

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES POLICY**WHY?**

Thrive Group is committed to providing a framework, as detailed in the following procedure that addresses the way complaints and grievances will be handled in an equitable and efficient manner, in accordance with the *Education and Care Services National Law* and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations – 168*.

WHO?

This policy applies to the following persons:

- Approved Provider (Thrive)
- Thrive Management
- All Staff
- Family Day Care Educators, Assistants and Relief Educators
- Volunteers
- Students on professional experience placements
- Others involved in the provision of education and care

All of the above will be made aware of the requirements of this policy and procedure and this will be undertaken as a part of the registration/induction process.

WHAT?

Thrive is committed to establishing a culture that is mutually respectful and supportive of all stakeholders.

Where a complaint or grievance is raised, Thrive will have the issue examined and dealt with in a respectful, professional, transparent and confidential manner. In addition to the process being progressed in a timely manner, with the aim of resolving the issue as fairly and effectively as possible.

WHEN?

As per the *Education and Care Services National Law* and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*, a complaint or grievance is taken to mean a verbal or written expression of dissatisfaction about an aspect or aspects of the service provided by Thrive.

All complaints and grievances, whether raised by a child, family, parent, Educator, staff member or a community member will be dealt with promptly and in a professional and confidential manner. This will ensure procedural fairness, so that an impartial and proper investigation can be undertaken. Similarly, the process must be ethical, transparent, free from discrimination and harassment, fair and unbiased.

Thrive will provide all staff, Educators, Assistants and Relief Educators covered by this policy with the appropriate training so they are made aware of their responsibilities and obligations.

Thrive retains the sole discretion to reasonably vary, terminate or replace this policy from time to time. Thrive will consult before any amendments are made and will notify and train those to whom the amendments apply.

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES POLICY

All persons covered under the paragraph 'Who' that breach this policy may be subject to the appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure or removal from the workplace or termination of services (workers, other than employees and other persons in the workplace).

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES PROCEDURE**HOW?:**

A complaint or grievance may be made in person (verbally) or in writing (email or letter) or by telephone.

Thrive believes, where possible that complaints and grievances are best resolved as close to the source as possible. This simply means complainants are encouraged, in the first instance, to work through and discuss the issue with the individual or service to try and resolve the matter in a timely and respectful manner.

When raising or responding to a complaint/grievance, each person and all stakeholders are encouraged to speak respectfully; listen and acknowledge the other person; clarify the issue as clearly as possible; explore options for resolving the matter and ensure all parties are notified once the matter has been resolved (as is appropriate). Confidentiality must be maintained by all stakeholders throughout the process, as far as practicable.

Where it is not possible for the complainant to address the complaint directly with the other party, the matter should be directed to the Family Day Care Statewide Manager who will meet with the complainant to discuss the issue in detail and gather the details of the matter. As appropriate, Family Day Care Statewide Manager will then meet with the other party, advise them of the complaint/grievance and offer them the opportunity to reply.

Family Day Care Statewide Manager will then facilitate a meeting between both parties to support them in reaching a mutually acceptable outcome. Should either party not be satisfied with the outcome or the way the complaint was handled, they may lodge a written appeal which should outline their reasons for their dissatisfaction and state the grounds for a review (if applicable).

At this point, the General Manager and Director of Children's Services will review the procedure undertaken to ensure due process was followed. In the event of procedural and/or factual errors or new and additional information coming to light, a new complaints/grievance investigation may commence. Issues that remain under contention, may be referred to the Thrive Board.

Where a complaint or grievance relates to any of the following matters, the complainant will be requested to put their complaint in writing, detailing their concerns in regards to the complaint or contravention: the health, safety or well-being of a child (or children) has been compromised; the *Education and Care Services National Law* and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* have been contravened; a serious incident has or is occurring while a child was or is being educated and cared for (where the approved provider believes that physical or sexual abuse has occurred or is occurring). Notification of the complaint will be made to the Education and Care Unit.

Should the complainant not be willing to formalise the complaint pertaining to the above matters, Thrive will proceed and investigate the matter in line with the relevant policy and procedure.

Thrive will ensure the details of each complainant are documented and the issue will be investigated by the relevant Thrive Manager. All documentation including records of meetings, conversations, decisions and/or outcomes must be recorded in a clear, concise, thorough and factual manner. These records will only be shared with those who have a need to know or as required by legislation and will be stored in a confidential and secure manner.

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES PROCEDURE

Prevention:

Thrive will implement preventative measures and regularly review these to reduce the likelihood of issues arising or escalating. These measures may include but are not limited to:

The implementation of supportive communication strategies.

Providing training for all Thrive staff that supports a culture of open and positive communication.

Thrive staff being attuned to the needs of families and aware of potential concerns before they escalate or become a complaint.

Listening to, documenting and following up on issues raised by children, families and other stakeholders in a timely and sensitive manner.

Implementing transparent, clear information systems to minimise misunderstandings of service practice.

Regularly seeking family feedback about service provision via surveys, open discussion and post placement follow ups.

Where a grievance or complaint is raised, ensure they are investigated and documented in a timely mannerism.

Review and Evaluation:

The framework provided in this procedure will continually inform practices in relation to dealing with complaints and grievances in a professional and confidential manner. All complaints/grievances will be handled in a transparent, sensitive and prompt manner.

The Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedure will be reviewed regularly or as required. Thrive will also regularly review and analyse the frequency, number and nature of complaints and grievances, as a measure of performance and means of identifying continuous improvement initiatives.

Where a conflict of interest arises, an alternate arrangement for dealing with complaints/grievances may be sought, if this is practicable to do so.

Confidentiality:

Thrive will ensure all records are maintained in a confidential manner in line with legislative requirements. This will include, but is not limited to: ensuring documentation is maintained in a secure manner; documentation is only accessed by those who have a legitimate need to access and all persons associated with the education and care of children at Thrive will maintain confidentiality at all times.

Personal information will not be used for any purpose, other than what it was reasonably intended for (unless required by law). Personal information will not be disclosed to any person who is not authorised to have the information.

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES PROCEDURE

BREACH OF THE PROCEDURE

Any breach of this procedure may result in disciplinary action including, but not limited to, termination of employment or registration.

Thrive retains the sole discretion to reasonably vary, terminate or replace this procedure from time to time. Thrive will consult before any amendments are made and will notify and train those to whom the amendments apply.