



Program and Service Complaints Policy and Procedure

Alcohol and Drug Foundation

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Our Purpose

To prevent and minimise the harm caused by alcohol and other drugs in Australia.

Our Mission

We work in partnership with others to support and create evidence-based policies and practice that prevent and minimise the harm caused by alcohol and other drugs.

For further information about the Alcohol & Drug Foundations vision and purpose, visit our website at <http://adf.org.au/about-adf/our-purpose-mission-focus/>

Policy Purpose

The ADFs Program and Service Complaints Policy & Procedures are designed to provide partners, stakeholders and customers with a clear process that enables people to register concerns and complaints about the ADF.

This includes programs, projects, products and individual behaviour. The document provides for prompt, effective, respectful and timely responses to complaints raised.

Your comments are very important to us as they can help us improve our programs and services.

We appreciate any type of feedback, whether positive or negative to help us review and improve the way we work with our communities and partners.

Scope

This policy applies to partners, stakeholders and consumers who are involved in ADF projects, programs and/or utilise ADF products. It is to be applied wherever people wish to register a complaint.

Our policy covers complaints about:

- the standard and quality of service
- the behaviour of our staff or providers in delivering that service
- any action, or lack of action, by our staff or others engaged on ADF business

What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not. A complaint may be about any act, omission, situation or decision that you think is unfair, discriminatory or unjustified. This includes interpersonal behaviour, and it also includes conflicts of interest and respect for intellectual property. Complaints can be about unsatisfactory products and services.

Complaints can be about problems concerning the public, clients or community members regarding the ADF, programs or staff that have been raised formally and have not been resolved through discussion with the relevant people involved. These complaints could include:

- the manner in which a service or program has been provided;
- disagreement with procedures or decisions made by ADF about the client's grant requests or participation in the service or program;
- failure of ADF to provide a service or program, or lack of responsiveness to a request;
- dissatisfaction with the actions of ADF employees;
- disagreement between members of a committee, team or group representing the ADF.

What's not included in this Policy

This policy does not apply to the following:

- ADF staff members who may have a matter of concern (a potential "grievance") in relation to their employment or workplace in which case the Staff Grievance Resolution Policy applies.
- Organisational (ADF) Human Resources policy and procedures as they relate to staff performance and performance management.
- Problems with sharing of organisational intellectual property or information that is confidential or personal in nature.

How do Complaints get resolved?

Confidential

Only the people directly involved in making or investigating a complaint will have access to information about the complaint.

Impartial

Both sides of the complaint or grievance will have an opportunity to detail and respond to the complaint. No assumptions will be made and no action will be taken until all relevant information has been collected and assessed.

Free From Repercussions

No service, program or product will be impacted by the complaints process. Unless the complainant requests such action to be taken and the ADF receives a complaint.

Timely

All complaints will be dealt with as quickly as possible. The ADF will aim to resolve all complaints within 4 weeks. In exceptional circumstances a complaint may require additional time to resolve, however, all relevant parties will be informed of developments.

Record keeping

- Accurate documentation of complaints will be maintained by the ADF, including the staff member receiving the complaint or assisting with the lodgement of the complaint and the staff member responsible for reviewing the complaint.
- The ADF will review feedback and examples of good practice on a three monthly basis with a view to celebrating success and improving program quality and effectiveness.

Rights & obligations

The aim of any complaint or grievance process is to achieve resolution. The complaints process should not be used to facilitate an escalation of interpersonal conflict, nor as a means to create difficulties for a worker or work unit. The assumption is that everybody involved in the resolution of a grievance or complaint will act to ensure the best outcome.

The ADF is also keen to highlight and celebrate effective work that aligns with the ADF's values.

Complaints Procedure:

Stage 1: Advice and Local Resolution

The ADF supports the empowerment of stakeholders and partners to resolve issues locally and as quickly and efficiently as possible. Where possible, it is encouraged the concern or complaint be resolved with the person directly. This is often the most effective way to address and resolve a concern or complaint.

When discussing it with the person, the complainant should clearly state the unacceptable behaviour experienced, or product deficiency. Explain why it is a problem and ask that it does not continue or specify an acceptable solution.

Stage 2: Conciliation/negotiation

Conciliation is a process in which parties to a dispute, with the assistance of a neutral third party, identify their respective concerns and any issues in the dispute with a view of reaching an agreed solution, to enable them to continue to collaborate in a manner acceptable to both. If the grievance reaches this stage, the State Manager should be advised and approve of the nominated third party.

The conciliation process will actively encourage the parties to reach an agreement but will not make a decision on the concerns.

Information and support provided by the delegated person* may include:

- Explaining ADF's policy on complaint & feedback;
- Exploring possible strategies which the person might use to resolve the concern;
- Providing information about other options including the right to complain to a relevant external body and
- Providing support to the person until the matter is concluded, under these procedures.

Stage 3: Investigation and Determination

If discussion, negotiation or conciliation fails to produce a resolution, then the matter may have to proceed to a formal review or investigation.

This means:

- The complainant will need to provide a signed, written statement, describing the complaint, and listing any evidence to support the grievance. The complainant should also specify the resolution they are seeking.
- The complainant's name and the substance of the grievance will be made available to the person(s) they have made the complaint against.
- Once a statement of complaint has been received, the appropriate ADF employee (or their nominee) will conduct an investigation, and then make a determination. This determination will be communicated to the complainant, and to the person(s) complained about within 10 working days of receiving the complaint with the aim of completing the whole process within 4 weeks.
- Depending on the level and complexity of complaint.

Appeals

If either party believes that the determination does not have merit, they may appeal within 7 working days of receiving advice of the decision to the State Manager or their delegate.

Once notified, the State Manager (or delegate) will conduct a review of the procedure followed, and the recommendations issued. They will then make a final determination on the issue. Once this determination is made, the person who has made the appeal will be notified of the outcome. This determination will be final.

Outcomes

The outcomes of this procedure will depend on the nature of the complaint, its severity and what is deemed appropriate in the relevant circumstances.

Where the investigation process reveals that a person has engaged in criminal behaviour the appropriate authorities will be informed.

Appendix 1:
ADF Feedback & Complaints Flowchart

