

# DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS POLICY

## OVERVIEW:

Feedback from families, educators, staff and the wider community is fundamental in creating an evolving Out of School Hours Care Service working towards the highest standard of care and education.

It is foreseeable that feedback will include divergent views, which may result in complaints. This Policy details SUNBEAMS procedures for receiving and managing informal and formal complaints. Parents, educators, visitors, students and members of the community can lodge a grievance or complaint, with the understanding that it will be managed conscientiously and confidentially.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD	OTHER SERVICE POLICIES/DOCUMENTATION	OTHER
172, 174, 168, 173, 176, 183	6.1, 6.1.2, 6.2, 7.1.2, 7.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parent Handbook</li> <li>- Staff Handbook</li> <li>- Providing a Child Safe Environment Policy</li> <li>- Excursion Policy</li> <li>- Code of Conduct Policy.</li> <li>- Communication Policy</li> <li>- Confidentiality Policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ACECQA</li> <li>- Guide to the National Quality Framework</li> <li>- Child Safe standards</li> </ul>

## OUTLINE:

The *Education and Care Services National Regulations* require approved providers to ensure their services have policies and procedures in place for dealing with complaints (regulation 168) and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed (regulation 170).

In keeping with the guidelines of The Child Safe Standards, staff will uphold the aim of Standard 3 that being "that Families and communities are informed and involved through active engagement" We aim to investigate all complaints and grievances with a high standard of equity and fairness. We will ensure that all persons making a complaint are guided by the following policy values:

- procedural fairness and natural justice



- code of ethics and conduct
- culture free from discrimination and harassment
- transparent policies and procedures
- opportunities for further investigation
- adhering to our OOSH Service philosophy

### WHO THE POLICY AFFECTS?

Management  
Staff  
Students  
Parents

### POLICY STATEMENT:

**SUNBEAMS** will maintain a complaints and grievance management system to ensure that all educators, families and communities members know that complaints and grievances will be taken seriously and investigated promptly and fairly. Complaints and grievances will be investigated and documented in a timely manner. Our complaints and grievance management system will be promoted in the family handbook, staff handbook and on our website. We will identify complaints and grievances as opportunities to improve the quality of our service.

### PROCEDURE:

Grievances and complaints can transpire in any workplace. Handling them appropriately is imperative for sustaining a safe, healthy, harmonious, and productive work environment. Our *Dealing with Complaints Policy* ensures that all persons are presented with procedures that:

- Value the opportunity to be heard
- Promote conflict resolution
- Encourage the development of harmonious partnerships
- Ensure that conflicts and grievances are mediated fairly
- Are transparent and equitable
- We implement a child-focused complaint handling procedure (as recommended in the child Safe standards)

**Notifiable complaint:**

A complaint that alleges a breach of *the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations*, National Quality Standard or alleges that the health, safety, or wellbeing of a child at the service may have been compromised. Any complaint of this nature must be reported by the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor to the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of the complaint being made (Section 174(2)(b), Regulation 176(2)(b)).

If the Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor is unsure whether the matter is a notifiable complaint, it is good practice to contact the regulatory Authority for confirmation. Written reports must include:

- details of the event or incident
- the name of the person who initially made the complaint
- if appropriate, the name of the child concerned and the condition of the child, including a medical or incident report (where relevant)
- contact details of a nominated member of the Grievances Subcommittee (or Nominated Supervisor)
- any other relevant information

Written notification of complaints must be submitted using the (National Quality Agenda IT System).

**Privacy and Confidentiality:**

Management and educators will adhere to our *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* when dealing with complaints and grievances. However, if a complaint involves a staff member or child protection issues, a relevant government agency will need to be informed. (See: Reportable Conduct Scheme in *Child Protection Policy*)

**Conflict of Interest:**

It is important for the complainant to feel confident in

- being heard fairly
- an unbiased decision-making process.
- Should a conflict of interest arise during a grievance or complaints that involves the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor, other Management will be nominated as an alternative mediator. Our Service may also engage the resources of an Independent Conflict Resolution Service to assist with the mediation of a dispute. We will ensure that

throughout the conflict resolution process the Services Code of Conduct is be adhered to.

**The Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor/Responsible Person will:**

- ensure the name and telephone number of the person to whom complaints can be made is clearly visible at the service
- ensure information about our *Dealing with Complaints* Policy is easily accessible to all families, visitors and volunteers.
- treat all grievances and complaints seriously and as a priority
- ensure grievances and complaints remain confidential
- ensure grievances and complaints reflect procedural fairness and natural justice
- discuss the issue with the complainant within 24 hours of receiving the verbal or written complaint.
- investigate and document the grievance or complaint fairly and impartially
- support an individual's right to complain and will help them to make their complaints clear and try to resolve them.
- Ensure families will be provided with clear written guidelines detailing the grievance procedure, in the family handbook.
- Ensure that all confidential conversations with individuals who have a complaint or grievance will take place in a quiet place away from children, other families or staff that are not involved.
- If an individual has a complaint or comment about the service, they will be encouraged to talk to the coordinator who will arrange a time to discuss their concern and come to a resolution to address the issue.
- If the complaint is not handled at this level to the satisfaction of the person making the complaint, they should discuss the issue with the Nominated Supervisor (if different from the coordinator) or management liaison person, either in writing or verbally.
- Management will discuss the issue with the coordinator and develop a strategy for resolving the problem, this would be discussed further with the individual or if necessary, a meeting will be organised with the coordinator and individual to resolve the problem.
- All complaints will be recorded and dated indicating the issue of concern and how it was resolved. All information on complaints and grievances will include evidence that complaints are investigated within satisfactory timeframes and have led to amendments to policies and procedures where required.
- The coordinator or management will inform the person making the complaint of what has been decided regarding the issue. Staff will also be informed of any relevant issues

- that they need to address or be aware of. This could be done verbally or if the issue has been dealt with on a more formal basis, then the coordinator or Approved Provider will write personally to the individual making the complaint.
- If any complaint cannot be resolved internally to the person's satisfaction, external options will be offered such as an unbiased third party.

### An investigation will consist of:

- reviewing the circumstances and facts of the complaint (or breach) and inviting all affected parties to provide information where appropriate and pertinent discussing the nature of the complaint (or breach) and giving the accused educator, staff member, volunteer, or visitor an opportunity to respond
- permitting the accused person to have a support person present during the consultation (for example: Union Representative or family member; however, this does not include a lawyer acting in a professional capacity)
- providing the employee with a clear written statement outlining the outcome of the investigation.
- Advise the complainant and all affected parties of the outcome within 7 working days of receiving the verbal or written complaint.
- management will provide a written response outlining the outcome and provide a copy to all parties involved
- if a written agreement about the resolution of the complaint is prepared, all parties will ensure the outcomes accurately reflects the resolution and sign in agreement.
- should management decide not to proceed with the investigation after initial enquiries, a written notification outlining the reasoning will be provided to the complainant
- keep appropriate records of the investigation and outcome and store these records in accordance with our *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* and *Record Keeping and Retention Policy*
- monitor ongoing behaviour and provide support as required
- ensure the parties are protected from victimisation and bullying
- request feedback on the grievance and complaint process using a feedback form review the effectiveness of the Service policy and procedures to ensure all complaints and grievances have been handled fairly and professionally
- track complaints to identify recurring issues within the Service
- notify the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours if a complaint alleges the safety, health or wellbeing of a child is being compromised. Notification must include any incident where



there is a reasonable belief that physical and/or sexual abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring at the service, or any allegation that sexual or physical abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring at the service.

### Continuous Improvement:

- Complaints provide our Service with opportunities for learning and improvement. We encourage regular and ongoing feedback from staff, children and families and the community.
- Our Service is committed to resolving complaints through prompt investigation, open communication, and transparent processes.
- Use complaints as opportunities to reflect on the services Child Safe Practices.
- Review processes regularly and after complaints are made.
- Continue to ensure there is an organisational culture where complaints are taken seriously and acted upon.

### ENDORSEMENT BY THE SERVICE:

The policy will be reviewed as required. The review will be conducted by management, staff, children, families and the wider community.

Last reviewed: October 2025

Date of next review: April 2027

APPROVAL DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE FOR REVIEW: \_\_\_\_\_