



Peterborough Community Preschool
and Rural Care Services
76-80 Victoria Street Peterborough SA 5422
Ph: (08) 8651 2550 Fax: (08) 8651 3456
dl.6649.leaders@schools.sa.edu.au

Grievance/Complaints Management

Rationale: "Good relationships within Preschool & Rural Care community give children a greater chance of success. All employees of DECD are guided by the Code of Ethics for South Australia, with the values being, Democratic Values, Services, Respect and Courtesy; Honesty and Integrity; Accountability; Professional Conduct Standards. We support the right of any member of the community who believes our actions, standards or practices do not reflect these values to have their grievances addressed.

Grievance/Complaints Management

In the event of a grievance the following guidelines may be used. (For further details refer to the Department of Education's documents *Grievance Procedures for Employees* and the *Grievance Resolution Policy*.)

Peterborough Community Preschool & Rural Care has a duty of care to provide a harmonious working environment for positive staff wellbeing and children's learning outcomes.

Procedural fairness and natural justice: the core principles are

- the right to be heard fairly;
- the right to an unbiased decision made by an objective decision maker; and
- the right to have the decision based on relevant evidence.
- the grievance meeting will be structured on equity, parity, confidentiality and democratic principles. Conflict management principles will apply to parties who are aggressive.

Children with grievances could:

- Talk to the person about the problem. (See Behaviour Management Policy)
- Be encouraged to talk to someone that they feel safe with.
- Speak to their parents/ caregivers.

Parents/ caregivers:

- Arrange a time to speak to the relevant staff member about the problem. (Please do not approach staff about a major grievance without prior arrangements.) It is important that grievances are kept confidential and private.

- Inform the staff member of what you consider to be the issue.
- Allow a reasonable time frame for the issue to be addressed.
- If the grievance is not addressed, arrange a time to discuss the issue with the Director.
- If you are still unsatisfied you may contact the Education Director

Staff, volunteers and helpers:

- Arrange a time to speak to the person concerned.
- If the grievance is not resolved speak to the Director.
- If the problem is not resolved contact the Education Director.
- Model positive behaviour and language that is based on our centre philosophy of equity, parity, democratic principles and positive relationships. Aspire to uphold the Early Childhood Code of Ethics in relation to families, colleagues, children, communities, employer and self.
- Intervene early if a grievance occurs to avoid problems and follow conflict management guidelines.
- Use DECD complaint resolution for employees documents.

Grievances and complaints management procedure:

1. Notification. Document the grievance or complaint. (see Grievance/complaint documentation form)
 - Consider any legal requirements in relation to the complaint.
 - Notify regulatory or licensing bodies if required.
 - Discretion of communication - only communicate with those who need to know.
 - Identify the timeframe for resolution.
2. Investigation. Determine how the service will investigate the complaint/grievance and who will be involved and what records will be kept.
3. Resolution. How does the investigation reach a resolution? Are there any issues arising?
4. Evaluation Analyze any consequences for the service and reflect on any changes that may be wise.

Supporting documents:

- Grievance/complaint documentation form
- Complaints resolution for employees document "*DECS Complaint Resolution for Employees*" from www.decd.sa.gov.au

Legislation:

Teachers Registration and Standards Act 2004

Code of Ethics

Work, Health and Safety Act 2012

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2011

Education and Care Services Regulations 2011 (amended 2013)

Chairperson
Governing Council
20.....

Director
Peterborough Community Preschool
and Rural Care Service.

Adopted: August, 2010
Review Date 20.....



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Complaints/grievance form

Date.....

Name:

Address:

Phone:

This form is available for staff, families or community members to communicate with the centre management or other staff members a genuine opportunity to voice a complaint or grievance. This process offers you a genuine and transparent opportunity to provide feedback and opinion about issues that may be of concern to you about centre/staff practices. Your issue will be treated with confidence, promptness and viewed as a possible vehicle for improvement in our centre practice and for informing our future decisions.

"Early childhood educators have been found to make up to 936 decisions in a six hour day that affect children." Carr 1999

The purpose of this form is to document the process of resolution which aims to do the following:

- Facilitate the communication between parties involved.
- Promote understanding by defining the problem.
- Allow feelings to be expressed and the other person's perspective understood.
- Encourage problem-solving by looking for alternative solutions.
- Assist those involved in the conflict to work out how they will put an agreed solution in place.

Good conflict resolution relies on both parties being able to discuss the complaint/conflict with respect and as equal participants. It requires a calm and confidential place and use of language that is positive. ***Should one party become aggressive, begin to yell, use abusive names or bad language they will be asked to leave the meeting.***

Effective use of language that are constructive (not destructive) approaches are :

When.....(with a description of the action or issue that is causing concern)

I feel/felt.....(description of the feeling or emotion that you are experiencing)

Because.....(gives an explanation of the importance or relevance to you of the issue/concern/action.)

I'd prefer.....(indicates an alternative that would solve the problem.)

Complaints/grievance form

Date.....

Parties present

Please describe the complaint or grievance.

Describe the circumstances of the complaint or grievance.

If you wish to name any witnesses or other parties that were involved please do so. It may be necessary to ask these people if they would be happy to discuss the situation if the Director requires added information.

What solutions or strategies do you have that you feel the service/management could put in place to resolve the issue or prevent the concern from occurring again? (These will have to comply with our legal, ethical or business restraints.)

How will you know the problem is solved?

What steps do you want taken next? Do you require another meeting to reach a solution?

Date planned.....

Who do want involved?(Director, Educational Director, other external agencies)

I agree to this solution and am happy that this process is completed.

Signed.....

Date

Signed.....

Date



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Managing complaints

Developing a complaints handling procedure: Tell yourself that a complaint about our service practices can be seen as an opportunity to fix problems, improve our work with children or to better ourselves as professionals. Complaints are often triggered by poor communication or lack of information sharing between management, staff and families. As professionals we provide a proactive approach to handling complaints that reflects a responsive desire to be informed of concerns so that these can be promptly addressed and the service improved.

It is important to remind yourself that the complainant might be experiencing strong emotions during this process of raising the complaint. They may be feeling nervous or apprehensive about raising their concern, or simply angry or upset about the issue itself.

Response : If the complaint is aired at an inappropriate time reassure the person that you would like to hear their complaint at a time that is more appropriate in a situation of confidence, calmness and where you can be attentive. Make an appointment with the person as soon as is possible and make sure that you can stick to it.

Structure your conversation with the person by using the following behaviours that reflect your professional position. Sit down in the staff room and face the person to establish an equal balance of power and to communicate a genuine attitude of listening.

- Speak with a calm voice and apply principles of equity and respect
- Use positive language and words that are appropriate to the person being spoken to.

Effective complaints handling steps:

- If the person is upset or aggressive state positively that you wish to seek a solution to the issue and that we will need to work together in order to understand the problem and reach a solution for the good of all concerned, including their child/themselves and their family.
- You must attempt to empathize with the other's perspective. (if the complaint is about you avoid responding immediately and defensively to the issues raised.)
- Listen actively to the complainant and repeat to the person the complaint to show true understanding of what they see as the problem. State "So you are telling me that....."
- Ask questions to help identify or clarify the problem.
- Using the complaint form take notes, ask the complainant if they have any strategies or solutions that they feel the service could put in place to resolve their issue/s. Record answers and clarify if what you have written is what the person meant. If the matter is resolved satisfactorily fill out the remainder of the form and sign it off and present it to the Director.

- Alternatively you can ask the complainant to fill out the form and return it to the centre.
- If you are unable to manage the issue raised because it is out of your control or because service practice cannot be changed for ethical, legal or business reasons advise the complainant that this is the case and provide clear reasons or refer to centre policy. Do not make any promises or commitments - it is wise to take some time for reflecting and thinking about your responses. If the person is not satisfied refer the matter to the Director to handle, along with the notes.
- Discuss the issue/s with the Director, ensuring that professionalism and confidentiality is maintained.
- Arrange a prompt follow up meeting if you need more time to discuss the issue with the Director, if you need to get more information or gather information from policies, DECD departments etc. This meeting should include a proposed solution and a commitment by the staff involved to implement the solution, as well as a timeframe as to when it will occur. Feedback from the complainant should be sought after the solution is implemented satisfactorily or the issue is resolved and the document signed by the complainant after resolution.