



August 2023

## **YMCA Northumberland Complaints Policy & Process**

Complaints Policy for Members of the Public was developed to become compliant with Imagine Canada Standard A14. The Association has a complaints policy applicable to external stakeholders that is posted in a readily accessible location on its website. The Association responds promptly to complaints by external stakeholders. The Association informs the Board annually of the number, type and disposition of complaints received. In addition, a process to respond promptly to complaints and to report them has been documented.

This policy is intended to encourage and enable anyone to raise serious concerns so that we can address and correct inappropriate conduct and actions. It is the responsibility of all Board members, employees and volunteers to report concerns about violations of our policies or suspected violations of law.

Both the policy and process have been communicated to senior staff across the Association, with front-line staff and volunteers through on-going annual training sessions. The policy is being linked to the website home page to formalize the complaints. All formal complaints will be captured in a data base and the Manager, Finance, Audit & Risk will follow up with the individual handling each complaint to ensure appropriate process and documentation is completed.

When complaints are received, the resulting report to the Board will summarize them by type of complaint, type of stakeholder submitting the complaint (where that can be determined), and the type of action taken to resolve the complaint (e.g. financial compensation, adjustment to policies, improved communication). The report will also indicate the number of complaints, and number of unresolved complaints.

### **Philosophy**

We believe that complaints are to be dealt with promptly and resolved as quickly as possible. We believe that the review of complaints is fair, impartial and respectful to all parties. Complainants always have the option to escalate their complaint to a more senior staff person if they are dissatisfied with treatment or outcome or uncomfortable dealing with someone. Complainants are provided clear and understandable reasons for decisions relating to complaints and are updated with relevant information throughout the process. We believe that complaints help us in improving services, policies and procedures.

### **Definition**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the service, actions, or lack of action by YMCA Northumberland as an Association or a staff member or volunteer acting on its behalf. Anyone personally affected can complain and their complaint will be reviewed.

Examples of complaints include but are not limited to:

- perceived failure to do something agreed upon;
- failure to observe policy or law;
- breaches or departure from our ethical standards;
- error made by a staff member/volunteer; or
- unfair or discourteous actions/statements by staff member/volunteer.

## **Types of Complaints**

Complaints will be broken down into three categories:

1. External Complaints
2. Staff Complaints
3. Volunteer Complaints

External complaints will cover all complainants who are not staff members or volunteers. Staff complaints will cover complaints by any current staff member. Volunteer complaints will cover complaints by active volunteers (those who have volunteered in the past three months).

## **Complaint Receipt and Handling**

A complaint may be received verbally (by phone or in person) or any complainant may communicate in writing (by mail, fax, email) as outlined on our website. An employee or volunteer who receives a complaint should first determine the proper person to handle it. This will generally be the person who has the primary relationship with the complainant or has the specific knowledge that is needed to resolve the problem. It is the responsibility of the person who receives the complaint to either resolve it or transfer it to another person who can resolve it. If the complaint is transferred, the recipient must acknowledge to the transferor that he/she has received it and will act on it.

The person who initially receives the complaint should acknowledge to the complainant that the complaint has been received and will be acted on either by him/her or another employee. If a timeframe for action can be determined, that should be included in the acknowledgement. Basic contact information including name, phone number and email address should immediately be recorded.

Anyone filing a complaint concerning a violation or suspected violation must have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed indicates a violation. Any allegations that prove not to be substantiated and which prove to have been made maliciously or knowingly to be false will be viewed as serious. In the case of employees, such offenses will be handled on a case-by-case basis as determined by the CEO.

## **Confidentiality**

Violations or suspected violations may be submitted confidentially by the complainant. Reports of violations or suspected violations will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation.

## **Resolving the Complaint**

Every effort will be made to resolve verbal and written complaints within 2 business days. When receiving a verbal complaint, staff should listen and seek to understand the complaint, and may be able to resolve it immediately.

Where a complaint cannot be immediately resolved, it should be escalated to the relevant Manager. If the Manager cannot resolve the complaint, it will be escalated to the CEO. If the complaint is about the CEO, it will be handled by the Board Chair. Complainants should be kept informed of the status of their complaint and every attempt should be made to resolve escalated complaints within 2 weeks.

## **Documenting the Complaint**

Complaints are required to be documented. Documentation should include a description of the complaint, who handled it, what was done to resolve the complaint, the timeframe, and a description of the resolution. Documented complaints are then submitted to the Director, Finance, Audit and Risk.

On a quarterly basis the Director, Finance, Audit and Risk will submit to the CEO a summary of all complaints received (including type) in the period. Annually, the CEO shall report to the Board a summary of the complaints received. All website complaints will be recorded as well as complaints that have not been rectified to the complainant's satisfaction. Complaints will be broken down by Complainant Category, external and internal. HR complaints are excluded from the scope of this policy as they fall within the purview of HR matters and under relevant HR policies and procedures.

## **Feedback Process listed on YMCA Northumberland's Website**

YMCA members — including participants, customers, parents, donors, contractors or other members of the public — are encouraged to bring forward complaints, concerns or compliments, and to make suggestions on ways to improve programs and services and their YMCA experience. Please provide feedback in person to a YMCA employee, by email, telephone or by regular post mail to:

YMCA Northumberland  
Attn: Manager, Administration and Human Resources  
339 Elgin Street West  
Cobourg, ON K9A 4X5  
Email: [lynne.caffin@nrt.ymca.ca](mailto:lynne.caffin@nrt.ymca.ca)  
Tel: 905-372-0161

The Manager, Administration and Human Resources will refer any accessibility-related questions or concerns to the accessibility team, who will work with senior managers to respond. All other feedback and complaints received shall be referred to the appropriate YMCA program manager for handling.