

G2a. Client Complaint Policy

1.0 Policy Statement

The Clinic is committed to ensuring that its services are delivered with excellence and from an anti-oppression, feminist perspective. Part of this commitment includes supporting clients who have concerns or complaints about the manner in which they have been treated or the way in which they have experienced service delivery. Often, a complaint to the Clinic can be part of a new experience of being heard and taken seriously for women who have experienced violence, oppression and trauma. If this is so, we are able to reflect, admit imperfection and not react with defensiveness or personal hurt.

All complaints, whether formal or informal, will be documented by the Program Director and reviewed within 48 business hours by the Executive Director.

All those associated with the Clinic are encouraged to resolve differences, complaints and conflicts using informal methods, wherever possible.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all complaints received from members of the public about our programs, services, staff and volunteers. This policy does not apply to employees or volunteers as the Clinic has specific policies and procedures to address these instances.

As a matter of practice, client complaints that are made over one year after the alleged incident took place will generally be considered as out of time and should be forwarded directly to management. Management will only consider such untimely complaints in exceptional circumstances.

3.0 Definition

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction with regard to a service or program, an action or decision taken by the Clinic, or the way in which the Clinic's employees or volunteers carry out their duties. A complaint is distinct from an enquiry, feedback, or a suggestion. Complaints typically arise when a person believes:

- The Clinic has failed to do something agreed upon or expected
- A Clinic policy or procedure has not been followed
- A Clinic policy or procedure is unfair or inadequate
- An error has been made
- Clinic employees or volunteers have acted in a wrongful way

4.0 Procedures

The Clinic acknowledges it may be difficult for clients to bring a formal complaint forward. All staff and volunteers are expected to be mindful of this reality and to provide clients who wish to make a complaint with reasonable access to information and support.

Clients are encouraged to and will be supported in determining their own complaint process, which will include some form of communication with the involved staff person(s).

Follow-up to the complaint will be as the client wishes, including whether or not she is informed of the outcomes.

All necessary interpretation and translation shall be provided by the Clinic at the Clinic's expense.

Detailed information about specific outcomes and/or actions taken may not be shared with all parties (for example, if a staff person is to be disciplined as a result of the complaint, the client may not be provided with the specific details but may simply be told that disciplinary action is being taken).

Detailed and identifying information shall not be shared throughout the Clinic; rather staff and Board members will receive general information about the complaint, the investigation and the outcomes.

4.1 Informal Complaint

Clients are encouraged to speak with a program manager about a question or concern. In most cases, raising an issue with a program manager will resolve the matter. You may do this either in person, by phone or by email. Staff support may include such options as supporting the client in writing a letter to the staff/volunteer or having a Manager sit in on a meeting. Program Managers are involved in handling questions or concerns as they arise. The client may bring a support person with her, but for confidentiality reasons, this cannot be another staff person or client.

Every effort will be made to resolve complaints in a timely manner. When receiving any complaint, whether written or verbal, staff will listen and seek to understand your complaint, and may try to resolve it immediately. If follow-up is required, staff will record your contact information including your name, phone number, and email address (if any).

4.2 Formal Complaint

Where the above attempts to resolve a concern or complaint are unsuccessful or where the client does not wish to engage in a process with staff, the Clinic provides a formal complaint procedure.

The client will contact the Program Director in person or in writing to elaborate her complaint. The Program Director will attempt to resolve the issue including speaking with both staff and client to understand the scope of the issue and will try to find a resolution that is satisfactory for the client.

Escalation of Formal Complaint

If you have been unable to resolve your concern through the steps described above, or where the complaint involves a Program Director, a formal complaint may be made in writing (by mail or email) to:

Mailing Address: Executive Director
 Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic
 489 College Street, Suite 503
 Toronto ON M6G 1A5

Email address: executive.office@schliferclinic.com

Please provide your full name and contact information, as the Clinic does not respond or take action on anonymous complaints.

If you are unable to submit a formal complaint in this manner due to a disability, you may contact the Clinic to request accommodation, which will be provided in keeping with the Clinic's Accessibility Policy - Customer Service Standards.

Formal Complaint Process

The Clinic's Executive Director will process all written complaints after the above steps have been followed. The Clinic is committed to a fair process when dealing with complaints. You will be treated with respect and kept informed of the status of your complaint. We will respond within 3 business days to confirm that your complaint has been received.

The Clinic aims to resolve all complaints within 30 days of receipt. If this timeline cannot be met, you will be informed of the reasons and given a revised timeframe. Upon completion of the review, you will be provided with reasons for the decision relating to the complaint, which will complete the formal complaint process. There are no further internal steps available if the client remains unsatisfied with the outcome of her complaint.

5.0 Confidentiality /No Retaliation

Any staff that receives a complaint or concern shall always maintain confidentiality by not discussing allegations with other individuals, except on a 'need to know' basis. For example, in some programs that receive funding from partner agencies, complaints may need to be shared with those agencies. No person who in good faith and under this policy submits a concern or complaint shall suffer retaliation.

6.0 Records

A summary of all formal complaints, including number and type, will be provided to the Board or Board Committee on an annual basis.