

FAMILY, VISITORS AND CHILD GRIEVANCE AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

Quality Areas: NQS 7 - Governance and Leadership

Policy Owner: Safety and Compliance

Why this is
important

1.0 Purpose and Introduction:

We recognised that great relationships are an essential aspect of the positive learning journey that we provide for the children, families, and others. We strive to provide open, transparent, and timely communication. We also understand that from time to time that complaints and grievances may arise and these need to need taken seriously and managed appropriately.

This policy reflects requirements as it relates to complaints made by families, children, community members, contractors and visitors. For specific management of complaints made by team members regarding other team members conduct with them, refer to the **Team Member Grievance Policy**.

Where a team members actions or allegations allege that the National Law has been breached then reporting processes will be implemented as listed below. Where a team member is also a parent, their complaint will be managed in accordance with this policy where it directly related to the care of a child.

2.0 Who does this policy apply to:

All Team Members, Families, Children, Board members, Contractors, Visitors and Members of the Community.

3.0 What is our Policy:

3.1 An effective grievance and complaint management system

An effective grievance and complaint management system assures team members, families, children, and the community that all concerns are taken seriously and addressed promptly, fairly, and thoroughly.

The policy is based on the fundamental belief that everyone has the right to raise a complaint or grievance and feel heard.

Principles of the Grievance and Complaints Process:

- All concerns and complaints, whether verbal or written, from families, community members, visitors, or children will be taken seriously and acted upon
- The process will be managed with openness and transparency with timely and clear communication undertaken at all times. Diverse and different views and beliefs will be respected
- Confidentiality and privacy principles will be maintained
- All parties will act in good faith and fairly that balances the rights and responsibilities of all parties

- All complaints and concerns will be handled respectfully. Abusive language or physical violence will not be tolerated. Any individual engaging in such behavior will be removed from the premises, and if necessary, the police will be contacted
- Ongoing complaints regarding children's or adults' behavior will be managed in accordance with the *Enrolment Decisions Policy*

3.2 Feedback methods

We take a proactive approach to managing complaints and grievances, focusing on shared expectations for outcomes and resolving matters in a timely manner. We welcome feedback.

The following opportunities are available to provide feedback:

- Contact information for lodging complaints is displayed at the main entrance in the *Information for Display in Main Entrance* document. This includes the centre's contact details and the direct information for the state-based Regulatory Authority
- Families can also submit feedback via our on-line feedback system. Information on accessing this system is provided during enrolment and included in the parent information pack.
- Complaints may be verbal or written. If it is unclear whether a person is raising a complaint or grievance, clarification will be sought as soon as practicable.
- If an issue is determined to be a grievance rather than a complaint, it will be handled through the complaint process but will not be reported—except in cases involving child harm. If a grievance is not resolved in a timely manner, it may escalate into a complaint.

3.3 Valuing Children's Voices and Opinions

Children have the right to be heard and included in decision-making. When children are non-verbal, their concerns may be communicated by a family member or another adult. Educators will ensure all children are considered in decisions made on their behalf, recognizing that responding to individual needs is a fundamental way of valuing their voices.

Concerns regarding children may arise through verbal and non-verbal communication, behavioural changes, or close observation. Where appropriate, children will be consulted in determining strategies and solutions for resolving grievances or complaints.

Any concerns raised by or on behalf of a child will be taken seriously and managed in line with this policy. Teams will help children understand that they can share their concerns openly in a safe and supportive environment.

3.4 Managing a Complaint

Complaints will be addressed immediately whenever possible. If not, they will be managed promptly by the child's educator, as they typically have the closest relationship with the family. The complaints process will prioritize the child's needs and interests, following the *Grievance and Complaint Process*.

If the issue is beyond the educator's control or if the family prefers to discuss it with someone else, the complaint will be directed to the Centre Manager. The process will be clearly explained to the complainant, including any necessary information-sharing with third parties to meet reporting requirements or support resolution.

All complaints will be documented in *Be Safe*, and any legal reporting requirements will be considered, including notifying the Regulatory Authority when necessary. The Be Safe report will include information about the complaint, the actions taken and evidence of discussions.

To ensure a fair resolution process, complainants will be asked how they believe the issue could be rectified. Whenever possible, problems will be resolved immediately. If immediate resolution is not feasible, the complainant will be informed of the next steps and given an expected timeframe.

For complex issues, complainants may be asked to provide a written statement to support a better understanding of the concerns. If mediation is required, all parties will have the right to agree on the appointment of a mediator.

3.6 Reportable Complaints

Some complaints must be formally reported (See *What Is a Reportable Complaint?*). These include allegations that:

- A child's safety, health, or wellbeing has been compromised.
- The *National Law* has been breached.
- A serious incident has occurred while a child was under the service's care.
- A complaint related to physical or sexual abuse of a child has occurred. This will be reported to the Regulatory Authority
- A child is at significant risk of abuse and is not safe. This will be reported to Child Protection and/or the Police
- Meets the *Reportable Conduct Scheme* definition. These complaints will be reported by the Compliance Team.

Harmful Sexual Behaviours

The complaint process must also be followed if a child exhibits harmful sexual behaviours, which are defined as calculated, developmentally inappropriate, targeted, and repeated sexualized play over time. These behaviours may pose harm to the child and/or others.

When such complaints arise:

1. A *Child Support Plan* will be developed in collaboration with the family, outlining supervision and intervention strategies
2. The centre will meet with the family to provide updates and offer resources for additional support
3. If the plan does not effectively reduce incidents, the *Child Support Plan Escalation Process* will be followed

3.7 Direct Complaints

Families may lodge complaints directly with the *Regulatory Authority* where they believe that:

- A child's safety, health, or wellbeing has been or is being compromised while under the service's care
- Relevant legislation has been breached

3.8 Follow-Up and Review

We view each complaint as an opportunity for improvement. As part of the resolution process, we will review complaints to assess whether policy or procedural changes are needed.

We will ensure that all complaints and grievances are resolved satisfactorily. Families will be contacted to confirm whether they are satisfied with the resolution, and educators will be consulted to assess outcomes from an operational perspective.

A complaint is considered resolved when:

- The issue has been fully addressed. The concern or grievance has been resolved satisfactorily or managed in accordance with the policy
- Communication has been undertaken, and the complainant has been informed of the actions taken or resolution and no further action is required by either party
- All documentation is complete and uploaded in the Be Safe Record
- No further following is required. There are no outstanding issues or requests that require additional actions

4.0 Responsibilities:

The Approved Provider will:

1. Notify the Regulatory Authority of a reportable complaint within 24 hours. All notifications to the Regulatory Authority are the responsibility of our Compliance Team
2. Ensure that complaint enquiries or investigations are undertaken so that issues are resolved, and actions implemented.
3. Advise parents/guardians and new employees of the complaints and grievances policy and procedures upon enrolment
4. Ensure that there are systems and processes in place to ensure that Grievance and Complaints are recorded and managed in a timely manner
5. Manage and respond to all media enquiries
6. Manage all complaints which are classified as critical by enacting a Critical Incident Team of relevant persons, which will assign roles and responsibilities
7. Ensure that information about complaint trends is provided to the business and centres so continuous improvement can be embedded
8. Maintain a register of all complaints reported including those related to child harm

The Centre Manager / Nominated Supervisor will:

1. Ensure that all team members understand their role in managing any complaint and grievance, including whom to report these issues to at the centre. This will include that reportable complaints are recorded on Be Safe within four hours and that the record details the complaint, actions and communications taken
2. Ensure that this policy is available at the centre and a copy is provided to a parent or guardian upon request
3. Ensure that the name and telephone number of the person to whom complaints and grievances may be addressed are

- displayed prominently at the main entrance of the centre on the *Information for Display in the Main Entrance* document
4. Ensure that the *Grievance and Complaints Process* is available at the centre and used to support the management of complaints and grievances
 5. Ensure that the *What is a Reportable Complaint?* and the Notifications Table are used to support decision making about reporting a complaint
 6. Ensure all team members record complaints on *Be Safe* and those complaints deemed reportable are classified as moderate or above
 7. Ensure that if a complaint remains unresolved or whether the party is dissatisfied, that this issue is escalated to the next line manager for resolution without delay
 8. All documents related to complaints and grievances remain confidential and are kept confidential
 9. As soon as a complaint or grievance is received that contact is made with the person and an outline of the issue is gained and desired outcomes understood. As part of this process how and when communication will be undertaken will be discussed
 10. Ensure that there is a system to regularly check the on-line feedback systems and respond to any feedback
 11. When a complaint is raised about a team members conduct with a child that the *Child Harm Classification Table* and *Child Harm Management Process* are implemented
 12. Ensure that where a person raises a complaint or concerned that time is made to discuss that issue and that these conversations are undertaken in a confidential space
 13. Ensure that complaints are reviewed to assess themes so that improvements can be made, and outcomes improved
 14. Ensure that ongoing complaints regarding children's or adults' behavior will be managed in accordance with the *Enrolment Decisions Policy*

Team members will:

1. Ensure that open, transparent and on-going communication occurs regularly that includes information about their child's day, changes to programming and incidents and illnesses
2. Ensure that grievances and complaints are dealt with in accordance with this policy and the *Grievance and Complaints Procedure*
3. Report any grievances and complaints to the Centre Manager or Responsible Person (RP) as soon as possible
4. Take all feedback seriously and report these to your Lead Educator.
5. Ensure that complaints are recorded on *Be Safe*
6. Support the NS or RP with ideas, suggestions, and information to support the management of complaints and grievances
7. Ensure that children are involved in any decisions that affect them, so their needs, thoughts and ideas are included in the weekly indoor and outdoor plan
8. Ensure that all children's concerns and complaints are taken seriously and acted upon. Children's complaints related to breach of the National Law, will be managed in a timely manner and their families will be involved in resolution processes
9. Respond to children's verbal and non-verbal cues so that programming meets their individual needs.
10. Continue to embed strategies so that children are engaged in discussions about decisions that affect them and how their ideas and suggestions impact planning outcomes
11. Where concerns or issues have been raised about a child's specific behaviour ensure that a *Child Support Plan* is in place, if applicable

Families and Community will:

1. Raise any concerns immediately to ensure that these can be addressed
2. Communicate any concerns relating to the management or operation of our centre as soon as it is practicable
3. Raise any unresolved issues or serious concerns directly with management, via the Nominated Supervisor
4. Co-operate with requests to provide relevant information when requested in relation to complaints and grievances

5.0 Definitions

Complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

A Grievance can be described as a feeling of resentment or injustice at having been unfairly treated.

6.0 State Specific Requirements

National	Australian Capital Territory	New South Wales
ACECQA Phone: 1300 422 327.	Children's Education and Care Assurance, Early Childhood Policy and Regulation, Education Directorate. Email: ceca@act.gov.au Phone: (02) 6207 1114	Early Childhood Education, NSW Department of Education Email: ececd@det.nsw.edu.au Phone: 1800 619 113 (toll free)
Queensland	South Australia	Victoria
Regulation, Assessment and Service Quality, Early Childhood and Community Engagement, Dept. of Education and Training Email: ecec@qed.qld.gov.au Phone: Early Childhood information service: 13 QGOV (13 7468)	Education Standards Board. Email: ESB.EarlyChildhoodServices@sa.gov.au Phone: 1800 882 413 (toll free)	Department of Education and Training. Email: licensed.childrens.services@education.vic.gov.au Phone: 1300 307 415

7.0 Tools and Resources

The most important documents I need are: Procedure and Process doc What is a Reportable Complaint Complaint and Grievance Process Be Safe Team Member Grievance Policy	Other supporting documents will include: Child Support Plan Child Support Plan Escalation Process Child Harm Classification Table Notifications Table Information for Display in the Main Entrance Fact-find / Investigations Tool Kit
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8.0 Links to the National Law and Regulations

Section 165 Offence to in adequately supervise children.

Section 167 Offence relating to protection children form harm and hazards. Section 174

Offence to fail to notify certain information to the Regulatory Authority .

Regulation 174 – 176 Notifying certain information to the Regulatory Authority

Regulation 168 Education and care services must have policies and procedures.

9.0 References

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2018 Guide



to the National Quality Framework 2018

Policy owner	Chief Quality and Curriculum Officer		Content author	National Safety and Compliance Manager	
Date published	01/04/2025	Document version	V1.0	Revision due date	01/04/2026
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