

**Policy & Procedure**

Section: Program

Approved On: May 2, 2012

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**COMMUNITY OPINIONS/PUBLIC COMMENT**

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**POLICY STATEMENT**

Community Living Essex County welcomes community opinions and public comment from people we support, families and the community at large. The Agency recognizes the value of compliments, suggestions or complaints received through a variety of communication options. The Agency response will take into consideration people's needs, improvement in service delivery and administrative resources while ensuring continued excellence in the provision of supports and services.

**DEFINITION**

**Community Opinions/Public Comment** - may be positive or negative (including complaints which are an expression of dissatisfaction) related to the services and supports provided by the Agency. They may be solicited or unsolicited, formal or informal and by various means such as through a survey and comment box, verbally, by letter, email and other social feeds.

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Community Opinions/Public Comment Policy describes a mechanism to encourage enhanced communication with the community. It is not intended to replace the ongoing communication that should occur between people, families, direct support professionals and management. Whenever possible feedback will be addressed at the point of service delivery. Complaints by people supported/families regarding their individualized supports will follow the process described in the Appeal Process for People/Families [PRO-200-05] policy.

Community opinions/public comments provide the Agency the opportunity to be responsive to people's needs, support continuous improvement in service delivery, consider and act upon potential risks. Therefore, the Agency will:

- a) Encourage people to provide feedback by establishing numerous ways to express opinions and concerns that include in person, by phone, in writing, by using comment boxes located at the Agency resource centres, by fax, email, through the Agency's website ("Your Opinion Matters") and by other social media platforms.
- b) Provide equal access in accordance with the Accessibility [ADM-100-18] policy.
- c) Ensure all communications are in accordance with the Plain Language [ADM 100-13] policy.

- d) Provide a copy of this policy to all people supported/families when they begin receiving Agency services and review annually, and thereafter documented using the Mandatory Annual Review Record for People Supported (PROG 87) form.
- e) Post a copy of this policy on the Agency’s website.
- f) Respond to all comments in a timely manner.
- g) Ensure transparency in responses.
- h) Record comments and track action taken.
- i) Review each comment to determine if any changes to Agency policies and practices should be made.
- j) Ensure the entire review process is free of any coercion, intimidation, and bias.
- k) Act in accordance with the Conflict of Interest [ADM-100-02] policy.
- l) When appropriate, the Agency will refer action regarding comment/opinion as follows:
  - where an abusive situation is involved or suspected, follow the direction contained in the Abuse Prevention and Reporting [PRO-200-06] policy.
  - if it is considered a Serious Occurrence, follow the procedures set out in Serious Occurrence Reporting [PRO-300-02] policy.

A person who submits a community comment/public opinion or on whose behalf the submission is made, would never be at risk of having their supports and services negatively impacted or withdrawn.

## **PROCEDURES**

1. All compliments, suggestions or complaints made about the organization, operations, service quality or employees will be handled professionally and in a timely manner.
2. Compliments, suggestions or complaints received, including those submitted through the website, are forwarded to the Manager, Grants and Strategic Planning, as soon as possible, and at a minimum within 2 days. The person providing the information can also be given the contact information for the Manager, Grants and Strategic Planning, if they wish to contact the manager personally.
3. The person providing a compliment, suggestion or complaint will be asked to fill out the “Your Opinion Matters” card (ADMIN78). If an employee receives a verbal comment, they will send an email or complete the “Your Opinion Matters” card (ADMIN78) and forward it to the Manager, Grants and Strategic Planning, and inform their manager.
4. The Manager, Grants and Strategic Planning, is responsible for coordinating the process of receiving, documenting, investigating and recommending a resolution to the Executive

Director, or designate, and responding to the person who submitted a community comment or public opinion when requested.

5. The Agency will only share personal information in accordance with applicable legislation, Agency policies and after obtaining the person's consent.
6. Compliments
  - a) When a compliment is received a response to the person is required within 14 working days, if requested.
  - b) The Executive Director, or designate, within 14 working days will call, send an email or letter of thanks to the employee or location team as appropriate.
7. Comment, Opinions or Suggestions
  - a) When a suggestion is received a response will be sent to the person, where requested, within 14 working days that:
    - explains how the suggestion will be implemented, or
    - informs the person why the suggestion is not being implemented, or
    - advises the person that a review is underway and provides a date when a future update will be provided
8. Public Complaints
  - a) Any employee who receives a complaint will act in a manner that is professional, courteous and impartial.
  - b) Employees will immediately bring the concern, issue or complaint to their manager, or designate.
  - c) If the complaint does not fall within the guidelines of the Appeal Process for People/Families [PRO-200-05] policy, the person making the complaint will be contacted by the Manager, Grants and Strategic Planning, at a minimum, within 4 working days from the date of the complaint.
  - d) The Agency will make all reasonable efforts to resolve or address the matter to the mutual satisfaction of both the person and the Agency.
  - e) Follow-up contact or meeting with the person who made the complaint, together with others as appropriate to the concern, may be necessary to resolve the matter. The Manager, Grants and Strategic Planning, will co-ordinate this meeting within 28 working days from the date of the complaint.

Updates will be provided to the person every 15 days from the date the complaint was received and every 15 days thereafter until it is resolved.
  - f) In instances where the complaint may warrant a review, the Executive Director or designate shall examine the information and determine whether an Internal Review Committee should be formed or whether an External Review should occur.

- g) Members of an Internal Review Committee will be appointed by the Executive Director or designate and conduct the review in accordance with the guidelines in the Serious Occurrence Reporting [PRO-300-02] policy.
- h) The person making the complaint will be advised in writing within 60 working days from the date of the complaint the Agency's action and, if they are not satisfied with the response, the contact information for the Executive Director or designate is provided.
- i) If the person making the complaint is not satisfied with the Executive Director's response, they may bring the concern to the Agency's Board of Directors.
- j) The Agency is not required to resolve complaints that it may determine to be frivolous or vexatious.

### **REVIEW AND REPORTING**

At least once every 12 months the Manager, Grants and Strategic Planning, will complete a review and analysis of the community comments/public opinions received, including recommendations regarding the effectiveness of the procedures and the need for any revisions to this or any other Agency policies and procedures.

The Executive Director, or designate, will review the report to evaluate the effectiveness of the Agency's policies and procedures and determine if any changes to the organization or service delivery are needed.

A summary of the annual review will be forwarded to the Board of Directors.