

Complaints and Problem Solving Policy

Board Approval Date: 9 March 2010

Revision Date: _____

Big Brothers Big Sisters will facilitate in a respectful manner, the fair, simple, speedy and efficient resolution of problems and complaints between staff, mentors, mentees, school and family.

All those involved in the running of the programme and the Trust Board will follow the correct procedure when receiving and investigating problems and complaints.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure all problems and complaints are investigated by a process where the rights of both the complainant and complainees are respected throughout the investigation procedure.

Definitions

The initial problem is any expression of dissatisfaction about any aspect of the Trust, its services offered and the personnel involved.

The official written complaint is any problem that has not been resolved through the problem solving procedure.

The complainant is the person making the complaint.

The complainees is the person(s) about whom the complaint concerns.

Problem Solving Procedure

If the mentoring programme is to be as successful as possible it is important that any problems that arise are dealt with effectively. This procedure sets out information on how problems can be raised and worked through.

Steps involved

- 1 If you feel that there may be a problem, the first step is to check the facts and make sure there really is a problem, and not simply a misunderstanding.
- 2 You may want to discuss the situation with someone to clarify whether a problem exists. In doing so you should take care to respect the privacy of others and protect confidential information belonging to the employer.
For example you could seek information from:
 - ☐ Friends and family
 - ☐ Community Law Centre
- 3 If you feel you have a real problem discuss this with the Mentoring Coordinator. (Except when it concerns him or her in which case it is forwarded to the Board Chairperson).
- 4 The Mentoring Coordinator will initiate immediate resolution where practicable.

- 5 If you feel that the problem has not been resolved to your satisfaction you may wish to make an official written complaint. (Please refer to the complaints procedure)

Complaints Procedure

- 1) After following the problem solving procedure if the issue remains unresolved, when the complainant is not satisfied that justice has been done, or when the complaint is of a serious nature, the complainant is informed of their options of how to lay an official written complaint
- 2) A complaint may be initiated by:
 - The person affected
 - A third party on behalf of the person affected e.g. relative, friend, school staff where the complainant is under 18 years of age.
- 3) All complaints must be received:
 - In writing
 - Within 90 days of the incident
 - Through a mentor, the Mentoring Coordinator, a member of the Project Support Team or a Board member.
 - Official written complaints are to be forwarded to the Board Chairperson within 24 hours.
- 4) Once the official written complaint has been received, the Board Chairperson will refer the matter to the Complaints Committee. This comprises the Board Chairperson and the Mentoring Coordinator.
- 5) The Complaints Committee shall nominate one or two persons to discuss the complaint with the complainant and one or two persons to discuss the complaint with the Complainee. The Complaints Committee must advise the complainant and complainee of their right to nominate a support person(s) to be present at the discussions, interviews or meetings held as a result of the Complaints Procedure being invoked.
- 6) Within seven days from the receipt of the complaint, the Complaints Committee will meet to discuss the complaint and take one of the following actions:
 - a) Where it is considered that the complaint is unwarranted then the Complaints Committee should
 - i) either discuss the matter with the complainant again with a view to reconciling the complainant to an understanding of the problem or arrange for the matter to be discussed in a group situation with all parties present so that the complainant can be made aware of the misunderstanding; or
 - ii) write to the complainant advising that the matter has been fully investigated and the Complaints Committee is satisfied that the complainee has not acted incorrectly.
 - iii) report to the Board accordingly.
 - b) Where the complaint is found to be justified but is not of a sufficiently serious nature to require formal action to be taken the Complaints Committee will
 - i) counsel the complainee and advise the steps to be taken to rectify the position,
 - ii) write to the complainant advising of the outcome, and
 - iii) report to the Board.
 - c) Where the Complaints Committee considers the complaint to be serious it will immediately call a full Board meeting to discuss the matter and may, if it is considered necessary, suspend the complainee pending the outcome of the meeting.
- 7) Where a complaint is brought to the attention of the Board it may do any of the following:

- a) Make such further inquiries it considers necessary.
 - b) Nominate an independent person to act as mediator
 - c) Where the complaint is of a criminal nature, notify the police
 - d) Where appropriate, apologise in writing to either party
 - e) Arrange for counselling of either party
 - f) Terminate the complaine'e's position.
- 8) At all times the Board will keep both the complainant and the complaine'e informed of any action it proposes to take.
- 9) All material as part of the investigative process and the original complaints are held with the Chairperson of the Trust Board on a Complaint's File. Access is limited to the complainant, Trust Board members, any legal representatives and appropriate government agency, such as the Police. Material is retained for a period of one year following the complaint resolution.