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*Activity Centres Incorporated is a community based not for profit organisation managed by a parent Committee*

## **Policy Statement**

- The organisation will maintain a grievance and complaints management system to ensure that all staff, children, families, volunteers and community members know that any grievance or complaint will be taken seriously and investigated promptly and fairly.
- We aim to maintain a positive working environment for staff and for the committee.
- Complaints and grievances will be investigated and documented in a timely manner, through providing an efficient, fair and accessible mechanism for resolving complaints and grievances.
- Our complaints and grievance management system will be accessible in the family handbook, staff handbook and on our website.
- We will identify complaints and grievances as opportunities to review the quality of our service.
- Confidentiality will be practised at all times.

## **Considerations**

- ✓ The Education and Care Services National
  - Regulation 168 "Education and care service must have policies and procedures"
- ✓ The Education and Care Services National Quality
- ✓ Community Services Complaints, Appeals and Monitoring Act, 1994.
- ✓ My Time Our Place
- ✓ ACI Philosophy
- ✓ OSHC Code of Professional Standards
- ✓ ACI Conditions of employment policy, Staff code of Conduct Policy, Staff professionalism policy Disciplinary action policy, Child Protection Policy, Child management policy and Reporting to the Regulatory Authority Policy.

## **Procedures**

- The organisation will support an individual's right to make a complaint and will help them to try to resolve them.
- Staff and committee members will be offered the opportunity to participate in some form of conflict training.
- To facilitate communication between staff and management, the Management Committee members will be known to all staff. Staff will receive this information annually after every AGM.
- If individuals have a grievance or complaint that they feel has not been resolved properly then they can approach any member of the current committee to make a formal complaint.
- Either party may withdraw their complaint or grievance at any time. However, where the complaint or grievance identifies other issues of concern, Management Committee may decide to investigate those issues.
- The service will ensure that all individuals involved in the complaint process are provided with a high level of equity and fairness in relation to the complaint management and grievance process and procedures.
- All complaints and grievances are to be treated seriously, fairly and impartially.
- Persons directly involved in a legitimate grievance process will be expected to continue to conduct themselves, in and around the services, in a professional manner.
- Malicious or vexatious claims will not be tolerated.
- Complaints and grievance management are to be mediated fairly and the process is transparent to all parties involved.
- The service is to ensure that privacy and confidentiality is maintained at all times throughout the process, ensuring that only individuals who are directly impacted by the complaint or grievance are involved. However there may be instances where 3<sup>rd</sup> parties will need to be involved if we are required by legislation to do so e.g. - if it is a child protection issue, work place bullying etc.
- Families will have clear written guidelines detailing the complaints management and grievance procedure, in the family information booklet and on our website [www.activitycentres.com.au](http://www.activitycentres.com.au)
- Staff will be made aware of our organisation complaints management and grievance procedure on employment through the staff handbook and our organisation website [www.activitycentres.com.au](http://www.activitycentres.com.au).

# Grievances and Complaints Management Policy

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- Wherever possible, complaints and grievances should be resolved as soon as possible on an informal level. Where the informal process fails or if any of the parties involved wish to pursue a more formal process then the matter is to be taken further.
- If an individual or group has a complaint or grievance they should discuss the issue with the service coordinator, or shift supervisor. This will provide an opportunity to discuss the issue and hopefully come to a satisfactory resolution to address the issue for all parties. This conversation should be documented by the staff member who received the complaint and discussed and resolved the issue, with the date, who made the complaint, nature of complaint and resolution. This should be filed at the service and a copy given to nominated supervisor and/or management.
- If the issue can't be resolved at the informal level then the issue will need to escalate to a more formal process.
- All formal complaints and grievances are to be in writing to avoid confusion and misinterpretation of the issue and to ensure clear, precise and transparent documentation. These should outline the complaint, and what the desired action or resolution to the issue may be.
- An estimated timeframe for resolution should be communicated to all parties, as well as steps that will be taken to resolve the issue (e.g. – interview other parties, investigation, mediation, 3<sup>rd</sup> parties becoming involved etc.). Accurate documentation of the process needs to be kept at all times.
- Each complaint is to be treated individually and steps taken to resolve the issue will vary depending on individuals involved, circumstances of the complaint or grievance and wishes of all parties involved. Communication with all parties involved will be maintained at all times so everyone is aware of what is happening.
- If the complaint is about an individual, then that individual is to be provided the opportunity to respond to the complaint/grievance. Individuals have the right to seek assistance and support from a support person (e.g. – union representative) of their choice when responding to a complaint/grievance against them. They will receive feedback in relation to any outcomes.
- Wherever possible, all complaints and grievances should be resolved in a way that is satisfactory to all involved.
- The coordinator and/or manager will inform all parties, in writing, of outcomes and decisions made regarding the issue. Staff will be made aware of any issues and/or relevant information.
- If the complaint is not handled to the individual's satisfaction by service coordinator or manager then the issue should be brought to the attention of the management committee, in writing.
- The management committee will discuss the issue with the manager or service coordinator and develop a strategy for resolving the problem. This would be discussed further with the individual or if necessary a meeting will be organised with the manager and/or coordinator, committee representative and individuals/groups who made the complaint to resolve the problem. All meetings and discussions will be minuted.
- Written records will be kept of all communication and meetings between all parties involved.
- At no time will ACI staff, families or children be exposed to aggressive and abusive behaviour throughout any stage of the complaints and grievance management process. (This may include vulgar noises, expressions or gestures, verbal abuse, threatening or offensive behaviour, or physical behaviour against a person or property.) In situations where this behaviour happens the meeting, call, interview or consultation will be terminated.
- Complaints, will be recorded accordingly and dated indicating the issue and/or concern and how it was resolved, include any evidence to support resolution and outcomes. It should also be documented if the complaint or grievance resolution resulted in practice or policy changes at the service.
- All confidential conversations with individuals who have a complaint or grievance will take place in a quiet place away from children, other parents or staff not involved.
- At formal grievance resolution meetings all parties are entitled to invite a support person to attend. This person does not provide input to the meeting, but may offer support and advice to their party during the meeting.
- The manager/nominated supervisor must notify the regulatory authority of any complaints made at the care service operated by the approved provider Activity Centres Inc – Please see Reporting to the Regulatory Authority Policy
- Where resolution is not achieved, the nominated supervisor or Activity Centres Inc. Management is to advise all parties of their rights to seek external advice and make a written report. Agencies they may access can include but not limited to:
  - NSW State Ombudsman office: Level 24, 580 George Street, Sydney  
Tollfree: 1800 451 524 (02) 9286 1000  
Email: [nswomb@ombo.nsw.gov.au](mailto:nswomb@ombo.nsw.gov.au)  
Web page: <http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/contact-us>

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- NSW Early Childhood Education and care Directorate; Department of Education: (NSW Regulatory Authority)  
Locked Bag 5107, Parramatta, 2124  
Tollfree: 1800 619 113  
Email: [eceed@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:eceed@det.nsw.edu.au)  
Web Page: [www.dec.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au)
- Fair Work Ombudsman Australia:  
Ph: 13 13 94  
Web Page: <https://www.fairwork.gov.au>

## **Complaints/Grievances from Children**

- Children have the right to voice complaints and/or grievances and have these issues taken seriously and dealt with equally and fairly.
- Where children have a complaint/grievance against another child's behaviour towards them at the service, staff are to follow ACI child management policy and ACI Anti-Bullying policy.
- Where children make a complaint against a staff member at the service:
  - Children may make a complaint or grievance against a staff member at the service to any member of staff they feel comfortable with.
  - Staff member receiving the complaint should inform the coordinator of the complaint and document the conversation with the date and nature of the complaint, and the resolution the child is seeking. If the complaint made by the child is about the service coordinator then the complaint should be forwarded onto the Manager.
  - If the issues is of a child protection matter then steps outlined in our ACI 'Child Protection Policy' and our ACI 'Reporting to the Regulatory Authority Policy'.
  - Parents of the child will be informed that the child has made a complaint against a staff member and that this complaint/grievance is under investigation or has been resolved. If quick resolution was found then this should also be documented and disclosed to family.
  - If the child complaint, through investigation, is found to be baseless then this will be discussed with child and family, and the evidence to support this conclusion presented.
  - If the child complaint is found to be legitimate, child and family will be informed of the steps taken by management to rectify the issue (eg – additional training, procedure change etc.).
  - If the staff member who the complaint is made against is found to not be following our Oshc code of professional standards or not following ACI 'Staff Code of Conduct Policy', 'Conditions of Employment Policy' or 'Staff Professionalism Policy' then disciplinary action will be taken in line with our ACI 'Disciplinary Action Policy'.
- Where the child makes a complaint against another adult (parent of another child etc.)
  - Children may make a complaint or grievance against an adult at the service (e.g. parent of another child) to any member of staff they feel comfortable with.
  - Staff member receiving the complaint should inform the service coordinator of the complaint and document the conversation with the date and nature of the complaint, and the resolution the child is seeking.
  - If the issues is of a child protection matter then steps outlined in our ACI 'Child Protection Policy' and our ACI 'Reporting to the Regulatory Authority Policy'.
  - Parents of the child will be informed that the child has made a complaint against an adult who is in the service community and that this complaint/grievance is under investigation or has been resolved. Parent will be requested to not approach the other adult that we will mediate the issue if need be. If quick resolution was found then this should also be documented and disclosed to family.
  - Other adult, who complaint is about will be approached, and provided the opportunity to respond to the complaint made and a resolution sought.
  - Child and family of child, who made initial complaint will be informed of the resolution and conversation with adult.

## **Complaints/Grievances from Parents/Guardians**

- Parents/Guardians have the right to voice complaints and/or grievances and have these issues taken seriously and dealt with equally and fairly.
- Where parents have a complaint/grievance against another child behaviour, service staff may be required to follow ACI Child Management Policy and ACI Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Where parents/guardians make a complaint against a staff member at the service:

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- Parents/guardians are to make a complaint against a staff member at the service to the service coordinator, Manager or Management Committee in writing.
  - If parent/guardian approaches a staff member, who is not the coordinator, manager or member of management committee, then that staff member is to direct the parent/guardian that they need to see one afore mentioned personal.
  - Complaint letter should clearly state date and nature of the complaint, and the resolution the family is seeking. If the complaint made by the parent/guardian is about the coordinator then the complaint should be made in writing to the Manager or Management Committee.
  - The staff member who the complaint has been made about will be informed about the complaint and be provided with an opportunity to respond to the complaint.
  - If the issue relates to a child protection matter then steps outlined in ACI Child Protection Policy and ACI Reporting to the Regulatory Authority Policy, must be followed. NSW Ombudsman may also need to be contacted in relation to the complaint.
  - Depending on the nature of the complaint the staff member may have to be relocated to another service or stood down without pay, until the investigation process is finalised. This will be determined by manager and management committee on a case by case basis.
  - If the complaint, through investigation, is found to be baseless then this will be discussed with child and family so that everyone is aware of steps taken. Families will be disclosed as to what evidence has led to this conclusion.
  - If the staff member who the complaint is made against is found to not be following our Oshc code of professional standards or not following conditions signed in their letter of employment, ACI Staff Code of Conduct Policy, Conditions of Employment Policy or Staff Professionalism Policy then disciplinary action will be taken in line with our Disciplinary Action Policy.
- Where the parent/guardian makes a complaint against another adult (parent of another child etc.)
- Parents may make a complaint or grievance against an adult at the service (e.g. parent of another child) in writing.
  - Staff member receiving the complaint should inform the coordinator of the complaint and document the conversation with the date and nature of the complaint, and the resolution the child is seeking.
  - If the issues is of a child protection matter then steps outlined in our 'Child Protection Policy' and our 'Reporting to the Regulatory Authority Policy'.
  - Parent/Guardian will be requested by ACI staff to not approach the other adult that we will mediate the issue if need be. If quick resolution was found then this should also be documented and disclosed to family.
  - The adult, who complaint is about will be approached, and provided the opportunity to respond to the complaint made and a resolution sought. They will also be informed not to approach the family who made the complaint and we will mediate the issue is necessary.
  - Individual who made initial complaint will be informed of the resolution and conversation with adult.

## **Complaints/Grievance between staff:**

- Any complaints and grievances made by staff about another staff member should be provided in writing to the service coordinator or the manager.
- The complaints/grievances will be mediated between the staff members. A resolution will be sought as soon as possible.
- The management committee will be informed of the grievance between staff if the grievance is ongoing and can't be resolved.

**NOTE:** Where the issue of grievance is between management and staff and concerns standards of work performance or work practice, then ACI Staff Discipline Policy will be followed.

## **Dealing with the Media**

- If at any time a situation attracts media attention it is the organisations responsibility to protect the interests and wellbeing of all parties involved.
- To avoid placing anyone's privacy at risk or providing incorrect information only the Manger or members of the executive committee are to respond to media claims. All other staff and members of the committee are to decline to comment.
- Legal representation will be sought if deemed necessary by executive committee.



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## How to lodge a complaint and or grievance to Activity Centres Inc

### In writing via post (for any of our services)

Can be addressed to any of the following: (depending on the nature of the complaint and the service it relates to)

- The management Committee
- The Manager
- Coordinator Beresford Road Activity Centre
- Coordinator Girraween Activity Centre
- Coordinator Toongabbie West Activity Centre
- Coordinator Greystanes Activity Centre
- Coordinator Vacation Care

PO Box 768  
Toongabbie, NSW 2146

### In Writing Via email

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| - Beresford Road Activity centre:  | <a href="mailto:brac@activitycentres.com.au">brac@activitycentres.com.au</a>     |
| - Girraween Activity Centre:       | <a href="mailto:gac@activitycentres.com.au">gac@activitycentres.com.au</a>       |
| - Toongabbie West Activity Centre: | <a href="mailto:twac@activitycentres.com.au">twac@activitycentres.com.au</a>     |
| - Greystanes Activity Centre:      | <a href="mailto:grey@activitycentres.com.au">grey@activitycentres.com.au</a>     |
| - Vacation Care:                   | <a href="mailto:vac@activitycentres.com.au">vac@activitycentres.com.au</a>       |
| - Activity Centres Manager:        | <a href="mailto:sharon@activitycentres.com.au">sharon@activitycentres.com.au</a> |
| - Activity Centres Management:     | <a href="mailto:admin@activitycentres.com.au">admin@activitycentres.com.au</a>   |

### In Person

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| - Beresford Road Activity Centre: -  | 74 Beresford Road, Greystanes 2145     |
| - Girraween Activity Centre: -       | 216 Targo Road, Girraween 2145         |
| - Toongabbie West Activity Centre: - | 83 Ballandella Road, Toongabbie 2146   |
| - Greystanes Activity Centre:-       | 198 Old Prospect Road, Greystanes 2145 |
| - Activity Centres In Head Office: - | 216 Targo Road, Girraween 2145         |

### By Phone

- |                                      |                |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| - Beresford Road Activity Centre: -  | (02) 9896 8661 |
| - Girraween Activity Centre: -       | (02) 9896 1466 |
| - Toongabbie West Activity Centre: - | (02) 9631 0855 |
| - Greystanes Activity Centre: -      | (02) 9896 2382 |
| - Activity Centres In Head Office: - | (02) 9631 6495 |

## **Checklist for Staff**

- Staff should not enter into an argument if someone makes a complaint, listen to the person making the complaint and ensure they understand it is their right to complain, however our procedures need to be followed.
- All grievances and complaints should be made in writing.
- Process is to be transparent to all parties involved, while maintaining confidentiality.
- All meetings, conversations etc. must be documented/minute.
- Outcome of grievances and complaints should be communicated to all parties.

\_\_\_\_\_ end of policy \_\_\_\_\_

Policy is only endorsed if initialled by 2 members of the management committee

**Endorsed by the Management Committee on the 19<sup>th</sup> September 2016**

**Complaints Policy is to be reviewed by the 19<sup>th</sup> September 2018**