

Rationale

SDN acknowledges that people who use or interact with our services have a right to complain when dissatisfied with that service. SDN encourages feedback and we understand that complaints are inevitable, valuable and must be managed effectively.

SDN recognises when complaints are properly handled and analysed they help to improve service delivery for complainants, for all children and families who access the service. SDN records and analyses trends from complaints to drive organisational policy development and continuous improvement.

SDN recognises our responsibility to facilitate ways for children and young people to raise their concerns about our services.

Scope

This policy, and its associated documents, applies to the entirety of SDN Children’s Services and the entirety of its wholly owned subsidiaries.

This policy applies to all SDN services.

This policy does not apply to staff grievances - refer to SDN *Grievances Policy*.

This Policy does not cover protected disclosures under the Corporations Act 2021 by whistleblowers as defined by that law- refer to SDN *Whistleblowers and Protected Disclosures Policy*.

Key Terms

Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of an SDN service provided will be recorded as a complaint. If the complaint is alleging that a staff member is harming a child or that a child or young person is exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours please call the SDN Incident Line 1300 838 152 urgently.

Complainant

A party that makes a complaint.

Policy

SDN values all complaints, compliments and feedback as they allow us to:

- build relationships with our stakeholders
- improve our programs and services
- seek to resolve issues.

SDN is a Child Safe Organisation and the best interests of children and young people and their protection must be the first priority.

Making a complaint

Complaints may be made anonymously or using a pseudonym. However, we may not be able to respond fully and/or take the desired actions to such complaints.

Any service user or stakeholder can make a complaint. If possible, the complainant is encouraged to discuss the matter with the person who is the subject of the complaint (if applicable). Sometimes this will resolve the complaint without lodging a formal complaint.

Where this is not possible, the complainant may choose to lodge a formal complaint.

A complaint can be made by:

- telling an SDN Manager or Centre Director in person or in writing
- calling the SDN Family Engagement Team on 1300 831 445
- using the enquiry form on the SDN website contact page <https://www.sdn.org.au/contact-us/>

SDN will:

- acknowledge complaints promptly
- explain the process, what we are going to do with the information they have given us, and what they can expect to happen next
- give the opportunity for questions and answer to the best of your ability
- not make promises we cannot keep. For example, guaranteeing that the complaint will remain confidential or anonymous if it will not be
- aim to resolve all complaints as efficiently as possible and will notify delays, including the reasons to relevant parties
- try to reach a local resolution wherever possible; however where this is not possible, SDN will support complainants to access external complaint handling agencies wherever necessary
- investigate thoroughly when an investigation is needed
- maintain open and transparent communication with the complainant throughout the process
- manage complaints in a responsive, fair, efficient, effective, and equitable manner
- not discriminate against a person making a complaint and treat each person making a complaint with respect and create a safe environment for making complaints
- make different channels for making a complaint available and identify and address barriers to complaints and help complainant/s to participate in the complaints process as needed

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- be responsive to diverse cultural and communication needs of complainants and encourage participation through:
 - continuous and easy access to meaningful and culturally relevant information
 - opportunity to have a chosen support person to assist or represent them
 - provision of support to complainant which reflects their individual, cultural and communication needs
- communicate the *Complaints Policy* and *Procedure* clearly
- provide options on when and how to communicate about the matter
- enable children to express their views and provide opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their lives
- facilitate child-friendly ways for children to communicate and raise their concerns
- inform the complainant at each stage of the process and of the outcome of the complaint
- monitor complaints as part of SDN’s continued quality improvement.

Related SDN Documents

Policies

- GI-HLP-1.04: Equity, Social Justice and Social Inclusion
- GI-HLP-1.09: Privacy and Protection of Information
- GI-HLP-1.10: Code of Conduct
- GI-OP-1.14: Communication with Families
- GI-OP-1.19: Complainant Conduct
- GI-HLP-1.33 Child Protection
- HR-HLP-3.02: Equal Employment Opportunity and Good Working Relationships
- HR-OP-3.09: Grievances

Procedures

- GI-PRO-1.13-01: Complaints Management
- GI-PRO-1.14-01: Feedback Management
- GI-PRO-1.19-01: Complainant Conduct
- GI-PRO-1.33-01: Reporting an Allegation of Possible RC or Reportable Incident
- GI-PRO-1.33-02: Responding to Concerns of Risk of Harm
- HR-PRO-3.02-03: Working with Children and Vulnerable People and Police Checks

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- HR-PRO-3.09-01: Grievances

Forms/Templates

- GI-FRM-1.13-01-01: Complaints Form
- GI-FRM1.13-01-02: Complaints Register

Other SDN Document

- GI-ADD-1.13-01-A: Completing the Complaints Register Work Instructions

Relevant Legislation/Regulations

- Child Safe Standards (NSW)
- The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- National Standards for Disability Services
- Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010, sections 172(f) and 174(2)(b)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, regulations 168(2)(o), 173(2)(b) and 176
 - Schedule 1: National Quality Standard, standards 7.2 and 7.3, elements 7.3.1, 7.3.3 to 7.3.5
- Education and Care Services National Amendment Regulations 2013
- Health Records Information Privacy Act 2002
- Privacy Act 1988
- Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)
- Discrimination Act 1991 (ACT)
- Human Rights Act 2004 (ACT)
- Human Rights Commission Act 2005 (ACT)

Other References/Related Documents

- The NSW Ombudsman has general advice about making a complaint: <https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/Making-a-complaint>
- NSW Ombudsman (2017) *Effective complaint handling guidelines*. https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/131096/Effective-complaint-handling-guidelines-Third-edition.pdf
- NSW Office of the Children’s Guardian *Guide to the Child Safe Standards 2020*

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