

# Policy On Complaints Regarding Funded Partners

## 1 - Purpose

Each year United Way Greater Toronto (UWGT) receives complaints about UWGT-funded partners and initiatives. UWGT is committed to addressing complaints with a focus on enabling a process where participants can voice their concerns to service providers.

This policy is intended to formalize the intake and management process whereby complaints are made about a funded partner to UWGT. The policy will promote clarity and consistency as UWGT employees respond to a variety of different complaints and provide oversight to ensure that UWGT policies are being followed.

## 2 - Scope

This policy applies to all complaints received by UWGT staff from members of the public and agency or former agency staff about UWGT funded partners. It does not apply to complaints made by members of the public to UWGT about UWGT operations. Nor does it apply to questions received – see Appendix for the definition of a question versus a complaint.

UWGT and its funded partners are distinct and separate entities with independent governance and management structures. UWGT will refer complaints it receives to the funded partner and follow-up with them to ensure appropriate action has been taken but cannot guarantee resolution. All Community Services funded agencies are required by contract to have their own complaints policy and procedures. UWGT in general will not conduct investigations or mediate complaints unless there are patterns that reflect concerns about overall agency performance, or there is reasonable evidence that the agency has breached its contract with UWGT. The process of follow-up with the agency may enable a response or identify a policy or procedural issue that the agency can improve. Patterns of complaints may also signal other organizational health issues that will be considered by UWGT as part of its funding review.

## 3 - Policy

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction regarding the standard of service, action or lack of action, or decision taken by a currently funded partner/agency, or the way in which the organization's employees, volunteers or contractors carry out their duties.

Complaints may be made by any means, written, electronic, by phone, in person. Complaints may be received via various access points and will be directed to the Administrative Assistant for the Community Services team who will open the complaint in the tracking file, logging the date of receipt and forwarding the complaint to the Community Investment Manager (CIM) assigned to the funded agency named in the complaint. Where the complaint involves an agency or project outside the community services funding, the Director of Community Services will identify the most appropriate respondent for UWGT.

In all cases, the complainant will be treated with respect and kept informed of the status of the complaint, and the steps being followed.

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## 4 - Procedures

### Informal Complaints

As a first step, the UWGT employee handling the complaint, will encourage the complainant to talk to the funded agency in question. The CIM will request preliminary information from the complainant, including whether the complainant has undertaken the agency's own complaints procedure. The CIM will then ask the complainant if they wish to lodge a formal complaint that will be shared with the agency in efforts to seek resolution. If the complainant does not want to register a formal complaint or if the complainant is anonymous, the CIM may notify the agency of the concern with the complainant's consent but no further UWGT action will be taken. The CIM will log the presenting concern and initial steps under the informal complaints log. The Vice President of Investment and Development will review this log on a quarterly basis.

### Formal Complaints

If the complainant wishes to register a formal complaint the CIM will collect the contact information of the complainant(s) and may ask for more details verbally. Formal complaints will be made in writing and the individual will be informed that the CIM will notify the agency and follow up on the complaint. If the individual is unable to register their complaint in writing due to a disability or for other reasons, they may ask for accommodation and the CIM will record the details of the complaint and confirm these with the complainant before proceeding. The CIM may also propose a telephone or virtual meeting with the complainant to understand the issue in more detail. It is recommended that a second United Way staff should join the conversation.

The CIM will provide a description of the complaint and actions taken in the formal complaints tracking system.

The CIM will make a risk assessment of the complaint and ensure that the complainant is aware of and has engaged in the funded partner's complaints process. The CIM will notify the funded partner of the complaint made about the organization and will request information about the status of the complaint, the steps being followed and expected timelines of the organization's response. The CIM will then follow-up with the funded partner to ensure appropriate measures have been taken and monitor them to ensure timely response to the complainant. The CIM will notify the complainant of the steps they have taken. The CIM may also offer and provide support to the organization to address policy or procedural issues that have led to the complaint if the organization is interested in this support.

Actions taken by UWGT or agencies to resolve the issue will then be tracked in the formal complaints log.

If a funded partner's complaints process has been exhausted and the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they have the option to submit a written request to escalate the issue with UWGT. In this case, the CIM will escalate a complaint first to the Director of Community Investment and Development and if necessary, the Director will escalate to the Vice President of Community Investment and Development and finally to the CEO.

If the complaint is assessed to be of significant risk to UWGT, the complainant or other service recipients (i.e. funded partner criminal activity) the CIM will immediately notify the Director who may involve other teams at UWGT or escalate the complaint to the CEO. UWGT may take action on these complaints which could include changes to funding in these cases.

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### Closing Complaints

Once UWGT staff have received a report from the agency and have followed up with the complainant, the matter is generally considered to be closed unless it is escalated as above. Where the complainant has not provided further contact or information as part of the process for over 3 months, the complaint will also be considered closed.

In the case where a complainant continues to contact UWGT and the complaint has been escalated but cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, the VP Community Investment and Development may assess that the complaint is most appropriate to be handled by the agency without further UWGT intervention and will direct that the complaint should be closed.

### Review and Oversight

**All formal and informal complaints will be logged in a tracking sheet maintained by the Administrative Assistant for the CSS team. The log will include the date and time of the initial complaint, a general description of the complaint and actions taken by UWGT to understand the resolve the issue. If complainants disclose social identity data, this may also be recorded.**

All formal complaints will be reviewed by the Vice President of Community Investment and Development and senior members of the Community Investment team one month in advance of each board reporting cycle and will be reported to the CEO and Board of Directors as part of regular compliance reports provided at corresponding Board meetings. The review will include an analysis of any patterns or re-occurring issues with agencies. To protect the confidentiality of the complainant and the funded partner, the names of the complainants will be withheld from this reporting and any accompanying documentation will be secured separately in the appropriate organizational folder with restricted access.

**Third Party Complaints:** From time to time, individuals will contact UWGT on behalf of complainant. Unless there are issues of accessibility, UWGT can only discuss a complaint with the individual affected. If there is an issue of accessibility for the complainant, UWGT must have permission from the complainant for the third party to act on their behalf. If there is no permission, then this is treated as an anonymous complaint.

**Anonymous Complaints:** UWGT will not respond to an anonymous complaint since the details of the complaint cannot be verified. UWGT does, however, allow for the fact that some anonymous complaints may have value in providing feedback to UWGT, and will track these complaints in the Informal complaints tracking sheet. UWGT may also follow-up with a funded partner or another funder based on the significance of this feedback.

## 5 – Appendix

**Complaint vs. Question:** It is important to distinguish between a complaint and a question.

A complaint alleges deficiencies or infractions of stated policies or standards of service and requires examination.

The inquiry of an actual complaint may result in different types of resolutions. In some cases, the error can be quickly resolved for the complainant. In other cases, UWGT/the organization may not be able to change

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anything, but the complaint still needs to be handled with skill and sensitivity and requires a response from the agency in question. It is important to note that a constituent complaint may provide valuable information about an issue or what constituents perceive as an issue. In some cases, highlighting a specific issue may lead to a change in processes or policies to rectify a problem, whether real or perceived.

A question is an inquiry that asks for a reply and/ or information.

When the constituent's problem/inquiry is easily resolved by providing an answer, it is not a complaint, but a request for information or service; there is no deficiency and, therefore, no further investigation required once the information/answer is supplied. It is not a complaint and should not be recorded in the complaint tracking system. If a complaint turns out to be a request for information, it does not need to be tracked on the tracking system and any open record can be closed.

The inquiry of an actual complaint may result in different types of resolution.

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