



Government of South Australia

Department for Education and
Child Development

Families SA Client Feedback Policy

1 Intent

This policy intends to:

- Assist Families SA with the timely and effective management of client feedback including complaints, compliments and suggestions
- Enhance the ability of Families SA to identify trends and improve services based on client feedback
- Assist Families SA staff to be aware of their responsibilities in regards to client feedback.

2 Context

The Families SA Client Feedback Management Policy and associated procedures comply with the Australian Standard AS ISO 10002 - 2006 Customer Satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations.

The Families SA Client Feedback Management Policy replaces all existing operational divisions' policies in relation to client feedback and complaints management and will be consistently applied across all of Families SA.

The Families SA Client feedback management guidelines outlines Families SA approach to managing client feedback and provides greater detail on the:

- Principles underpinning the client feedback management
- Definitions
- Legislative and policy requirements
- Governance and roles
- Client feedback management process
- Client feedback management considerations
- Key performance indicators

3 Risk

By not adhering to the consistent, timely and effective management of client feedback, (and the opportunity for service improvement and performance management) Families SA risks litigation, significant financial loss, consumer dissatisfaction and poor service delivery outcomes for clients. The lack of a

consistent policy will also impact upon the capability of the department to report against SASP Target 32- Customer and client satisfaction with Government services and to meet relevant legislative responsibilities.

The severity of each client complaint received will be immediately assessed according to Families SA Severity Assessment Code table to determine the action required.

4 Reference Documents and Links

4.1 Directive Documents

- Health and Community Services Complaints Act 2004 (for complaints about 'community services' with the exception complaints about adoption matters, and applications to become a foster carer)
- Public Sector Act 2009
- SASP Target 32 - Customer and client satisfaction with Government services: Increase the satisfaction of South Australians with government services by 10% by 2014, maintaining or exceeding that level of satisfaction thereafter (*baseline: 2008*)

4.2 Supporting Documents

- AS ISO 10002-2006 Customer Satisfaction - Guidelines for Complaints Handling in Organisations
- Standards Australia Better Practice Guidelines on Complaints Management for Health Care Services – Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care
- Australian Safety & Quality Framework for Health Care
- Families SA Client Feedback System
- Care Concern Investigations Unit
- Child-Safe Environments Guidelines for Mandated Notifiers - Reporting Child Abuse & Neglect

4.3 Related Documents and Resources

- Information sharing guidelines for promoting the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and their families
- South Australia Government Information Privacy Principles Instruction
- Code of Conduct for South Australian Public Sector Employees, Office for the Commissioner of Public Employment
- Families SA Customer Service Standards
- HCSCC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outreach Project: *Ever felt like complaining* final report

5 Scope

This policy applies to all Families SA divisions that are involved in any way in the provision of client services or have a relationship with clients.

6 Definitions

Carer is used to refer to family members, guardians or friends who have an interest in, or are responsible for, the care of the Families SA client.

Client* is someone who has received, relies on or is the subject or benefits from Families SA services or programs. Interchangeable terms used are consumer and customer.

Complainant is any person, organisation or its representative, making a complaint.

Complaint is defined to include expressions of dissatisfaction or concerns about a Families SA service made by clients, their carers or others.

Consumer* is someone who has a direct relationship with, or is directly affected by Families SA.

Feedback is any comment/suggestion, compliment or complaint made by a client

Open Disclosure: The elements of open disclosure are an expression of regret, a factual explanation of what happened, the potential consequences of the incident, and the steps taken to manage the event and prevent recurrence.

Severity Assessment Code (SAC) is Families SA's assessment tool used to assess the severity of a client complaint and assist in determining the appropriate action.

**For the sake of brevity, the word client/consumer in the context of client feedback can also be a Families SA client's relative, carer, friend, service provider or any member of the public*

7 Policy Detail

7.1 Guiding Principles

The following principles guide Families SA management of all client feedback:

1. Commitment to clients and quality improvement

Families SA promotes a client focused approach to feedback as part of a continuous quality improvement program.

2. Accessible

Families SA encourages clients to provide feedback about the service, including comments, compliments and complaints, and makes it easy to do so.

3. Responsive

Families SA acknowledges all client feedback and responds promptly and sensitively.

4. Effective assessment

Families SA assesses client feedback to determine appropriate responses by considering risk factors, the wishes of the client and accountability.

5. Appropriate resolution

Families SA deals with client feedback in a manner that is complete, fair to all parties and provides just outcomes.

6. Privacy and open disclosure

Families SA collects, manages, uses and discloses personal information in accordance with the South Australia Government Information Privacy Principles Instruction.

7. Gathering and using information

Families SA records all client feedback to enable review of individual cases, to identify trends and risks, and report on how feedback has led to improvements.

8. Making improvements

Families SA uses client feedback to improve the service, and regularly evaluate the client feedback management policy and practices.

7.2 Governance and Roles

The following governance arrangements support Families SA client feedback management:

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive is responsible for:

- Encouraging an environment where client feedback is handled seriously and thoroughly
- Ensuring an effective client feedback management process is developed and in place for the department
- Ensuring appropriate actions are implemented to eliminate or minimise similar problems from occurring
- Providing quarterly summary reports for the Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner (for complaints falling within this jurisdiction)
- Promoting the rights of clients and carers to provide feedback, including complaints

Executive Leadership Team

The Executive Leadership Team is responsible for:

- Reviewing and evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of client feedback management policy including the promotion of the Families SA Client feedback management framework to clients and their carers.
- Reviewing reports from divisions on client feedback data and trend analysis.
- Identifying opportunities and need for service improvements.

Executive Directors

The Executive Director is responsible for:

- Ensuring client feedback is managed in line with the Families SA Client Feedback Management Policy and Managing Families SA Client Feedback Management procedure.
- Informing the Chief Executive of any high risk complaints, specifically allegations about abuse of clients.
- Reporting complaints where it is deemed to be high-risk, to the Manager of the HCSCC Complaint Resolution Services (if the complaint falls within this jurisdiction) and providing a summary of the actions taken and planned to resolve the complaint.
- Ensuring appropriate data collection processes are in place to enable quarterly summary reports for the Executive Leadership Team and the Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner (for complaints falling within this jurisdiction).
- Ensuring divisional staff understand the policy and procedures and promote the client feedback process to clients and their carers.

7.3 Client Feedback System

The Families SA Client Feedback System employs a three phase holistic approach to managing all types of client feedback:

1. Promote:

- a pro-active approach to promoting and encouraging client feedback from Families SA clients. Families SA must ensure that the process for providing client feedback is highly visible and accessible to all clients without fear of prejudice or retribution.
- an empowered and trained workforce that encourages and welcomes client feedback and understands that feedback provides a powerful mechanism for identifying current strengths and areas for improvement within Families SA.

2. Respond:

- receive client feedback
- assess client feedback to determine appropriate response
- respond, resolve and record client feedback as quickly and effectively as possible

3. Improve:

- follow up on client satisfaction with the client feedback process
- analysis of client feedback and identifying/implementing opportunities for business improvement

7.4 Key Performance Indicators

The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that measure Families SA Client Feedback Management System's effectiveness include:

- Number of client feedback received over 12 months for Families SA
- Number of client feedback received by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders over 12 months for Families SA
- The percentage of complaints closed within 30 working days
- The percentage of complaints acknowledged within five (5) working days
- Quarterly corporate governance meetings are held to identify areas for improvements

7.5 Reporting Requirements

Families SA is required to report on complaints to the HCSCC in order to provide information for the Commissioner's Annual Report and to Parliament in accordance with the reporting obligations identified within the Health and Community Services Complaints Act 2004.

7.6 Responsibilities

The *Families SA Client Feedback System* procedure provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities associated with each of the stakeholders both within and external to the department in relation to the governance of client feedback management.

8 Policy Approval

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