

Policy Introduction and Purpose

Weldon adopts a positive approach to handling complaints in a way that upholds the rights of natural justice, supports partnerships and ongoing communication with families and, most importantly, protects children's rights. We value the feedback of educators, staff, families and the wider community. Feedback will likely include diverse views and opinions, which may result in complaints and grievances. This policy includes details on Weldon's procedures for receiving and managing informal and formal complaints and grievances from families and ensures they are handled appropriately.

Definitions

Complaint: An issue of a negligible nature that can be resolved within 24 hours and does not require a comprehensive investigation. Complaints include an expression of dissatisfaction, such as poor treatment, and any verbal complaint.

Grievance: A grievance is a formal statement of complaint that cannot be addressed immediately and involves matters of a more serious nature. For example: If an individual is in breach of the legislation or regulations or the code of ethics.

Notifiable complaint: A complaint that alleges a breach of the Regulation and Law, National Quality Standards or alleges that the health, safety or wellbeing of a child may have been compromised. Any complaint of this nature must be reported by the Approved Provider, CEO or Area Manager to the Department of Early Childhood Education and Care within 24 hours of the complaint being made (Section 174(2)(b), Regulation 176(2)(b)).

Procedural fairness and natural justice: Concepts that guide the strategies and practices in this policy, which include:

- The right to be heard fairly
- The right to an unbiased decision made by an objective decision-maker
- The right to have the decision based on relevant evidence

Our policy in action

Weldon responsibilities :

- Provide opportunities for consultation, evaluation and review of the operation of our school-age and early years learning programs and other programs and services Weldon offers that
- Value the opportunity to be heard
- Promote conflict resolution
- Apply the principles of procedural fairness and natural justice
- Encourage the development of harmonious partnerships
- Maintain procedures for making and resolving complaints

Privacy and Confidentiality

All Weldon staff will adhere to our Privacy and Confidentiality Policy when dealing with grievances. However, if a grievance involves a staff member or child protection issues, a government agency may need to be informed. (see: Reportable Conduct Scheme the Child Protection Policy)

Communication

Families:

- Our procedure for managing complaints will be made available to families through:
 - the enrolment and orientation process;
 - the parent handbook;
 - Access to policies on our website; and
 - The displayed process at each program
- Families will be provided with contact details for putting forward a complaint, including contact details of the regulatory authority

Employees:

- Educators and staff will be provided with our procedure for managing complaints
- Educators and staff will be provided with training in complaints management

Making a complaint

Families:

- Families may make a complaint directly to their child's educator, the coordinator/director/nominated supervisor/responsible person, the executive management team, the CEO or the approved provider.
- As a starting point, we encourage families to raise concerns with the Program coordinator/director/nominated supervisor/responsible person who will document and work through the issue with the family or escalate the concern/complaint to the Executive Management team or the CEO as appropriate

Employees:

- Educators/staff may wish to make a complaint about an aspect of our program delivery. He or she may make the complaint directly to the coordinator/director / nominated supervisor / responsible person, the executive management team, the CEO or the approved provider – NOTE this is not a grievance procedure, matters of staff grievance should be dealt with under the grievance policy relating to staff
- Educators will discuss the complaints procedure with children and encourage them to raise any issues they have with the Program. Children's complaints will be taken seriously, and resolutions will be sought

Dealing with complaints

- All complaints will be dealt with in a confidential manner
- A response will be made within 24 hours to the person complaining advising the next steps to be taken to reach a resolution
- No complainant will be disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint

Complaints and Feedback



- The rights of the person against who the complaint is lodged will be recognised and respected
- All confidential conversations/discussions with families will take place in a quiet area away from children, other families and educators/staff who are not involved
- Where a family/staff member wishes their complaint to remain confidential this will be honoured. However, families/staff members will be advised that issues cannot always be resolved if they choose to remain anonymous
- Where an educator/staff member believes information specific to the complaint needs to be disclosed to others to resolve an issue, or if the nature of a complaint requires that a third party has to be informed to meet legislative requirements, they will inform the family of this need before any further discussions on the matter taking place

Steps to managing complaints

- The receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged.
- The complainant will be asked to provide information regarding how the situation could be rectified to their satisfaction
- The person receiving the complaint will clarify issues by actively listening and questioning the complainant to further understand the issues
- The person receiving the complaint will document the complaint and place the complaint on the complaints register
- If the issues are complex the complainant may be asked to put their concerns in writing
- Where possible, the problem will be resolved immediately. If this is not possible the complainant will be advised that the issue will be given a high priority/escalated and dealt with as soon as possible
- If the problem is about an issue that is outside the control of the Program or service, the person receiving the complaint will explain this to the complainant and let them know who they should contact if they wish to take the matter further
- Any commitments made to the complainant in regards to addressing the issue will be followed up and the results given to the complainant as soon as possible
- Each complaint will be evaluated to determine how we responded and whether further action is required or whether preventative measures can be implemented

Escalation of complaints

- In situations where educators/staff feel the resolution of a complaint is beyond their control, or the complainant feels their complaint has not been resolved to their satisfaction, they may choose to:
 - Step One: raise a complaint with the coordinator/nominated supervisor/responsible person
 - Step Two: raise a complaint with the Executive Management team
 - Step Three: raise a complaint with the CEO
- In situations where the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution as provided by the CEO, the complainant may wish to contact the Chair of the Board in writing. The Chair can be contacted by email via info@weldon.com.au

Notifiable complaints

If a complaint alleges a breach of the Regulation and Law and/ or alleges that the health, safety or wellbeing of a child may have been compromised it must be reported to the Department of Early Childhood Education and Care within 24 hrs.

- Any complaint of this nature must be reported by the Approved Provider, CEO or Area Manager to the Department of Early Childhood Education and Care within 24 hours of the complaint being made (Section 174(2)(b), Regulation 176(2)(b)).
- The parents/ guardians of the child involved in the allegation must be notified of the complaint or allegation within 24 hrs of Weldon being made aware of the complaint/ allegation
- If the Director is unsure whether the matter is a notifiable complaint contact the Area Manager, Manager Quality, Compliance and Policy
- The Nominated Supervisor and the Responsible Person at the Program on the day of the incident are responsible for documenting all the relevant details. Written reports must include:
 - details of the event or incident
 - the name of the person who initially made the complaint
 - if appropriate, the name of the child concerned and the condition of the child, including a medical or incident report (where relevant)
 - contact details of the Nominated Supervisor and Approved Provider
 - any other relevant information.
 - The documented details are to be completed and provided to the Area Manager for review so that they can report to the Department of Early Childhood Education and Care within the required timeframes.
- Written notification of complaints must be submitted using the appropriate forms, which can be found on the ACECQA website: www.acecqa.gov.au and logged using NQAITS (National Quality Agenda IT System).

Follow-up and review

Each complaint will be viewed as an opportunity for improvement

- After the complaint has been managed, the cause will be analysed to determine if the Program should implement any changes to policy or operational procedures to avoid similar situations occurring in the future.
- Such changes will be communicated across all Weldon's programs if appropriate, to avoid similar situations occurring in other programs.
- A member of the Executive Management Team will follow through to determine that complaints have been successfully resolved to everyone's satisfaction.
- Families will be contacted to determine if they are satisfied with the way the issue was resolved, and educators/staff will be consulted about the outcome from an operational viewpoint
- The complaints register will be updated to reflect the resolution
- The complaints procedure is reviewed and evaluated annually, or whenever an incident occurs, to ensure the processes are clear and non-discriminatory

Links to other policies

- Family participation and communication policy
- Confidentiality, Privacy and Security of Information
- Performance and Misconduct
- Staff Grievance Policy
- Guiding and Supporting Behaviour Policy
- Interactions with Children

Source

- Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).
- Australian Human Rights Commission: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au>
- Commonwealth Ombudsman. (2009). Better practice guide to complaint handling: https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/35615/Better-practice-guide-to-complaint-handling.pdf
- Education and Care Services National Regulation. (2011).
- Fair Work Australia: <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/>
- National Quality Standard. (2017).