



Formal Complaint Feedback Process

Policy

A complaints/feedback process is an important part of providing quality support that is responsive to people's needs and that supports continuous improvement in service delivery. The information received through a complaints/feedback process can assist Addus to take steps to better support individuals and/or improve administrative practices.

Definitions:

- a. "Feedback" may be positive or negative (including complaints) and is related to the services and/or supports that are provided by a service agency. Feedback may be solicited (such as information and comments collected through a satisfaction survey or a comment box) or unsolicited (such as a letter from a person or family member about the services and supports that the agency provides). Feedback may be formal (like the survey or letter noted above) or informal (such as a verbal complaint expressed to a staff person).

Addus formally elicits feedback from stakeholders on a regular basis as follows:

- As part of each participants annual review process (ICAPS)
- Annual Quality Assurance Reviews
- As part of the Addus Newsletters to families and community.
- In satisfaction surveys to families/participants, community and staff.

Definitions:

Problem

A situation, matter, or person that presents difficulty with regard to day-to-day living, but can be readily resolved and may be a onetime issue.

Concern

An on-going issue which causes worry and may require help from someone else.

Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction: This may come as a result of unresolved problems or concerns.

- b. "Complaint" is an expression of dissatisfaction related to the services and/or supports that are provided by a service agency. A complaint may be expressed by a person with a developmental disability who is receiving services and supports from the service agency, or a person acting on their behalf, or by the general public, regarding the services and supports that are provided by the service agency. A complaint may be made formally (such as a letter written to the agency) or informally (such as a verbal complaint

expressed to a staff person). A complaint does not include feedback on matters unrelated to the agency and the services and supports that it provides.

Addus takes all complaints seriously, and review and investigate all matter. Addus is not however, obligated to apply the process of complaints that it judges to be vexatious, frivolous, personal in nature, or not made in good faith. However, at its own discretion the agency may address complaints of this nature.

Conditions:

Addus recognizes the need for and the benefit of accountability to our participants, families and to the general public.

The complaints process must be accessible to all persons. The following criteria will be considered:

. For example, the use of plain language, audio, in person when it will help the person served communicate more effectively;

- Forms used in the complaints process are to be in a simple, straightforward format;
- By request, a person who has a disability or is from any ethnic or racial minority can rely on the services of an interpreter/translator at any stage throughout the complaints process;
- Any meetings forming part of the complaints process shall be held in a place that is accessible to those who are mobility restricted.

- Complainants have the right to be accompanied at all stages in the complaints process by an advocate or support person;

- Complainants have a right to complain as recipients of services. They should not fear reprisals as a result of initiating a complaint;

- Staff and persons served will be encouraged and will have the opportunity to respond to complaints and/or correct the issue at hand locally before proceeding to a further stage in the complaints process. This does not apply in situations in the case of alleged, suspected or witnessed abuse that may constitute a criminal offense. An employee has the obligation to report immediately to the Police as required by Ontario Regulation 200/10 regarding quality assurance measures made under the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2009 and as per Addus's Policy on Abuse; and/or

.Reported to the Ministry as a serious occurrence through the ministry's serious occurrence reporting process (based on the nature of the complaint/feedback);

- The period of time from the initial complaint to a formal response to the complainant shall not exceed two weeks.

Complaints Procedure

- Persons served will be informed of our procedures regarding complaints about agency programs or services;
- Complaints from persons served, families or members of the community regarding the actions or decisions of any Addus employee, service or program shall be reported to the Program Manager who shall document the complaint in writing and submit it to the Executive Director within 48 hours of the complaint being made;
- The Program Manager shall be responsible for maintaining a record of all complaints made by clients, families or members of the community, and for ensuring appropriate resolution of all complaints. The Program Manager shall inform the appropriate authority about any complaints made regarding Addus's services as appropriate;
- Wherever possible, complaints should be dealt with at the source, following the steps outlined in Addus's "conflict resolution" procedure. If the complaint cannot be dealt with to satisfaction at the source, then the Executive Director shall designate a third party who will have responsibility for hearing, reviewing and resolving the complaint. The designated third party should not have a direct line of responsibility over the area, person or subject of the complaint;
- If the complaint is still not resolved to satisfaction, then the Executive Director shall direct the complainant to an appropriate outside source, such as the Ministry of Community and Social Services, or Ontario Human Rights Commission or Ombudsman Ontario;
- On an annual basis, the Executive Director will review all formal complaints to determine trends, areas needing performance improvement, and actions to be taken, if applicable. This will also be reviewed by the Addus Quality and Risk Committee and Board of Directors. Addus will also share information about its complaints/feedback process and/or about complaints/feedback, as part of the ministry's risk assessment process, upon request by the ministry.

Conflicts are a natural consequence of human interaction and decision-making. It is the process for resolving conflicts that determines whether conflicts lead to confrontations and arguments or to peaceful resolution. We should all expect to run into difficulties and all of us are at some stage in learning about how to resolve our problems. Our abilities to assert ourselves, communicate effectively and listen to criticism will differ for each of us - which can create another layer of conflict.

Any effective conflict resolution process is one based on principles of administrative fairness and respect.

These principles include:

- the right to be heard;
- the right to participate in decisions that affect you;
- the right to an impartial decision based on relevant information;
- the right to receive clear, complete and appropriate reasons for a decision;
- the right to an impartial review of a decision you believe to be unreasonable or unfair;
- the right to a conflict resolution procedure which is accessible, flexible, timely and easy to use;
- the right to obtain all relevant information that has led to the decision being disputed;
- the right to a conflict resolution procedure which begins closest to where the conflict originated,

with those most affected involved in the decision-making process;

- the right to a conflict resolution procedure which has a built-in mechanism to protect against retribution.

Conflict Resolution Guidelines

For a person served to effectively participate in decisions that affect him or her they may require assistance or support from another person. The conflict resolution process includes the right of a person served to be accompanied and supported by a family member, friend advocate, support person or interpreter/translator at any and all of the steps in the conflict resolution process.

Appropriate reasons for a decision affecting persons served must be given. The reasons must address the person's concerns and be comprehensible to him/her. The reasons must be in writing or recorded in an alternate format that is accessible to the person, as directed by them.

It is Addus's obligation to inform the persons served that there is a conflict resolution process regarding matters that concern the working conditions, health or safety of persons served. Persons served or their advocates must be told that they are entitled to seek a review of any decision [which includes the lack of a decision] if they believe the decision or failure to make a decision to be unfair or unreasonable. All persons served and where appropriate their family member, will receive a copy of the conflict resolution procedures when they begin to receive services from Addus.

Conflict resolution procedures must be accessible to all persons. The following criteria are examples of what is meant by accessible:

- The use of plain language where appropriate;
- All forms used in the appeal procedure are to be in a simple, straight-forward format;
- By request, a person who has a disability or is from any ethnic or racial minority can rely on the services of an interpreter/translator at any stage throughout the appeal procedure;
- Any meetings or hearings forming part of the appeal procedure shall be held in a place that is accessible to those who are mobility restricted;
- Conflict resolution processes must be flexible and timely. A variety of conflict resolution options should be provided, including mediation, internal review and external appeal procedures;
- There will be no reprisals because a person served or other stakeholders have initiated a conflict resolution process. Addus upholds this right and will train staff to respond appropriately and professionally to feedback and complaints. If there is evidence of retribution against persons who have exercised their right to appeal, Addus will take steps immediately to remedy the situation;
- Persons served appealing a decision are entitled to an impartial review. Our policy is to ensure a review free of bias. That means that the employee responsible for making a decision at any stage in the appeal process must disassociate him/herself from participating in the decision at

the next level of appeal. The employee should declare the conflict immediately, so as to avoid the perception that the decision-making process is not objective. A conflict of interest is defined as a situation in which a person has a private or personnel interest sufficient to appear to influence the objective exercise of his or her official duties as an employee. Some examples of types of conflict include financial, political, or personnel. This would not preclude them from providing information to those responsible for the decision at the next level;

- Procedures must be sensitive about the privacy needs of individuals. Respecting everyone's right to privacy may also enhance the opportunity for early resolution;
- The conflict resolution process must be an open and honest one that finds a balance between privacy and the right to know and participate.

Conflict Resolution Procedure

Ensuring the complainant knows the issue is a **COMPLAINT**. That this is not a **PROBLEM**. That it is not a **CONCERN**.

1. Talk with the person involved. You can bring a friend, family member or advocate to help you. Try to find a way to come to an agreement. If this does not resolve the problem within two days, go to the next step.
2. Talk with the supervisor of your program. Call or write a note to the supervisor. The supervisor will respond to your concern with 24 hours by setting up a time to discuss the problem. If the problem has not been resolved within seven days, go to the next step.
3. Talk with the manager of your program. The manager will talk to the person served or family member and to the other person involved to review the situation. They will ask you what you think needs to be done to resolve the situation. They will recommend a solution within seven days. If this does resolve the problem the manager will refer the issue to the Executive Director.
4. The Executive Director will talk to the person served and/or family member, friend or advocate and to the other person involved to discuss the issue and will issue a decision in writing within seven days. If it is required the Executive Director will ensure the decision is written in plain language or given to the person served in a manner he/she understands.
5. If the written decision of the Executive Director is unsatisfactory the grievor may submit their issue to the Addus Board of Directors. The submission must be in writing and directed through the Executive Director.
6. The Board of Directors will carry out an investigation and issue a written decision with 30 days of receiving the complaint. The decision will be in writing. The decision of the Board of Directors is final.
7. If the complainant feels that the issue/concern is not resolved he/she has the right to get outside help. For example, the Ministry of Community and Social Services can be asked by the Executive Director or the Board of Directors to review the situation.

8. All communication between Addus employees and persons served will be courteous and respectful. Any time this condition does not exist, communications may be discontinued by either side and resumed at a time when this can be achieved. Complainants will be given a copy of the report. The Supervisor, Day Supports Manager, Executive Director and Addus Board will also get a copy of the complaint and the response/resolution.