



## PROCEDURE

Policy No.: PRO016

Document Name: Procedure  
Function: Complaints and Compliments  
Subject: COMPLAINTS RELATING TO SERVICES

Revision No.: 2  
Approval Date: March 2009

### PURPOSE AND SCOPE

DASSI is committed to service quality and valuing its people. This procedure has been developed to inform the process of following through on a complaint submitted at DASSI. This procedure applies to any member of staff who receives a complaint from any person about any aspect of service. This procedure must be followed in accordance with the complaints policy at DASSI which outlines the principles that guide this procedure. For complaints from employees in relation to their employment, refer to the staff grievance policy.

### PROCEDURE

#### Complaint Timelines

A complaint can be either submitted or received by DASSI by writing, telephone, sending a fax, via the web site, or in person.

A complaint can be made to DASSI about any aspect of the service [from intake to exit phase], including the way that DASSI has managed a complaint about the service.

A complaint will be acted upon and will have outcomes sought within 28 days of receiving a complaint.

A complaint will be acknowledged formally by way of sending a letter to confirm that the complaint has been lodged. This will take place within seven [7] days of receiving the complaint.

A DASSI staff member will contact the complainant throughout the process of managing the complain, to provide information on the progress of the complaint process.

#### Nature of Complaint

All forms of complaints [expressed concerns / informal complaints through to formal complaints] are to be followed through and logged into the Complaints Register [REG002].

If the complaint nature relates to a *safety issue* whereby either a client or staff member may be at risk of harm, then the person receiving the complaint will refer the matter to their Manager. The Manager will make a decision whether to action the complaint as an incident [thereby referring to the incident management procedure] or to follow through with this complaint procedure.

Where the complaint is about a DASSI employee, their line manager will be informed and will inform the employee of the nature of the complaint. The employee will be given the opportunity to respond to the complaint prior to any disciplinary action being taken. All complaints relating to employees will be viewed in light of systemic errors rather than individual errors.

There may be times when a complaint may consist of a *serious dispute* [see the definition below], and this will be acted upon with priority.

#### Handling a Complaint

Any complaint must be recorded onto the Complaints Report Form [FOR135]

The staff member who receives the complaint at the outset will refer the complainant to the appropriate staff member [Service Coordinator, Team Leader or Service Manager] within 24 hours of receiving the complaint.

When the appropriate staff member has received the complaint or is in contact with the complainant, he or she will ask general questions to assist the person who is making the complaint; who is involved, what happened, where it happened and when it happened.

The staff member handling the complaint will assist the complainant with strategies to identify a resolution. In doing so, the staff member should ask the complainant what outcomes they expect seek address the complaint.

The staff member handling the complaint will document the complaint and outcomes sought by the complainant into the appropriate complaint form [FOR135]. The staff member will document any required actions to be taken in order to resolve the matter to the complainant's satisfaction.

The staff member handling the complaint will forward the completed form [FOR135] to the Team Leader / or Service Manager, who will follow through on the actions to be taken and provide feedback to the complainant either by phone or letter to inform them of the progress of the complaint.

### **Complaint follow through**

If a satisfactory resolution has been achieved and no follow up actions are required, the Team Leader or Services Manager will enter the complaint details and outcomes into the Complaint Register [REG002]

The completed complaints form [FOR135] is to be forwarded to the Quality Improvement Officer who will store the form in the client file and hyperlink the file to the register.

### **Continuous Improvement**

The Quality Officer will review the number, nature and outcomes of complaints received, and will communicate this information to representatives of the Quality Management Review Committee [QMRC].

The QMRC will make decisions relating to corrective actions that may be introduced into the organization to improve the complaint process and to improve services for all people.

### **Appealing a complaint / Complaint not resolved**

In the event that a resolution has not been achieved within the 28 day timeline, the staff member who is handling the complaint will notify their next line manager or General Manager of Services of the complaint status, and provide details of actions taken to identify resolution.

The Services manager or General Manager of Services will contact the complainant and will implement strategies [see below for definitions] to achieve a resolution that is satisfactory to the complainant.

If the complaint has not been resolved at this level of intervention, the complainant will be informed of and /or assisted to lodge a complaint with the Office of Disability Services Commissioner, the funding body or appropriate advocacy service.

The Services Manager or General Manager of Services will notify the CEO of the complaint process and will document the process and outcomes into the complaints report form [FOR135].

The Services Manager or General Manager of Services will document the complaint details into the complaint register [REG002]

The completed complaints form [FOR135] is to be forwarded to the Quality Improvement Officer who will store the form in the client file and hyperlink the file to the register.

### **Office of Disability Services Commissioner investigating a complaint**

After receiving a complaint from a complainant, the Disability Service Commissioner will assess the complaint within 28 days of receiving.

After investigating the complaint, the Commissioner will decide what action should be taken to remedy the complaint, and will notify the service and the complainant within 14 days of deciding.

The service provider is then required to report in writing to the Commissioner within 45 days of receiving the notice to outline the action take on the complaint.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**Formal Complaint** means an expression of dissatisfaction that arises out of the provision of a service or out of the complaints handling process itself. In this instance, the complainant chooses to make a complaint that will be documented and will be followed by the complaints procedure until an outcome is arrived at.

**Informal Complaint** means an expression of dissatisfaction or concern that arises out of the provision of a service. In this instance, the person expressing the concern chooses not to make a formal complaint. The expression of concern will be documented as an informal complaint and will be used to inform improvement opportunities at DASSI.

**Serious Dispute** means a complaint that has the potential to lead to notification to and intervention by senior external funding delegates such as the Program and Support Advisor or Executive representative of

the funding body. A complaint that has the potential to attract media attention or may lead to external investigation.

**Appropriate staff member** means the service coordinator or team leader or Services manager if the complainant is a client or a person who is representing a client of the service.

**Appropriate staff member** means the immediate service coordinator, team leader, manager or general manager [or who ever is the person's line manager] if the complainant is a staff member at DASSI.

**Aspect of Service** means any part of DASSI services from entry through to exit, that relate to client services

**Form** means complaint form [FOR135]

**Resolution strategies may include:**

- Working informally with the complainant and any persons involved, to resolve the complaint.
- Facilitating discussion [conciliation] with the complainant and any person involved
- Undertake an investigation into the complaint to determine the best course of action to resolve the complaint
- Assess the complaint to be outside of the scope of the service and /or complaints procedure, and refer the complainant to other services that may be able to assist in resolving the complaint

**RELATED DOCUMENTS**

Discrimination, Harassment and EEO policy	POL107
Discrimination, Harassment and EEO procedure	PRO112
Policy: Complaints relating to service	POL017
DASSI Complaints report form	FOR135
Procedure: Incident Management - Client	PRO072
Staff grievance policy	POL012
Human Rights and Freedom from Abuse procedure	PRO079
Service management procedure	PRO081
Office of the Disability Services Commissioner	<a href="http://www.odsc.vic.gov.au">www.odsc.vic.gov.au</a>
Client Complaints register	REG002

**RESPONSIBILITY**

<b>Implementation:</b>	<b>Client Services Manager</b>
<b>Review:</b>	<b>General Manager Services</b>
<b>Approval:</b>	<b>Quality Sub-Committee</b>