Procedure: Complaints Management

# Introduction

When responding to complaints, staff should act in accordance with Territory Families complaint handling procedures. Staff should also consider any relevant legislation and/or regulations when responding to complaints and feedback.

There are three levels of complaint handling:

* Level One - frontline complaint handling and early resolution of complaints;
* Level Two - internal review of complaints and/or complaint handling (may include further investigation of issues raised); and
* Level Three - external review of complaints and/or complaint handling by organisations.

# Level One

Level One complaints are resolved by the person who receives the complaint, unless they relate to another business unit.

If a staff member receives a complaint that they can resolve they should resolve the complaint. Staff then inform the Territory Families Practice Complaints and Investigation Unit of the details of the complaint and confirm that it has been resolved.

If a staff member receives a complaint that they feel should be responded to by another business unit they must document the details of the complaint, the name of the complainant and their contact details. They should then provide the complainant with general advice about how the complaint will be addressed and the expected timeline for resolution. Staff then inform the Territory Families Practice Complaints and Investigation Unit of the details of the complaint.

Staff are to provide this information to the Practice Complaints and Investigation Unit by email to TF.complaints@nt.gov.au or phone 1800 750 167.

# Level Two

The key stages in the management of Level Two complaints are:

1. Receipt of complaints

Territory Families will record complaints and the supporting information. The record of the complaint will document:

* the contact information of the person making a complaint;
* issues raised by the person making a complaint and the outcome/s they want;
* any other relevant information; and
* any additional support the person making a complaint requires.

1. Acknowledgement of complaints

Territory Families will acknowledge receipt of each complaint promptly, and preferably within one working day.

Territory Families will advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to deal with any part of their complaint and provide advice about where such issues and/or complaints may be directed (if known and appropriate).

1. Initial assessment and addressing of complaints

After acknowledging receipt of the complaint, Territory Families will confirm whether the issue/s raised in the complaint is/are within the Agency’s control. Territory Families may also consider the outcome/s sought by the person making a complaint and, where there is more than one issue raised, determine whether each issue needs to be separately addressed.

When determining how a complaint will be managed, Territory Families will consider:

* how serious, complicated or urgent the complaint is;
* whether the complaint raises concerns about people's health and safety;
* how the person making the complaint is being affected;
* the risks involved if resolution of the complaint is delayed; and
* whether a resolution requires the involvement of other organisations.

After assessing the complaint, Territory Families will consider how to manage it. To manage a complaint Territory Families may:

* give the person information or an explanation;
* gather information from the person or area that the complaint is about; or
* investigate the claims made in the complaint.

Territory Families seek to resolve all complaints in 28 days from receipt; albeit, more complex matters would likely need more time to be completed.

Territory Families will keep the person making the complaint up to date on our progress particularly if there are any delays. Territory Families will also communicate the outcome of the complaint using the most appropriate medium.

Which actions Territory Families decide to take will be tailored to each case and take into account any statutory requirements.

# Providing reasons for decisions

Following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, Territory Families will contact the person making the complaint and advise them of:

* the outcome of the complaint and any action Territory Families took;
* the reason/s for Territory Families’ decision;
* the remedy or resolution/s that Territory Families have proposed or put in place; and
* any options for review that may be available to the complainant, such as an internal review, external review or appeal.

Territory Families will make reasonable efforts to contact the complainant prior to closing the complaint.

# Closing the complaint, record keeping, redress and review

Territory Families will keep comprehensive records about:

* how we managed the complaint;
* the outcome/s of the complaint (including whether it or any aspect of it was substantiated, any recommendations made to address problems identified and any decisions made on those recommendations); and
* any outstanding actions that need to be followed up.

# Alternative avenues for dealing with complaints

Territory Families will inform people who make complaints to or about us about any internal or external review options available to them.

In most cases, Territory Families will undertake one internal review of the management of a complaint.

Where a person making a complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome of Territory Families’ review of their complaint, they may seek an external review of the Agency’s decision by contacting a number of oversight bodies such as: the Northern Territory Children’s Commissioner, or the Northern Territory Ombudsman, the Northern Territory Information Commissioner or the Northern Territory Antidiscrimination Commissioner.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Authorised by: | |
| **Executive Leadership Group** | | | | 27/06/2018 | | **Active from:** | 28/06/2018 |
| **Version 2.0** | To describe the process for responding to complaints | | | | | | |
| **Review due:** | June 19 | | **Maintenance:** | | TF.Complaints@nt.gov.au | | | |