

Client Complaints Policy

POLICY STATEMENT: A client has a right to complain about their experience with services and programs provided by SVCHC.

All client complaints are taken seriously and responded to in a timely manner.

The Client Complaint Policy shall be displayed within the Centre and a copy provided to any person on request.

The responsibility for handling complaints or allegations rests with the Executive Director.

Informal resolution of a complaint should be timely so as not to delay appropriate action for the complainant or cause undue stress for the staff member.

The Centre shall maintain a centrally held file of complaints for monitoring and quality assurance purposes.

Some health and social services workers are regulated by professional bodies, which investigate and deal with complaints from the public. Clients may choose to register their complaint with the Centre and/or with the appropriate regulatory body. These bodies, listed below, have established their own procedures for investigating and dealing with complaints.

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario and College of Nurses of Ontario: Through their Complaints Committees, the Colleges investigate specific complaints about doctors, RN's, and RNA's. The Committees are guided by the Health Disciplines Act.

Health Professions Appeal and Review Board: This is a government body which has a review process available both to complainants and those health professionals governed by the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991.

The Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers: The College is self-regulating body with a specific mandate for protecting the public by setting professional standards, registering individuals who meet its requirements, investigating complaints and disciplining members for failing to comply with standards.

Civil Courts: Issues of negligence and malpractice are the responsibility of the civil courts when lawsuits are commenced. Civil courts may award

damages. Generally speaking, the liability insurer for SVCHC, as the employer of the health professional who is sued, would appoint and instruct legal counsel to defend the lawsuit, and would pay for any settlement or judgment.

1.1 Procedures for responding to client complaints addressed to the Centre Client complaint by telephone or in person

The client will be directed to the Executive Director (or the Manager acting in the absence of the Executive Director) who will consult with the client to determine the nature of the complaint and clarify the client's concerns/issue with regard to a staff person or program/service. This information will be documented.

The Executive Director (or the Manager acting in the absence of the Executive Director) will discuss with the involved staff member(s) concerns raised by the client, in order to better understand the issues and to determine actions required to resolve issues. Whenever possible, the Executive Director/Manager will support the client to speak directly with the involved staff member(s) in the interests of cooperative problem solving.

The Executive Director/Manager will follow-up with the client concerning proposed resolution of issues within five (5) working days of the complaint being made. In the event that no satisfactory resolution is proposed, the Executive Director/Manager will determine what additional action will be required to satisfy the client.

In the event that the client cannot be satisfied at this point, the complaint shall be directed to the President of the Board of Directors for policy review, who will follow-up with the client concerning proposed resolution of issues within thirty (30) working days of the complaint being referred.

If still not satisfied with the proposed resolution of the issues raised, the onus will be on the client to determine whether further action is warranted.

If the complaint is about the Executive Director, the President of the Board will handle the complaint.

Client complaints received in writing

Written complaints will be forwarded to the Executive Director, who will contact the client within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving the complaint to clarify concerns and issues raised and to inform the client about the Centre's complaints review process, including client options, expectations and the

anticipated time-frame for a proposed resolution.

The Executive Director will follow procedures as described above (b) to (f)

If the complaint is about the Executive Director, the President of the Board will handle the complaint.

1.2 Professional Misconduct, Incompetence or Incapacity

If on assessment the client's concerns suggest professional misconduct, incompetence, or incapacity, the Executive Director/Manager responsible will take the following action:

The Executive Director/Manager will determine what actions, if any, are immediately required to ensure the safety of clients. Such actions may include suspension of involved staff members from work, with or without restrictions, pending further investigation of allegations made; leave of absence for therapy; provision of therapy while working; relocation; or termination.

The Executive Director/Manager will ask involved staff persons to prepare a written response to the issues raised.

Since allegations of professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity may result in a complaint to a professional regulatory body (see 2 above); the Executive Director/Manager will inform involved staff persons of their rights to obtain independent legal advice.

The Executive Director will write to the client within forty-eight (48) hours of the complaint being made, stating planned action to be taken to investigate allegations, and will obtain legal advice.

In the event that it has been determined that a staff person has indeed demonstrated professional misconduct, incompetence, or incapacity, disciplinary action shall be taken and the Executive Director will forward a report to the appropriate professional regulatory body.

1.3 Litigation and Insurance Coverage

When a client provides notice, oral or written, of an intention to take legal action against the Centre or any of its staff, the Executive Director shall be informed immediately.

Upon receipt of such information, the Executive Director shall as soon as

possible provide written notice to the Centre's insurer of the claim or possible claim, and shall seek legal advice.

A physician who is a member of the Canadian Medical Protective Association may contact that Association; Registered Nurses may contact the legal department of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario; Nurse Practitioners may contact the Nurses' Legal Protection Society; Registered Social Workers & Social Service Workers may contact the legal department of Ontario Association of Social Workers & Social Service Workers.

All staff members shall co-operate fully in providing statements and any other information required by the Centre's insurer, its adjusters and its lawyers with respect to a claim.

1.4 Accountability

Annually, the Executive Director shall provide to the Board of Directors a report, which summarizes the number and type of complaints and/or allegations received and the manner in which the issues were resolved.