

Policy Title:	External Stakeholder Complaints
Policy Number:	2) f.12.
Date Approved:	Mar. 22, 2017
Date Amended:	Nov. 27, 2024

Rationale:

Because CMHA views complaints from external stakeholders as an opportunity to learn and improve its operations, as well as a chance to rectify a situation for the complainant, and, potentially, provide further understanding and information, the organization welcomes complaints and will make every effort to ensure that, wherever possible, these are resolved and relationships are repaired.

Procedures:

1. Whether justified or not, an external stakeholder complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction which may come from any person or organization who has an interest in CMHA. Examples of complaints may include, but are not limited to:
 - Perceived failure to do something agreed upon
 - Failure to observe policy or procedures
 - Error made by CMHA Personnel
 - Unfair or discourteous actions/statements by CMHA Personnel
2. Complaints may be received in writing (electronically or otherwise) or verbally. The recipient of an external complaint will ensure that it is forwarded to the appropriate Supervisor or Manager who will then inform the ED. If the complaint is regarding the Supervisor or Manager, the complaint will be passed directly to the ED or their delegate.
3. The recipient of the complaint will record, in writing, the facts of the complaint, the name and contact information of the complainant, and the relationship of the complainant to CMHA (eg. member, family or friend of client, caregiver, etc.). Where appropriate, the complainant will also be asked to submit a written, dated, and signed account to CMHA so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.
4. Written complaints may be sent to the attention of the ED at the CMHA head office.
5. Complaints received verbally, by phone or in person, will be recorded, if possible.
6. The complainant will be informed about the CMHA complaints process, including next steps and time frame.

7. CMHA may create and maintain a specific channel or means (such as a dedicated email address) for the receipt of external stakeholders' complaints.
8. All complaint information will be handled sensitively and confidentially by Personnel, informing only those who need to know, and following all CMHA data protection and privacy requirements. (See Policy 2) h.2. for more regarding Personal Information Access and Protection.)
9. In some cases, a complaint is best resolved by the Personnel responsible for the complaint issue. If the complaint has been received by that person, they should resolve the issue swiftly and effectively, if possible and appropriate.
10. Whether or not the complaint is resolved, the complaint information will be documented and passed to the ED as soon as possible.
11. The complaint will be recorded in a complaints log by the ED or, as directed, by the HR Manager or other delegate.
12. If the complaint has not been resolved, the ED may delegate appropriate Personnel to investigate and take appropriate action.
13. The complainant will be informed as to who is dealing with their complaint and when they can expect a written reply.
14. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they will be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond. All details of their response, and of the investigation will be documented, dated, and filed.
15. Whether or not the complaint is justified, the written reply to the complainant will describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions of the investigation, and any action(s) taken as a result of the complaint. A copy will be retained and filed.
16. Ideally, complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because, for example, the investigation has not been fully completed, a written progress report will be sent to the complainant, indicating when a full reply will be provided. Copies of all correspondence with the complainant will be kept and filed.
17. If the complainant is not satisfied with the reply or resolution, they can request that the complaint be further reviewed by the ED, or, if the complaint concerns the ED, by the CMHA Board. At this stage, the complaint becomes a **'formal complaint'** and will be addressed by the ED or by the Board Chair.
18. A request for formal complaint level review will be acknowledged in writing within one week of receiving this and will include who will address the case and when the complainant can expect a written reply.

19. As appropriate, the ED or Board Chair may investigate the complaint themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This next level investigation will involve reviewing the documentation of the case and, likely, speaking with the Personnel who initially dealt with the complaint and the person who is the subject of the complaint. Both will be given opportunity to provide their version of the situation. Further detailed documentation will be completed and filed.
20. Personnel who dealt with the original complaint will be kept informed of the proceedings.
21. Ideally, complainants should receive a definitive reply to a formal complaint within four weeks. If this is not possible because, for example, the investigation at this stage has not been fully completed, a written progress report will be sent to the complainant, indicating when a full reply will be provided. Copies of all correspondence with the complainant will be kept and filed.
22. Whether the formal complaint is upheld or not, the written reply to the complainant will describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action(s) taken as a result of the formal complaint. The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.
23. The Board may vary for various reasons, including, for example, in order to avoid a conflict of interest. A complaint about the Chair should not have the Chair as the person leading the review of a formal complaint.
24. Ordinary (stage one) complaints will be regularly reviewed with the senior Managers, to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.
25. Formal complaints will be reviewed annually by the Board, to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.
26. CMHA will publicize the existence of an external stakeholders' complaints procedure to facilitate these types of complaints.
27. CMHA will ensure that Personnel are trained and updated as to how to handle external complaints and the procedures involved in addressing these.
28. This policy will be regularly reviewed and updated as required and to ensure that the procedures are clear, fair, and timely.

