



HS11	Healthy and Safe Services	Client Feedback Policy and Procedures
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What this policy aims to do	Ensure clients and their families, carers or guardian have the opportunity and process to provide feedback to MASS, whether it be a compliment or a complaint. MASS will address feedback in a timely and responsive manner.
Who this policy applies to	People with disability, their supporters and advocates, and families who access our services, or anyone that observes a service-related matter they believe should be addressed
Who is responsible for carrying out this policy	MASS Board, the Director and all service staff
What words used in this policy mean	<p>A '<i>complaint</i>' is an expression of dissatisfaction by an affected person or their representative in regard to their service or treatment while at MASS.</p> <p>A '<i>compliment</i>' is positive and appreciative feedback.</p> <p>'<i>External body</i>' is a complaints body that can investigate complaints about services for children and/or people with disability, e.g. Office of the Disability Services Commissioner, Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority</p>
Legislation this policy is based on	<p>National Disability Service Standards</p> <p>Victorian Human Services Standards</p>
Other relevant policies	<p>HS4 Rights and Responsibilities</p> <p>MS11 Whistle-blower Protection</p> <p>MBD1 Board Authority and Operations</p> <p>HS7 Information Privacy Policy</p>

Version	Date	Author/Editor	Approved by	Notes
1.0	26/8/2016	Peter Lane		
1.1	31/5/2018	D Stephenson		Update format
1.2	7/3/2019	D Stephenson		Minor edits
1.3	17/10/2019	D Stephenson		Added NDIS complaints link
1.4	17/6/2020	D Stephenson	S. Reeves	Updated P&P, produced new brochures and forms to request feedback.

Client Feedback Policy

Any person or family receiving services from MASS is encouraged to give feedback to raise any complaint or dispute they may have concerning the organisation or the services received or to give kudos.

The right to complain or raise an issue is seen as vital to our commitment to continually improve services, and as such every service user, family or advocate shall:

- Be supported to make a complaint
- Be reassured that all correspondence is treated as 'confidential'
- Be protected from retribution
- Be provided with information in a format they can understand that details the internal process for making a complaint and the contact details of an external complaints body such as the Office of the Disability Services Commissioner (disability service complaints), the NDIS Safety and Quality Commission or the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (independent schools).

MASS will endeavour to address all complaints immediately if possible, however if an immediate resolution is not possible following an initial consultation with the complainant then a formal acknowledgment and process instigated by the Director may occur.

A summary of all complaints and resolutions is provided to the MASS Board at regular intervals.

Feedback Procedures

Providing Feedback to MASS

- Any service user, family, advocate or support person can give feedback (compliments and complaints) about any person or process in the organisation
- Information on how Feedback can be given to MASS will be provided for all service users in a manner and format suited to their communication preferences
- Feedback can be made:
 - In person at reception
 - By telephone to (03) 5775 2876
 - In writing by letter, facsimile or email, direct to the Director
 - Online via the MASS website www.autismmansfield.org.au

Providing Feedback (Complaint) to an External Body

- Externally to:
 - the Office of the Disability Services Commissioner (disability services)
Freecall: 1800 677 342 or email: complaints@odsc.vic.gov.au; or
 - the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (independent schools)
Tel: 03 9637 2806.
- NDIS Safety and Quality Commission for NDIS services
<https://forms.business.gov.au/smartforms/servlet/SmartForm.html?formCode=PRD00-OCF>
- A person can still make a complaint to the Disability Services Commissioner or the Victorian Registration, the NDIS Safety and Quality Commission and the Qualifications Authority even if they have made a complaint directly to MASS
- MASS will prominently display contact details for these external bodies (and where a person indicates a desire to lodge a complaint with an external agency, support that effort)

Complaint Process

Support for Complainant

- People who wish to bring a complaint will be invited to have a support person or representative of their choice to assist or represent them during the complaints process
- Where possible, if the complainant is a person with disability or a person from a non-English speaking background, MASS will provide additional resources to assist the person to communicate their concerns effectively. Where appropriate, these resources will be from external sources to ensure the rights of the individual

- ☑ MASS will ensure that no complainant will be victimised or suffer any form of discrimination as a result of having raised a dispute or complaint. No-one making a complaint will experience any reduction or withdrawal of service as a result of that complaint
- ☑ If an affected person is unable to lodge a complaint personally due to poor health, distance, disability, language, legal or other reasons, the complaint may be lodged by another person or agent on their behalf:
 - An employee who receives such a complaint will take reasonable steps to confirm that the person claiming to act on behalf of the affected person has the appropriate authority to do so
 - If a complaint is formally lodged by an authorised agent, responses will be provided directly to that agent.

Initial Handling of Complaint by MASS

- ☑ Wherever possible, MASS will aim to address a complaint at the first point of contact
- ☑ If the affected person is satisfied with the response provided at the first point of contact, no further action is required
- ☑ If a complaint cannot be resolved at the first point of contact, the matter may be escalated to the responsible manager or the Director. The person looking into the complaint at this level must not have been involved in the original incident.

Investigating Complaint

- ☑ Upon completion of the review/investigation, the affected person will be provided with a statement of findings including evidence and other material available for assessment, and the reasons for any decisions made by MASS
- ☑ If the complaint is sustained, the affected person will also be advised of any remedy; the circumstances and timeframe in which the remedy will be available
- ☑ If the affected person remains dissatisfied after the first review, he/she may request a second review by the Director (if not involved in the first review) or Board Chair. The person undertaking the second review will consult with the affected person and other relevant persons to assess the need for a second review
- ☑ If a second review is warranted, it will be undertaken; if in the opinion of the person nominated to undertake the review all avenues for pursuing the complaint have been exhausted, no further investigation is required. Either way, the affected person and the relevant area/employee will be advised accordingly
- ☑ If proceeding, the second review will consider the process that was followed during the first review, including: the adequacy of the statement of reasons; that all relevant evidence was considered; the principles of natural justice have been observed; and that the final decision was based on these considerations
- ☑ The affected person will be advised of the final decision and provided with a second statement of reasons (together with any remedies etc if the complaint is supported)

Feedback Procedures

- ☑ If the affected person is still dissatisfied with the response he/she will be provided (again) with contact details for the Disability Services Commissioner, the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority and the Victorian Ombudsman's Office and information about what role and powers they have
- ☑ Any external agency may liaise with MASS for any further information that may be required and may choose to respond directly to the affected person. MASS will cooperate fully in any such process
- ☑ In some instances, as determined by the Director or Chair, a suitably qualified independent external mediator/investigator may be appointed to review a complaint on behalf of MASS, at MASS' expense

Timeframes

- ☑ MASS aims to provide a first response within 10 working days of receiving the complaint. The timeframe for completing a second response will depend on the circumstances including the seriousness, urgency and complexity of the matters to be investigated. The affected person shall be kept informed of the progress of the investigation

Records and Reporting

- ☑ Complaints (together with any investigation reports, findings and communications) will be retained and filed in a relevant information storage and retrieval system that complies with the Information Privacy Policy
- ☑ A summary of all complaints and outcomes (de-identified if necessary to protect privacy and confidentiality) is to be provided by the Director to the Board on a quarterly basis to inform planning and quality improvement
- ☑ MASS also reports all complaints annually to the Disability Services Commissioner.