

Transition House – Complaints Policy

This complaints policy and resolution procedure does not replace the informal resolution of individual complaints. Everyone is urged to try and resolve conflicts and differences through informal discussion. A formal complaint should only be submitted when informal discussions have failed to produce an acceptable solution.

Who Can Make a Complaint?

Anyone who feels that they have a legitimate concern about the agency, staff, or other issues may make a complaint. This includes staff, direct service volunteers, Board and Committee volunteers, neighbours, as well as current and prospective residents and outside stakeholders.

How Do I Make a Complaint?

Tell someone what happened. This could be a staff member, a volunteer, a friend or the Executive Director. Usually, a staff person or the Executive Director can assist in resolving the matter to the satisfaction of all parties. Staff have a duty to try to resolve any issue that is raised.

This may include providing the affected person with a copy of this policy and conflict resolution process. If you are not satisfied that the problem has been resolved, you may make a written complaint to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will attempt to resolve the matter by meeting with all parties concerned.

If this proves unsuccessful, or the complaint is about the Executive Director, you may complain in writing to the Chair, Board of Directors.

What Are My Rights If I Make a Complaint?

- You have the right to confidentiality
- You have the right to be protected from threats or intimidation, punishment, discipline or dismissal
- You have the right to have an advocate with you at all meetings dealing with your complaint
- You have the right to language and sign language translation of everything said and written with regard to your complaint
- You have the right to withdraw your complaint and drop actions under this policy at any time.

How Should I Make A Written Complaint?

Please send a letter to:

The Executive Director
Transition House Inc.
162 Madison Avenue,
Toronto, Ontario
M5R 2S6

or via email to: transitionhouse@bellnet.ca

Please include your return mail or email address.

If your complaint is about the Executive Director, you may send a letter outlining your complaint to:

Chair
Board of Directors
Transition House Inc.
162 Madison Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M5R 2S6

Please mark "Personal and Confidential" on the outside of the envelope.

Please describe your complaint and what has or has not happened. Try to include as much information about your complaint as possible. Please also include what remedy you would like to see to resolve this problem fairly for all parties. You are welcome to have an advocate or friend help you to write or communicate with Transition House regarding your complaint.

What Happens When The Complaint is Received by the Chair of the Board?

Step 1: The Fact Finder

Within 5 days of receiving the written complaint, the Chair of the Board appoints an experienced fact finder to gather and report the facts. The fact finder will interview individually, all those involved in the situation. Anyone being interviewed may choose to have someone they trust present to help.

The fact finder gathers all relevant facts but does not express opinions or make recommendations in the report. The fact finder will be someone who has had no direct or indirect involvement in the situation which led to the complaint. They may come from within the organization or be an external person.

The fact finder will show the complainant and the respondent the report. If there are parts of the report that either party does not agree with, they will be given an opportunity to attach their own written comments to the fact finders' report.

Step Two: The Conflict Resolution Panel

Within 5 days of receiving the fact finders' report, the Chair of the Board appoints a Conflict Resolution Panel of three persons. Their role is to review the fact finders' report and decide on the best course of action to resolve the complaint.

The members of the Conflict Resolution panel will include people from the following groups:

- A member of the Board of Directors (this includes the Chair)
- A member of the staff (this includes the Executive Director)
- A member of the Advisory Committee (a community worker/member)

Panel members will have no direct knowledge of, or personal interest in the issue under review. If all members of a group have direct or indirect involvement, the selection of panel members must be made from the other two groups, or by going to an external resource person.

Conflict resolution panel members will receive the training they need for making decisions in harassment and discrimination cases.

The panel decides on the best course of action and will prepare a final decision in writing. One or more of the members will present in person to the complainant and the respondent in separate meetings. The written decision will be given to the Chair of the Board and the Executive Director (unless the complaint is about the Executive Director), who will then take appropriate action.

Resolutions may include:

- An apology from the offender, along with assurances that the conduct will not be repeated
- A warning or reprimand
- Exclusion from services and programs

Confidentiality

While a complaint is being looked into, the only people who should know about it are those who are directly involved and have a role to play in resolving it. All files and records will be kept strictly confidential.