

Client Complaints, Feedback and Grievances Policy

1. Purpose

The Art of Expression believes that all complaints, feedback, and grievances provided by our Clients are an important opportunity to improve the quality of our services. Through this Policy The Art of Expression ensures that our Clients, their families, carers, advocates and members of the public are aware of their right to complain and the procedure to follow to lodge their complaint, feedback or grievance. All complaints, feedback, and grievances shall be treated confidentially, where possible, and The Art of Expression shall take all reasonable measures to ensure complainants are protected from reprisals and/or victimisation.

2. Policy Statement

1. The Art of Expression understands and supports person-centred and family-centred approaches to delivery of services and recognises the central role of families in peoples' lives. This approach may include inputs and evaluations from families, friends and carers. Feedback received assists continuous improvement and contributes towards enhancing service delivery.
2. The Art of Expression is committed to working collaboratively together with Clients to continue to deliver a high standard of services that meet the needs of Clients and their families and ensures that the Client participates fully in their family and community life.
3. When managing complaints The Art of Expression shall take a focus on identification of risk and the prevention of errors in order to reduce the potential dissatisfaction and harm to Clients.
4. The Art of Expression shall give all Clients access to lodging complaints, feedback, and grievances without fear of retribution or victimisation and shall ensure that all received complaints, feedback, and grievances are considered, appropriately referred and actioned upon.
5. The Art of Expression shall engage employees and contractors that have the right skills and training to meet the standards prescribed by this Policy.

3. Scope

This Policy applies to all employees, volunteers and contractors of The Art of Expression and shall be implemented with all Clients of The Art of Expression.

4. Definitions

1. **Informed consent** means permission an individual gives to sharing information, either implied or explicit, after they have demonstrated that they understand the purpose of the request and the likely outcomes of that consent.
2. Any reference to a **Person-centred Approach** also includes family-centred approach when considered in relation to providing services to children.
3. Any reference to **Feedback** also means a reference to a complaint, a grievance or a dispute.

5. Communication

1. This Policy shall be communicated to existing Clients on its commencement and to new Clients on the commencement of their service.
2. This Policy shall be communicated to all staff of The Art of Expression on its commencement and to new staff members on the commencement of their employment in compliance with the Recruitment, Induction and Training Policy.
3. This Policy shall be read in conjunction with:
 - Alcohol and Drugs in the Workplace Policy;
 - Client Services Governance Policy;
 - Communication, Confidentiality and Privacy Policy;
 - Duty of Care and Incident Management Policy;
 - Performance Management and Disciplinary Policy;
 - Recruitment, Induction and Training Policy;
 - Risk Management Policy;
 - Vulnerable Persons Policy.
4. This Policy is available in easy read and pictorial format.

Policy and Procedures

6. Quality Assurance

1. The Art of Expression shall deliver services in accordance with its lawful obligations, rules and regulations that set standards such as:
 - Support for Clients to meet their aspirations and to participate in the community;
 - Respect for the Clients' right to choose;
 - Non-Discrimination;
 - Culture of Respect.
2. All staff of The Art of Expression shall be subject to regular performance reviews as indicated in Performance Management and Disciplinary Policy which shall support the practice of providing feedback and goal setting for continuous improvement.
3. Individual Client programs developed for each Client in accordance to the Individual Programs Policy shall be reviewed at least annually, allowing for feedback and amendments to match the Client's wishes.
4. This Policy shall be read in consultation with Code of Conduct and Ethical Guidelines for each discipline in which staff is employed at The Art of Expression. Health Practitioners have a responsibility to be familiar with their discipline specific Code of Conduct and Ethical Guidelines and to comply with the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, where appropriate. The Code of Conduct and Ethical Guidelines outline professional standards and guidelines to support practitioners in providing high quality healthcare to Clients.
5. All unregistered health practitioners employed or otherwise working for The Art of Expression are required to comply with the Code of Conduct for Certain Health Workers which promotes safety and quality in health services for those not covered by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulatory Agency.
6. Where a health practitioner has a serious concern about the treatment provided by another health practitioner the matter shall be referred to the [Health and Community Services Complaint Commissioner](#) and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulatory Authority (AHPRA) in accordance with the Code of Conduct in addition to the internal reporting

requirements of The Art of Expression as outlined in the Duty of Care and Incident Management Policy.

7. Information received through Client Feedback and surveys shall be compiled and analysed for themes and trends on the Complaint and Feedback Register.
8. The Art of Expression schedules and implements 4 Planning Days every year whereby staff get together and discuss and action how to better the service based on client and staff feedback. The practice is accountable to regular self-assessment and development. Each Planning Day has a Planning Day Agenda with actions required by each staff member to complete by the next Planning Day. This way, The Art of Expression completes a regular self-assessment every year, including information about service improvements and new additions made during the past 12 months as well as providing information for the next 3-12 months.

7. Procedure

1. The Art of Expression shall provide an Easy Read and Pictorial copy of this Policy to all Clients on intake.
2. Clients of The Art of Expression as well as their family member, carer, advocate, guardian or other nominee have a right to lodge their feedback, complaint, grievance or dispute about the services or the way they are delivered at any time during or after receiving services using any available means for lodging this Feedback.
3. A complaint can be made by:
 - Face-to-face verbal communication to the person delivering services or to the managers;
 - Telephone call; 0404757864
 - Email; info@theartofexpression.com.au
 - Any Client surveys;
 - Filling in a Client Feedback form on our website:
<https://theartofexpression.com.au/review>
 - Written communications to the Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner.
4. Complaints about abuse or neglect can also be made to the National Abuse and Neglect Hotline on 1800 880 052.
5. If complaints are not resolved within The Art of Expression they can also be made to the NDIS Commissioner by email or phone 1800 035 544 and the NDIA 1800 800 110.
6. Complaints can also be made anonymously to the NDIS Commissioner by email or phone 1800 035 544 and the NDIA 1800 800 110.
7. For the purpose of achieving the best outcome possible Clients are encouraged to include the following information in their Feedback:
 - Detailed description of the matter of the Feedback: persons involved, location, date, time, sequence of events and their results;
 - Actions that the Client would like The Art of Expression to take to resolve the complaint;
 - Preferred means of communication between the Client and The Art of Expression in regard to the Feedback, investigations and actions taken.
8. The staff member receiving the Feedback shall document in writing any complaint that is received verbally.

9. Received Feedback shall be acknowledged to the Client by phone or in writing as appropriate and information shall be provided on the staff member responsible for handling it.
10. The Art of Expression shall respond promptly and fairly to any Complaint/Feedback requiring follow-up action or investigation, aiming to provide an outcome within 2 weeks.
11. The Art of Expression shall take reasonable action to attempt to resolve any complaints, grievances or disputes by consulting with Clients, staff and management.
12. Where such action is not sufficient the matter shall be referred to the Health and Community Services and Complaints Commissioner (Unregistered Practitioners).
13. Management of complaints shall be conducted in a confidential and courteous manner according to the Communication, Confidentiality and Privacy Policy without any form of retribution against the Client.
14. Staff issues or positive feedback shall be addressed with the staff members in question promptly to encourage everyday practice reflection and self-development.
15. Where resolution provides for an increase in service offerings, these shall be considered against budget and staff expertise. Partnerships with other organisations may provide for an increased service offering where budget and expertise do not allow The Art of Expression to further expand on the services offered.

8. Advocacy

1. Clients have the right to have an advocate or representative to assist them in making a complaint or providing feedback.
2. Where a client expresses a wish for an advocate or representative to assist them, The Art of Expression shall assist the client in accessing and contacting an advocate. Further information is available here: <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/participants/disability-advocacy>. Clients may also use the Disability Advocacy Finder available here: <https://disabilityadvocacyfinder.dss.gov.au/disability/ndap/>
3. There may be occasions where Clients are not comfortable requesting assistance from The Art of Expression to provide information on advocates or representatives. Further information on making complaints, rights and processes can be found on the NDIS website: <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/about/complaints>
4. Advocates and representatives can and should be involved in the management of a complaint at the request of the client.

9. Dispute Resolution

1. Where a Client is not satisfied with the outcome of the Complaints management process, they may seek external representation to assist with the resolution of complaints.
2. The Health and Community Services Complaints Office is an independent Statutory Authority providing an impartial resolution service for complaints relating to health and disability services provided in South Australia.
3. Staff may assist Clients in accessing and contacting the Health and Community Services Complaints Office by accessing their website on www.hcsc.sa.gov.au.

10. Investigations

1. Not all feedback, complaints, disputes or grievances will require an investigation.
2. Where an investigation is necessary, it shall be undertaken in accordance with the provisions of the internal Performance Management and Disciplinary Policy (where applicable), the Principles of Natural Justice and Procedural Fairness and shall follow the process:
 - Collect evidence (this may involve direct observation, collation of documentation relating to the complaint, interviews with parties to the complaint, etc.);
 - Assemble and consider the evidence;
 - Compare the findings with relevant standards, protocols or guidelines, whether national or local, to establish the facts, draw conclusions about causation and make recommendations for actions to minimise risk;
 - Develop an improvement strategy with prioritised actions, responsibilities, timescales and strategies for measuring the effectiveness of actions;
 - Implement the improvement strategy and track progress, including the effectiveness of actions.
3. The investigation process shall be tailored to the Client's needs and/or disability.
4. Where possible and appropriate the Client shall be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and its outcome and offered support during this process.
5. Incidents that require reporting shall be reported promptly to the relevant authorities such as the Department of Human Services, SA Police, etc. as outlined in the Duty of Care and Incident Management Policy and Communication, Confidentiality and Privacy Policy.

11. Documentation

1. Details of the Feedback, investigations, reports and outcomes shall be recorded and managed in a confidential manner and stored securely in accordance with Communication, Confidentiality and Privacy Policy and a Complaints and Feedback Register maintained.
2. Records shall contain:
 - Details of the initial Feedback received from the Client;
 - Communications with the Client regarding the matter;
 - Staff members responsible for addressing the matter;
 - Investigations;
 - Actions taken;
 - Outcome and whether and how the outcome was reported to the relevant authorities and parties.

12. Mandatory Notification

1. In addition to anything contained in other sections of this Policy The Art of Expression recognises that information may be released to authorities in situations where a child is at risk following the Information Sharing Guidelines for Promoting Safety and Wellbeing.
2. All employees, directors and volunteers of The Art of Expression are mandated notifiers. There are additional responsibilities for mandated notifiers in relation to Responding and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect.
3. Duty of Care may not necessarily be exhausted by a mandated notifier by notifying. Further information shall be sought from the Department for Education and Child Development.

13. Documents

- Client Feedback and Complaints Form;
- Complaints and Feedback Register.

14. References

1. External:

- Code of Conduct for Certain Health Care Workers;
- [Health and Community Services Complaint Commissioner](#);
- Health Practitioner Regulation National Law;
- Information Sharing Guidelines for Promoting Safety and Wellbeing.

2. Internal:

- Alcohol and Drugs in the Workplace Policy;
- Client Services Governance Policy;
- Communication, Confidentiality and Privacy Policy;
- Duty of Care and Incident Management Policy;
- Performance Management and Disciplinary Policy;
- Recruitment, Induction and Training Policy;
- Risk Management Policy;
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