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Approved by: Executive Director

This policy should be read and understood by NYCH:

☒ Full-time Employees

☒ Part-time Employees

☒ Board of Directors

☒ Volunteers and Students

EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all clients and community members have access to a clear, concise complaints process, so their concerns are handled fairly and effectively in order to maintain safe, respectful and high quality service, and a positive environment for those we serve.

All external parties have the right to file complaints or raise concerns about NYCH's services without fear of reprisal, interference, coercion or discrimination. Information about the complaints process, client bill of rights, or other required information will be made available in a format that is accessible to the client.

Complaints from NYCH participants, clients and community members will be received by staff in written form (letter, email, via NYCH's website) or verbally (phone, in person), and should be related to NYCH's services, programs and operations. They may refer to issues such as timeliness of response/service, quality of service, appropriateness of programming, adequacy of staffing, appropriateness of staff's decisions/judgment/actions, and/or adequacy/appropriateness of physical environment and resources.

PROCEDURES

1. Provision of Information

- Staff, and volunteers in appropriate positions, will be familiar with the complaints policy and procedures, and must cooperate fully if and when required to do so.
- Upon initiation of a service, clients will be informed of the service they are to receive, the amount, frequency, fees and any relevant instructions for using or receiving the services. This information can be delivered verbally or, if appropriate, in writing. All information must be shared in such a way that barriers are minimized (e.g. language, literacy, comprehension, disability, etc.).

2. Registering/Receiving a Complaint

- Complaints should be filed as soon as possible and no later than six (6) months following the date of the incident that is the subject matter of the complaint. NYCH has the discretion to not investigate any complaint that is submitted more than six months following the date of the incident that is the subject of the complaint.
- All complaints will be dealt with promptly and adequately, and as confidentially as possible.
- All clients who file complaints shall be treated fairly. No retaliation action is permitted against clients who file complaints.
- Individuals with a complaint are encouraged to discuss their concerns directly with any other person involved if they feel safe to do so. If this is unsuccessful or inappropriate to the situation, complainants may launch the formal process as outlined below.
- When a complaint is received, staff must review the complaint and appeal policy and procedure with complainant in a manner that is accessible to them, and provide them with a NYCH complaint form. If the complainant requires assistance in completing the form, staff will make arrangements to provide them with support.
- If the client wishes to make a complaint about the staff who is serving them they should submit a complaint form to a manager or director. If the complaint is regarding a manager or director, it will be directed to the Executive Director. If the complaint is regarding the Executive Director, it will be directed to the Board of Directors via the Executive Committee.

3. Investigating a Complaint

- A prompt fair investigation of a verbal or written complaint will be initiated by the program manager by acknowledging receipt of the complaint within 3 business days of its submission.
- Management members who are leading the investigation of a complaint may assign any of the functions outlined above to a designate. The timelines indicated above may be extended in extenuating circumstances.
- After investigating a complaint, NYCH might respond by:
 - providing an explanation;
 - offering a service;
 - changing a decision;
 - confirming an existing decision;
 - changing a practice to prevent a recurrence;
 - changing a policy;
 - providing additional training to staff or volunteers.
- These are examples of some responses that may be appropriate. There are other possible outcomes that may be more suitable in some situations.
- If at any time during a complaint procedure, evidence exists to indicate possible staff misconduct, incompetence, or incapacity, the Director of Talent and Innovation will be immediately informed and appropriate steps will be taken.
- The program manager will follow up regarding the complaint resolution.
- Follow-up actions of complaints may include:
 - Review of policy and procedures issues arising out of the complaints;
 - Ensuring that all remedial actions to address the complaints are followed by staff;
 - Disciplinary actions of staff if deemed to be required.

4. Documentation

- Staff will document all complaints received from clients and forward notes to management for their records.
- Management/senior management will document the investigation and response.

- The completed complaint notes with all documentation of the investigation, resolution and follow-up will be filed separately from the client file and kept in the program managers' office with copies sent to the Director of Talent and Innovation.
- Information relating to complaints may be used to examine patterns of complaints.
- The Director of Talent and Innovation will prepare an anonymous summary of all complaints received for the Executive Director and Board of Directors upon request.

5. Respect and appropriate behaviour

- Community members, clients and participants are encouraged to lodge a complaint if they are dissatisfied with their experience at NYCH. However, the organization will not tolerate personal attacks or unsubstantiated criticism by clients against staff or volunteers.
- Any behaviour deemed threatening or inappropriate towards a staff or volunteer at NYCH will be addressed immediately to ensure the health, safety and respectful treatment of everyone involved.

North York Community House ("NYCH") Client Bill of Rights

(To be posted at all NYCH sites, on NYCH's website, and to be made available upon request in the most accessible format possible)

NYCH believes, supports and promotes the rights of clients, participants and residents we serve, and will ensure that they are free to exercise their rights in an atmosphere that is free of pressure, control, punishment and discrimination.

Each client's rights are:

- To be treated in a manner that is free from mental, physical or financial abuse
- To be treated in a manner that respects privacy, dignity and supports independence
- To be treated in a manner that recognizes individuality, responds sensitively to individual needs and preferences, and respects cultural, ethnic and spiritual values
- To be informed about the services provided, including the right to request access to personal records
- To give or refuse consent to the provision of any NYCH service
- To participate with service provider(s) in determining needs, in deciding how to provide services, and in any reviews or revisions

- To raise concerns, recommend changes and appeal any decisions related to the services received without fear of unfair treatment or being forced to agree to an action unwillingly. Clients are encouraged to direct any complaint, concern or appeal to the appropriate program manager or supervisor, and they may choose to pursue any concern or appeal up to the level of the Executive Director
- To have personal and service information kept confidential

REFERENCES and POLICIES

NYCH

- Code of Conduct
- Confidentiality
- Health and Safety
- Anti-oppression
- Workplace Anti-Discrimination, Anti-Harassment
- Workplace Anti-Violence

Other

- Ontario Health and Safety Act
- Ontario Human Rights Code