

7. COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES

POLICY 7.1 CLIENT AND FAMILY FEEDBACK

Policy

At any time, a client or their family/advocate is free to make a complaint or provide feedback about any aspect of the service they receive. Issues raised will be treated confidentially, fairly, dealt with promptly and without retribution. Clients can seek the support of an advocate at any stage of the dispute resolution process.

All clients, and potential clients, will be informed of their rights including their right to complain without affecting access to services, and their right to have an advocate of their choice. All clients, and potential clients, will be encouraged to provide positive feedback, where appropriate, on the service provided.

In cases of reported suspected abuse, assault or neglect of a Client, management will follow the procedures outlined in the Preventing and Responding to Abuse or Neglect policies and procedures.

Purpose

Multicap will encourage clients to provide both positive and critical feedback on services provided to ensure that clients receive the best possible service.

Scope

The following guidelines apply to all clients including their families and advocates.

Procedure

All complaints (whether formal or informal) should be raised as early as possible after the incident occurs. It is hoped that most issues can be resolved to the client's/family's satisfaction in dialogue with the team leader/Key Worker/Coordinator. Documentation should be made for any complaint whether informal or formal. File notes should be raised and retained in day service Areas and the concern log should be noted and retained in accommodation and respite service areas.

Underpinning Principles

- No person will be victimised because they raise a complaint or are associated with a complaint.
- The investigation and resolution processes will be undertaken in a fair and positive manner with confidentiality maintained throughout.
- Multicap recommends the use of an advocate, and is able to supply a staff member, or recommend a suitable mediator in an endeavour to resolve the situation.
- Clients and advocates will also be made aware of external avenues of dispute resolution such as the Disability Services Queensland's Complaint Process.

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- A complaint will be approached in a positive way, with the aim of resolving the complaint appropriately, and making any warranted improvement to procedures, service delivery and policy.
- Staff members will be offered appropriate support in the event of a complaint made against them.
- The complainant should be notified within 3 working days to provide feedback on progress, actions taken and outcomes achieved. Multicap will endeavour to resolve all complaints in a timely manner.

A minor (informal) complaint is an issue or occurrence that is resolved at the first point of contact, when all parties reach agreement and are satisfied with the outcome.

A major (formal) complaint is an issue or occurrence that is not resolved at the first point of contact, and needs further investigation.

STEP 1 - Talk to your Team Leader/Coordinator/Keyworker

Clients and his/her family/advocate should, in the first instance, seek to resolve any issue or dispute with the staff member who would be in the best position to resolve the issue. Where the issue involves that person, the Client/family member should refer the matter to the manager.

In the event of a complaint between a client and their principal carer, Multicap encourages early identification and open discussion of potential difficulties at assessment and Program Plan stages/reviews to alleviate any conflicts.

If the client and his/her family/advocate and the team leader/coordinator/Keyworker are unable to resolve the issue or dispute, then the matter becomes a formal complaint and shall be referred to the next level of management.

On receipt of a serious complaint (e.g. suspected abuse), the Team Leader/Coordinator will inform the Manager as soon as possible. Within 24 hours from the receipt of the complaint, the Manager will inform the Disability Services General Manager, who in turn may seek legal advice.

STEP 2 - Talk to a Manager

Clients and his/her family/advocate can approach a manager directly to raise their complaint in the first instance. He/she can also approach the manager if the complaint had not been resolved to their satisfaction by the team leader/coordinator/Keyworker. In any action taken, the manager will ensure natural justice principles are followed and that appropriate file notes are recorded.

The manager will attempt to resolve the complaint by conciliation and to arrive at an outcome that is satisfactory for the complainant. This could include the client/advocate having a better understanding of the issue and the organisational response.

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STEP 3 - Talk to the CEO

The Client and his/her family/advocate can approach the CEO if the complaint has not been resolved to their satisfaction and seek a review of the complaints handling process and outcomes. Any determination made by the CEO with regard to the grievance will be final save for the party's right to pursue the matter outside Multicap.

Recording and Filing of complaints:

File notes and/or concern logs must be completed for all concerns raised by clients and his/her family/advocate.

Formal complaints are recorded on the central Complaints Register for future review by management.

All grievances and complaints are confidential and are registered and kept on a centralised complaints register. No grievances or complaints are to be kept on the staff member's personnel file, however written reprimands, if an outcome to the process, will be placed upon the staff member's file.

Continuous Improvement

All grievances and complaints are to be reviewed by the Senior Management periodically and suggested improvements considered.

Improvements made as a result of a concern or complaint should be documented on the Systems Improvement Form (SIF). A copy of this form is available on every client file and should be used to record improvements made. A copy of the completed SIF should be forwarded to Human Resources to be retained for evidence in the next quality audit.

Relevant Legislation

Disability Services Act 2006

Whistleblowers Protection Act 1994

Anti-Discrimination Act 1991

Forms

Complaints Register (format)

Concern Log

Systems Improvement Form (SIF)

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