

Health Consumers' Council WA Inc

Complaints Policy

Consumers and members and service providers who wish to complain about the Health Consumers' Council's operations or service.

Overview

The Health Consumers' Council welcomes feedback and complaints from our consumers, members and service providers. Complaints and feedback enable us to correct any problems with our service, re-establish our relationship with our consumers, members or others, and assists us to learn how to improve our service quality.

The Health Consumers' Council defines a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction with our service, including administration of the Council, activities of the Council in the community and media, and the conduct of advocates providing an advocacy service.

Feedback is defined as issues raised with the organisation, where the consumer, member or others request that no action will be taken.

Key Principle

Health Consumers' Council complaint handling processes will be consistent with current complaint handling International Standard ISO 10002

Guidelines

The Health Consumers' Council's consumer feedback and complaints system demonstrates that:

- Information about how and where to complain is well publicised
- The complaints handling process is easily accessible, with supporting information easy to understand and use
- Complaints should be acknowledged within 2 working days
- Each complaint will be addressed fairly
- The complaints process will be free
- Personally identifying information about the complaint will be actively protected from disclosure and only used for the purposes of the complaint unless with the express consent from the complainant
- A customer focussed approach will be evident from the open and receptive manner that complaints and feed-back are received and responded to
- A reporting process will be in place to ensure that actions from complaints are followed through
- The complaints handling process will be a part of the on-going refinement and improvement of the organisation's operations and service quality.

The Health Consumers' Council will:

- collect non identifying data on complaints and feedback,
- use the information to identify underlying causes of problems, and
- correct any problems and improve the quality of our services.

Consumer and Member complaints

Recognising that there may be barriers discouraging consumer feedback and complaints, the Health Consumers' Council takes the consumer perspective into account by:

- Allowing for the complainant to stop dealing with staff who were involved in the problem,
- Enabling consumers and members to choose from several feedback procedures,
- Ensuring that consumers' or members' disability does not prevent them using the consumer feedback system,
- Having only one tier or stage in our system,
- Reviewing the complaints and feedback procedures with the Health Consumers' Council Board

Complaints Procedure

Consumers and Members

Introduction

This procedure is for complaints about the services provided to consumers and members by the Health Consumers' Council. The Health Consumers' Council empowers all staff to handle consumer service problems. The Executive Director reviews any unresolved problems. [The procedure for complaints about the Health Consumers' Council Advocacy service and the conduct of Advocates is addressed in a following section.]

All client contact staff at the Health Consumers' Council are expected to listen courteously to client's concerns and problems with the service, and do what they can to correct deficiencies.

Receiving Complaints

Complaints will be documented by the organisation and reported to the Board in the Executive Director's report.

Feedback, including complaints, may come to the Executive Director by:

- Personal contact from the consumer, family or carer, or
- Telephone call from the consumer, family or carer, or
- Letter, or
- Referral from another agency.

A complaint about the Executive Director must be directed to the Chairperson of Health Consumers' Council Board and dealt with by the Board Executive.

Any complaint about Health Consumers' Council Board Members will be dealt with by the full board.

Clarification of Nature of Complaint

- The Executive Director contacts the complainant and makes an appointment, for the first meeting.
- The relevant files and documents, best read before the meeting give the necessary background to understanding the complainant's issue.
- At the first meeting the Executive Director, using active listening skills and minimal prompts, asks the complainant to tell the whole story. He/she then asks to hear the story again, asking questions to clarify the exact nature of the complaint.
- The Executive Director restates the issues of the complaint and checks that they are correct. At this stage the complaint issues are documented and acknowledged as correct by signature of the complainant.
- The Executive Director records the proposed or possible action which will correct the problem for the complainant.
- For complex complaints, two visits may be necessary to achieve this goal.
- The Executive Director then explains:
 - ⇒ how the matter will be investigated,
 - ⇒ that resolution usually needs negotiation on both sides,
 - ⇒ any limitations on the Health Consumers' Council's part to fix the problem,
 - ⇒ the Health Consumers' Council's limits if any to give the sought remedy, and
 - ⇒ the feedback procedure.
- The Executive Director makes an appointment, usually a telephone appointment, to give the complainant a progress report or a result.

Investigation of Complaint

- The Executive Director interviews the respondent and any staff involved in the situation.
- The Executive Director collates the material for a response, decides on a response, writes a draft response letter and reviews the complaint with the Health Consumers' Council Chairperson.
- At the agreed appointment time, the Executive Director reports the Health Consumers' Council's response to the consumer or gives a progress report.
- If the complainant agrees that the proposed resolution will finalise the complaint, the Executive Director reads the draft letter to the complainant. The Health Consumers' Council thus ensures that the complainant is satisfied, and avoids internal and external appeals.
- The Executive Director will; suggest other avenues of complaint including the Health Consumers' Council Board, Chief Health Officer, Health Department of WA or Minister for Health.

Consumer Feedback

The Health Consumers' Council welcomes feedback from consumers and members. This feedback is noted by the Executive Director and will lead to improved standard of service. Complements about the services provided by the Health Consumers' Council will be noted in a testimonial file.

Consumer Representatives

The Health Consumers' Council recruits, trains and supports consumer representatives on a range of local and state committees. Should the Council receive complaints from the Chair of a committee about a consumer representative the following steps will be taken:

1. The matter will be the responsibility of the Executive Director
2. The matter will be dealt with in a timely manner.
3. A meeting will be called between the consumer representative and the Executive Director in an attempt to resolve the issue.
4. A report of the meeting will be prepared by the Executive Director for the Health Consumers' Council Board Executive.
5. The Health Consumers' Council Executive will decide on appropriate action.
6. The Executive Director will implement the decision.

Complaints Procedure

Service Providers

Procedure for complaints about the Advocacy service or the conduct of Advocates

Introduction

The Health Consumers' Council Advocates engage with health service providers through the Advocacy Service. The operations of the advocacy service and the conduct of the advocates may be the subject of complaints to the Health Consumers' Council.

Receiving Complaints

Complaints will be accepted in writing or verbally. Verbal complaints will be documented by the Executive Director with key issues being identified.

Clarification of Nature of Complaint

The Executive Director may contact the person or organisation making the complaint to confirm their understanding of the key issues of the complaint. If the complaint is received in writing, the Executive Director may be satisfied that the issues are clear enough to be able to proceed with preparing a response.

Investigation of Complaint and response

The Advocate who is the subject of a complaint will be provided with the full details of the complaint and be given an opportunity to formulate a response.

The Executive Director will draft a reply and provide this draft to the advocate to inform them of the nature of the Health Consumers' Council response.

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