

19. Complaints Policy

Introduction

Spectrum has a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to any complaint made by an employee, volunteer, sub-contractor, individual or their family or representative, or member of the community. The complaints policy sets forth principles that will be upheld, and outlines a procedure for dealing with complaints.

Principles:

- (i) **Entitlement:** individuals and families, employees, volunteers and sub-contractors have a right to fair and equitable treatment as outlined in the Society's Policy and Procedures Manual and other relevant documents.
- (ii) **Accountability:** the complaints process is an integral component of overall quality assurance. From a professional and ethical point of view, the Society accepts and recognizes the need for and the benefit of accountability to individuals and their families, employees, volunteers, sub-contractors, and to the general public.
- (iii) **Responsiveness:** the Society's management shall be trained in the concepts of administrative fairness and due process, to ensure appropriate follow-through on all complaints.
- (iv) **Accessibility:** the complaints process must be accessible to all persons. For example, the following criteria should be considered:
 - (i) The use of plain language
 - (ii) All forms used in the complaints process are to be in a simple, straight-forward format
 - (iii) By request, a person can make use of the services of an interpreter / translator at any stage throughout the complaints process
 - (iv) Any meetings or hearings forming part of the complaints process shall be held in a place that is accessible to those who are mobility restricted
- (v) **Rights:** both the complainant and the person about whom the complaint is being made have a right to be accompanied at all stages in the complaints process by an advocate or support person, and to be treated with fairness and impartiality. Any person about whom a complaint is being made has a right to due process, which includes respect for their privacy and confidentiality of information. Information about the complaint should not be discussed by either party outside of the complaints process, except on a "need to know" basis.

- (vi) **Responsibilities:** both the complainant and the person about whom the complaint is being made have a responsibility to respond truthfully to any questions and to cooperate with the complaints process in the spirit of achieving a fair and timely resolution to the complaint.
- (vii) **No reprisals:** no-one should fear reprisals as a result of initiating a complaint.
- (viii) **Local resolution preferred:** a person initiating a complaint should be encouraged and should have the opportunity to respond to complaints and/or correct the issue at hand locally before proceeding to a further stage in the complaints process. This does not apply in situations involving criminal acts or suspected abuse, which are required to be reported immediately to the supervisor.
- (ix) **Timelines:** all complaints will be dealt with in a timely fashion. The period of time from the initial complaint to a formal response to the complainant shall not exceed two weeks.

Complaints Procedure

- (a) Complaints from employees, volunteers, sub-contractors, individuals or their family or representatives, or from the community regarding the actions or decisions of any Spectrum employee shall be reported to the supervisor or coordinator, who shall document the complaint in writing and submit it to the Executive Director within 48 hours of the complaint being made.
 - (i) If the supervisor or coordinator is the source of the complaint, then the complainant will make their report directly to Human Resources or the Executive Director, or in the case of a complaint against the Executive Director, to the Society's Board of Directors.
- (b) The Executive Director shall be responsible for maintaining a record of all complaints and for ensuring appropriate resolution of all complaints. The Executive Director shall inform the appropriate authority about any complaints made regarding Spectrum's services.
- (c) Wherever possible, complaints should be dealt with at the source, following the steps outlined in Spectrum's Conflict Resolution procedure. If the complaint cannot be dealt with to satisfaction at the source, then the Executive Director shall designate a third party who will have responsibility for hearing, reviewing and resolving the complaint. The designated third party should not have a direct line of responsibility over the area, person or subject of the complaint.
 - (i) The designated third party will meet individually with the complainant and the person about whom the complaint is being made, to gather information from both parties and gain as full an understanding as possible about the situation. He/she

may conduct additional research or interview others as appropriate to corroborate the statements of either party.

- (ii) The designated third party will review the available evidence and provide a written response to the complainant, copied to the Executive Director, outlining the actions to be taken to resolve the complaint, a timeframe for resolution of the complaint, and any further investigation that may be required.
- (d) If the complaint is still not resolved to satisfaction, then the Executive Director shall direct the complainant to an appropriate outside source, such as Community Living B.C.
- (e) On an annual basis, the directors will review all formal complaints to determine trends, areas needing performance improvement, and actions to be taken, if applicable.