

Procedure name:	Date of draft/approval
Complaints Policy and Procedures	Approved February 23 2016

Background

Ontario 211 acknowledges the right of the public to complain when dissatisfied with a service, and encourages feedback from customers, clients and the public generally; views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organization that has made the complaint; wants staff to be complaints friendly' and not defensive or negative about feedback and complaints; and recognizes that properly handled complaints and feedback help the agency to improve its business processes, and therefore, time spent on handling complaints is an investment in better service to the public.

Purpose

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- To publicize the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint.
- To make sure everyone at the 211 contact centres knows what to do if a complaint is received.
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired.
- To gather information which helps to improve what we do.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the work relating to the delivery of 211 at the contact centres.

Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from any person or organization who believes they did not receive the service they expected. A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing.

This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should use their organization's internal policies.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with Ontario 211 and the RSP's.

AIRS Standards (Standard 24 – Governance)

Complaints Process: The organization/I&R service has a formal process for registering and resolving complaints from inquirers, staff members and the community.

Procedures

Receiving Complaints

Complaints may arrive through mail, email, by calling 211 or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have. To be a valid complaint it must have a date and name attached to it. It cannot be anonymous.

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be documented.

The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should connect the complainant to the Supervisor or Manager at the Contact Centre. In situations when this is not possible then record the details of the complaint on the attached form:

- Write down the facts of the complaint
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to 211 (for example: client, organization)
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

For further guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see **Page 4**.

Resolving Complaints

General Complaints

These are complaints received about other aspects of the 211 Ontario system. They could include but not limited to, complaints concerning Ontario 211 database, AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) issues, Privacy issues etc. The Manager/Supervisor of the 211 Contact Centre receiving the complaint should contact the appropriate individual to discuss the complaint and get a resolution. For example, a complaint about the Ontario 211 database could be discussed with a data provider or the data support team at Ontario 211, whomever is the most appropriate person. Complaints about AODA or privacy issues as they relate to the Ontario 211 system should be referred to the Executive Director of the 211 Contact Centre who will discuss the complaint with the Ontario 211 Executive Director or the Director of Partnership Development and Strategic Initiatives at Ontario 211.

Complaints Received by the 211 Contact Centre against a staff at the same centre

1. On receiving the complaint, the Manager/Supervisor will review the complaints form. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.
2. Using inContact recordings, the call should be listened to for assessment of the facts provided.
3. Decide if there is a reasonable course of action to be taken to resolve the situation.
4. Contact the complainant to suggest to them the course of action to be taken in response to the complaint within 5 working days. Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate

the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be given with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Complaints Received by the 211 Contact Centre against a staff at the same centre from a client from another contact centre regional area

1. Notify the Manager/Supervisor of the regional contact centre where the client resides within 24 hours of receiving the complaint.
2. Follow the steps 1 through 4 above.
3. Within 3 days there should be communication either by phone or email back to the Manager/Supervisor of the regional centre where the client resides as to the findings and the source of action taken with the staff involved.

Complaints Received by the 211 Contact Centre against a staff at another centre

1. The Manager/Supervisor will review the complaint and may choose to listen to the recording of the call.
2. The complainant will be called to inform them that their complaint is being sent to the appropriate person at the other 211 contact centre and **you** will get back to them within 5 working days to give them an update.
3. The Manager/Supervisor will contact the appropriate individual at the other 211 contact centre *within 24 hours* of receiving the complaint to advise them of the complaint and send them the completed complaint form with all documented facts. At this time the complaint will be handed over to the Manager/Supervisor for them to follow up with the staff named in the complaint.
4. Within 3 days there should be communication either by phone or email (back to the Manager who initiated the complaint) as to the findings and the source of action taken with the staff involved.
5. The complainant will be called, within 5 working days by the Manager/Supervisor from the contact centre who first received the complaint from the complainant, to inform them about who is dealing with the complaint and to provide an update and action taken if one is available at that time. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be given with an indication of when a full reply will be given. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply *within 30 days*. Details of the action taken with the staff member involved need not be shared with the complainant.

Escalation of Complaints

If at any time during the investigation of a complaint the complainant talks about going to the media, going to a lawyer or feels they their human rights have be violated and any action they take could compromise the 211 Ontario system then the Executive Director of Ontario 211 should be briefed on the complaint. This should be done whether the threat is believed to be real or perceived.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation
- Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam"
- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry
- Show an interest in what is being said
- Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary
- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down
- Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organization. e.g "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"
- If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organization, then apologize
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve
- Don't promise things you can't deliver
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told