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Policy and Statement

In all cases, staff will comply with Central West Specialized Developmental Services' policies and relevant Ministry's policies and legislation with respect to reporting to other parties or any other required actions.

The process contained in this Policy and Procedure deals with **non-emergency situations**. If the complaint received is in regards to abuse, refer to Abuse of Individuals – Policy No. 07-002; Investigation of Witnessed, Alleged or Suspected Abuse of a Child or Individual – Policy Nos. 07-004 and 07-005; and Serious Occurrences – Policy No. 07-003.

The Ministry has procedures to be explicitly followed by their service providers in regards to complaints received about CWSDS and / or complaints made by or about an individual residing at CWSDS and/or using CWSDS' services. For matters dealing with either of the aforementioned situations, refer to and follow Serious Occurrences – Policy No. 07-003 and Discrimination and Harassment Prevention – Policy No. 30-012.

CWSDS will deal with all complaints with respect and confidentiality. CWSDS will attempt to resolve all complaints and issues immediately. However in some circumstances, in order to address and respond to complaints and issues to the fullest extent, an extended period of time may be required. In all cases, responses will be provided in a timely manner, as outlined in the Procedure.

It is expected that any individual residing at CWSDS and/or using CWSDS' services who has a question, concern or complaint will, in the normal course of events, discuss and resolve it with the person(s) involved. This may be a house mate, day program co-worker, support staff, and/or management. The majority of concerns should be resolved at this stage.

CWSDS recognizes the importance to encourage individuals to develop conflict resolution skills, self-advocacy skills, and to exercise such skills. There are copies of Conflict Resolution pamphlets in each residential home that outlines what steps individuals can take to resolve issues. The "Individual's Complaint Plan" (See Appendix A) was developed with CWSDS' client advocacy committee ("The Voice"). An "Individual's Complaint Plan" is posted in all departments in an area accessible to individuals. It outlines who to talk to should an individual have a complaint against other clients, service delivery, staff, or management. If an individual does not feel that their complaint has been resolved satisfactorily, the individual would then proceed on to the next step outlined.

Non-Resolved Complaints

The following procedures are meant for those situations that do not get resolved in the normal course of events, or where the complainant feels that they cannot raise the matter with the relevant staff member.

When an individual raises a concern, the individual will first be asked if they wishes a family member to be informed and their wishes will be respected. Individuals may also ask for an independent advocate to support them through the process.

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When an individual is unable to give consent or direction regarding family contact, a family member will be informed and may support the individual through the process.

It is expected that any family member who has a question, concern or complaint will, in the normal course of events, discuss and resolve it with the relevant front-line staff member. As appropriate to the situation, this may be the primary counselor, the staff on duty at the time, or the team leader. If unable to resolve the issue at this level, they should follow the process.

If a community partner (other service agencies, tenants, etc.) or member of the general public has a complaint, they should attempt to resolve the issue with the person they have the complaint with. If unable to resolve the issue at this level, they should follow the process.

Written feedback is welcomed. Comment cards and locked boxes on accessibility and/or services at CWSDS are available for anyone to complete at each of the main entrances in the Administration building and in the family visiting room. Comment surveys are also available on CWSDS' website. In addition, there is a dedicated telephone voice mail box for individuals to leave comments / feedback on regarding our accessibility and service.

Email, telephone messages and written comments are monitored by a member of the Accessibility Committee. Those leaving comments with their contact information can expect that a member of the Accessibility Committee will follow up initially within five (5) business days. Email, telephone messages and written comments on services will be monitored by the Executive Coordinator and forwarded to the appropriate Director for response.

Throughout each step in the process, complaints will remain confidential and there will be no reprisal towards the individual who made the complaint. In the event that it becomes known that the complainant was coerced, intimidated and / or biased either during the process or after resolution, CWSDS will take immediate action to address the issue.

Consideration will be given to altering / omitting steps in the process in the event of any conflict of interest that may exist (or arise as a result of information gathered) between the complainant and those involved, including those who will manage / resolve the complaint.

In this policy and procedure, the term "family member" is intended to include parents, any other members of the individual's family, friends who are part of the individual's life, and / or substitute decision makers.

Procedure

Step No. 1

Concerns, questions, or complaints that have not been dealt with satisfactorily, or cannot be dealt with at the front-line staff level, may be taken to the relevant Residential Manager as appropriate. In urgent situations, when that Manager is not on duty, the issue may be brought to the Shift Manager. It is acknowledged that complaints may be verbally given however, a written format is preferred.

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Assistance from an independent or neutral staff / person may be requested. In urgent situations, when the relevant Residential Manager is not on duty, the issue may be brought to the Shift Manager.

The Manager will ensure that they have a full understanding of the nature of the concern, question, or complaint from the complainant's perspective.

If the Manager is able to answer the question or resolve the complaint / concern immediately, they will do so. The Manager will document the complaint / concern and the response. Documentation will be forwarded to the appropriate Area Manager.

If not, they will undertake whatever actions are necessary and appropriate in the circumstances.

These actions might include, but are not limited to:

- gathering information;
- discussing the issue with staff;
- involving other Managers / Area Managers / Directors and / or the Executive Director;
- initiating a formal investigation; and/or
- consulting a neutral third party with expertise in the matter at hand.

Once this process has been completed, the Manager will provide a response to the person who raised the issue, having due regard for the privacy and confidentiality rights of individuals and staff. The Manager's response is to be provided to the complainant within five (5) business days.

If the complainant is, or seems to be unhappy with the Manager's response and asks to speak to someone else, the Manager will ensure that the complainant is aware of the next step in the process and will assist the complainant to take that step if she wants assistance. The Manager will provide the relevant information and documentation on the complaint / concern to the appropriate Area Manager.

Step No. 2

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response of the Manager, the individual may bring the issue to the attention of the appropriate Area Manager.

The Area Manager will ensure that they have a full understanding of the concern, question or complaint from the complainant's perspective. They will review all of the material gathered by the Manager and meet with the Manager. They may then confirm the response of the Manager or carry out any other actions they deems necessary.

In either case, the Area Manager will provide their response to the person who raised the issue, having due regard for the privacy and confidentiality rights of individuals and staff. The Area Manager's response is to be provided to the complainant within five (5) business days. If the complainant is, or seems to be unhappy with the Area Manager's response and asks to speak to someone else, the Area Manager will ensure that the complainant is aware of the next step in the process and will assist the complainant to take that step if she wants assistance.

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Should information become available during Step No. 2 that was not known to the Manager, and that requires reporting to their parties or other actions as specified in policy or legislation, the Area Manager must comply with such policy or legislation.

The Area Manager will document the concern / complaint raised and the response. Documentation will be provided to the appropriate Director of Services.

Step No. 3

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response of the Area Manager, the individual may bring the issue to the attention of the appropriate Director of Services.

The Director will ensure that they have a full understanding of the concern, question or complaint from the complainant's perspective. They will review all of the material gathered by the Manager and the Area Manager and meet with them. The Director may then confirm the response of the Area Manager or carry out any other actions she deems necessary.

In either case, the Director will provide their response to the person who raised the issue, having due regard for the privacy and confidentiality rights of individuals and staff. The Director's response is to be provided to the complainant within five (5) business days. If the complainant is, or seems to be unhappy with the Director's response and asks to speak to someone else, the Director will ensure that the complainant is aware of the next step in the process and will assist the complainant to take that step if she wants assistance.

Should information become available during Step No. 3 that was not known to the Area Manager, and that requires reporting to their parties or other actions as specified in policy or legislation, the Director must comply with such policy or legislation.

The Director of Services will advise the Executive Director.

Step No. 4

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response of the Director, the individual may bring the issue to the attention of the Executive Director.

The Executive Director will ensure that they have a full understanding of the concern, question or complaint from the complainant's perspective. They will review all of the material gathered by the Manager, the Area Manager and the Director and meet with them. They may then confirm the response of the Director or carry out any other actions they deems necessary.

In either case, the Executive Director will provide their response to the person who raised the issue, having due regard for the privacy and confidentiality rights of individuals and staff. The Executive Director's response is to be provided to the complainant within seven (7) business days. If the complainant is, or seems to be unhappy with the Executive Director's response and asks to speak to someone else, the Executive Director will ensure that the complainant is aware of the next step in the process and will assist the complainant to take that step if they want assistance.

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Should information become available during Step No. 4 that was not known to the Director, and that requires reporting to their parties or other actions as specified in policy or legislation, the Executive Director must comply with such policy or legislation.

Step No. 5

If, after Step No. 4, the complainant is still not satisfied, the individual may bring the question, concern, or complaint to the attention of the Chair of the Board of Directors.

In order to expedite the process at this step, the complaint must be presented to the Board Chair in writing, outlining the nature of the complaint, why the responses to date have not been satisfactory, and the desired outcome. If the complainant is an individual acting on their own, this will not be required. Exceptions may also be made for others for whom a written complaint would be a hardship.

The Chair will ensure that they have a full understanding of the concern, question or complaint from the perspective of the complainant. They will review the letter from the complainant and all material compiled by the Manager, Area Manager, Director and the Executive Director, and will meet with any of these individuals as she deems necessary.

The Chair may then confirm the response of the Executive Director or determine that they will undertake further actions. In the latter instance, the Chair will determine whether they undertake these actions themselves, requests another Board member to do so, or forms an ad hoc committee of the Board of Directors to do so. The individual or committee will report to the Board of Directors and the Board will ratify or amend the proposed response. This item may be dealt with In Camera if required to maintain confidentiality.

In all cases brought to Step No. 5, the Chair is responsible for ensuring that a response is provided to the person bringing the complaint, having due regard for the privacy and confidentiality rights of individuals and staff. The response from the Chair of the Board of Directors is to be provided to the complainant within fourteen (14) business days.

At the end of Steps No. 1 through 4, the person dealing with the complaint will briefly document the nature of the complaint and the response. The Executive Director will regularly review and analyze these reports and will provide a summary report to the Board of Directors at a frequency determined from time to time by the Board of Directors.

At the end of each step of the process, the complainant will be provided with a written response if they so requests, or if the person responding to the complaint deems it necessary.

A copy of this procedure will be provided to the listed next-of-kin, or the substitute decision-maker for each individual and to any other family member who requests it. It will be available in each house and program area and brought to the attention of individuals as appropriate and relevant.

Approved:

Executive Director