

## Client Complaint Policy

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**KEY POLICY AREA:** CLIENT SERVICES

**POLICY:** CLIENT COMPLAINTS

**APPROVED DATE:** 2000

**MODIFIED DATE:** 30<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2016

### **STANDARDS, PROTOCOLS & PROCEDURES LINKAGE**

DHHS STANDARDS

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR REGISTERED HOUSING AGENCIES

DHHS *Getting it right in your organisation 2006*

DHHS OFFICE OF HOUSING CONSUMER CHARTER

CLIENT PRIVACY POLICY

QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

NEIGHBOURHOOD ISSUES POLICY

STAFF COMPLAINTS POLICY

CLIENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

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### **POLICY**

Clients will be informed of their right to complain and the procedures necessary to effectively institute such complaints both verbally and in writing. Assistance will be provided by staff, if necessary, to carry out a complaint.

### **CLIENT RIGHTS**

WAYSS recognises the right of clients to make complaints about the service. Clients are entitled to question in an informal or formal way, the treatment or services they receive from WAYSS. WAYSS will support the rights of clients to complain using methods outlined in the complaints procedure.

### **SCOPE OF THIS POLICY**

This policy is to assist clients to complain about WAYSS services. Complaints from other persons such as staff, neighbours and other agencies are covered in separate WAYSS policies and procedures. This complaints policy does not change the obligation to lodge an incident report to the Department of Human Services or Public Liability/ Malpractice Insurers on any matter which may result in a claim under public liability and malpractice insurance policies. Critical Client Incident Reports are processed under separate policies and procedures, although in many instances they might relate to the same matters.

### **DEFINITION**

A complaint is to be regarded as an expression of dissatisfaction by a client or their representative regarding any aspect of the service. It must relate to a specific occurrence or episode that has an impact, or potential impact, on the individual client. Complaints may be accepted from a client, or another person acting in good faith on a client's behalf.

### **PRINCIPLES OF COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT**

WAYSS will uphold the following principles when handling complaints:

- Commitment to the rights of clients to complain and to an efficient and fair resolution of complaints.
- WAYSS complaints management process will be fair to all parties involved in a complaint.
- All staff and management of WAYSS will manage complaints as required.
- Information about how to make a complaint will be available to clients.
- WAYSS will make the complaints process as easy as possible.
- Clients will be offered assistance to lodge a complaint.
- All complaints will be managed as quickly as possible.
- Clients will be advised of the outcome of the complaint.

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### COMPLAINTS CATEGORIES

WAYSS will define categories of complaints, where possible, to assist in the recording of complaints and the recognition of trends. Categorising of complaints will not effect how they are handled. The following are broad categories of complaints:

- Client rights – treatment by staff, right to complain, advocate.
- Breaches of privacy or confidentiality.
- Access to services and service information.
- Service delivery – level of support, worker compatibility, flexibility.
- Environmental – receptions, offices, properties.
- Tenancy Issues
- Other clients.

### QUALITY ASSURANCE

WAYSS recognises that the adoption of an effective complaints procedure is more likely to lead to client satisfaction and enables the service to evaluate the need for improvement. WAYSS will register and monitor client complaints. An analysis of this data will be used to improve client services.

### WAYSS RESPONSIBILITIES

#### WAYSS staff have the responsibility to:

- Ensure clients are informed of their right to complain.
- Ensure clients have access to written information describing how complaints may be made and to whom; how complaints are investigated by the service; and how and when they can expect to be informed of investigation outcomes.
- Encourage clients to bring their complaint to the attention of staff.
- Attempt to resolve the complaint at the time it is made.
- Inform the client that they can make a formal complaint to the Manager or Coordinator.
- Assist the client to access advocacy agencies.
- Record details as necessary on **Complaint Record**.

#### WAYSS management is responsible for:

- Listening to, investigating and resolving client complaints.
- Implementing a formal complaints procedure.
- Recording the details of a complaint on the Complaint Record.
- Keeping a complaints register in their area of responsibility.
- Forwarding complaints to the central complaints register.
- Advising clients the outcome of the complaint.

#### Client Rights Group is responsible for:

- Analysis of the complaints register.
- Identifying any patterns of complaints.
- Highlighting the need for policy or procedure change.
- Evaluation of the complaints system.
- Reporting findings and recommendations to Executive.

#### The Manager of Quality Assurance is responsible for:

- Maintaining a central complaints register.
- Resourcing Client Rights Group.
- Reporting the Group's finding and recommendation to Executive and the Management Meeting.
- Ensuring that policy and procedure change is carried out.
- Responding to complaints from the Housing Registrar and DHHS

#### Chief Executive Officer is responsible for:

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- Receiving reports on any contentious or unresolved complaints.
- Directing management on actions to resolve a complaint.
- Informing the Board of Directors of complaints that may have legal implications or effects on the agency's reputation.

### ADVOCACY

WAYSS will provide to all clients the opportunity to access an advocate. Any client can have access to an advocate to assist their complaint. An advocate can be a friend, family member, worker or person from a specific advocacy agency. WAYSS will provide the client with verbal and written information on how to access an advocate. If a client chooses to have an advocate act on their behalf consent should be obtained from the client making the complaint that information can be released or discussed with the advocate. The client has the right to withdraw this consent at any time during the complaints process.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

All clients or advocates who lodge a complaint will have their privacy respected in accordance with **Client Privacy Policy**.

A WAYSS staff member who has had a client complaint made about them will have their privacy respected in accordance with **Staff Privacy Policy**. A complaint will only be discussed with management and the appropriate parties involved in the complaint.

### RECEIVING AND INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS

WAYSS programs will adopt the **Client Complaints Procedures** designed to ensure adequate investigation and satisfactory resolution of service complaints where possible. All relevant WAYSS staff will be familiar with the **Client Complaints Procedure** and how to deal with a complaint.

All complaints are to be received and handled with respect of the persons' right to complain and with an attitude of helpful co-operation to ensure that:

- a) The complainant feels that they have received a fair hearing and that the complaint was properly considered.
- b) The complainant is informed of the progress and outcomes of the investigation of the complaint.
- c) Any remedial action is taken promptly.

### STAFF TRAINING

WAYSS will provide staff with access to relevant training to further develop their skills in complaints handling. Staff will be particularly encouraged to attend training on dealing with challenging behaviour and safety assessments.

### EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed as part of a formal review process, in accordance with the review procedures as set out in the **Document Development and Review Procedures** and will be monitored through:

- Feedback from complainants.
- WAYSS staff feedback and training.
- Auditing of Client Complaints register.