

A.4.3 COMPLAINTS

PURPOSE

This policy is intended to ensure that complaints received from members of the public about South Essex Community Council's services and programs are dealt with promptly, consistently and fairly in accordance with SECC's highest standards. SECC recognizes that, when a person has a complaint, the way in which their complaint is handled is critical to the person's ongoing relationship with SECC.

This policy applies to all complaints received from members of the public (including donors, prospective donors, community members, etc.) about SECC's operations, which includes the conduct and behaviour of all employees and volunteers.

POLICY

SECC will fully, fairly and transparently deal with complaints received from members of the public regarding its staff, volunteers, or operations in a timely manner. The policy will be made available to the public on the SECC website.

IMPLEMENTATION

It is the responsibility of the Executive Director to ensure the implementation and appropriate facilitation of this policy.

DEFINITIONS

Complaints are defined as an expression of dissatisfaction with regard to a service/program, an action or a decision taken by SECC, or the way in which SECC employees or volunteers carry out their duties.

Complaints typically arise when a person believes:

- SECC has failed to do something agreed upon or expected
- A SECC policy or procedure has not been followed
- An error has been made
- SECC employees or volunteers acted incorrectly or inappropriately

A complaint is distinct from an inquiry, feedback, or a suggestion.

PROCEDURE

To launch a formal complaint, the Complainant must submit his/her concerns in writing (letter, fax or e-mail) and identify him or herself. SECC will not respond to verbal or anonymous complaints, however accommodations will be made for individuals with disabilities. Once a formal complaint is registered, SECC is committed to handling the complaint promptly, consistently and fairly. The Complainant will be treated with respect and be kept informed of the status of the complaint, the investigative steps being followed and expected timelines for resolution.

Upon completion of the investigation, the Complainant will be provided with clear reasons for the decisions relating to the complaint. If the Complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may appeal the decision and have the matter escalated to the Executive Director or the Board of Directors.

1. Informal Complaint

Anyone who has a concern is encouraged to speak to the employee at SECC who is most connected with the situation to resolve it before it becomes a formal complaint. This informal process can be used to resolve many inquiries or matters of simple error that can be corrected to the satisfaction of the person with the concern.

Programs and/or departments may establish protocols and responsibilities for handling informal complaints. Staff should keep Department Coordinators apprised of complaints as they arise. If the matter is not resolved, the person may make a formal complaint to SECC.

2. Formal Complaint

Step One – Initial Complaint & Investigation

A formal complaint should be made in writing (by mail, fax or email) to the Executive Director providing details of the complaint and contact information of the Complainant. If the individual is unable to register their complaint in this manner due to a disability, they may contact the Executive Director to request accommodation, which will be provided appropriate to the individual's needs and circumstances.

If the complaint concerns the Executive Director, the complaint should be directed to the Chair of the SECC Board of Directors.

Upon receiving the complaint, the Executive Director will identify an investigating individual to handle the complaint investigation. If the complaint is related to a program or service, it will be referred to the Manager of Programs who will oversee the resolution of the complaint, in partnership with the corresponding Department Coordinator. If the complaint is related to an

employee and their performance or behavior, it will be referred to the Manager of Human Resources to investigate. If the complaint is related to a volunteer, it will be referred to the Manager of Human Resources, who will oversee the resolution of the complaint, in partnership with the Volunteer Services Coordinator.

The Executive Director will respond to the Complainant within two (2) business day of receiving the complaint to confirm that the complaint has been received, and indicate expectations as to the duration of the investigation, if it can be reasonably assessed at that point. Once appointed, the investigating individual will communicate with the Complainant as necessary.

The investigating individual will be accountable to the Executive Director for the investigation and timely resolution of the complaint. The target timeframe for concluding a complaint investigation is ten (10) business days from the receipt of the complaint. If this timeline cannot be met, the Complainant will be informed of the reasons and be given a revised timeframe. The investigating individual will consult with other employees to determine the facts. Throughout the process, confidentiality will be maintained as much as possible.

The investigating individual should record the following:

- Name and position of the Investigating individual
- Name and contact information of the Complainant
- Log the written complaint and the date it was received
- Details of the complaint, key steps in the investigation, investigation notes, and other key documents gathered during the investigation
- Other key personnel involved
- The findings, recommended resolution and rationale

The investigating individual will report the findings and recommendations to the Executive Director in writing. With the Executive Director's consent the investigating individual will then communicate the findings and resolution to the Complainant.

Step Two – Appeal to the Executive Director

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the findings or the corrective action, they may submit a written appeal to the Executive Director within ten (10) business days of the receipt of the communication. If the Executive Director was involved in the complaint or the investigation, the appeal should be made to the Chair of SECC's Board of Directors.

Step Three – Appeal to the Board Chair of SECC

If the issue cannot be resolved under Step Two, the Complainant may require that the issue be considered by the Board Chair who may:

1. Elect to bring the matter before the Board with a recommended resolution; OR

2. Deem the complaint to be frivolous or vexatious or otherwise without merit and inform the complainant that no further action will be taken.

3. Monitoring

The Executive Director will report to the Board at least annually on the number and type of formal complaints received and their respective resolutions.

REFERENCES and RELATED STATEMENTS of POLICY and PROCEDURE

United Way Complaints Policy <https://www.weareunited.com/policies/complaints-policy/>
Parkinson Canada Complaints Policy and Procedure <https://www.parkinson.ca/complaints-policy-and-procedure/>