



PERSONNEL POLICIES & PROCEDURES MANUAL

Policy Title: External Complaints

Policy #: G - 68

Issued by: People and Culture Department

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I. Policy:

This policy and procedure applies to complaints received by Covenant House Toronto (CHT) about our activities, programs, services, staff or volunteers.

II Purpose:

It is in the interest of all parties that complaints are dealt with promptly and resolved as quickly as possible, based on the following guiding principles:

- Review of complaints shall be fair, impartial and respectful to all parties.
- Complainants shall be advised of their options to escalate their complaint to a more senior staff person if they are dissatisfied with treatment or outcome.
- Complainants shall be provided clear and understandable reasons for decisions relating to complaints.
- Updates shall be provided to complainants during review processes.
- Complaints will be used to assist in improving services, policies and procedures.
- The complaints process shall be accessible to all persons, and CHT will strive to alleviate barriers to access, wherever possible.

Types of Complaints and Complaints Reporting

Definition – A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the service, actions, or lack of action by CHT as an organization or a staff member or volunteer acting on behalf of CHT. Examples include but are not limited to the following:

- perceived failure to do something agreed upon
- failure to observe policy or procedures
- error made by a staff member/volunteer
- unfair or discourteous actions/statements by staff member/volunteer
- dissatisfaction with fundraising practices/approach



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Anyone personally affected can complain and their complaint will be reviewed in accordance with this policy and procedure.

For purposes of complaints reporting, the following are reportable complaints that must be tracked.

Reportable Complaints, including complaints that remain unresolved	<p>Reportable complaints include those that took effort to resolve and/or had to get escalated to another level, as well as unresolved complaints. These would include items that have the potential to create reputational, financial or other risks for CHT, as well as any complaint that cannot be resolved easily within a short timeframe (generally within one to three business days from when it was received, depending on the nature of the complaint).</p> <p>Examples of complaints that should be reported include the following: abuse, misrepresentation of CHT, potential criminal behavior or fraud, serious injury, disputes over money. Such complaints should be escalated for review by the respective Director/Officer and brought to the attention of the Executive Director, when significant.</p> <p>For program, complaints escalated to the Chief Program Services Officer and/or Executive Director for resolution will be reportable. For fundraising, complaints about the cost of fundraising, religious issues (too Catholic or not Catholic enough), frequency of solicitation, etc., that require escalation to the Director of Communications, Chief Marketing and Development Officer, and/or the Executive Director.</p> <p>To determine if escalated complaints outlined above are reportable, judgement must be exercised to identify if a complaint has been escalated for resolution or for information. Complaints escalated for resolution are reportable; however, in most cases, complaints brought to the attention of a Director/Officer or the Executive Director for information will not require reporting, depending on the nature of the complaint.</p> <p>Reportable complaints require formal tracking as outlined in 5 below.</p>
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III. Procedure

A. Complaint Receipt and Handling

A complaint may be received verbally (by phone or in person) or in writing (by mail, fax, email, social media). An employee or volunteer who receives a complaint should first determine the proper person to handle it. It is the responsibility of the person who receives the complaint to either resolve it or transfer it to another person who can resolve it. If the



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complaint is transferred, the recipient must acknowledge to the transferor that they have received it and will act on it.

The person who initially receives the complaint should acknowledge to the complainant that the complaint has been received and will be acted on either by them personally or by another employee. If a timeframe for action can be determined, that should be included in the acknowledgement. Basic contact information including name, phone number and email address should immediately be recorded.

B. Resolving the Complaint

Every effort should be made to resolve complaints received in a timely fashion. When receiving a verbal complaint, staff should listen and seek to understand the complaint, and may attempt to resolve it immediately. Complaints received in writing should be acknowledged within 2 business days and staff should attempt to resolve the matter within 10 business days.

Where a complaint cannot be easily resolved, it should be escalated to the relevant Director/Officer. If the Director/Officer cannot resolve the complaint, it will be escalated to the Executive Director. If the complaint is about the Executive Director, it will be handled by the Chair of the Board of Directors. Complainants should be kept informed of the status of their complaint. Every attempt should be made to resolve escalated complaints within an additional 10 business days so that all complaints are resolved within a month of having been received.

If the written decision of the Executive Directors is unsatisfactory, the complainant may submit their issue to the Covenant House Toronto Board of Directors. The submission must be in writing and directed to the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors will issue a written decision within 30 days of receiving the complaint. The decision will be in writing. The decision of the Board of Directors is final.

C. Documenting the Complaint

Complaint Records

It is necessary to keep a record of reportable complaints. Information about such complaints must be recorded on the complaints tracking worksheet. Information recorded on the worksheet includes a description of the complaint, who handled it, what was done to resolve the complaint, timeframe, and a description of the resolution.



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Complaint Resolution and Tracking

The following Directors will be responsible for overseeing complaint resolution and tracking in their respective functional areas as outlined below:

Director	Complaint Documentation Responsibility
Chief Program Services Officer	Responsible for maintaining a record of reportable complaints made by clients, families or members of the community (including neighbours), and for ensuring appropriate resolution of complaints in these areas.
Director of Communications, Chief Marketing and Development Officer	Responsible for maintaining a record of reportable complaints made by donors/funders and complaints relating to our fundraising/communications, and for ensuring appropriate resolution of complaints in these areas.
Chief People and Culture Officer	Responsible for maintaining a record of reportable complaints related to staff/volunteers and human resources-related issues, and for ensuring appropriate resolution of complaints in these areas.
Associate Executive Director	Responsible for maintaining a record of reportable complaints related to finances/operations and privacy/legal/risk management-related issues, and for ensuring appropriate resolution of complaints in these areas.

On an annual basis, the Executive Director will review all reportable complaints to determine trends, areas needing performance improvement, and actions to be taken, if applicable. A summary of the complaints received including number and type will be reported to CHT's Board of Directors annually for information. On a quarterly basis, the Executive Director will provide an interim complaints update to the Board of Directors.

Serious complaints requiring the Board's immediate attention will be brought forward to the Board Chair by the Executive Director.

D. Other Relevant Agency Policies

It should be noted that CHT has other policies in place that cover potential complaints-related issues that should be referenced, when appropriate, including:

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities
- CHT Site Child Protection Officer
- Conflict Resolution
- Donor Care Policy



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- Grievance Procedure
- Health & Safety Harassment (Bullying) and Violence in the Workplace
- Privacy Policies – Client & Donor
- Sexual Harassment
- Unusual Incident Reporting
- Violence Protection
- Whistleblowing
- Workplace Harassment
- Youth Death Review Protocol

In addition, CHT must comply with Toronto Hostel Services' complaints resolutions process.