

CATEGORY: Standards of Conduct

Policy: Community & Service Complaints

Revision Date: August 2012

Approved by: Board of Directors

At CultureLink (CL) we are committed to providing the best possible services to the communities that we serve, to respecting and supporting the competence and integrity of its staff, and to protecting the privacy of its clients, donors, volunteers, employees, and other stakeholders. If a service user is dissatisfied with the standard of conduct of a settlement agent, or the service provided by the CL, he or she can file a complaint. CL acknowledges clients' right to complain and actively solicits feedback from service users. The employees at CL maintain a positive attitude to resolve complaints fairly and efficiently.

CultureLink adheres to the strict Confidentiality Agreement statement and will institute sanctions against persons who violate confidentiality procedures. Information about any parties involved in the incident and the witnesses interviewed by the investigators will not be shared with anyone other than relevant personnel. No information about the incident will be provided to any person without the party's prior verbal and informed consent. We value the trust of the people we deal with and recognize that maintaining this trust requires that we be transparent and accountable in how we treat the information that clients choose to share with us.

When a service user wishes to file a complaint, the following steps should be taken:

1. If a complaint is filed in person:

Step One: Try to resolve the complaint

- If a complaint from a service user is received directly by the staff person providing the service, the staff member should listen without interrupting as this is likely to defuse the complainant's emotions. Write down all the relevant information, without arguing or denying anything. Discuss the complaint together as soon as possible and try to resolve it. The staff person should also make the service user aware of our policy and inform the client that the relevant supervisor will be advised, in case further action is required.
- If a complaint by a service user is received by another staff person or volunteer, they should (1) inform the service user about the complaint policy, (2) encourage the service user to speak to the staff person providing the service first if possible (3) ask the client for the permission to inform the staff against whom the complaint is being filed, and (4) advise the appropriate supervisor of the complaint.
- In hearing a complaint directly or indirectly, the staff person providing service should consult the supervisor. If the situation is not yet resolved proceed to Step Two.

Step Two: Complaint Form

If there is no successful resolution, the service user can fill out a complaint form, providing the following information:

1. Complainant name
2. Complainant contact information either through mail, e-mail or by phone
3. The name of the program or service about which a complaint is being made or the name of the service provider about whom a complaint is being made
4. Details of complaint.

The service user should be informed that once the complaint form is filled out, the complaint will not be anonymous, as the service user has to identify themselves in the form.

Step Three: Review of the complaint by the supervisor

- Forward the complaint to the supervisor of the staff member concerned. At first contact, the supervisor should learn more about the complaint and the services being provided before taking any action. If the complaint is serious and involves accusations of violence, threatening behavior, sexual abuse or realistic fears of retaliation, the supervisor will act with the safety of the service user and staff as top priority. The supervisor will also seek assistance from our Director of Human Resources in investigating alleged serious employee misconduct.
- If the nature of the complaint does not put the service user or staff at risk, the preferred method of complaint resolution is to get all parties together to discuss the situation.
- If the parties are unwilling or safety is a concern, the supervisor will meet with them separately. At this stage the supervisor will speak to the staff person providing services in order to investigate the complaint. The supervisor will advise the client in writing of the results of the meeting/investigation. If the worker and supervisor fail to resolve the client's complaint, the client should be informed of the right to seek resolution through a meeting with the Director to review the complaint. The client should be informed of the name and work phone number of the Director if they wish to pursue the complaint.
- The Director should be informed of the complaint by the supervisor and receive a copy of the written response to the service user (or community member).

Step Four: Review of the complain by the Director

- The Director will review the complaint to determine if the supervisor has properly and fairly followed the complaint policy. The Director will not re-investigate the complaint unless there is reason to believe that the supervisor has not acted properly.
- The Director will meet with the service user or community member and review the process of the complaint. The Director will also provide a final written response to the service user or community member of any actions that have resulted from the complaint.

- The Director will send a copy of this written response to the supervisor and the Executive Director for information. The Executive Director should bring to the attention of the Board of Directors any complaints that can have a negative impact on the organization's financial, legal or public relations situations.
- The complaint forms filled out by the service users will be kept in a folder, according to the confidentiality procedures. Annually, the Executive Director will summarize all of the complaints for the Board of Directors.

This policy considers these principles:

- All complaints will be dealt with as quickly as possible
- Complaints will be treated confidentially and in accordance the Municipal Freedom of Information Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) legislation
- All complaints will be treated equally, fairly and transparently and will follow the organization's stated procedures for resolution.

2. Online complaint:

CL website will inform visitors about this policy. The service users will have access to the complaint form on the CL website. After filling out the form, the client may send it by email to info@culturelink.ca, or may drop it off at the CL office.