

Section: Client Rights	Client Complaint	2-002
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POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of SCIO to provide and encourage clear and open channels of communication between employee and client and to respect and value a client's rights under the Client Bill of Rights. SCIO informs clients of the procedure for initiating a complaint and how to appeal a decision. SCIO maintains a formal process for receiving, reviewing, and responding to client complaints. It is the policy of SCIO to ensure that issues are addressed in a timely, fair, and equitable manner. SCIO is committed to ensuring that there are no negative repercussions from engaging in the complaint process.

PURPOSE

SCIO has a transparent process for the management of complaints and recognizes the rights of clients to bring forward their complaints. It is necessary to recognize that SCIO is accountable to provide quality services within the context of its policies and available resources. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that complaints are addressed and resolved promptly and to outline the process for complaints.

SCOPE

This policy applies to employees, volunteers, and clients.

DEFINITION

Complaint – A complaint is a concern or dissatisfaction brought forward by a person interested in SCIO services, a client, substitute decision-maker, caregiver, or family member of a client, whether it is written or verbal. The client can use the availability of advocates or other assistance.

Formal – A formal complaint requires communication to take place through structured channels of the organization, along the lines of established authority. It may be verbal or written requiring action to be taken to address the complaint.

Informal – An informal complaint can be communicated casually and takes place outside of formal channels and does not flow in line of authority. There is no formal action required. These complaints are often resolved at the front-line employee level.

Systemic Issue – A systemic issue is a problem that relates to SCIO overall, a policy or a procedure. A change to the structure, organization or policies could alleviate the systemic issue. The source of the issue can be said to be a common cause rather than a special cause.

Individual Issue – An individual issue is a problem that relates to one person rather than SCIO as a whole. A change to the specific, individual, or isolated factor could alleviate the individual issue.

RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of employees to:

- use problem solving techniques to address the complaint in a timely manner
- advise their manager of a complaint they have not been able to resolve and that they have advised the client to elevate it to the manager

It is the responsibility of the managers to:

- acknowledge and respond to complaints received from clients
- elevate the complaint to the Director, Client Services when a resolution is not obtained

It is the responsibility of the Director, Client Services to ensure:

- employees uphold the integrity of this policy by adhering to the guidelines and procedures
- when the complaints process has been exhausted that the client is aware that they may appeal a decision made by SCIO

GUIDELINES

- Clients are made aware of the complaint process during the Client Orientation when the handbook is reviewed. It is reviewed at the time of developing the service plan (i.e., service commencement) and when renewing service agreements.

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- SCIO is committed to handling complaints in a responsive, fair, and courteous manner that is respectful of the client's privacy. Every effort to resolve a complaint in a timely, sensitive, and supportive manner will be made through discussions between employee and client.
- An elevated complaint or one that has escalated to the next level of management must be documented. SCIO will document the complaint in writing at each step of the resolution process utilizing file notes. A written response will be sent to the client including reasons for the decision. It is preferable, but not necessary, for the client to document their complaint in writing.
- A client has the right to raise concerns or recommend changes about services without fear of negative repercussions. No client will be penalized for using this process. If it is found that a client has been subject to negative repercussions as a result of using the complaints procedures, the employee will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with SCIO's Human Resources Policies and Procedures, Performance Management System.

PROCEDURE

Intake or pre client Complaint

When an applicant or referral is not satisfied with a SCIO decision that includes being ineligible for a particular service or has been deemed eligible for service but has been placed on a wait list, the complaint is addressed by the manager in the specific program and the formal complaint process is followed.

Informal Complaint

1. Whenever possible, complaints are best resolved informally by the individuals involved. In the event of dissatisfaction, the employee and client directly concerned are encouraged to discuss the issue with one another in an attempt to reach a satisfactory resolution. The employee and client have an open and direct discussion as soon as possible describing the circumstances that have led to the concern and discuss some possible solutions. The discussion should include establishing timeframes for change and allows time to remedy the situation. Where documentation is feasible a file note in the electronic database is completed indicating the informal complaint and secured in the client file. Informal complaints are not reported on the Client Complaint Tracking Tool.

Formal Complaint

1. Where an informal complaint has not been resolved directly with the client and there is anticipation of it being elevated the employee informs their manager.
2. The employee notes the nature of the informal complaint in the file notes in the client's file.
3. When a resolution does not appear likely the employee will inform the client that the nature of the complaint suggests that the complaint be dealt with more appropriately at the next level of management. The client will then take responsibility for advancing the complaint to the next level.
4. Where a client elevates a complaint to the manager, the manager will acknowledge the complaint and initiate an investigation.
5. The client is provided with a written response from the manager within 10 working days of the discussion outlining the complaint and what SCIO can do to attempt to resolve the client's complaint. A mutually acceptable date will be established for resolution, which will be within a maximum of thirty (30) days from the day of complaint. If the manager is unable to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the client within this time, they must advise the client that they will be elevating the resolution of the complaint to the next level of management.
6. All documentation relating to a formal complaint are kept confidential and will be kept in a separate file.
7. If the client is not satisfied with the proposed resolution, they may take the issue to the next level of management up to and including the Chief Executive Officer. The details of the complaint and copies of supporting documentation will be provided to the level of management involved. At any stage, if everyone involved agrees, the client or management may request third party mediation to help resolve the differences.

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8. The determination of the Chief Executive Officer will be sent to the client within 30 days of receiving the complaint and is considered final and is implemented by SCIO and the employees involved.
9. The written response to the client must also include procedures for initiating an appeal in the event where the client is not satisfied with the decision.
10. All formal complaints (resolved and not resolved) are logged in the client database, complaints. The log includes categories that are suitable for trending and instructions that are applied consistently. The Quality Lead reviews the data and completes an annual written analysis. The analysis is distributed to the Director, Client Services and the Quality Committee of the Board. The written analysis is helpful in identifying trends, areas needing improvement and actions to be taken to address systemic issues.

Resolution

1. The client has the right at any time to bypass the complaint structure.
2. When the complaint suggests there is a systemic rather than an individual issue relating to the provision of service, SCIO must review its policies and procedures and determine whether any changes are necessary. If a resolution to a complaint may result in changing policies or procedures it must first be approved by the Director, Client Services, who initiates a review of the policy or procedure as appropriate.

Appeal

1. In the event that the client is not satisfied with the resolution proposed by the Chief Executive Officer, the client may request consideration of the issue by an appeal to the Chair of the Board of Directors or his/her/their designate. Once their appeal is received, the client is notified in writing that their complaint is being reviewed by the Chair of the Board of Directors.
2. The Chair of the Board of Directors or his/her/their designate will undertake an investigation to consider the appeal and make a decision. The Chair will advise the client in writing of the decision within thirty (30) days of receiving the appeal request.

Complaint or Appeal to Ministry of Health

1. In the event that the client is not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal at the agency level, the client has the right to report a complaint to the Ministry of Health who receives and responds to complaints from those who have not had their concerns resolved through existing agency complaint mechanisms.
2. Clients who are not satisfied with the agency decision can apply to the Health Services Appeal and Review Board for review of the agency decision when the complaint is regarding:
 - Eligibility to receive service
 - Exclusion of a service from the person's plan of service
 - Amount of service to be included in the person's plan of service
 - Termination of service
3. It is suggested that clients follow the formal agency process. However, at any time a client who is receiving services in a program funded through the Ministry of Health can contact the Long-Term Care Action Line and request the services of an Independent Complaints Facilitator. This option is available even if a client does not want to go through the formal agency complaint and appeal process.

Documentation Requirement

SCIO must maintain a written record of all formal complaints to include the following information:

1. Name of person who is making the complaint and/or the person who is the subject of the complaint
2. Date of the complaint
3. Nature and details of the complaint, and type of service if applicable
4. How the complaint was made initially, whether verbal or written
5. What actions would resolve the situation from the client's perspective

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6. Name or names of the employees who are handling the complaint review or investigation taken, outcome of the review, decision made
7. Date of the decision
8. Actions taken including what steps were taken to resolve the complaint
9. Date decision or feedback was provided to the client
10. Reaction to the decision or feedback
11. Current status of resolution
12. Any follow-up actions or monitoring plan if required

TOOLS REQUIRED

Client Bill of Rights (Ref. CS 2-001)
 Performance Management System (Ref. HR 3-001)
 Incident Management (Ref. HS 2-001)
 SCIO Client Bill of Rights (Ref. CS form)

Legislative References:

Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act 2020
 Bill of Rights, Part 111, Section 3.1

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