



Title	Family Feedback & Complaints Policy
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Approved By	Alpine Children's Services Board of Management
Owner	General Manager
Version	5
Purpose or Reason	Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
Source or Reference Material	Guide to Complaint Handling in Health Care Services, Health Services Review Council (2005) ECA Code of Ethics

VERSION CONTROL

Version No.	Date	Comment	Author
1	2004	Develop to ensure a clear process for families and staff to provide feedback, complaints and complaints	Manager
2	Oct 2014	Separated this policy into one for families and one for staff and created a flow chart to clearly outline the steps for family feedback and complaints	General Manager
3	Nov 2014	Reviewed and reformatted by ACS CoM for consistency	ACS CoM
4	May 2015	Formatted to ensure the flow chat on the final page can be clearly read	General Manager
5	13 Nov 2017	Changed title of Team Leader to Coordinator / OSHC Leader Included some examples of an ACS appointed mediator Noted who will undertake an investigation of a complaint Included the importance of compliments in the policy statement and a process for recording compliments	General Manager & ACS Board

Policy

Scope

The Policy and Procedure applies to all Alpine Children's Services (ACS) staff, ACS Board of Management, Family Day Care Educators, parents/guardians, children, volunteers, Families and contractors involved with the service.

Policy Statement

The Family Feedback & Complaints Policy encourages families to provide feedback on services managed by Alpine Children's Service (ACS) in order that issues are addressed in a timely and proactive manner and so that compliments are recorded and celebrated. The policy outlines clear steps for giving feedback, via multiple methods, as well as detailing complaints and compliments handling processes

The aim of this Feedback & Complaints Policy is to provide a mechanism that encourages families of children attending a service managed by Alpine Children's Services (ACS) to access complaints and complaints procedures whenever appropriate and to provide a fair and just conflict resolution process.

Objectives/Principles

The Feedback & Complaints Policy is therefore based on the following Principles:

- That all families of ACS have the right to provide feedback or make a complaint and have it handled in accordance with our Feedback & Complaints Policy.
- The Feedback & Complaints Policy should be seen by all stakeholders of ACS to be a positive and productive mechanism and will be undertaken in good faith by both parties.
- All families of ACS have the right to provide feedback or make a complaint without fear of recrimination.
- All policies and procedures need to safeguard the privacy of all parties involved and all documents secured in such a way as to protect their confidentiality.
- ACS will work together with relevant stakeholders to achieve a fair and reasonable outcome.
- All procedures in this policy should be fair and just and be applied equally to all parties regardless of their role.
- ACS recognises that effective communication is of paramount importance when attempting to resolve difficulties experienced by families and is committed to a culture of openness, fairness and continuous improvement.
- ACS will follow transparent, fair and timely procedures for addressing feedback and complaints in accordance with principles of natural justice, ensuring that all parties are treated equally and fairly.
- All parties to feedback or complaints must act in good faith and seek to achieve an amicable resolution. Intimidating, harassing, threatening or offensive behaviours will not be tolerated from any parties.
- ACS will give families who provide feedback or raise complaints the opportunity to formally present their cases and families will not suffer any discrimination as a result of raising complaints or complaints in good faith.
- ACS staff with a role in resolving feedback or complaints will reach conclusions based on a fair hearing of each point of view.

- All parties to feedback or a complaint must respect privacy and confidentiality, except where the release of particular information is required by law.
- ACS will consider feedback and complaints in a timely manner, within specified and achievable timeframes.
- ACS will keep all parties to feedback and complaints informed of the progress of the matter and will give all parties reasonable opportunity to respond to outcomes.

Procedure

Refer to page 7 for process overview

Anonymous feedback and complaints

Families who choose to submit an anonymous feedback or complaint must note that:

- It is not possible to keep an anonymous complainant informed of decisions and progress of investigations.
- It may not be possible to ensure that the identity of the complainant remains anonymous.
- The provision of recompense or assistance to complainants who remain anonymous may not be possible.

Mediation

ACS will make a judgement about whether mediation is practicable and appropriate, and secure the agreement of all parties to the complaint to the use of mediation (noting that the use of mediation does not necessarily imply there is a case to answer).

ACS will negotiate the appointment of an independent qualified mediator with the parties concerned where mediation is to proceed. The mediator may be from:

- The Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria (part of the Victorian Department of Justice & Regulation);
- The Victorian Department of Education & Training; or
- A private local organisation.

ACS will forward a copy of the complaint to all parties and the appointed mediator.

Families will be given an opportunity to present their case and the mediator will assist the parties to reach a mutually agreed resolution.

All parties to the mediation may be accompanied by a support person other than a legal representative during the mediation process.

The President of the ACS Board of Management may decline to hear a complaint, for example, where the family has repeatedly submitted complaints in relation to the same matter which have not been upheld.

Investigation

The General Manager will undertake the investigation of the complaint unless there is a conflict of interest. In this case, the Business Manager or an investigator appointed by ACS will undertake the investigation.

The investigator must:

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within five working days and indicate when a resolution of the matter should be expected
- recommend any immediate corrective action that needs to be taken before the complaint is investigated
- independently review the complaint including hearing from all parties who wish to partake in the process and attempt to resolve the problem
- within fifteen working days of receipt of the complaint, notify the family and the President of the ACS Board of Management in writing of the nature of the investigation process

- provide the President of the ACS Board of Management, or delegate, a report of the investigation for review prior to its release
- provide the family with the outcome of the review process, including a resolution or why a resolution could not be reached.

The investigator will notify the family and the President of the ACS Board of Management if the complaint is frivolous, or if no grounds could be adduced to support it.

Withdrawal of complaint

Families may withdraw a complaint at any time during the resolution process, and the complaint will be deemed to be resolved.

Simultaneous complaints

The General Manager and/or the President of the ACS Board of Management may determine that a single investigation will take place into multiple complaints that relate to the same issue where the family or families lodging the complaint(s) agree to this approach.

Repeat complaints

The General Manager and/or the President of the ACS Board of Management may contact a family who repeatedly submits complaints on a particular matter, and the person who is the subject of the complaint, to ascertain that there is prima-facie evidence to support the complaint before initiating an investigation.

Record keeping

All family compliments and complaints will be recorded on the ACS Incident Register.

Staff receiving complaints must keep appropriate, confidential records of informal discussions and outcomes.

Mediators must keep appropriate, confidential records of mediation discussions and outcomes.

Investigators must report findings and outcomes to the President of the ACS Board of Management, who will ensure appropriate, confidential records are kept.

The General Manager will ensure that reporting of complaints and complaints and their resolution is confined to ensuring that processes are fair and that appropriate action is taken to address problems and improve existing policies, procedures and processes.

The General Manager will analyse data relating to complaints and complaints on an annual basis to identify trends. The General Manager will provide an annual report on family complaints and complaints to ACS Board of Management including quantitative and qualitative data.

Family Feedback and Complaints Process

