



Policy Number: QA7.010	Policy Section: Quality Assurance	Effective: April 2008 Revised: December 1, 2009
Title: Complaints Resolution		Executive Sponsor: Director, Quality Assurance Directors, Regional Operations

1. PURPOSE

This policy is to ensure that individuals, transitioning youth, and their families who have concerns about the supports and services they receive from CLBC are responded to in a fair and timely manner. It reflects CLBC's commitment to resolve issues locally, and support staff to make decisions that meet the needs of individuals, youth, and their families. The complaints process is an important element of CLBC's approach to quality assurance to continuously improve its ability to provide high quality supports and services.

A complaint can be initiated if an individual, youth, family member or other person is dissatisfied with a service provided by CLBC, if they disagree with a decision made by a CLBC staff member, or if they believe they have not been treated fairly or respectfully.

Individuals, families or others who have complaints related to contracted service providers are encouraged to discuss these directly with the service providers. Each contractor must have a system for responding to complaints and resolving problems. Where an individual or their family is reluctant to go directly to a service provider with a complaint or have been unsuccessful in attempts to resolve issues, they can discuss it with CLBC staff or use the CLBC complaints process. CLBC could consider a number of options depending on the circumstances including a request to the agency to review the processes which led to the complaint, informal or formal mediation or a formal review.

Complaints can be made through any Community Living Centre or Quality Service Office, in person, on-line or in writing. Complaints can be made by the individual, youth or family member involved, by an advocate or support network member or other community members including service providers.

2. DEFINITIONS

Complaints Process: specific steps to address an individual's, youth's, or family's concerns about CLBC services and supports

Individual: a person 19 years of age or older who is eligible for CLBC services, as described in the CLBC eligibility policy

Support Network: family, friends and/or community members who have a personal relationship with an individual and provide support, advocacy and/or help with monitoring services

PARIS: the CLBC information management system

Youth: a person who is over 16 years of age, but under the age of 19 who will be eligible for CLBC adult services, as described in the CLBC eligibility policy.

3. POLICY

The complaints process in CLBC focuses on resolving issues at the level they arise, beginning with individual facilitators and quality service analysts. When CLBC staff at any location receive a complaint, their role is to ensure that the views of the person making a complaint are fully heard and wherever possible an acceptable resolution is found for the person and CLBC.

When complaints are not resolved locally, CLBC can provide a further review of the complaint to ensure quality assurance.

In working to resolve complaints, all CLBC staff are guided by the following principles:

Accessibility and Consistency: Every CLBC office will provide the same information on how the complaints process works and will follow the same steps to resolve them. All offices will encourage individuals, youth and families to resolve problems with the staff member involved.

Person-Centred: The concerns and interests of an individual, youth or family will guide the complaints resolution process, regardless of who is making the complaint.

Right to Be Heard: Individuals and youth will be supported to participate fully in the complaints process. The person will be given every opportunity to have their independent views heard, respected and considered.

Culturally Responsive and Inclusive: CLBC staff members are expected to be responsive and sensitive to the culture, language and heritage of individuals, youth and their families who are participating in a process to resolve a complaint.

Administrative Fairness: Every individual, youth or family has a right to understand why and how a decision was made and will be provided with and given the opportunity to respond to the reasons for a decision and to the fullest extent possible, the information relied upon to reach that decision. Persons will be given information about the next stage in the process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of local discussions. Additionally, anyone making a complaint must be assured that there will be no retaliation from any person employed by CLBC regardless of how the complaint is made, to whom it is directed, or the eventual outcome.

Right to Advocacy and Support: Individuals, youth and their families have the right to involve an advocate, relative, or friend to support them through the complaints process.

Timeliness: All concerns expressed about service delivery will be reviewed as quickly as possible. The total length of time from receipt of a complaint to its resolution through the four steps will be no longer than 30 days.

Policy Compliance: All decision making with respect to complaints must comply with CLBC policies and standards.

Complaints made directly to CLBC headquarters will be forwarded to the responsible CLBC local office for resolution.

CLBC will keep records of the types of complaints received, and use the information collected to inform a program of continuous quality improvement. This may include revisions to policies and procedures, responding to individuals, youth and families, changes to practice or in-depth review of potentially systemic issues.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1 Making a Complaint

a. CLBC staff will be available to individuals, youth, family members and others to review concerns and address issues. Every effort should be made to provide information proactively and resolve issues in the context of policy, budget and the CLBC vision, mission and values.

b. Individuals, youth, families or others may decide to make a complaint if they are not satisfied with a response or decision made by a facilitator, quality service analyst or other CLBC employee.

CLBC staff will respond to phone messages within two business days and the facilitator or analyst will be given the first opportunity to review the concerns with an individual, youth or family member before the issues are considered by the respective Community Planning and Development or Quality Service manager.

c. Complaints may be made in writing, by phone or in person. CLBC's Complaint Resolution Form is attached to this policy and must be made available to any individual, youth, family, support network member or service provider who wishes to have their issues reviewed by the responsible Quality Service or Community Planning and Development Manager. The form is also posted on the CLBC website.

d. CLBC staff locally can assist persons in describing their complaint if requested and must provide them with the name and methods of contacting the manager who will be reviewing their complaint. They can also request that the facilitator or quality service analyst forward the complaint to the respective manager on their behalf.

4.2 Proceeding with a Complaint: Step 1

The Community Planning and Development manager or Quality Service manager receiving a complaint will:

- a. Open the Complaint in PARIS using the appropriate Complaint Alert and Note function.
- b. Review the complaint, related documentation and the process to date.
- c. Provide advice or options to the staff involved to resolve the issue quickly if possible, or contact the person making the complaint within 10 business days to discuss the issues and to develop a plan to address them.
- d. Communicate with the person making the complaint, by telephone and in writing, if requested, advising of the outcome of the manager's review and response, including the decisions and reasons.
- e. Document the review and the efforts to reach a solution as well as any outstanding concerns of an individual, youth or family.
- f. Forward the complaint to the respective Director, Regional Operations as required or requested.

4.3 Continuing with a Complaint: Step 2

The Director, Regional Operations receiving a complaint will:

- a. Follow the same procedures outlined above (a-e) but may also consult with a broader range of colleagues to assess similar complaints, precedents and potential options for resolution.
- b. Forward the complaint to the Director, Quality Assurance as required or requested.

4.4 When Complaints Remain Unresolved

- a. If an individual, youth or family has explored all the options available to resolve their complaint locally or regionally with CLBC staff and are not satisfied with the outcome, the complaint and any supporting documentation should be forwarded to the Director of Quality Assurance by the manager. The Director, Regional Operations or the manager will briefly outline the issues and the outcome of the steps taken at a local or regional level to achieve resolution.
- b. Where a complaint is sent directly to the Director of Quality Assurance, the director may respond, but will ensure that all local or regional processes have been completed prior to becoming involved.
- c. The Director of Quality Assurance will review the issues outlined and make every effort to support the process of moving towards resolution. The director does not have an operational function and is not in a position to override the decisions made at a local or regional level, but may be able to provide clarification or perspective on alternative approaches. The primary role of the Director of Quality Assurance is to determine whether the process followed has been clear and accessible for individuals, youth, and families, to identify potential areas for either resolution or further discussion and to provide support as required.
- d. The Director of Quality Assurance may conduct an independent practice review when the issues are complex or may benefit from the involvement of an independent third party.

4.5 Concluding the Internal CLBC Complaints Process

- a. Where a complaint has been reviewed through the process outlined above and individuals, youth or families are not satisfied with either the outcome or process followed, it will be forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer who has final decision-making authority.

The CEO will:

- i. Review the decision, the information relied upon in reaching that decision, and any information previous or new information provided by the person dissatisfied with the decision and make a final decision on action to be taken.

- ii. Write to the person outlining final decision and reasons.
 - iii. Advise of external complaint resources such as the Ombudsman or the Advocate for Service Quality for individuals who are not satisfied with the outcome of the complaints process.
- b.** CLBC will maintain records of all complaints and their outcomes and will use this information to continually improve services, policies and staff training.

4.6 Independent Reviews

a. At any time during the CLBC process, individuals, youth, and families may choose to take their concerns or complaints to external bodies such as those listed below and CLBC staff will work cooperatively with these authorities to resolve the issues raised.

b. The following are external resources for individuals, youths and families dissatisfied with the CLBC complaint process:

- i. The Advocate for Service Quality for People with Developmental Disabilities is independent from the direct service delivery system of CLBC and can assist with resolution of concerns and complaints. The office may assist individuals and families in understanding how the complaints system operates and provide information on relevant community resources. The advocate can be reached in Vancouver at 604-775-1238 or by e-mail at Jane.Holland@gov.bc.ca.
- ii. The Ombudsman of British Columbia is available to review concerns of an individual, youth or family who believes that CLBC has been unfair. The Office of the Ombudsman can be reached by phone at Enquiry BC at 1-800-663-7867 or through their website at www.ombudsman.bc.ca.
- iii. The Information and Privacy Commissioner can provide an independent review for any person who is concerned that their privacy has not been respected by CLBC or their request for access to information has not been granted. The office can be reached by phone through Enquiry BC or through their website at www.oipcbc.org.
- iv. The Representative for Children and Youth provides advocacy services to children, youth, and their families who need help dealing with the child and youth serving system and ensures that the voice of young people are heard and considered and that their rights and interests are upheld in decisions that are being made about them. The office also advocates for changes to the child and youth serving system itself to improve its effectiveness and responsiveness. The office can be reached through Enquiry BC or at 1-800-476-3933 or www.rcybc.ca.

- v. The Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee provides services to individuals and families where there are issues related to guardianship or the management of an individual's financial or personal affairs including health care consents, adult guardianship and substitute decision-making. The office can be reached through Enquiry BC or at 1-800-663-7867 or www.trustee.bc.ca

5. DOCUMENTATION

5.1 Documenting a Complaint

The Quality Services or Community Planning and Development Manager receiving a complaint will document it using the instructions for Alerts and Notes as detailed in the PARIS Functionality Manual and scan related documents into SharePoint.

6. PRACTICE

6.1 Commitment to Quality Assurance

CLBC is committed to providing individuals, youth, families, advocates and service providers with quality service. To work towards this goal, CLBC will:

- a. Ensure information about the complaint process is widely available and well understood.
- b. Inform individuals, youth and families about community resources which might assist them.
- d. Ensure any review of a decision is carried out in a manner that is fair, respectful, collaborative and clear.
- d. Be open to reviewing actions and decisions to ensure the best practice possible.
- e. Learn from information gained from the complaint process and use it to improve service quality.
- f. Make every effort to resolve conflicts at the local level at the time they arise.

7. REFERENCES

- CLBC Vision, Mission and Values
- U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child