

7.14 GRIEVANCES AND COMPLAINTS

Purpose Statement

A grievances and complaints management system provides ECECS with an opportunity to monitor its work and continue to improve the delivery of its service.

Complaints or grievances may be received from anyone who comes into contact with Windermere's Family Day Care (FDC) service including parents/guardians, educators, members of the local community and other agencies.

Scope

This policy applies to all salaried full time and part time staff (including casuals), educators, contractors, families receiving services and members of the local community.

NOTE: detailed administrative procedures are outlined in Windermere's 'Compliments and Complaints' policy. This policy guides the Coordination Unit in regards to managing and recording complaints

Definitions

ECECS – Early Childhood Education and Care Service

Grievance or Complaint - an expression of any dissatisfaction or frustration with any aspect of the service, where a response or resolution is expected.

Policy Statement

TO ENSURE THAT ALL INDIVIDUALS¹ ARE SUPPORTED TO ACCESS A GRIEVANCES AND COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM THAT VALUES THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD, IS TRANSPARENT AND EQUITABLE AND ENCOURAGES THE DEVELOPMENT OF HARMONIOUS PARTNERSHIPS.

Procedures

Principles and Practice

ECECS staff and educators should endeavour to resolve consumer complaints with all relevant parties by engaging in open dialogue to determine if the matter can be resolved at a local level. This should be facilitated in a manner that is both empowering and positive for all involved. This process should not in any way trivialise or underestimate the nature of the complaint.

The following principles guide ECECS grievances and complaints process:

Accessible

1. All educators and families are to be provided with a *Compliments and Complaints* brochure at enrolment (see attached).

¹ For the purpose of this policy, 'individuals' include children and their families, educators and members of the local community

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2. The process for lodging a complaint must be explained to educators and families in a way that they understand. All educators and families have a right to lodge a complaint if they are dissatisfied with any aspect of the Family Day Care service and/or its Management.
3. The Coordination Unit is to ensure that all individuals feel comfortable in continuing to access Windermere services after lodging a complaint.

Rights Based

1. Individuals have a right to speak up about the service they are receiving. This will not impact on the level or quality of service received.
2. Privacy will be protected at all times.
3. Ensure all families receiving FDC are provided with a:
 - a. Service Charter (consumer rights and responsibilities)
 - b. Compliments and Complaints brochure (brochure that explains internal compliments and complaints process and provides contact details for external dispute resolution organisations)
 - c. Copy of this policy (where requested)
4. Individuals have a right to choose a support person or an advocate to assist them in making a complaint.
5. Educators must advise families they have a right to contact the Coordination Unit if they feel their complaint has not been heard or resolved satisfactorily.
6. The Coordination Unit must advise individuals they have a right to contact the Director of Community Services & Business Development if they feel their complaint has not been heard or resolved satisfactorily.
7. Individuals who are unhappy with the handling of a complaint, have a right to contact the Department of Education and Training.

Department of Education and Training

South Eastern Victoria Region

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Responsive

1. All personnel play an important part in providing an initial response to any dissatisfaction expressed by a consumer or stakeholder.
2. Educators receiving the complaint are responsible for acknowledging it and informing the Coordination Unit immediately.



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A good acknowledgement delivered with respect, the right body language and tone will indicate to the person that you are not about to oppose them and that you see their feelings as legitimate. Acknowledgement is about validating emotions.

3. All complaints alleging that the safety, health or wellbeing of a child was or is being compromised, or that the law has been breached, must be reported to the Department of Education and Training by the Coordination Unit. This notification is to be submitted within 24 hrs of the complaint.
4. Complaints are to be resolved within 30 days where possible. If complaints are complex or of a sensitive nature, it is acknowledged that resolution may require a longer timeframe.

Quality

1. All feedback is good feedback, and provides Windermere with information to inform service and systems improvements.
2. All complaints are recorded on a web-based database called the ACR Tool (Annual complaints Reporting Tool)
3. Feedback is to be systematically collated and reported by the Coordination Unit to inform planning, improvements and risk mitigation.

Relevant Standards/Legislation

- National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care Services including:
 - Education and Care Services National Law 2011
 - Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Related Policies & Links

- Windermere's *Compliments and Complaints* policy
- *Compliments & Complaints* brochure