

THE HELP CENTRE OF NORTHUMBERLAND

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Complaints may be filed against the Northumberland Community Legal Centre, against the Help Centre, or against the corporate body, The Help Centre of Northumberland. In each case, the procedure required to deal with the complaint is slightly different, so each will be described in turn.

TYPES OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE LEGAL CENTRE (the Clinic)

- 1.01 Complaints may include but are not limited to
- (a) denial of service to a potential client;
 - (b) the quality of legal service provided to a client;
 - (c) the scope of the Clinic's authority to utilize public funds for a particular purpose in accordance with the regulation on Clinic funding
- 1.02 A complaint may be between the Clinic and a person provided with services by the Clinic or between the Clinic and a person affected by the services provided by the Clinic.

PROCEDURE FOR COMPLAINTS INVOLVING THE LEGAL CENTRE

- 2.01 Notification of the existence of the Complaints Policy shall be posted within the public area of the Clinic, and shall form part of the retainer.
- 2.02 Complaints must be submitted in writing to the Executive Director within twenty-one (21) calendar days of the event described in the complaint. The complainant must state a mailing address for a reply in the written complaint.
- 2.03 When a complaint involving the Clinic is submitted, the Executive Director shall:
- (a) immediately inform the Executive Committee of the Board of receipt of said complaint and
 - (b) within seven (7) calendar days,
 - (i) prepare a written report for the Executive Committee and
 - (ii) inform the complainant of the complaints procedure to be followed.
- 2.04 The complaint shall be considered by the Executive Committee within ten (10) calendar days of receiving the complaint. If the complainant wishes, the complainant may appear in person before the Executive Committee. All steps shall be taken to ensure that information which is confidential to any client or former client is withheld unless the person consents to its disclosure.
- 2.05 The Executive Committee shall, upon completion of its investigation, prepare a written decision with reasons. A copy of the decision shall be provided to the

complainant and a copy shall be provided to the Board of Directors within seven (7) calendar days of the decision.

2.06 If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the Executive Committee, the complainant has a right to appeal and have the complaint dealt with by the Board of Directors. The request to appeal to the Board must be made in writing to the Executive Director within seven (7) calendar days of the complainant receiving the Executive Committee's decision. The complainant is deemed to have received the Executive Committee's decision 5 days after mailing to the address stated in the complaint.

2.07 When such request is submitted, the Executive Director shall:

- (a) immediately inform the Chair of the Board of receipt of said appeal, and
- (b) within seven (7) calendar days,
 - (i) prepare a written report for the Board and
 - (ii) inform the complainant of the appeals procedure to be followed.

2.08 The appeal shall be considered by the Board of Directors within ten (10) calendar days of receiving the appeal. If the complainant wishes, the complainant may appear in person before the Board. All steps shall be taken to ensure that information which is confidential to any client or former client is withheld unless the person consents to its disclosure.

2.09 The Board shall, upon completion of its investigation, prepare a written decision with reasons and provide a copy to the complainant all within seven (7) calendar days of the decision.

2.10 Prior to the Clinic making a final disposition of the complaint, the complainant shall be notified that Legal Aid Ontario has a Complaints Policy if the complainant is not satisfied with the Clinic's disposition of the complaint.

2.11 The Board of Directors shall report annually to Legal Aid Ontario on the disposition of any complaints received.

TYPES OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE HELP CENTRE (THC)

3.01 Complaints may include but are not limited to

- (a) denial of service to a potential client;
- (b) the quality of service provided to a client
- (c) the scope of THC's authority to utilize public funds for a particular purpose in accordance with its funders' guidelines

3.02 A complaint may be between THC and a person provided with services by THC or between THC and a person affected by the services provided by THC.

PROCEDURE FOR COMPLAINTS INVOLVING THE HELP CENTRE (THC)

4.01 Notification of the existence of the Complaints Policy shall be posted within the public area of the Help Centre.

4.02 Complaints must be submitted in writing to the Managing Director of THC within twenty-one (21) calendar days of the event described in the complaint. The complainant must state a mailing address for a reply in the written complaint.

4.03 When a complaint involving THC is submitted, the Managing Director for THC shall,

- (a) immediately inform the Executive Committee of the Board of receipt of said complaint and
- (b) within seven (7) calendar days,
 - (i) prepare a written report for the Executive Committee and
 - (ii) inform the complainant of the complaints procedure to be followed.

4.04 The complaint shall be considered by the Executive Committee within ten (10) calendar days of receiving the complaint. If the complainant wishes, the complainant may appear in person before the Executive Committee. All steps shall be taken to ensure that information which is confidential to any client or former client is withheld unless the person consents to its disclosure.

4.05 The Executive Committee shall, upon completion of its investigation, prepare a written decision with reasons. A copy of the decision shall be provided to the complainant, and a copy shall be provided to the Board of Directors, all within seven (7) calendar days of the decision.

4.06 If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the Executive Committee, the complainant has a right to appeal and have the complaint dealt with by the Board of Directors and to appear before the Board of Directors. The request to appear before the Board must be made in writing to the Managing Director within seven (7) calendar days of receiving the Executive Committee's decision. The complainant is deemed to have received the Executive Committee's decision 5 days after mailing to the address stated in the complaint.

4.07 When such request is submitted, the Managing Director shall

- (a) immediately inform the Chair of the Board of receipt of said appeal and
- (b) within seven (7) calendar days,
 - (i) prepare a written report for the Board and
 - (ii) inform the complainant of the appeals procedure to be followed.

4.08 The appeal shall be considered by the Board of Directors within ten (10) calendar days of receiving the appeal. If the complainant wishes, the complainant may appear in person before the Board. All steps shall be taken to ensure that information which is confidential to any client or former client is withheld unless the person consents to its disclosure.

4.09 The Board shall, upon completion of its investigation, prepare a written decision with reasons and provide a copy to the complainant within seven (7) calendar days of the decision.

TYPES OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE HELP CENTRE OF NORTHUMBERLAND (THCofN)

5.01 Complaints may include but are not limited to

- (a) complaints of staff against staff (intra- or inter-agency), volunteers or board members,
- (b) complaints of volunteers or board members against volunteer or board member,
- (c) complaints of members of the organization against the organization
- (d) complaints of the public against the organization.

5.02 A complaint may be between The Help Centre of Northumberland (THCofN) and a person affected by the actions of THCofN.

PROCEDURES FOR COMPLAINTS INVOLVING THE HELP CENTRE OF NORTHUMBERLAND

6.01 Complaints of staff against staff or staff against volunteer (intra-agency) may first be submitted orally to the respective Executive Director or Managing Director who will attempt to informally facilitate/mediate a decision that is acceptable to all parties involved.

6.02 Complaints made by staff against staff or staff against volunteer (inter-agency) may first be submitted orally to both the Executive Director and the Managing Director, who will jointly attempt to informally facilitate/mediate a decision that is acceptable to all parties involved.

6.03 If such facilitation/mediation fails, the complaint must be submitted in writing within seven (7) calendar days of the failure of mediation. In all other cases of complaints the complaint must be submitted in writing within twenty-one (21) calendar days of the event described in the complaint. When a complaint involving THCofN is submitted, complaints are submitted directly to the Executive Committee through the Chair of the Board.

6.04 After a complaint is submitted, the Chair of the Board shall,

- (a) immediately inform the Executive Committee of the Board of receipt of said complaint and
- (b) within seven (7) calendar days,
 - (i) prepare a written report for the Executive Committee and
 - (ii) inform the complainant of the complaints procedure to be followed.

6.05 The complaint shall be considered by the Executive Committee within ten (10) calendar days of receiving the complaint. If the complainant wishes, the complainant may appear in person before the Executive Committee. All steps shall be taken to ensure that information which is confidential to any client or former client is withheld unless the person consents to its disclosure.

6.06 The Executive Committee shall, upon completion of its investigation, prepare a written decision with reasons. A copy of the decision shall be provided to the complainant, and a copy shall be provided to the Board of Directors, all within seven (7) calendar days of the decision.

6.07 If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the Executive Committee, the complainant has a right to appeal and have the complaint dealt with by the Board of Directors and to appear before the Board of Directors. The request to appear before the Board must be made in writing to the Chair of the Board within seven (7) calendar days of receiving the Executive Committee's decision. The complainant is deemed to have received the Executive Committee's decision 5 days after mailing to the address stated in the complaint.

- 6.08 When such request is submitted, the Chair of the Board shall
- (a) immediately inform the Board of receipt of said appeal and
 - (b) within seven (7) calendar days,
 - (i) prepare a written report for the Board and
 - (ii) inform the complainant of the appeals procedure to be followed.

6.09 The appeal shall be considered by the Board of Directors within ten (10) calendar days of receiving the appeal. If the complainant wishes, the complainant may appear in person before the Board. All steps shall be taken to ensure that information which is confidential to any client or former client is withheld unless the person consents to its disclosure.

6.10 The Board shall, upon completion of its investigation, prepare a written decision with reasons and provide a copy to the complainant within seven (7) calendar days of the decision.

Passed as revised by the Board of Directors on April 23, 2007.

(Revised May 2010)

