



Grievance and Complaints Management Policy Parents / Guardians / Community Member

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Next Review Date:
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Interactions and Relationships related Policy –Education and Care Services National Regulation 168

Policy statement:

Lipscombe Child Care Services Inc (**the Service**) aims to meet the needs of individual children and families through the development of relationships. However, from time to time a grievance may arise and in this instance, the Service has a duty of care to ensure that all persons are heard fairly. We view any complaint as an opportunity to improve our Service and maintain our positive relationships. This Policy does not apply to complaints by staff /volunteers about the Service or other staff/volunteers. It may at the Service's absolute discretion be used by the Service to raise an issue regarding a child or family, however the Service is under no obligation to do so before using other remedies.

This Policy does not prevent a family from making a complaint to a relevant regulatory authority at any time.

Target Audience:

Educators, Families, Management

Definitions:

Grievance: concerns or complaints relating to the Service.

Complainant: the person who raises the grievance.

Respondent: the person or organisation who the complaint is about.

Mediator: A third party who has skills in resolving conflict between two parties.

Aim:

- To ensure families feel able to raise concerns related to the Service as they arise.
- To ensure that each family feels that they can raise contentious issues, and provide critical feedback without any concern that their comments will lead to any victimisation or prejudice to themselves or their child.
- For the Service to be able to monitor the quality of the service provided and identify areas that require review.
- To promote staff to be responsive to the needs and concerns of families and their children, supporting the Service to develop and review its practices and procedures.
- To encourage both negative and positive feedback that can support the Service's quality improvement plan, which in turn leads to improvements in service delivery.
- To ensure methods of communication are varied and suit a range of individuals.

Responsibilities:

Board, Educators, Management.

Guidelines / Procedures:

- Listen to and acknowledge the issue raised.
- Provide information, etc that may assist in resolution.
- Acknowledge and set a reasonable time frame for follow-up.

Guidelines for Educators:

- Always display a positive response to family requests, concerns or grievances.
- Be open and honest.
- Ensure concerns that are raised are addressed at the earliest opportunity.
- When a concern is in regard to a team member, refer them to their coordinator.
- When a concern is in relation to the co-ordinator, refer to the Director.
- When uncertain about how to deal with a grievance raised by a family, or the grievance issue is out of their control, seek support or assistance from the Director or Assistant Director.
- Offer a comments/concerns/grievances pamphlet to the person with the concern, to enable details to be provided in writing, or direct the complainant to the email contact details for Nominated Supervisor
- Maintain confidentiality for families, children and staff at all times.
- Inform the Director of the progress or challenges of grievance resolution.
- If a grievance was resolved by the educator, the Director will follow up and monitor the outcome to confirm the complainant is satisfied.

The Service Director will:

- Ensure that all staff will be supported in the Grievance procedure with regard to its application and implications.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Encourage staff to identify potential family concerns and ensure such concerns are addressed at the earliest opportunity in an open and collaborative way.
- Ensure establishment of unbiased Service procedures and policies that are supportive of families and the Service.
- Ensure all grievances will be dealt with promptly and the complainant will be kept informed of the progress towards the resolution.
- Protect the rights of staff members relating to any grievance, and ensure all outcomes will be based on the principles of natural justice.
- Ensure processes and procedures are clear and are transparent and fully explained to all concerned.
- Ensure that new families are provided with thorough orientation which covers the Service's grievance policy information and discuss ways that families can work in partnerships with us on an ongoing basis.
- Ensure contact details for the Regulatory Authority are readily available.
- Provide a Compliments, concerns, complaints and suggestions leaflet in Parent packages, including email contact details for the Nominated Supervisor.
- Keep a register of all grievances received, detailing action taken to address the matter, who was involved and the outcome and where records are stored.
- Report to the Regulatory Authority as per regulatory requirement.
- Offer an interpreter when handling complaints where required.
- Report the grievance / complaint to the Board.

The Board will:

- Require the Director to report to the Board on a regular basis regarding any grievances/complaints received and the outcome or resolution of that grievance.
- Support the Director in resolution of any ongoing more challenging grievances/complaints.

Grievance raised, Steps to take:

If a staff member receives a verbal grievance or complaint from a family, they will confirm its details with the complainant and record it in writing. If the nature of the verbal complaint is minor, the staff member should use best efforts to suggest a mutually agreeable resolution and implement it. If the nature of the verbal complaint is major, or the suggested resolution to a minor issue is not accepted by the family, the staff member should politely request that the complaint be put in writing to the Director in order for it to be further considered.

Upon the Director receiving a written grievance the procedure will be as follows:

- The Director will acknowledge the grievance promptly by speaking to the complainant. The Director will obtain all relevant details about the complaint, clarify the facts, details and perspectives of the complainant. The Director will also explain the steps in the complaint process and expected timeframes for handling the complaint, noting that the Director is the relevant contact person. These details must also be provided in writing to the complainant promptly.
- The Director will then speak with a respondent (if there is one other than the Service) and any other persons involved, to clarify the facts, details and perspectives and organise a meeting or follow up, with the complainant. The Director may at this meeting suggest a resolution to the grievance if there is no respondent other than the Service.
- If there is a respondent to the grievance other than the Service, the Director will offer to organise a meeting between the complainant and respondent at which time they will be encouraged to resolve the matter through informal discussions using problem solving techniques. These sessions will be facilitated by the Director.
- Where the Director or Board decides it is necessary, an investigator may be appointed to determine the facts.
- If, despite all best efforts by all parties, grievances cannot be resolved by the process above, a mediator will be appointed to mediate the grievance.
- Where appropriate at the option of the Service this mediator may be drawn from the Lipscombe Board of Directors or alternatively an independent mediator professional may be used. The costs of such mediation will be met by the Service.
- If despite best efforts of all parties a resolution cannot be agreed at the mediation, the complainant may take the matter further in their personal capacity outside the Service.
- If a resolution is agreed at the mediation, the Director and respondent will ensure the required steps are taken to implement the resolution.
- At the conclusion of any process used to attempt to resolve the grievance, the processes and the outcomes will be recorded in a separate and confidential grievance file and any legal requirements in relation to the complaint considered, such as the need to notify regulatory authorities. Any actions recommended by the Director in order to avoid recurring similar grievances will also be noted and acted upon.

Conflict of interest:

A conflict of interest may arise during a grievance management procedure. If a parent / guardian voices a complaint against the Director who usually manages and mediates all grievances, the family will be referred to the Chair of the Service Board who will consider the written complaint, appoint someone other than the Director to manage it and act as mediator or nominate an alternative mediator.

In the case of a conflict of interest regarding a parent who is a member of the Board, the parent would be required to declare the conflict of interest and absent themselves from any discussion regarding the issue when it is being considered by the Board.

Links to other Policies:

Child Grievance
Staff Grievance
Duty of Care
Privacy and Data Management
Enrolment of new families into Service
Meeting Children's Individual Needs
Communications Policy

Attachments:

Compliments, Complaints, Concerns and Suggestions Pamphlet.

Links to NQF:

Standard: 6.1 Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.

Standard: 7.1.1 A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the services' operation.

Standard: 7.1.2 Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.

Standard 7.1.3: Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision making and operation of the service.

References:

Natural Justice / Procedural Fairness NSW Ombudsman

Policy Review:

Lipscombe Early Years Education & Care will review this policy and related documents, every 2 years, or more often as required when new information becomes available.

Families are encouraged to collaborate with the Service to review the policy and procedures.

It is essential for all staff to be involved in the policy review process and familiarise and acknowledge in writing any changes to policy made at review.

Changes made at review:

Additional Policy, statement information, Roles of the staff, Director and Board, Addition of QIAS, Links to other policies, Use of additional resources,

Additional definitions – informal complaint, formal, serious and rights, Additional background information

Additional rationale, Addition of aims, added family involvement opportunities

August 2011 – removed QIAS links and replaced with NQF standards

Last policy review - 2008

Review 2012 Changed format, Changed philosophy wording to reflect updated philosophy, Staff change to educators, Shortened policy statement as repetitive, Assessment family book

May 2013 review - Reference to regulatory authority, Additional background removed,

Added reference to NQF Regulations

January 2015 – Refined policy statement, changed wording and removed verbal feedback and conversations with Board in Service Director will:, removed Family involvement section, added link to Communications Policy.

October 2015 - Clarification added as to when and how the Policy applies and what the grievance process is.

October 2017 – review; addition of email contact details for Nominated Supervisor to be made available

May 2018 - Updated National Quality Standards