to submit a written complaint for formal review at the next level.

ANY EMPLOYEE WHO RECEIVES A VERBAL OR WRITTEN COMPLAINT:

Must take action within 24 hours of receiving the complaint by:

- assisting the complainant in understanding the review process, including the expectation that concerns are addressed in a progressive manner starting with an initial response at the front line staff level.
- attempting to resolve the concern/complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant.

FRONT LINE EMPLOYEE'S INITIAL RESPONSE

If the front line employee is able to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the complainant, they document the complaint and solution, in writing in AIMS. Automatically the complaint goes to the Manager who will notify the ED. A copy is given to the complainant and the Manager of that program must follow up with the complaint.

If the front line employee is unable to resolve the issue, they bring the matter without delay, to the attention of the appropriate program manager.

Complaints identifying serious safety issues will be addressed immediately by the Employee and/or the Manager to eliminate/control the hazard.

FORMAL REVIEW PROCESS:

1st Level: Manager

- Where the Complainant believes that a contentious issue was not satisfactorily resolved at the level of the front line employee, a formal written complaint, may be submitted for review by the Manager responsible for that program.
- The Manager reviews the matter and provides a response to the Complainant as soon as possible within the ten working days following receipt of the complaint.
- The response is documented in writing in AIMS. The Manager will notify the ED. A copy is given to the Complainant and the Manager of that program must follow up with the complaint.
- If the review process is going to take longer than the expected 10 days, the Manager will notify the Complainant, in writing, of the expected completion date.

2nd Level: Executive Director

Where a Complainant believes that a complaint was not satisfactorily resolved at the 1st level, an appeal may be submitted to the Executive Director within 30 days following completion of the 1st level review.

The Executive Director shall prepare a report containing:

- His/her perception of the problem
- The facts he/she has obtained
- The documentation already in the file
- The attempts made to resolve the problem
- The suggested solution to the problem
- Any recommendations for preventing further occurrences of the problem
- And will make sure that the process for investigating the matter is free of conflict of interest as per signed SDS policy and procedures that may arise between the person who makes the complaint or provides feedback, and those who may be involved in the review, documentation, investigation, resolution and notification/confirmation. He/she will also ensure that the review process is free of any coercion or intimidation or bias, either before, during, or after the review by ensuring that the person towards whom the complaint has been made, has no contact with the person who or for whom the complaint was filed.

The Executive Director, within 10 days of receipt of the complaint and/or appeal will:

- Review the complaint and the decision made by the Manager
- Render their decision, in writing to the Complainant
- If the review process is going to take longer than the expected 10 days, they will notify the Complainant, in writing, of the expected completion date.
- Notify the Chair of the Board of Directors of the complaint and its resolution.

3rd Level: Board of Directors

Where a Complainant believes that a complaint was not satisfactorily resolved at the 1st and 2nd levels, an appeal may be submitted to the Chair of the Board of Directors within 30 days following completion of the 2nd level review.

The Chair of the Board of Directors within 10 days of receipt of the complaint and/or appeal will:

- Review the complaint and the decision made by the Executive Director
- Render their decision, in writing to the Complainant and the Executive Director
- If the review process is going to take longer than the expected 10 days, they will notify the Complainant, in writing, of the expected completion date.

4th Level Ministry of Community and Social Services

Where a Complainant believes that a complaint was not satisfactorily resolved at the 1st, 2nd and 3rd levels, an appeal may be submitted to the Program Supervisor for the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

FLOW CHART COMPLAINT PROCESS

