



HABITAT FOR HUMANITY ONTARIO GATEWAY NORTH
Title: **Complaints**
Policy Type: Governance
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Policy # GV-15

COMPLAINTS

INTENT

Habitat for Humanity Ontario Gateway North recognizes that from time-to-time there will be complaints about the organization or its employees. Habitat for Humanity Ontario Gateway North wants to ensure individuals with complaints are able to voice their concerns, but that they should do so through proper channels of communication. This policy applies to complaints received by Habitat for Humanity Ontario Gateway about our activities, programs, services, staff or volunteers.

POLICY

Definition: A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the service, actions, or lack of action by Habitat for Humanity Ontario Gateway North as an organization or a staff member or volunteer acting on behalf of Habitat for Humanity Ontario Gateway North.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- perceived failure to do something agreed upon;
- failure to observe policy or procedures;
- error made by a staff member/volunteer; or
- unfair or discourteous actions/statements by staff member/volunteer;

Anyone personally affected can complain and their complaint will be reviewed in accordance with this procedure.

Guiding Principles

- It is in the interest of all parties that complaints are dealt with promptly and resolved as quickly as possible.
- Review of complaints is fair, impartial and respectful to all parties.
- Complainants are advised of their options to escalate their complaint to a more senior staff person if they are dissatisfied with treatment or outcome.
- Complainants are provided clear and understandable reasons for decisions relating to complaints.
- Updates are provided to complainants during review processes.

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- Complaints are used to assist in improving services, policies and procedures.

Complaint Receipt and Handling

A complaint may be received verbally (by phone or in person) or in writing (by mail, fax, email). An employee or volunteer who receives a complaint should first determine the proper person to handle it. This will generally be the person who has the primary relationship with the complainant or has the specific knowledge that is needed to resolve the problem. It is the responsibility of the person who receives the complaint to either resolve it or transfer it to another person who can resolve it. If the complaint is transferred, the recipient must acknowledge to the transferor that he/she has received it and will act on it.

The person who initially receives the complaint should acknowledge to the complainant that the complaint has been received and will be acted on either by him/herself or another employee. If a timeframe for action can be determined, that should be included in the acknowledgement. Basic contact information including name, phone number and email address should immediately be recorded.

Resolving the Complaint

Every effort should be made to resolve complaints received in a timely fashion. When receiving a verbal complaint, staff should listen and seek to understand the complaint, and may attempt to resolve it immediately. Complaints received in writing should be acknowledged within 2 business days and staff should attempt to resolve the matter within 10 business days.

Where a complaint cannot be easily resolved, it should be escalated to the Chief Operating Officer. If the Chief Operating Officer cannot resolve the complaint, it will be escalated to the CEO. If the complaint is about the CEO, it will be handled by the Executive Committee. Complainants should be kept informed of the status of their complaint. Every attempt should be made to resolve escalated complaints within an additional 10 business days so that all complaints are resolved within a month of having been received.

Documenting the Complaint

It is necessary to keep a record of any complaint that involves a dispute over money as well as any complaint that cannot be resolved immediately (on the same day it is received). Information about such complaints must be recorded on an incident report form. Information recorded on the form should include a description of the complaint, who handled it, what was done to resolve the complaint, timeframe, and a description of the resolution.

A summary of the complaints received including number and type will be reported to Habitat for Humanity Ontario Gateway North's Board of Directors annually.

RESPONSIBILITY

All staff and volunteers are responsible for handling complaints appropriately.

RATIONALE

This policy explains Habitat for Humanity Ontario Gateway North's underlying approach to external stakeholder complaints as part of an overall crisis and risk management process. It outlines key guidelines and responsibilities of the complaint process, and identifies the main reporting procedures. The policy is reviewed and amended at least every two years, as required.