



HFS Community Member's Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedures

GENERAL PRINCIPLES:

- Homes First is committed to providing the best possible service to the organizations and individuals with whom we work. We recognize that there may be occasions when community members have concerns and this procedure exists to raise issues more formally.
- We will respond professionally and appropriately to all complaints.
- All complaints will be handled as confidentially as possible and will be treated seriously.
- Anonymous complaints will not be considered.

Community members may make a complaint for feeling:

- They have been treated unfairly.
- Homes First has failed to provide information about the agency or our services.
- That we have failed to provide a key service.
- They have been mistreated by our staff.
- Disagree with a decision we have made or policy we operate.

Step 1: Informal Complaints to a Homes First Staff Member:

- Community members can make their complaint to the member of staff concerned or to any manager.
- Staff members will be able to tell the individual who the most appropriate person to approach. This may be done in person, by telephone, or email.
- We will listen to all complaints and aim to find a solution with the complainant.
- On occasions where we expect a delay in dealing with the complaints, we will do our best to inform the complainant.
- We aim to deal with complaints with immediacy; however there will be occasions when there is a delay. We will reply as quickly as possible either in writing or verbally.
- If the complaint remains unresolved, the community member may proceed to the next step.

Step 2: Formal Written Complaints:

- A community member may use the formal complaints procedure at any time, if they feel the complaint is too serious for an informal approach.
- Staff can provide a complaint form upon request, or the community member can write a letter. The letter should be addressed to the appropriate manager.
- Homes First will aim to acknowledge receipt of your formal complaint within five working days. A letter will be mailed to the postal address provided with further details on investigating the complaint.
- If the complainant is asked to meet with Homes First, they can be accompanied by a support person of choice. Following an in-person meeting, Homes First will likely allocate the complaint to the appropriate manager.
- If the complaint is about a member of staff, it will be passed immediately to the appropriate manager. If the complaint is about the manager, a letter should be addressed and labeled “private” to the Chief Executive Officer. If the complaint is about the CEO, the letter should be addressed to the Society Board of Directors Chair.
- We aim to resolve all complaints quickly and keep community members informed throughout the process. A written response will be mailed within 28 days, and we will inform the complainant of any further delays.

Step 3: Appeals Process:

A complainant can appeal if they are unhappy with any aspect of the formal procedure outlined above, including the final response. Appeals can only be made after going through the formal procedure. The appeal process will be included in the letter sent to you after the formal procedure.

Written acknowledgement of your appeal will usually be sent out within ten working days, along with information as to when and how it will be dealt with. The appeal and original written complaint will be considered in detail. The appeal stage is the final internal one.

If the complainant remains unsatisfied, staff and management will provide the contact information for SSHA and the Office of the Ombudsman to any individual or business who wishes to make a complaint about a HFS service or program.

Keeping Complaints Confidential:

Complaints will be reviewed by managers as part of the investigation process. If your complaint is specifically about a member of staff at Homes First, it will be necessary for that person to be told that a complaint has been lodged against them to allow the investigation to proceed.

Other Avenues for Complaints and Appeals:

- Staff will encourage and support community members in following the HFS Community Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure; however, if the individual making the complaint is still not satisfied, they may lodge a complaint with the City's Office of the Ombudsman (375 University Ave, Suite 203, Toronto, ON M5G 2J5; 416-392-7062; ombudsman@toronto.ca)

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- Created on February 1, 2018.
 - Approved by HFS Management Team on August 8, 2019.
 - This Policy applies to all of Homes First.