

COMPLAINTS POLICY - MENTORING

PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines to ensure that the correct procedures are followed when receiving, dealing with and investigating complaints.

Note: This policy does not address complaints relating to staff grievances or employment matters. Refer the related People and Culture policy for information on the management of such issues.

POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Sparkways is committed to:

- providing an environment of mutual respect and open communication, where the expression of opinions is encouraged
- complying with all legislative and statutory requirements
- dealing with disputes, complaints and complainants with fairness and equity
- establishing mechanisms to promote prompt, efficient and satisfactory resolution of complaints
- maintaining confidentiality at all times.
- distributing any information relating to the complaint, strictly on a need to know basis
- taking steps to ensure that the complainant/s feel comfortable to continue accessing the service after making a complaint

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Sparkways Mentoring Staff



DEALING WITH A COMPLAINT – INFORMAL / LOW LEVEL

When an informal or low-level complaint is received, the staff member receiving the complaint will:

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 48 hours and advise complainant that a response will be provided within one week
- inform the complainant of the *Complaints Policy*
- encourage the complainant to resolve the complaint with the person directly, or to submit their complaint in writing
- enter the complaint in the *Complaints Register* together with the outcome
- comply with the service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* with regard to all meetings/discussions in relation to a complaint
- manage the complaint in consultation with the Team Leader
- inform the Team Leader if the complaint escalates or is unable to be resolved appropriately in a timely manner.
- inform the complainant that as an alternative, they are welcome to contact the Department of Families, Fairness & Housing (DFFH) with any concerns. State switchboard number for DFFH is 1300 884 706.

DEALING WITH A COMPLAINT – FORMAL / MED-HIGH LEVEL

When a formal or med-high level complaint is lodged with the organisation the staff member will record all relevant details in the *Complaints Register* and immediately inform the Team Leader.

The Team Leader will:

- consider the nature and the details of the complaint
- be responsible for investigating the complaint and identifying which policies (if any) the complaint involves
- maintain appropriate records of the information and data collected, including minutes of meetings, incident reports and copies of relevant documentation relating to the complaint
- respect the confidential nature of information relating to the complaint
- store all written information relating to complaints securely and in compliance with the service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*.

INVESTIGATING THE COMPLAINT AND GATHERING RELEVANT INFORMATION

When investigating the complaint (formal / med-high level) and gathering relevant information, the Team Leader will:

- meet with individual witnesses, and give right of reply to the person against whom the allegations are made in relation to any accusation or information relating to an alleged incident, within 2 weeks of receipt of complaint
- offer the complainant the opportunity of meeting to discuss the complaint and provide additional information where relevant, within 2 weeks of receipt of complaint
- document the time, date and detail of meetings/discussions, and follow this up with a letter to the complainant outlining the information discussed, within 2 weeks of last meeting or discussion
- review relevant information and documents

- obtain any other relevant information or documentation that will assist in resolving the complaint
- seek advice, where appropriate, from individuals and organisations that may be able to assist in resolving the complaint

FOLLOWING THE INVESTIGATION

Once the investigation of the complaint is complete, the Team Leader will:

- endeavour to resolve the complaint by mutual agreement of the parties involved
- meet to discuss the information gathered and determine further action, including generating recommendations to be presented to the Chief Executive Officer
- ensure that any recommendations or actions are in accordance with relevant legislation and funding requirements.
- report outcomes that may include relevant information gained in investigations and consultations to the Chief Executive Officer and, where required, provide any recommendations for consideration
- advise the complainant and other relevant parties of any decisions made by the Chief Executive Officer in relation to the complaint
- follow up to ensure the parties involved are satisfied with the outcome and monitor progress on any actions taken by the Chief Executive Officer, within 2 weeks of decisions and/or outcomes being delivered

***Note:** If at any stage it is believed that the complaint relates to a Child Safety matter, such as Reportable Conduct, then the appropriate steps and measures must be followed according to the Child Safety Policy and Critical Incidents & Injury Management Policy.*



BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Privacy Act 1988(Cth)
- Information Privacy Act 2000(Vic)
- Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)
- Victorian Child Safe Standards
- Victorian Human Services Standards

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au



DEFINITIONS

Complaint: A statement that something is unsatisfactory, unacceptable, an accusation, allegation or charge.

Complainant: Person/s lodging the complaint. Which may include parents, carers, young people and mentors, as well as stakeholders, partners and referring agencies.



SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

SOURCES

- Department of Families Fairness & Housing – Making a Complaint
<https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/making-complaint>

RELATED POLICIES

- Child Safety Policy
 - Privacy & Confidentiality Policy
 - Critical Incidents & Injury Management Policy
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EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, Sparkways will:

- seek feedback from people affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
 - monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
 - keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
 - revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
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ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Complaints Register
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AUTHORISATION

This policy was confirmed by Sparkways on 14/03/2023

REVIEW DUE: March 2024

ATTACHMENT 1

COMPLAINTS REGISTER

(Image only; Access from program resources)



Complaints Register - Sparkways Mentoring						
Date of complaint	Complainant	Nature of complaint	External notification required	Status (tick stages completed)	Date actioned	Notes
	<input type="checkbox"/> Service user <input type="checkbox"/> Staff member <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer <input type="checkbox"/> Governance body member <input type="checkbox"/> Member <input type="checkbox"/> Family/carer <input type="checkbox"/> Other agency		<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes To Whom Notified <input type="checkbox"/> DFFH <input type="checkbox"/> Workcover <input type="checkbox"/> Other Date of notification: / /	<input type="checkbox"/> Being investigated <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution proposed <input type="checkbox"/> Resolved <input type="checkbox"/> Remains unresolved		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Service user <input type="checkbox"/> Staff member <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer <input type="checkbox"/> Governance body member <input type="checkbox"/> Member <input type="checkbox"/> Family/carer <input type="checkbox"/> Other agency		<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes To Whom Notified <input type="checkbox"/> DFFH <input type="checkbox"/> Workcover <input type="checkbox"/> Other Date of notification: / /	<input type="checkbox"/> Being investigated <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution proposed <input type="checkbox"/> Resolved <input type="checkbox"/> Remains unresolved		