

## **Complaints Handling**

### **Purpose of this policy**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure CPEC staff respond to complaints and concerns from any person who receives a service from CPEC in an effective and timely manner. This policy seeks to meet the following requirements:

- When a person wants to make a complaint, CPEC staff will make sure the person's views are respected, that they are informed as the complaint is dealt with, and have the opportunity to be involved in the resolution process.
- Each person is treated fairly when making a complaint and is provided with information and support to make a complaint.

### **Policy**

Complaints are a mechanism for continuous improvements in all aspects of the administration and services delivered at CPEC.

Each person who receives a service from CPEC will be encouraged and supported as necessary, to give feedback about the type or quality of services provided to him or her or any other issue of concern. In the event of complaints arising CPEC will provide appropriate avenues for clients to state and have resolved to their satisfaction any complaints about the service they receive or any other issue, without fear of penalty or victimisation.

This management process is designed to achieve resolution at the earliest possible time and provide an opportunity to CPEC to review service delivery or other relevant issues and achieve service improvement. All complaints shall be handled according to the Privacy Policy. Where a matter cannot be resolved within CPEC, then it may be taken to an independent mediator.

### **Procedures**

#### **Awareness of the complaint process**

The CEO and the management team will ensure that the complaint process described in this policy is clearly explained and understood by staff. The CEO will reinforce to staff the confidentiality aspects of complaints and that staff may not disclose (at any stage of the complaint) any details of a complaint that they have received except to report it to the appropriate staff member.

CPEC staff are responsible for openly communicating CPEC's complaints process in the following routine basis:

- Induction of new clients (this may include parents/ guardians) into a service
- Ongoing support to clients in making complaints. Both formal and informal methods may be used to facilitate this goal
- Client support meetings with the therapists, CEO or the management team.

CPEC provides access to the Complaint Process brochures through:

- Displaying copies at the main reception area
- Including a copy in the induction package for clients accepted into CPEC services
- Providing when requested by families or other stakeholder.

### **Informal Complaint Handling Procedure**

A staff member receives an initial verbal complaint:

- The staff member receiving the complaint informs the CEO to discuss the issue with the person raising the issue/ complaint
- The CEO identifies and clarifies the person's complaint and the outcomes expected by the complainant
- Where the issue can be solved through mutual agreement, then this should be undertaken and the informal complaint has been resolved
- Where appropriate an Incident Report may need to be completed.

### **Formal Complaint Handling Procedure**

- Where the complaint cannot be mutually resolved, the complainant will be provided with a complaint form and requested to complete and submit to the CEO
- In the case of very serious complaints (e.g. criminal activities or allegations of physical, sexual or emotional abuse and complaint about neglect of client's needs), investigations will be undertaken by the CEO and another member of the management team
- Upon receipt of the complaint form, the CEO shall:
  - Consider information in the 'Complaint Form' and determines if immediate action can be taken to resolve the complaint
  - If the complaint has been resolved, signs off the complaint form for entry in the complaint register and attach any correspondence that has been forwarded to the complainant

- c) Where the action item has not lead to resolution or the complaint is complex, the CEO shall discuss with the CPEC President of the Board of Management and the President will resolve the issue with the complainant. Where the complaint is serious and involves notification to the Police, the President of the Board of Management will be informed immediately of the complaint
  - d) The CEO will ensure that all complaints and the outcomes of complaints are appropriately recorded on the Complaint form and the CEO prepares a monthly report which informs the Board up-dates and actions regarding complaints received
- iv. All complaints records will be kept in the event of further investigations.

Where a complaint cannot be resolved, the complainant will be referred to an external body for examination of the complaint such as:

- Victorian Ombudsman
- National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), if a complaint is relating to NDIS
- Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission
- Complaints Resolution and referral services.

### **The Board of Management**

The Board will be responsible for:

- Oversight of the actions of CPEC in managing complaints
- Review/ monitor complaint handling practices
- Supervise the investigation of serious complaints involving suspected criminal or corrupt conduct
- Consider proactive measures that will address issues related to any consistent areas of complaint.

### **Complaint Documentation**

All complaints will be recorded in the complaint register and copies of all complaints forms kept in relevant files. Accurate written records must be kept of all communications that form part of the complaint process. This includes notes taken of conversations between the parties which relate to management of the complaint and all agreed actions and decisions made in relation to the complaint.

- Only the people who are directly involved in the complaint or in helping to resolve it, are to have access to information about the complaint
- Complaint documentation is to be kept separate from client or staff files
- Complaints will be kept confidential.

### **Time-line of complaints management**

Complaints received by CPEC will be responded to in a timely manner. CPEC will acknowledge complaints as soon as possible following receipt of the complaint. Acknowledgement will include advising the complainant who will be handling the complaint and anticipated time when that person will make further contact. Acknowledgement will be made within 48 hours of receipt of the complaint.

Response to a complaint should commence as soon as practicable, within two weeks of receipt. For complex complaints it may be necessary to investigate the matter or seek information from external parties. When a matter is going to take longer period of time to resolve, the complainant should be kept informed of progress at regular intervals.

The complainant should be contacted at the end of the complaint handling process to communicate the resolution achieved, any agreed outcomes and to discuss any ongoing issues that may remain.

Timeframe for resolving complaints:

- Simple – within 4 weeks of receipt
- Complex in nature – within 6 weeks of receipt.

Determination of whether the complaint is simple or complex in nature lies with the CEO.

A follow up of a complaint resolution or outcome should be done by the CEO or the person who has been nominated by the CEO to handle the complaint to ensure that the resolution/ outcome agreed upon has resulted in maintaining or improving a client's service and/ or workplace environment. This should occur within four weeks of the finalisation of a complaint investigation.

### **Process of Appeal**

A complainant may not be satisfied with the initial response provided to a complaint.

In such circumstances CPEC will review the complaint handling process followed in the initial response and may further investigate matters and/ or reconsider the original decision when appropriate.

### **External Agencies for Complaints**

#### **VIC Ombudsman**

570 Bourke Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000  
Phone: (03) 9613 6222

### **Related Policies**

- Information Privacy
- Intake

### **Related Legislation**

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*
- *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007*
- *Information Privacy Act 2000*
- *Wrongs Act 1958*
- *Ombudsman Act 1973*