

Public Feedback and Complaints policy

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Approved by:	FM Board of Directors
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Policy statement

Fontbonne Ministries is committed to safeguarding the rights and dignity of people who use their services. As part of program planning we strive to address community needs, identify gaps in service delivery, and ensure active participation. We recognize that people may have complaints about the services they receive. Complaints will be taken seriously, handled promptly, appropriately and sensitively. We welcome and appreciate service user feedback on all of our programs and organizational oversight.

Purpose

It is the policy of Fontbonne Ministries to ensure that all service users feel welcomed and safe when participating in onsite, virtual and hybrid programming. Further, Fontbonne Ministries is committed to continuous service quality improvement and responding to both program and overall organizational opportunities and concerns.

Scope

This policy applies to all service users at any of the Fontbonne Ministries premises. The application of this policy also extends to online and hybrid programming delivery models.

This policy covers complaints raised at any level within the organization, and the specific types of complaints including:

- The standard of direct service we provide;
- The behaviour of our personnel (eg. staff, volunteers, students) delivering service; and
- Our communications, resources or decisions about the service (eg. service related policies, fees)

Type of complaints not covered in this policy include:

- Whistleblowing complaints (such as criminal matters - which should be reported to the Police, or serious Regulatory breaches – which should be referred to the relevant Regulator/College);
- Disputes between the charity/its volunteers/its staff (which must follow our internal Complaint process – see Freedom from Workplace Discrimination, Harassment, Abuse and Violence policy B-02);
- Anonymous complaints (we cannot reply to such complaints but will consider if action is needed);
- Complaints by Third Parties – unless they are acting as an advocate for a participant/service user and with their consent; and
- Complaints which are inappropriate (we will not accept vexatious, malicious, abusive, frivolous or other inappropriate complaints).

Definitions

Complainant – a member of the public that brings forward an issue/concern.

Reviewer – the staff/team that is most knowledgeable to investigate the issue/concern.

Complaint Resolution – informal process

Where at all possible, complaints will be dealt with informally in the first instance. Most complaints can be resolved through early facilitated dialogue. Staff will be enabled and empowered to appropriately handle complaints, and attempts will be made to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of the complainant at a local level.

In order to pursue an informal resolution, the complainant should be referred to the person who manages the service, or manages the person complained about. In the event of not knowing who that person is the complainant should contact the Executive Director for assistance.

Complaint Resolution – formal process

When a formal complaint has been received it will be directed to the appropriate Manager involved with the service or who oversees the person is complained about. Some types of complaints will be directed to a staff specialist or the appropriate direct report e.g.:

- Resource development and communications (eg. social media) as well as fundraising complaints will be directed to our Director Development and Communications;
- Volunteer complaints will be directed to our Director Mission Integration and Volunteers;
- Complaints about Program Management will be directed our Director Community Programs & Partnerships;
- Legal action will be directed to our Executive Director and if necessary include the Board of Directors;
- Complaints about the Executive Director will be directed to our Chair of the Board of Directors;
- Complaints about a member of the Board of Directors will be directed to our Chair of the Board; and
- Complaints about the Chair of the Board of Directors will be directed to the President and CEO, Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario (CHSO).

The specialist best skilled to respond to the complaint will become the primary Reviewer (or delegate appropriately) and will contact the complainant to identify themselves and to summarize the steps that will be taken, with an estimated follow-up timeframe.

Once the Reviewer has completed their investigation, they will respond to the complainant in writing to include the decision made, and any specific action taken. The Reviewer will also indicate how, if necessary, one can Appeal their decision.

The complainant can communicate the issue/concern verbally in person, or by phone, by email or by filling in the Public Feedback and Complaints Form (appended to the policy) or writing a letter to include the following:

- What happened – a description of the event or situation
- When it happened – date and time of the event or incident
- Where it happened – location of the event or incident
- Who saw it happen – the names of witnesses, if any

All complaints will be investigated in an unbiased, impartial and timely manner.

Outcome and Appeal

Once a decision has been made about the complaint, it is hoped that the complainant will be satisfied with the process and outcome. If one is not satisfied then they will have the opportunity to appeal that decision.

In order to make an appeal one can contact the Reviewer by phone, email or in writing within fourteen days of receipt of the Decision to address the following:

- Why the Complaint Decision is unsatisfactory;
- Provide any further evidence to be considered; and
- Indicate any revised solution one would like considered (Fontbonne Ministries cannot guarantee that it will be able to meet this request).

The Reviewer considering the appeal will follow-up with the complainant within 14 to 21 business days of the receipt of the appeal.

However, once such an appeal has taken place, this will exhaust our internal Complaints Procedures, and no further appeal will be accepted. In certain cases, one may be able to refer the matter externally (e.g. to a Regulator, or to an Ombudsman) and we will provide further information in this respect.

Confidentiality Protection

Fontbonne Ministries will endeavour to treat information related to the complainant as confidential. However, in some cases the law will oblige us to refer matters to the Police, or to a Regulator etc. In addition, a person has the right to be told about a complaint against them and the evidence involved.

We will try to ensure that the complainant's identity as the source of a complaint is not revealed without their consent, however it may be that the nature of the allegations or evidence indicates their source.

Records

The Reviewer should keep a record of the incident(s) and any related discussions. The details should be noted, including when it happened, where it happened, who was involved, and any witnesses who may have seen or heard it, and the outcome of the investigation to the incident/concern. These notes will be kept in a locked file and/or online in secure encrypted format.

Freedom of reprisal

No person/service user shall be retaliated against for bringing forward a complaint in good faith, providing information related to a complaint, or assisting in the resolution of a complaint.

Fontbonne Ministries Public Feedback and Complaint Form

Incident location:

Month:

Day:

Year:

Time:

Name of person(s) involved in the incident:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Other:

Description of the event including all pertinent information (additional event details can be recorded on the back of the form):

Name of witness(es):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Other:

Form completed by:

Form submission date: