

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

Y-Central is fully committed to listening and responding to all customer, staff and public concerns, questions or comments about our organisation. Our priority is to have an open and accountable organisational culture that understands the needs of children, their whanau, and our community.

Having a clear, consistent and accessible Complaints Policy and Procedure is an integral part of demonstrating our commitment to the duty of care we have for safeguarding the welfare of our children and young people. It is in keeping with our core values of caring, respect, honesty, and responsibility.

We value all feedback received about our service delivery and will address all complaints promptly and fairly to achieve the best possible remedy. Ideally, all complaints should be resolved within a maximum 48 hour turn-around time. However, this may depend on the complexity of the complaint. If this turn-around time is not possible, staff must assure the person that they will be contacted and kept updated regularly throughout the resolution process.

Y-Central will:

- ▶ Keep an open mind and be objective when dealing with issues raised
- ▶ Understand the reasons why the complaint has been made and address those reasons
- ▶ Acknowledge any mistakes and take action to put them right so they do not happen again
- ▶ Escalate complaints to the correct staff as deemed necessary
- ▶ Capture complaints data and use data to identify any ongoing problems or trends
- ▶ Operate within legal boundaries and business policies

### What is a complaint?

A complaint is a suggestion. It should be regarded as an invaluable source of feedback. It can be received through customer feedback forms, surveys, or through informal conversations. It assists in identifying any problem areas and allows us to assess expectations so we can initiate improvements to service delivery.

It is important that all staff are aware of the complaints policy and processes as part of their induction to the organisation. All programme managers provide ongoing training for staff which includes different aspects of customer service, such as effectively understanding and dealing with complaints (refer to the useful guidelines in Appendix 1).

## PROCEDURES

### Receiving the complaint

Y-Central is committed to promoting a culture where all customers and staff feel confident to constructively challenge poor practice and raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal. The process of receiving and dealing with complaints needs to be transparent, consistent across all sites, accessible, valued and supported by management and staff (refer to flow chart on pg.4).

Feedback can be received verbally, face to face in programme, over the phone, or at reception areas. Staff should listen to what is being said, not get defensive, or give an opinion. If possible, get the person to log their feedback/complaint on the *Feedback Form* (see Appendix 2). Written complaints can be received via letter, customer surveys, email, or through social media platforms. Staff will log these types of complaint via the intranet using the *Feedback form* (if the person has not already done so).

All departments have *Feedback forms* available, so they can be accessed by staff and customers at any time. It is important to use this form where possible because helps in the analysis of individual incidents, as well as identifying patterns or trends that can emerge.

### **Thresholds of seriousness and staff responsibility**

Staff should pause to consider an appropriate response to the issue or concern raised. If there is any uncertainty about the seriousness of a complaint, staff are encouraged to seek assistance from their supervisor or manager who will make the decision as to the appropriate next step.

#### **Position:**

▶ Frontline staff

#### **Responsibility:**

Listen to what our customers say  
Resolve “on the spot” if possible  
Record and report feedback received  
Escalate if unable to resolve

- ▶ Supervisor/Manager: Conduct initial assessment of incoming feedback  
Resolve concerns and complaints with the knowledge and support of senior management, advising complainant of result  
Notify senior management of serious concerns or formal complaints  
Lodge and analyse feedback for trends  
Communicate decisions and actions to staff
- ▶ Senior Manager: Support Supervisor/Programme Manager in dealing with serious complaints  
Present complaints to senior management team meetings to assess if any patterns or trends need attention

### **Processing the complaint**

All complaints should be responded to promptly, handled objectively, fairly and in confidence. Remedies should be provided where possible. The designated manager will complete the following steps:

1. Review the complaint by completing the *Complaints Investigation Form* (refer Appendix 3).
2. Collect information by conducting interviews with staff, customers or witnesses, as well as referring to other relevant YMCA procedures and protocols, e.g. ensuring privacy of information. The review process should aim to resolve factual issues and consider constructive remedies.
3. Ideally, all complaints are dealt with in a 48-hour turn-around time. However, this may depend on their complexity. If this turn-around time is not possible, because it warrants further investigation, the complainant must be continually updated throughout the investigation and resolution process.
4. Responses to the complainant should be clear and informative, without breaching privacy or confidentiality, explaining the outcome of the review process, providing reasons for any decisions made about the resolution offered.
5. If the matter cannot be resolved within the department, it may need to be reviewed by the management team. Once again, the complainant must be kept up to date throughout this process.
6. Once completed, all documentation is filed with the relevant departmental senior manager. This is because there may be confidential or privacy concerns that need to be respected. If the manager believes a trend is emerging within that department, it will be assessed and remedied as part of standard quality assurance practises. If the manager deems it to be an organisation wide issue, then it is that manager’s responsibility to discuss it at the senior management team meeting.

7. The final response should include information about other possible remedies should the complainant be dissatisfied with the outcome. They may want to lodge the complaint with the:

- ▶ YMCA Central senior management team or Chief Executive;
- ▶ YMCA National
- ▶ Relevant organisations, such as the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), Ministry of Education (MOE), the Privacy Commissioner, the Ombudsman, local MP etc.

### **Analysis of complaint**

Any broader policy or procedural issues that may arise as a result of the complaint should be considered at programme, departmental team and/or senior leadership team level. This will ensure they are addressed and remedied before any further risk, incidents, and/or complaints arise.

The information needs to be lodged with the:

- ▶ Responsible Manager
- ▶ Senior Leadership Team (SLT) Manager

A mix of the above representatives may be required to carry out analysis of the complaint. However, the manager of the relevant department will take the lead to ensure the process is completed in a timely manner. This will include investigating the wider impact of any incidents, historical factors, shortfalls in policies or procedures that lead up to the complaint being made.

### **Accountability and responsibility**

Results of this analysis will be reported back to the SLT as a part of their regular team meeting agendas, and recorded in the meeting minutes. The managers will disseminate the important information pertaining to staff via department team meetings, monthly Health and Safety Committee Reporting, editing of organisational policies and procedures, e.g. incorporation into the staff training and induction practices. This analysis should always be seen as an integral part of the organisation's drive to improve policies, procedures, overall service delivery and outcomes for our customers.

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU RECEIVE A COMPLAINT?

#### Professionalism

Staff should always thank the person for bringing the issue to our attention. Don't get defensive when dealing with the person, or put yourself or others at risk. The goal is to de-escalate any concerns by giving the person confidence that they are being listened to, and that we're grateful for them raising the matter. Give reassurance that their complaint will be taken seriously and addressed.

#### Communication

The person must be communicated with throughout the complaint review process to ensure we are being accountable to our core values of caring, respect, honesty and responsibility.

#### Confidentiality

Details of complaints should not be discussed with staff who have no involvement with the situation. Gossiping negatively impacts on our professionalism. Staff need to show initiative and follow procedure.



#### STAFF PROVIDE AN "ON THE SPOT" FIX

- If the matter can be resolved reasonably and easily by the staff receiving the feedback, then it should be done quickly, courteously and professionally at the time.
- If it is a more serious complaint, then the duty manager must be alerted to provide support in dealing with the situation.
- Advise the complainant it will be investigated and they will be updated within 48 hours.



#### MANAGER ASSISTANCE

- The Manager will talk with people involved in the immediate situation and will make an appropriate decision, i.e. if requires further investigation
- If the manager is unavailable, a member of the senior management team should be contacted.
- Manager will take responsibility for agreeing a communication timeframe with the complainant.



**LOG THE COMPLAINT** - use the Feedback Form. It will be used for analysis by your management team.



#### PROCESSING THE COMPLAINT

- The responsible Manager will consult with staff and/or witnesses.
- Communicating with the complaint to let them know an expected timeframe for completion.
- If the matter has to be escalated, it will be reviewed by the senior management team.
- Reviews should always assess factual issues and constructive options for resolution.

#### RESOLUTION

- Responses to the complainant should be clear and informative, without breaching privacy or confidentiality, explaining the outcome of the review and providing reasons for decisions made.
- The file will be kept by the Senior Manager.
- The response should include information about other possible remedies. This may include lodging the complaint with the:
  - YMCA Central senior management team, Chief Executive, YMCA National, or
  - organisations, such as the MSD, MoE, the Privacy Commissioner, or other advocacy groups.



#### ANALYSIS

Broader policy or procedural issues may arise as a result of the complaint review process. They will be considered at both departmental team and senior management levels to ensure they are addressed and remedied before any further risk, incidents, and/or complaints arise. Outcomes will be added into policies, procedures, and future staff training and induction information.

## SOME USEFUL GUIDANCE WHEN HANDLING CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

### Why do people complain?

It is our job to ensure customers have the best possible experience when dealing with the Y. However, if a customer does want to make a complaint, it is important to accommodate this as part of our overall service delivery.

Customers can complain for any number of reasons. It could be anything from having a bad day, through to believing they have received poor service, e.g. if a customer is kept waiting, they have not received information as promised, or incorrect fees have been debited from their account, then they have the right to provide feedback on this.

By handling customers with CARE principles (Commit, Accept, Respond, Execute), and without any prejudice, you will show the customer that you are doing your very best as a representative of the Y.

### COMMIT

- ▶ Your primary objective as a Y-Central staff member is to provide exceptional customer service
- ▶ When you receive a complaint it is important to maintain a positive attitude and most importantly listen to the comments being made
- ▶ The person may not care about what you know, they want to know you CARE about their problem.

### ACCEPT

- ▶ Do not get defensive
- ▶ Avoid judging the person
- ▶ Maintain positive body language - do not roll your eyes, look away, frown or fold your arms defensively
- ▶ Eliminate distractions and listen carefully, it is too easy for us to jump ahead and start wondering how we are going to resolve the problem before we've heard everything they have to say
- ▶ Use silence
- ▶ Do not interrupt the customer
- ▶ The customer is entitled to display their complaint in the manner they know how, unless it is offensive, abusive and derogatory to you. In which case you must call your manager for assistance

### RESPOND

- ▶ Repeat back to them their concern to clarify you understand and to acknowledge you have listened
- ▶ Apologise (if appropriate)
- ▶ Show the person you understand why they are so upset.
- ▶ Never downplay their feelings or the anger they have

#### *Example - Empathy*

- “I can imagine you must be upset”
- “I totally understand that...”
- “Can I ask you a few more questions about that and take some notes?”

#### *Example - Respect*

- “I am concerned to hear that”
- “I respect you coming up to tell us that”
- “Can I ask you a few more questions about that and take some notes?”
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## EXECUTE

- ▶ We need to let the person get to a point where they understand there is a solution.
- ▶ Inform them of what actions you may take in order to resolve their problem.
- ▶ If you do not have the authorisation to 'solve' their problem or they continue to get upset with you, notify your supervisor immediately, and pass on feedback to a relevant senior manager who will follow up within 24 hours.

### *Example*

*"Ok. I have a good understanding of your concern. I will now pass on the information to my manager so the issue can be addressed appropriately. What is the best way for my manager to get back to you?"*

- ▶ Members want to hear about what you can do about the situation, not what you can't do about the situation.
- ▶ Make sure the Duty Manager is aware of the customers concern (when required).
- ▶ Make notes on the members account.
- ▶ Follow up with an email to relevant department or manager (if required)
- ▶ Check afterwards that the problem has been resolved.
- ▶ Take initiative to make sure that the problem does not happen again.

### SEVEN "NO-NOS" WHEN DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

#### 1. Broken Promises

If you promise to call someone back or you are going to find out something for them - DO IT!

#### 2. Impatience

Do not be impatient with customers if they disrupt your work. They are the reason as to why we work!

#### 3. Arguments

Do not argue with the customer. The customer may not always be right but you will always be wrong if you are arguing with them.

#### 4. Rudeness

The customer is the most important person to deal with in our service based industry. Treat them as you would your manager. No matter what the circumstances, never be rude to them.

#### 5. Misinformation

If for some reason you do not know the information they need, please let them know this and find it for them. Do not provide misinformation which will only spark a complaint later down the track.

#### 6. Indifference

If your customer has a problem, act as if it is a problem of your own. Caring keeps customers, indifference of opinion will drive the customer away.

#### 7. Gloom and Doom

Customers are turned off when they witness a negative attitude rather than a bright and bubbly one. Responding in a cheerful and upbeat way encourages them to keep returning.

*We are all customer service representatives of the Y (whatever your job title is!)  
"Remember, the customer may not always be right; but the customer is always the customer"  
Stay in control at all times - we are judged by our actions, not our intentions.*

By using the SOAR technique, we can derive maximum benefit from customer feedback. They want to be heard and valued when they provide feedback. Receiving a complaint is an opportunity to improve and keep them with our service. They want to hear a solution to their problem, not passing blame or making excuses.

**S - SOLICIT feedback at every opportunity**

- ▶ Always ask your members and guests how you could improve your service process.

**O - OPEN the communication channels**

- ▶ Let the member or guest know that you value their input.
- ▶ Sincerely show that you want to know their comments.
- ▶ Thank them for their feedback.
- ▶ Tell them you value their opinion.

**A - APPRECIATE what you hear**

- ▶ Even if you have heard bad news, thank the customer for being honest and helpful.
- ▶ We can improve our service and behaviour if we know what customers don't like.
- ▶ Customers just want to know you value their opinion.

**R - REWARD the behaviour**

- ▶ Demonstrate your appreciation by following up with a quick note or call back advising what action you have taken in response to the feedback that you have received. (Always check with your manager before responding to member feedback).

**Staff Welfare**

If the customer wishes to make a formal complaint or asks to speak to the 'manager', you should always follow the complaint process. If a customer verbally abuses a staff member, this should be directed to a manager immediately. An incident report should be filled in by the staff member and then passed on to the Centre Manager.

We are a team who support our fellow employees. If you see a fellow employee being verbally abused then please notify a manager immediately so that they can assist in calming down an irate customer.

If there is any concern for safety of staff, programme participants or visitors, do not hesitate to call the police by calling 111.

## FEEDBACK FORM

<b>HOW CAN WE HELP?</b>		
This feedback is a:	Compliment <input type="checkbox"/>	Suggestion <input type="checkbox"/>
Complaint <input type="checkbox"/>		
If you are giving feedback on staff, please give the name: _____		
If you have concerns about a child (or children) we're working with, please tell us their name/s: _____		
Are you contacting us for yourself? Or on behalf of someone else? _____		
Please give us your contact details? How would you like to be contacted?		
Name: _____ Email: _____		
Phone (day time): _____ Mobile: _____		
<i>What do you want to tell us? Include as much detail as possible, especially if you think there is an impact on a child or young person, e.g. when an incident occurred? What action staff took?</i>		
<i>Tell us if there is something you would like us to do.</i>		
Name of staff who received feedback: _____		Date/time: _____
Position Title: _____		Department/Programme: _____
Name of Manager notified: _____		Date/time: _____



# COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION FORM

<p><b>Details of complaint?</b> (attach Feedback Form)</p>
<p><b>Process</b> – what information has been collected, e.g. interviews, witnesses, staff observations staff, and/or customers.</p>
<p><b>Outcomes and responses to complainant</b></p>
<p><b>Analysis:</b> What organisational changes need to be made to policies and/or practices? Who will make this happen? When will it be completed?</p>
<p>Investigated by:</p> <p>Manager (name): _____ Position Title: _____</p> <p>Signature: _____ Date file closed: _____</p>

*This form, and all supporting documentation, is to be retained on file by the above named Manager.*

## VERSION CONTROL

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date Approved</b>	<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Description of Updates</b>
1.0	Apr-19	Kevin Ross	MSD Approved Mar-2019
2.0	Oct-19	Brendan Owens	Formatting doc GW & Central merger
3.0	Feb-20	Ben Keat	Merge website & MSD approved docs