

Policy number	Std 4 Fee Com Pol 001	Version	005
Drafted by	Staff	Approved by COM	May 2018
Responsible person	Program Manager	Scheduled review	May 2021

Complaints and Disputes

1. Purpose

That a consumer, their representatives, volunteer citizen advocates and staff have access to the internal and external complaints mechanisms. That there are effective systems in place that respond to individual needs, and enable all stakeholders to have input to improving the quality of the service.

2. Policy

Melbourne East Disability Advocacy (MEDA) will uphold the right of consumers, volunteer citizen advocates, staff and other stakeholders to make complaints. All complaints will be taken seriously and in confidence and will be investigated and acted upon in a timely manner. This is pivotal for stakeholder satisfaction and continuous improvement.

All individuals will be able to pursue a complaint without a fear of reprisal, retribution, intimidation, or victimization. All complaints handled by the staff and the Committee of Management will be dealt with in a professional and confidential manner, and in accordance with the **Privacy Dignity and Confidentiality Policy (Std 1 Rights Pol 003)**. Where a person from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse background makes a complaint, services and support will be offered in accordance with the **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Consumers Policy Std 5 Ser Acc Pol 002**.

Upon entering MEDA, all consumers, volunteers and staff will be made aware of the complaints and disputes policy. Staff will explain this process to Consumers and Volunteer Citizen Advocates when orientating consumers with the **Consumer Booklet Std 5 Ser Acc HB001** and Volunteers with the **Volunteer Citizen Advocate Handbook Std 6 Ser Man HB001**. Staff will be introduced to the Complaints and Disputes policy during orientation, please see **Staff Recruitment Employment and Training Std 6 Ser Man Pol 015**. When making a complaint, the complainant will again be reminded of the Complaints and Disputes process.

The Complaints and Disputes process forms (**Complaints and Disputes Form Std 4 Fee Com F002**, **Complaints and Disputes Agreement Std 4 Fee Com F001**, **Complaints and Disputes Log Std 4 Fee Com F005**, **Complaints and Disputes Meeting Agenda Std 4 Fee Com F004**, and **Complaints and Disputes Meeting Guidelines Std 4 Fee Com F003**) are based on the Complaints Resolution and Referral Service (CRRS) guidelines. These forms are available in the office and by request. CRRS is an independent complaints and resolution service that handles complaints about services funded under the Commonwealth *Disability Services Act*. If it is not appropriate for the Program Manager to be involved, for example if the Program Manager is involved in the complaint or is a party involved, the Program Manager will not be involved in the meeting process. Where disputes cannot be resolved, the complainant will be encouraged to seek the services of CRRS, relevant Union or other dispute body.

Staff will encourage the use of the Complaints and Disputes policy and procedure to maintain a cycle of continuous improvement.

3. Definition of Terms

Complainant: the person raising the complaint or dispute.

CRRS: Complaints Resolution and Referral Service.

DSCV: Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria

4. Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the Program Manager, Committee of Management (COM) / or delegate to take all complaints seriously and investigate in a timely manner. Complainants will be supported to pursue any avenue necessary to achieve a satisfactory resolution.

The Program Manager will report all complaints to the COM and document the process to resolution.

5. Procedure

5.1 Orientation to the Complaints and Disputes Policy

Consumers, volunteer citizen advocates and Staff:

- Complaints and Disputes policy explained in the **Consumer Handbook Std 5 Ser Acc HB001**)

5.2 Anonymous Complaint

The Program Manager will:

- Make **Complaints and Disputes forms (Std 4 Fee Com F002)** available in the office
- Record all complaints received by completing the **Complaints and Disputes form (Std 4 Fee Com F002)**;
- Register the complaint using the **Complaints and Disputes Log (Std 4 Fee Com F005)**
- Inform President of MEDA
- Investigate the complaint;
- Document in accordance with **Continuous Improvement Policy (Std 6 Ser Man Pol 005)** if appropriate.

5.3 Consumer or Volunteer Citizen Advocate Complaint

Following receipt of a complaint the Program Manager will identify complainants concerns and expectations: Complainant, with support of volunteer citizen advocate, friend, family member or other support person as required, will be requested to complete the **Complaints and Disputes Form (Std 4 Fee Com F002)**. A scribe will be provided if necessary.

Abuse:

All complaints or suspected abuse or neglect will result in staff, Program Manager or Volunteer Citizen Advocates to be supported to contact:

- Police
- Disability Abuse or Neglect Hotline

- Hotline: 1800 880 052
- Office of Disability Services Commissioner

All other Complaints:

- Provide access to a copy of the **Complaints and Disputes Policy (Std 4 Fee Com Pol 001)**, and register on the **Complaints and Disputes Log (Std 4 Fee Com F005)**
- Conduct an investigation into the complaint, attempt to resolve and negotiate a resolution through a meeting between the Program Manager, the Complainant and other parties involved:
- Use the **Complaints and Disputes Meeting Agenda (Std 4 Fee Com F004)**
- Follow the **Complaints and Disputes Meeting Guidelines (Std 4 Fee Com F003)**
- Complete the **Complaints and Disputes Agreement (Std 4 Fee Com F001)**
- If resolved, Program Manager to:
 - Complete follow up on **Complaints and Disputes Log Std 4 Fee Com F005**
 - Document any opportunity to improve MEDA service through recording improvement in accordance with **Continuous Improvement Policy (Std 6 Ser Man Pol 005)**

The President of the Committee of Management (COM) will take over the Complaints resolution process when:

- It is not appropriate for the Program Manager to investigate the complaint;
- Complaints investigated by the Program Manager remains unresolved;
- Meeting to resolve the complaint will be arranged within 5 working days of initial contact;
- The following forms will be used in the meeting:
 - **Complaints and Disputes Meeting Agenda Std 4 Fee Com F004**
 - **Complaints and Disputes Meeting Guidelines Std 4 Fee Com F003**
 - **Complaints and Disputes Agreement Std 4 Fee Com F001**
- If resolved, the President to:
 - Complete follow up on **Complaints and Disputes Log Std 4 Fee Com F005**
 - Start the cycle of **Continuous Improvement**

Where the matter remains unresolved, and the Complainant wishes to take the matter further, MEDA will provide information and referral to the following services:

- Complaints Resolution and Referral Service (CRRS)
 - Free call: 1800 880 052
 - Email: crrs@pdw.org.au
 - Post: Locked Bag 2705, Strawberry Hills, NSW, 2012.
- NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission
 - Free call: 1800 035 554
 - Email: contactcentre@ndiscommission.gov.au
- Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service.
 - Free call: 1800 014 111
 - TTY Users: 133 677 then ask from 03 5229 2925 Telephone Typewriter Service
 - Email: legal@villamanta.org.au
- Office of the Public Advocate
 - 24 hour emergency service: 1300 309 337
 - TTY: 1300 305 612
 - Fax: 1300 787 510

Disability Services Commissioner
Ph. 1300 728 187

This procedure is supported by the **Complaints and Disputes Flow Chart for Consumers (Std 4 Fee Com FL001)**

6. Filing & Archiving

Records shall be retained in accordance with **File Retention and Archiving (Std 8 Age Man Pol 006)** and **Privacy, Dignity and Confidentiality (Std 1 Rights Pol 003)**.

Records to be archived shall be identified by item, description and date to be destroyed

7. Related Documents

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Consumers	Std 5 Ser Acc Pol 002
Privacy Dignity and Confidentiality Policy	Std 1 Rights Pol 003
File Retention and Archiving	Std 6 Ser Man Pol 006
Continuous Improvement	Std 6 Ser Man Pol 005
Staff Recruitment Employment and Training	Std 6 Ser Man Pol 015
Complaints and Disputes Agreement	Std 4 Fee Com F001
Complaints and Disputes Form	Std 4 Fee Com F002
Complaints and Disputes Meeting Guidelines	Std 4 Fee Com F003
Complaints and Disputes Meeting Agenda	Std 4 Fee Com F004
Complaints and Disputes Log	Std 4 Fee Com F005
Staff Orientation checklist	Std 6 Ser Man F018
Complaints and Disputes Flow Chart for Consumers	Std 4 Fee Com FL001
Consumer Handbook	Std 5 Ser Acc HB001
Volunteer Citizen Advocates Handbook	Std 6 Ser Man HB001