

## **PURPOSE**

As a measure of quality assurance, the United Native Friendship Centre (UNFC) will provide a mechanism for addressing client complaints regarding service provision. Clients will have access to clearly defined procedure to register a complaint and UNFC staff will have clearly defined procedures to address the complaints.

## **SCOPE**

This policy will assist the UNFC Board of Directors, Executive Director, Program Manager, and Program staff to address client complaints and maintain a record of complaints, including the actions taken to resolve the issue. On an annual basis, the complaints record will be used to improve the services delivered by the UNFC.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

(a) UNFC Board of Directors:

Ensures that the policy and procedures on client complaints are incorporated into the UNFC quality assurance system.

(b) Management:

Ensures that complaints are resolved in a timely manner, are kept confidential, and that a record of all complaints is maintained for accountability.

(c) Staff:

It is the Program staff's responsibility to ensure that clients are informed of agency service expectations, and that clients are provided with a written complaints guide that is user-friendly.

## **SERVICE EXPECTATIONS**

The UNFC Program staff must ensure that the following information is provided to a client at the time services are begun:

- List of services and amount of services to be provided to the client;
- Clearly identify the service that are provided and how they will be provided;
- Program policy for service eligibility, amount of service, and termination of service;
- Program-specific client Bill of Rights, i.e.; the Life Long Care Program will provide clients with the LLCP Client Bill of Rights, developed in compliance with the Long Term Care Act, 1994, s.3.
- Guidelines for registering a complaint, including contact information;

- Information as to how to initiate an appeal within the agency about services provided.

## **DEFINITIONS**

A complaint is defined as negative feedback to the UNFC, whether it is written or verbal. A statement of concern or a problem is considered a complaint. Requests for information are not considered complaints.

Types of complaints include:

Where a client has been:

- Deemed ineligible for a service,
- Excluded from a particular health service.

Or, the client has a complaint about:

- The amount of service provided,
- The termination of health service,
- The quality of service provided.

For the Life Long Care Program, a complaint can be:

- An alleged right violation under the Bill of Right, s.3 of the Long-term Care Act

A conflict of interest is defined as participation or involvement in decisions where the result of the decision will unduly or unfairly favour one person over another as a result of relationship or preferences based on prohibited grounds.

Prohibited grounds under the Human Rights Code include: sex, race, age, creed, colour, marital status, sexual preference, disability, political or religious affiliation or family status.

Malicious complaints are complaints based solely on the intention of doing harm.

## **PROCEDURES**

A client is encouraged to initiate an open, respectful, direct discussion with program staff about the provision of any service or service-related issue that the client has a concern or issue with.

If such a discussion does not resolve the client's concern, issue or complaint, or if the client is uncomfortable initiating the discussion, the client should follow the complaint procedures for filing a written or verbal complaint.

There is no time limit in which to make a complaint. Complaints cannot be made anonymously.

### **(a) Filing a written complaint:**

A letter can be directed to the UNFC's Executive Director and must contain the following information:

- The name and contact information of the people involved. If a third party is acting on the behalf of a client, the complaint must include the name and contact information of the third party person and their relationship to the client. The letter must indicate as to whether the client is aware of the complaint being registered on their behalf.
- The name of the program staff involved in the complaint
- Description of the events leading to the complaint and relevant dates and times
- List the specific issues or concerns
- Reason for complaint and client expectations for resolution of complaint (an apology, improvements to service, deemed eligible for service, etc.)
- How the client wishes their concerns to be addressed (meeting with all parties involved, telephone call, etc.)
- Client signature or third party signature and the date.

If the client is unable to write a letter, a Client Complaints Form can be obtained at the UNFC or on the OFIFC website. The client must fill in all sections of the form, date the form and provide a signature.

Whether the complaint is a letter or on a Client Complaint Form, the complaint must be sealed in an envelope and submitted to the Executive Director.

**(b) Making a verbal complaint:**

If a client chooses to make a verbal complaint, rather than a written complaint, they must make an appointment to meet with the Executive Director or call the Executive Director by telephone. For confidentiality reasons, complaints should not be submitted by fax or email.

The Executive Director will use the Client Complaints form to gather all information required to resolve the complaint. If meeting with the complainant in person, the signature should be obtained on the form.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

If the nature of the complaint creates a conflict for the Executive Director, the complaint will be forwarded to the Friendship Centre's Board of Directors and discussed at the next scheduled Board meeting.

If the Executive Director and Board Members are in conflict, the complaint will be forwarded to the OFIFC Executive Director or an OFIFC Ad Hoc Complaints Committee.

**INVESTIGATION AND RESOLUTION OF THE COMPLAINT**

The Executive Director or designate will facilitate the investigation of the complaint. The investigation will begin within 7 days of the Executive Director receiving the complaint. Once the complaint is deemed valid, the Executive Director or designate will take all necessary actions to ensure the complaint is resolved, including mediation between parties involved.

The Executive Director must resolve the complaint within 30 days of launching the investigation, unless there are extenuating circumstances that delay the process.

Once a complaint is addressed, the Executive Director will send a letter to the complainant outlining:

- The steps taken to investigate the complaint,
- The decision of the UNFC in response to the complaint,
- The procedures for appealing the decision of the UNFC.

In the event that a complaint is deemed invalid, a letter from the Executive Director will be sent to the complainant. The letter will include the reasons why the complaint was deemed invalid and the procedures for launching an appeal.

All correspondence regarding complaints will be copied to the UNFC Board of Directors.

## **MAINTAINING A COMPLAINT LOG**

The UNFC will develop a complaints log to record all complaints. The complaint log will record the nature of the complaint, the program being complained about, the decision of the UNFC in response to the complaint, and the actions taken to resolve the complaint, if any.

The complaint log will be maintained by the Executive Director or designate. Each Program staff should have access to the log, at least that section of the log that is specific to their program. The information contained in the log will be utilized to improve program service delivery on an annual basis.

## **APPEALING A DECISION**

### **(a) Appeal to the UNFC Board of Directors**

If the Executive Director is unable to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of all parties, after all reasonable measures have been taken; the complaint will be taken to the UNFC Board of Directors for resolution based on all evidence and information gathered by the Executive Director. The client may be required to attend a Board Meeting to provide the Board members with additional information that they may require.

The UNFC Board of Directors has the authority to mandate a Complaints Committee to address all complaint appeals or just specific complaint appeals as outlined in the Committees terms of reference.

The Board or Complaints Committee will attempt to resolve the complaint in a timely manner and provide a written response to the complainant within 3 working days of their decision.

If the Board, or mandated Complaints Committee, is still not able to resolve the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction, the complaint directly relates to a health service provision, the complainant can appeal to the MOHLTC Health Services Appeal and Review Board.

**(b) Appeal to the Health Services Appeal and Review Board**

The Health Services Appeal and Review Board will hear complaints where a client has been:

- Deemed ineligible for services,
- Excluded from a particular health service

Or, the client has a complaint about:

- The amount of service provided,
- The termination of a health service.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

Client complaints will be held in strict confidence by all parties involved. All complaints will be kept separate from client files, *with the exception of malicious complaints.*

**CLIENT ACCESS TO THEIR COMPLAINT FILE**

Any information regarding a client in the UNFC complaints system is considered a part of the client's personal record. A client will have access to their complaints record when a written request is submitted to the Executive Director. The complaints record will be provided to the client within 7 working days.

**United Native Friendship Centre  
Client Complaint Form**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Phone:</b>
<b>Address:</b>	
<b>*Third Party Name:</b>	<b>*Third Party Phone:</b>
<b>*Third Party Address:</b>	
<b>Client Relationship to Third Party:</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Client is aware of complaint registered on their behalf:</b> <b>Yes      No</b>
<b>UNFC Program Staff Name(s) involved in complaint:</b>	
<b>Description of events leading to complaint (include relevant dates and times):</b>	
<b>Specific issues and/or concerns:</b>	
<b>Reason for complaint:</b>	
<b>Expectations for resolution of complaint:</b>	
<b>How would you like to see your concerns addressed?</b>	
<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Date:</b>

**\*If a third party is acting on the behalf of a client, the complaint must include the name and contact information of the third party person and their relationship to the client. The letter must indicate as to whether the client is aware of the complaint being registered on their behalf.**