

<b>Subject:</b> CLIENT COMPLAINTS: GENERAL	Staff
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<b>Cross Reference:</b>	<b>Approved By:</b> Executive Director

## POLICY:

Vaughan Community Health Centre (VCHC) strives to provide exceptional service to all of our clients. However, there may be times when clients may not be satisfied with the services received or a decision made by VCHC. VCHC will ensure that clients have the opportunity to express complaints without concern for repercussions. VCHC will make every effort to resolve any and all complaints in a fair, respectful, and timely manner.

## Definition:

A complaint is a client or visitor's concern that arises from actual or specific experience. General complaints might be about:

- Service – issues about the processes by which programs and services are delivered
- Service Accessibility – issues regarding access to a program or service
- Service Coordination – the extent to which staff communicate appropriately with each other and/or external partners and work as a team to provide seamless service
- Information – the extent to which written or verbal information given to clients was satisfactory
- Facilities – accessibility, signage, parking, cleanliness, privacy
- Safety and Security – the extent to which provisions are made to ensure a client's personal safety and the security of his/her belongings

(NOTE: Some general complaints might fall outside of these definitions/examples, which are not all-inclusive)

## **PROCEDURES:**

If a client has a concern, and expresses it to a direct supervisor or a staff person, and the concern is clarified with the client to their satisfaction, it is not treated as a complaint. The resolution of a concern is achieved through open communication.

Clients may express complaints to VCHC through either an informal or formal complaint process.

**An informal resolution of the complaint is encouraged whenever possible before formal procedures are initiated.**

### **Informal Complaint Process**

- Informal complaints can be expressed in person or by phone – ideally to the most relevant person involved. Because many complaints are related to misunderstandings or miscommunication, speedy resolution is usually the result of this conversation
- Staff receiving a complaint will respond in an open, positive, and professional manner. They will talk with the person to determine what the issue is and what they want done about it. They will then either deal with the complaint or refer to the most relevant person involved for resolution

### **Formal Complaint Process**

#### **Step 1:**

- If the complaint is not resolved through discussion, the staff person receiving the complaint will report it to the appropriate direct supervisor, who will complete the Client or Visitor Complaint Report (10.01.1A.), investigate the complaint, and respond to the complainant within one week. The direct supervisor must inform the Programs and Services Director of the client complaint and the resolution process. The Director will then inform the Executive Director of the incident.
- The client submitting a complaint may continue to access VCHC services during the investigation unless they prefer not to, in which case the direct supervisor will make every effort to make a referral to an appropriate organization.

### **Step 2:**

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the initial response s/he received from VCHC staff, a written complaint outlining the initial complaint as well as the client's reasons for dissatisfaction with the response may be submitted to the Executive Director
- Upon receiving a formal complaint, the Executive Director will first determine if the complainant has discussed the concern with the relevant staff person and may delegate follow up to the Programs and Services Director.
- The Executive Director will provide the complainant with the details of the complaint procedure, including the contact information of the Programs and Services Director if the Director has been assigned to investigate, within one week
- Upon investigating/receiving the Programs and Services Director's report and making a decision, the Executive Director will contact the complainant with a response as soon as possible – ideally indicating change(s) that will occur or the reason(s) why change(s) cannot occur to resolve the complaint

### **Step 3:**

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the Executive Director's response, a written complaint outlining the initial complaint as well as the client's reasons for dissatisfaction with the response may be submitted to the Chair of the Board of Directors within 4 weeks of receipt of the response.
- The Chair will refer the complaint to the Executive Committee of the Board for a final decision, which will be communicated to the complainant within six weeks.

### **Reports:**

- All client complaints and actions taken will be documented and shared with the Management Team, and with all staff. Complaints will also be analyzed to identify possible trends, and an annual report will be prepared for and presented to the Board.
- Complaints that may put the organization at risk are reported to the board within 24 hours.