

Mandatory – Quality Area 7

PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines for:

- receiving and dealing with complaints and grievances at Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc. Inc Services
- procedures to be followed in investigating complaints and grievances, including reportable conduct

Note: This policy does not address complaints relating to staff grievances or employment matters. The relevant awards provide information on the management of such issues.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc. Inc is committed to:

- providing an environment of mutual respect and open communication, where the expression of opinions is encouraged
- complying with all legislative and statutory requirements
- dealing with disputes, complaints and complainants with fairness and equity
- establishing mechanisms to promote prompt, efficient and satisfactory resolution of complaints and grievances
- maintaining confidentiality at all times.
- Zero tolerance to child abuse

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisors, educators, staff, students on placement, Parent Advisory Group, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc. Inc Services.

3. PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- being familiar with the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*, Commission of Children and Young People – Reportable Conduct Scheme, service policies and constitution, and complaints and grievances policy and procedures
- identifying, preventing and addressing potential concerns before they become formal complaints/grievances
- ensuring that the name and telephone number of the Responsible Person (refer to *Staffing Policy*) to whom complaints and grievances may be addressed are displayed prominently at the main entrance of the service (Regulation173(2)b))

- ensuring that the address and telephone number of the Authorised Officer at the DET regional office are displayed prominently at the main entrance of the service (Regulation 173(2)(e))
- advising parents/guardians and any other new members of Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc. Inc Services of the complaints and grievances policy and procedures upon enrolment
- ensuring that this policy is available for inspection at the service at all times (Regulation 171)
- being aware of, and committed to, the principles of communicating and sharing information with service employees, members and volunteers
- responding to all complaints and grievances in the most appropriate manner and at the earliest opportunity
- reporting to the Commission of Children and Young People within 3 working days of any alleged inappropriate behaviour of any employee
- treating all complainants fairly and equitably
- providing a *Complaints and Grievances Register* (refer to *Definitions*) and ensuring that staff record complaints and grievances along with outcomes
- complying with the service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* and maintaining confidentiality at all times (Regulations 181, 183)
- Investigating and resolving complaints or grievances and informing DET in writing within 24 hours of receiving a notifiable complaint (refer to *Definitions*) (Act 174(4), Regulation 176(2)(b))
- after investigation taking appropriate action.

All Early Childhood Staff are responsible for:

- responding to and resolving issues as they arise where practicable
- maintaining professionalism and integrity at all times
- discussing minor complaints directly with the party involved as a first step towards resolution (the parties are encouraged to discuss the matter professionally and openly work together to achieve a desired outcome)
- informing complainants of the service's *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- notifying the Approved Provider if the complaint escalates and becomes a grievance (refer to *Definitions*), is a notifiable complaint (refer to *Definitions*) or is unable to be resolved appropriately in a timely manner
- notifying the Approved Provider of any inappropriate behaviour by an employee that they have become aware of
- if there is an allegation of inappropriate behaviour in relation to a child by the Head of Organisation (GRPSA CEO) the matter must be reported to the Goulburn Region Preschool Association Board via email: board@grpsa.com.au
- providing information as requested by the Approved Provider e.g., written reports relating to the grievance
- complying with the service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* and maintaining confidentiality at all times (Regulations 181, 183)
- working co-operatively with the Approved Provider and DET in any investigations related to grievances about Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc. Inc Services, its programs or staff.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- raising a complaint directly with the person involved, in an attempt to resolve the matter without recourse to the complaints and grievances procedures
- communicating (preferably in writing) any concerns relating to the management or operation of the service as soon as is practicable

- If there is an allegation of abuse or misconduct in relation to a child by the Head of Organisation (GRPSA CEO) the matter must be reported to the Goulburn Region Preschool Association Board via email: board@grpsa.com.au
- raising any unresolved issues or serious concerns directly with the Approved Provider, via the Nominated Supervisor/educator or via email: ronni@grpsa.com.au
- maintaining complete confidentiality at all times
- co-operating with requests to meet with the Approved Provider or their representatives and provide relevant information when requested in relation to complaints and grievances.

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor complaints and grievances as recorded in the *Complaints and Grievances Register* to assess whether satisfactory resolutions have been achieved
- review the effectiveness of the policy and procedures to ensure that all complaints have been dealt with in a fair and timely manner
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Dealing with complaints and grievances

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc. Inc on 30th July 2012

Reviewed and Approved: 24th September 2016

Reviewed: 8th March 2019

Reviewed: August 2021

REVIEW DATE: AUGUST 2024

ATTACHMENT 1

Dealing with complaints and grievances

DEALING WITH A COMPLAINT

When a complaint is received, the person to whom the complaint is addressed will:

- inform the complainant of the service's *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- encourage the complainant to resolve the complaint with the person directly, or to submit their complaint in writing
- enter the complaint in the *Complaints and Grievances Register* (refer to *Definitions*) together with the outcome
- comply with the service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* with regard to all meetings/discussions in relation to a complaint
- inform the Approved Provider if the complaint escalates and becomes a grievance (refer to *Definitions*), a notifiable complaint (refer to *Definitions*) or is unable to be resolved appropriately in a timely manner.
- any inappropriate behaviour of an employee will be reported to the Commission of Children and Young People

DEALING WITH A GRIEVANCE

When a formal complaint or grievance is lodged with the service:

- the staff member receiving the formal complaint or grievance will record all relevant details regarding the grievance in the *Complaints and Grievances Register* (refer to *Definitions*) and immediately inform the Approved Provider
- the Approved Provider will appoint an investigator(s) to investigate the grievance
- the investigator will assess the grievance to determine if it is a notifiable grievance (refer to *Definitions*)
- if the grievance is notifiable, the Approved Provider will be responsible for notifying DET. This must be in writing within 24 hours of receiving the complaint (Regulation 176(2)(b))
- the written report to DET needs to be submitted using the appropriate forms from ACECQA and will include:
 - details of the event or incident
 - the name of the person who initially made the complaint
 - if appropriate, the name of the child concerned and the condition of the child, including a medical or incident report (where relevant)
 - contact details of the approved provider / investigator
 - any other relevant information
- if the Approved Provider is unsure if the complaint is a notifiable complaint, it is good practice to contact DET for confirmation.
- If the complaint or grievance is regarding inappropriate behaviour by an employee, the Approved Provider will report it to the Commission of Children and Young People – Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Investigators RESPONSIBILITIES and procedures

In the event of a grievance being lodged, the Investigator will:

- convene as soon as possible to deal with the grievance in a timely manner
- disclose any conflict
- consider the nature and the details of the grievance
- identify which service policies (if any) the grievance involves
- inform the Approved Provider if their involvement is required under any other service policies
- if the grievance is a notifiable complaint (refer to *Definitions*), inform the complainant of the requirements to notify DET of the grievance and explain the role that DET may take in investigating the complaint
- maintain appropriate records of the information and data collected, including minutes of meetings, incident reports and copies of relevant documentation relating to the grievance
- respect the confidential nature of information relating to the grievance. The Approved Provider and the investigator must handle any grievance in a discreet and professional manner
- store all written information relating to grievances securely and in compliance with the service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*.

INVESTIGATING THE GRIEVANCE AND GATHERING RELEVANT INFORMATION

When investigating the grievance and gathering relevant information, the Approved Provider / Investigator will:

- meet with individual witnesses, and give right of reply to the person against whom the allegations are made in relation to any accusation or information relating to an alleged incident
- offer the complainant the opportunity of meeting with the investigator to discuss the complaint and provide additional information where relevant
- nominate an investigator who is to inform the complainant of the procedures for dealing with the grievance if the complainant does not take up the opportunity to attend a meeting
- document the time, date and detail of meetings/discussions, and follow this up with a letter to the complainant outlining the information discussed
- be available to meet with DET staff, if required, and provide additional information as requested
- review relevant information and documents
- obtain any other relevant information or documentation that will assist in resolving the grievance
- seek advice, where appropriate, from individuals and organisations that may be able to assist in resolving the grievance (any cost in seeking advice will require prior approval by the Approved Provider).

FOLLOWING THE INVESTIGATION

Once the investigation of the grievance is complete, the Approved Provider / Investigator will:

- endeavour to resolve the grievance by mutual agreement of the parties involved
- meet to discuss the information gathered and determine further action, including generating recommendations to be presented to the Approved Provider
- ensure that any recommendations or actions are in accordance with relevant legislation and funding requirements including, but not limited to:
 - *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
 - *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*

– *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria*

- report outcomes that may include relevant information gained in investigations and consultations to the Approved Provider and, where required, provide any recommendations for consideration by the Approved Provider
- inform the Approved Provider on the involvement of DET and the outcomes of any investigation by DET. The Approved Provider will review the report and any recommendations and will be responsible for making decisions on the action to be taken (if any), including relevant review mechanisms
- advise the complainant and other relevant parties of any decisions made by the Approved Provider in relation to the grievance
- follow up to ensure the parties involved are satisfied with the outcome and monitor progress on any actions taken by the Approved Provider.