

CLIENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

A. Overview

The forum to address client complaints recognizes the importance of ensuring effective avenues to bring forth complaints to the attention of management to resolve issues.

B. Related Policy Statement

Client Complaints Policy - The Canadian Red Cross Society recognizes the need to provide a forum to address concerns or complaints raised by clients concerning employees and volunteers, or the products and services provided by the Society. The Society will provide an effective means of bringing problems and issues concerning client services or client relations to the attention of management and involved parties in order to seek mutually satisfactory resolutions.

C. Definitions

Complaint:

A problem is defined as any issue, concern or problem related to a condition that the client considers unfair or undignified. For example, problems can include interpersonal conflict, poor client care management, disagreements, etc.

Complainant:

A complainant is a person who submits a written or verbal complaint to the Society. A complainant may include a client who receives assistance from the Red Cross, consumer of Red Cross programs and/or services, supplier, funder, or family member of such an individual.

D. Procedure Details

Please also see 2.2 – *Prevention of Harassment in the Workplace* and 3.2 – *Prevention of Violence in the Workplace*. These policies may be applicable, dependant upon the particular fact scenario of the client complaint.

a. Red Cross Responsibilities:

Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that the confidentiality of all parties is respected throughout the complaint and investigation process and that information is limited to those on a ‘need-to-know’ basis. This is accomplished, in part, with the assistance of the Clearview Connect reporting system. Strict confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in all cases. Should a complaint undergo a formal investigation, the respondent will need to be made aware of the complaint in order to respond to it. There is also the potential for other individuals to become involved in the complaint investigation (i.e. witnesses), however, all parties involved will be subject to strict confidentiality terms. On a case-by-case basis, the Society may decide to retain an outside third-party firm to conduct the investigation.

The Society will provide a fair and prompt investigation of any complaint or concern without fear of reprisal, provided that the complaint is not found to be mischievous, false or vexatious.

b. Problem Resolution Steps:

Basic Problem Resolution Procedure:

Complaint → Inform → Investigate → Action

Complaint: Concerns may be received from clients, their families, suppliers, and/or funders through verbal or written submissions. In certain circumstances, complainants may be asked to put the complaint in writing. Upon receipt of a complaint, the employee or volunteer will ensure that the appropriate supervisor/manager is informed.

Inform: Concerns will normally be acknowledged within two (2) to three (3) business days by a supervisor/manager and a client visit may be arranged.

Investigate: Once the nature of the complaint is known, appropriate staff will look into the substance of the complaint, as appropriate, given the substance of the complaint. Client concerns, steps taken, and resolution must be appropriately documented. Some programs may require specific documentation protocols.

Action: The complainant will be informed of the conclusion and resolution of the issue. . If the complainant is not satisfied, the matter may be elevated to the executive level. At this stage all aspects of the case will be reviewed and a final decision will be relayed in writing to all parties involved.

Notes:

1. If an employee is involved, People Services is to be informed and the appropriate policies applied. No information is to be kept in the employee's personnel file, except for direct communication to the employee as part of the resolution (e.g. discipline). Similar to harassment cases, the documentation should be kept indefinitely in a separate file.
2. In situations involving senior volunteers or executive members, it is recommended that external third-parties become engaged to provide advice and recommendations in an attempt to find a resolution.
3. The Society reserves the right to tailor its processes as appropriate under the circumstances and in accordance with applicable law. .
4. In cases where there is a potential threat of a lawsuit or legal action, People Services will immediately notify General Counsel.

E. Responsibilities

1. The National Director, People Services, is responsible for advising stakeholders, maintaining, monitoring, and revising this policy; and for authorizing exceptions.
2. Members of the Society Management Team and/or the applicable national program directors are responsible for applying and implementing this policy in each of their respective areas.

F. References

1. Refer to 2.13 – Human Resources Records Retention, section G. Investigation Files for further information.