

COMPLAINTS POLICY

WHY?

Thrive Group Tasmania is committed to establishing a culture of mutual respect and open communication where the expression of opinions is encouraged.

In this context, Thrive respects the right of individuals to express criticism of, or to complain about service provisions.

Thrive recognises that there will be occasions when issues arise concerning aspects of service delivery or operation. Similarly, constructive feedback and complaints can help inform improvements to the service and provide further opportunities for review and reflection. The way in which complaints are handled will determine the service's ongoing relationship with the parties involved.

Thrive will develop mechanisms for people to raise issues when they are dissatisfied with the service provision. This will include a complaints management system which is efficient, fair and professional.

WHO?

This policy applies to families, staff and Educators enrolled with, or working in the following Thrive Children's Services:

- Early Learning Services
- Outside School Hours Care Services
- Family Day Care Services
- Business Services

WHAT?

Complaints

A verbal or written expression of dissatisfaction about an aspect or aspects of the service provision. Complaints may range from being trivial in nature to very serious allegations. All complaints are important and require prompt follow up. Complaints may be received from families, Educators, staff, children or community members.

Making a Complaint

Complaints can be made in person, by phone, email, or post, or through online feedback.

Responsibility for Dealing with Complaints

Thrive's service provider Person with Management and Control or Person with day-to-day Charge have immediate responsibility.

The Thrive appointed Person with Management and Control may also be involved in the complaints handling process, depending on the severity of the allegations.

Delegated staff may deal with issues/complaints of a lower level or those not involving breaches.

Guiding Principles

The following principles underpin Thrive's complaints management process: procedural fairness and natural justice; ethical conduct; transparency and equity; and privacy and confidentiality.

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Review and Evaluation

Thrive complaints handling procedures will be reviewed following their use and in accordance with the policy review cycle.

Thrive will also regularly analyse the number, frequency and nature of complaints received as a measure of performance and means of identifying areas of improvement.

HOW?

Please refer to the Complaints Procedure (following this Policy).

WHEN?

Individuals have the right to express criticism of, or complain about service provisions at any time.

Thrive will implement the organisational complaint handling procedures when individuals have been unable to satisfactorily resolve an issue independently or when it is not possible/appropriate for such action to have occurred or when a complainant feels unable to take such action.

The guiding principles will continually inform complaint management practices.

Complaints will be handled in a thorough, sensitive and prompt manner at all times.

Complaints handling procedures will be regularly reviewed and complaints data will be regularly analysed.

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.

All persons covered under the paragraph 'Who' who 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 PROCEDURE**HOW?**

Thrive will ensure:

All families, staff and Educators:

- Are advised of Thrive's Complaints Policy and Procedure at the time of enrolment/registration or employment.
- Have ready access to the full policy in hard copy form at Thrive head office and individual service premises.
- Are aware of who they may direct complaints to – this information will be displayed and included in the Family Handbook and staff/Educator induction material.
- Have access to contact details for the Regulatory Authority – State Education and Care Unit.

All complaints are handled in a prompt and professional manner.

All complaints documentation is factual and thorough. It is also only shared with those who have a need to know or those assisting with the complaint handling process. This documentation must be stored in a confidential and secure manner.

If any conflict of interest arises an alternate arrangement for dealing with the complaint will be sought.

All notification complaints will be reported to the Regulatory Authority within twenty-four hours of the complaint being received.

Complainants will have a right of appeal/review against any action or decision.

Specific

Thrive believes complaints are best resolved as close to the source as possible and complainants will be encouraged, in the first instance, to work through the issue independently with the individual and/or the specific service.

Where this is not possible or appropriate, or has been unsuccessfully tried, or the complainant does not feel comfortable in doing this, Thrive will follow up on the complainant's behalf. The nature or the severity of the complaint will determine how the complaint is handled.

Tier One

Where a complaint is not in breach of regulations, standards, conditions of licensing or registration, or Thrive policies: Staff members will endeavour to resolve the complaint immediately between the parties concerned. If the complainant does not want formal follow up with the person who the complaint has been made, a general approach will be undertaken. This may involve staff discussing the issue with an Educator or parent in general terms to improve the issue/s/practices.

Tier Two

Where a complaint is in breach of regulations, standards, conditions of licensing or registration, or Thrive policies: Matters will be referred immediately to the Person with day-to-day Management or relevant Person with Management and Control.

The complainant will be asked to put their complaint in writing.

In the event the complainant is not willing to formalise the complaint, staff will be required to investigate any breaches. The immediate Person with day-to-day Charge will record the complaint in writing. The complainant will be advised accordingly.

Details of the complaint will be documented and the issue will be investigated by the Person with day-to-day Management or Person with Management and Control.

The investigation may include meeting with the complainant to discuss in more details and gather additional information. It will also include meeting with the person about whom the allegations have been made, to provide this person with details about the complaint and provide them with the right of reply opportunity.

Where a Complaint is made by a Child

Every endeavour will be made to resolve the complaint quickly.

Staff/Educators will clarify with the child, the nature of his/her complaint; acknowledge the child's issues; explore options for resolving the matter and whether it will involve any assistance from additional staff members, the child's parents and/or other support people.

If the complaint involves breaches to licensing, policy or standards, a thorough investigation will be undertaken by the relevant persons with Management and Control or day-to-day Charge. All parties concerned will be notified of the process of the investigation and the outcomes of the same.

Avenues of Review and Appeal

Should any party bringing forward or responding to a complaint not be satisfied with the outcome of an investigation, he/she is able to lodge an appeal in writing, stating the grounds for such a review.

The appointed Person with Management and Control will review the complaint handling procedure to ensure the process has been followed.

In the event of procedural and/or factual errors or new additional information coming to hand, a new complaints investigation may commence. Issues under contention may be referred to the Thrive Board.

Prevention

Preventative measures will be in place to advert issues arising or escalating. For example:

- Regularly seeking family feedback about service provision via surveys, open discussion and post placement follow up.
- Having transparent, clear information systems to minimise misunderstanding of service practices.

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- Being attuned to the needs of families and being aware of potential concerns before they escalate into complaints.
- Championing a culture of open and positive communication.
- Offering training around effective communication and negotiation skills.

These Procedures relate to legislation as described in the Complaints Policy.

BREACH OF THE PROCEDURE

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

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