

SERVICE DELIVERY POLICY COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

Revised July 2008

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The NSW Health Care Complaints Act 1993 directs that health organisations are required to respond positively to complaints and comments from consumers or anyone representing a consumer (client/community member/visitor). Good complaints management helps ensure that complaints are dealt with to the satisfaction of consumers and that complaints lead to improvements in the standard and delivery of health services.

<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/viewtop/inforce/act+105+1993+FIRST+0+N/>

DEFINITIONS

What is a complaint?

According to the Health Care Complaints Commission guidelines, a complaint is a communication from a client of a health service or other interested party where concerns are raised about access to health services, treatment by a health service provider, communication with a health service provider or within a health facility, or the policies of any health agency.

A complaint in fact can be about any aspect of a service or its activities. Complaints may be made in writing or may emerge during any communication with a consumer. They could be made verbally at any time via a phone call or face to face.

Often clients or other stakeholders want to make comments that are not necessarily a complaint, and this type of feedback is invaluable in improving service delivery. It is important to establish whether the client input is a complaint or direct feedback/suggestion about a possible improvement to an aspect of the service.

PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

The goal of complaint management is to develop and implement an effective complaints handling system which will:

- uphold the rights of clients
- ensure that complaints are investigated adequately
- ensure that complaints are resolved to the consumer's satisfaction wherever possible
- provide health organisations with the opportunity to review and improve services.

PRINCIPLES

To achieve the goal of effective complaint management, Illawarra Women's Health Centre has developed the following general principles:

Commitment

The governing body (the Council of Women), the manager and staff, are committed to the rights of clients and other stakeholders to complain, and will be aware of their role in successful complaints resolution.

Illawarra Women's Health Centre welcomes information and feedback from consumers which will enable the centre to improve the quality of all aspects of the services.

Accessibility

All clients will be given verbal information about their right to complain, their options for making a complaint, the process regarding making a complaint, and the use and availability of advocates. Detailed written information will be available in plain language in the Centre's Rights and Responsibilities pamphlet.

An interpreter service will be arranged if necessary. The local Health Interpreter Service is available on 4274 4211 and a twenty-four hour Telephone Interpreting Service can be contacted on 13 14 50. The Doctors Priority Line 1300 131 450 will be utilised by Medical staff when required.

Accountability

To ensure that Illawarra Women's Health Centre is accountable for the actions and decisions taken in the investigation of a complaint, clear records will be maintained detailing the nature of a complaint; comments; action to be taken; outcome and any follow-up; and the reasoning behind these decisions.

All complaints are to be recorded on the Complaints Record Form.

Review

A review of the complaints procedure should be regularly conducted to determine the success of the existing procedure and to amend the procedure if necessary. The revision will take place every 2 years.

Confidentiality of Complaints

As far as possible, the fact that a consumer has lodged a complaint and the details of that complaint should be kept confidential amongst staff directly concerned with its resolution. The client's permission should be obtained prior to any information being given to other parties which it may be desirable to involve in order to satisfactorily resolve the complaint.

PROTOCOL

The complaint may be about this service, or in some cases the client may be wishing to receive assistance to make a complaint about another service. Staff will provide support to the complainant whichever the case.

The following protocol applies when the complaint is about this service.

1.0 Staff members will receive the complaint with courtesy and respect. If by phone, notes will be taken and the complainant will be assured that the service will try to sort out the problem straight away. If the staff member taking the call cannot resolve the matter immediately (eg the complaint may be straight-forward, and resolved by simple clarification or provision of further information), then they will inform the client of the range of options that they have, and offer to mail out written information about the options. The complainant will be offered the option of talking with the centre manager, and given a time-frame for this.

2.0 The Manager will respond promptly to the complainant. This initial talk will occur within 3 days. The Manager will ask the complainant how they want to see the complaint resolved, and this will be considered during the process. Resolution of the problem may take more than a phone call. An investigation may be required, and various solutions may need to be considered. Person/s affected by the complaint should be fully informed of all facts and given the opportunity to put their case forward. Complainants should be made aware that those complained about will be told of the complaint and will be given an opportunity to comment. The manager will maintain contact with the complainant to keep her (or him) informed of progress and outcomes.

3.0 If the complainant is not happy with the outcome after the complaint has been investigated and considered, there are several options which can be offered (options which could also be taken in the first instance). The Manager will assist complainant to bring the complaint to the Council of Women (the governing body of the centre) for further consideration. Alternatively the client could be offered again the other options such as:

- writing to or phoning the Health Care Complaints Commission

[Locked Bag 18, Strawberry Hills, 2012.
Phone: free call 1800 043 159 or
02 9219 7444 (TTY 02 9219 7555)]

- seeking legal advice eg via the Illawarra Legal Centre 4276 1978
- or seeking the advice of a private solicitor.

COMPLAINTS RECORD FORM

(To be completed by the manager)

DATE OF COMPLAINT:

COMPLAINT RECEIVED BY:

COMPLAINT MADE VIA TELEPHONE
 LETTER (attached)
 IN PERSON
 OTHER

SUBJECT OF COMPLAINT:

.....

Details of the complaint should be written on the next page. If there is insufficient space, attach extra sheets.

INFORMATION TO BE GIVEN TO THE COMPLAINANT:

- Reassure complainant that all complaints are treated confidentially and that they will suffer no loss of service because they have made a complaint
- Explain the option for making a complaint and IWHC complaints procedure
- Remind the complainant that they have the right to use an advocate of their choice and refer them to appropriate consumer advocacy services.
- Thank the complainant for their complaint and explain that complaints are valuable in helping to maintain and improve the service.

NAME OF COMPLAINANT:.....

ADDRESS:.....

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PHONE NUMBER:

DETAIL OF COMPLAINT:.....

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COMMENTS:

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ACTION TO BE TAKEN:.....

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OUTCOME:

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FOLLOW-UP:

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Signed:

(Coordinator) (Date)

DETAILS OF OTHERS INVOLVED IN THIS COMPLAINT

NAME:

ADDRESS:

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PHONE NUMBER:

COMMENTS

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ADVOCATE'S DETAILS:

NAME:

ADDRESS:

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PHONE NUMBER:

ADVOCATE'S RELATIONSHIP

TO COMPLAINANT: