

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS POLICY

Human Rights Legal Support Centre (HRLSC)

1. INTRODUCTION

From time to time, the HRLSC may receive complaints about the quality of service related to its policies and procedures, the application of those policies and procedures or the conduct of HRLSC personnel. The purpose of this policy is to create a transparent and fair method of responding to public complaints.

- 1 The purpose of the policy is to ensure that complaints are dealt with fairly and expeditiously, whether the complaint is in writing or made orally, and whether made by clients or others.
- 2 Staff are to make every effort to amicably resolve concerns raised about the services, and if unable to do so, to ensure that complainants are advised of their right to make a complaint, and the procedures involved.
- 3 Staff and board members will handle complaints equitably and attempt to resolve them in a considerate and respectful manner.
- 4 Where appropriate, staff will re-examine policies and services based on concerns raised in complaints.

2. IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT THE POLICY

- 5 If a person is unhappy with the outcome of a decision of the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, that is not a complaint about services at the HRLSC. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your mediation or hearing at the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, you may discuss the issue with the Legal Support Worker or Staff Lawyer assigned to your file and identify options.
- 6 All members and staff of the HRLSC are familiar with this complaints policy and can provide you with a copy.
- 7 The HRLSC will respond to your complaint and make every effort to resolve it to your satisfaction. If this is not possible, the HRLSC will make every effort to ensure that you understand the decision and feel that you have been treated fairly.
- 8 This policy does not affect your right to raise concerns with the Ombudsman of Ontario if you are dissatisfied with the results provided by HRLSC. Contact information is found at the end of this policy.

3. DEFINITION

- 9 A matter will not be treated as a complaint under this policy unless (a) it raises serious concerns about the conduct of the Centre or its staff, and (b) there have been attempts to resolve the matter informally, and these attempts have failed.

4. POLICY

- 10 Clients, former clients, or other people who are affected by the services provided by HRLSC can complain under this policy.
- 11 Complaints include, but are not limited to:
 - i) denial of service to a potential client
 - ii) the quality of services provided
- 12 Complaints made under this policy can be made orally or in writing. The only requirement is that the person making the complaint must give their name.
- 13 Confidentiality of any client affected by a complaint under this policy shall be maintained, unless the client expressly consents otherwise.

5. PROCEDURE

- 14 If the person wishes to make a complaint in writing they will be advised to do so to the attention of the Executive Director. If they wish to make it orally they may do so to the Team Manager, who will bring it to the attention of the Executive Director or Manager of Administration if the complaint has not been informally resolved.
- 15 Upon receipt of a written or verbal complaint, the Executive Director or Manager of Administration shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint within ten (10) business days.
- 16 The Executive Director and the Manager of Administration will decide which of them will take the lead in attempting to resolve the complaint and will collaborate to resolve it. Within fifteen (15) business days of receiving the complaint, either the Executive Director or the Manager of Administration will discuss the complaint with the complainant and with the appropriate staff member and attempt to resolve it. If they are unable to meet this timeline, they shall advise the complainant.

- 17 The Executive Director or the Manager of Administration may forward a complaint directly to the Board of Directors. While the Executive Director and the Manager of Administration are expected to attempt to resolve complaints as early in the process as possible, if there are safety and/or potential conflict of interest issues they may choose to ask for Board assistance in resolving the complaint at this point in the process.
- 18 The Executive Director and the Manager of Administration shall keep written documentation of the complaint and attempts to resolve it.
- 19 If the Executive Director and the Manager of Administration are unable to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant, they shall forward the matter to the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors or the Board of Directors as a whole.
- 20 The complainant will be asked to complete a consent to release information to the Board so that they can fully investigate the case. If the Complainant does not sign the consent to release information form the complaint will still go the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors, but will not include specific personal information related to it.
- 21 Upon receiving a report of a complaint that has not been resolved, the Executive Committee or the Board shall, within sixty (60) days of receiving it:
 - i) Appoint an ad hoc committee of the Board or take responsibility itself as the Executive Committee to consider the complaint and discuss with the Executive Director and the Manager of Administration, in a further effort to resolve the matter, and;
 - ii) Make a decision on the complaint based on the information provided to it. The complainant shall be offered the opportunity to make further comments in writing or by conference call as appropriate, and
 - iii) Inform the complainant of recourse through the complaint procedure of the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario.
- 22 The Executive or Board of Directors shall report its decision to the complainant in writing with reasons, and provide a copy of the decision to the staff member(s) who was the subject of the complaint.
- 23 If the Executive Committee handles a complaint, it shall report it to the full Board of Directors.

Complaints Regarding the Executive Director, the Manager of Administration or the Chair of the Board of Directors

- 24 A complaint concerning the Manager of Administration shall be referred to the Executive Director and a complaint concerning the Executive Director shall be referred to the Manager of Administration. The appropriate person will acknowledge the complaint and forward it directly to the Board of Directors or the Executive Committee.
- 25 When a complaint is made against the Chair of the Board of Directors, the procedure described above applies except that the review may be conducted by the Attorney General or his or her delegate.

Reporting a Potential Errors & Omissions Claim

- 26 If a complaint reveals an error or omission that could lead to a negligence claim, the Executive Director or the Manager of Administration shall report it to the Board of Directors.

6. CONTACT INFORMATION

Human Rights Legal Support Centre

180 Dundas Street West, 8th Floor

Toronto, Ontario M7A 0A1

Tel: (416) 314-6266

Toll Free: 1-866—625-5179

TTY: (416) 314-6651

TTY Toll Free: 1-866 612-8627

Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario

Bell Trinity Square

483 Bay Street, 10th Floor, South Tower

Toronto, ON

M5G 2C9

Phone: 1-800-263-1830 – Complaints Line

Fax: 416-586-3485

TTY (Teletypewriter): 1-866-411-4211

E-mail: info@ombudsman.on.ca

APPENDIX A

COMPLAINT FORM

This form is to be used by any individual who or organization that has dealt with the HRLSC and has a complaint about the quality of HRLSC's services relating to policies and procedures, the application of these policies and procedures or the conduct of HRLSC personnel in delivering these services.

The Complaint Form must include the signature of the complainant (the person making the complaint) and, if the complainant is an organization, the signature of the signing officer representing said organization.

I. COMPLAINANT INFORMATION (please print clearly or type)

Your full name:

Name of Organization (if applicable):

Your Address:

Your home phone number:

Your work phone number:

Your fax number:

Your e-mail address:

Your status in relation to the HRLSC: (i) Applicant (ii) Applicant Representative (iii) Other (specify):

CONTACT PARAMETERS

May we contact you at work? Yes..... No.....

May we contact you at home? Yes..... No.....

May we fax you? Yes..... No.....

May we e-mail you? Yes..... No.....

II. GUIDELINES ON FILLING OUT THE COMPLAINT FORM

1. Name and contact information of the HRLSC staff or board member(s) that is the subject of your complaint:
2. Please describe the complaint in your own words or provide the details as outlined below:
 - a. Relevant facts and events
Describe the nature of the complaint and particulars. This includes full details as to times, dates, the alleged conduct; any supporting evidence or witnesses; and, any additional facts/information about the complaint that may be relevant.
 - b. Details of any discussions between you and the HRLSC staff or board member(s):
(including efforts to discuss and/or resolve the complaint)
 - c. What would you like to see as the result of this complaint?
 - d. List any supporting documents relevant to this complaint that you will be attaching copies of
(do not send originals)
 - e. List other ways in which you are complaining against the HRLSC (including legal action):

III. PRIVACY

I understand that the complaint that I have submitted and all the documents I have provided in support of the complaint will be provided to the HRLSC staff person to allow him or her to provide full response to the complaint, unless the disclosure breaches the confidentiality of neutral third parties. I also understand that the staff person may release from his or her files documents that are relevant to this complaint to give him or her an opportunity to respond to the complaint. I understand that the staff person is to disclose no greater personal information than is reasonably required to respond to the complaint. Finally, I agree that documents that I obtain from the staff person or the HRLSC during the course of the investigation of this complaint will be used only for the purpose of this complaint and that any other use is prohibited.

Signature

Date

List supporting documents relevant to this complaint attached (do not send originals):

List other ways in which you are complaining against the HRLSC (including legal action):
