



# MSS & WAABINY OSHC SUGGESTIONS, COMPLAINTS (GRIEVANCES) & APPEALS POLICY



## PURPOSE

To ensure that suggestions, complaints (grievances) and appeals, have a defined process to follow and can be dealt with in manner that resolves the cause satisfactorily in the most simple and expeditious form.

- To ensure all parents/families feel empowered to provide suggestions, raise concerns about all aspects of the operation of Montessori Stepping Stones (MSS), as well as to raise contentious issues, and provide critical feedback without any concern that their comments will lead to any victimisation or prejudice to themselves or their child.
- To allow management to monitor the quality of service provided and identify any deficiencies.
- To encourage employees to be responsive to the needs and concerns of parents/families and their children; thus helping to develop and refine our service and its practices and procedures.
- To encourage comments and responses from parents/families and contractors (3rd parties, that can lead to improvements in service quality.
- To focus on the needs of children and their parents/families with the intent of resolving the complaint (grievance) to their satisfaction wherever possible within the group setting.
- To encourage a culture at MSS that values comment and response as an opportunity for continually raising and dealing with necessary improvements to our services.

## SCOPE

Management, employees and parents as well as custodians of children enrolled at MSS.

## DESCRIPTION/GENERAL

Through MSS' continuous improvement system (Quality Improvement Plan) and its objective towards preventative actions and continuous improvement the aim is to prevent any situation where a customer (all stake holders) of MSS should have a grievance, need to appeal or complain.

Communication and the ability to objectively and factually listen to suggestions or the potential cause for grievance, complaint or appeal and then providing options to resolve the issue instantly may resolve causes immediately. Everyone should aim at solving any issue immediately with anyone involved and at the most direct organisational level possible. Being attentive and open for needs of others is paramount in an organisation, for positive business as well as operational outcomes as well as human beings interacting with each other.

Parents/families are actively encouraged to be involved in all aspects of our service delivery, which is based on the principles of equity, affordability, and accountability.

For parents/families to have confidence in the quality of care provided by our service; it is important that they are aware of their ability to influence the nature of the service.

This means that parents/families know they have a right to comment on or appeal against any action or decision, which has unfavourable consequences for them or their children. This grievance, appeals and complaint policy is formal recognition, promotion and protection of each parent/family rights. Young

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children often react poorly to changing their child care services, causing upset disruption and concern for parents. Hence, it is important that parents have a viable alternative to dealing with problems that arise with their child's care and education, without having to move their child to another centre.

Each parent/family has a right to a positive response from MSS, to meet the parents/families particular needs.

### DEFINITIONS/PRINCIPLES/STRATEGIES

In all cases, upon receipt of notification of a suggestion, grievance, appeal or complaint, the educator/employee involved will inform management as soon as is practical. **In no circumstances will any individual employee make a decision in a suggestion, an appeal or grievance matter without consultation with management.**

If the grievance relates to a customer, the immediate MSS employee is the first point of contact. If this is not possible the individual must inform management as soon as is practical.

#### Management will:

- Encourage employees to identify parent/family concerns and ensure such concerns are addressed at the earliest opportunity
- Establish unbiased centre procedures to reduce any potential power inequities between parents/families and our service
- Ensure that parents/families are not treated unfairly or that the service(s) will be withheld if they raise a concern, grievance or complaint
- Deal with all grievances promptly and keep the complainant well informed of progress toward the resolution of the grievance
- Protect the rights of employee relating to any grievance, and ensure all outcomes will be based on the principles of natural justice. Ensure all processes and procedures adopted are clear, transparent and fully explained to all concerned.
- Maintain privacy and confidentiality to the maximum extent possible and assure parents/families and employees of this
- Give parents/families written information concerning the Suggestion, Grievance, Appeals and Complaints Policy at enrolment, and explain the policy to parents/families in a positive welcoming manner
- Ensure information about grievances is given on a regular basis, as parents/families may not remember all information given during the busy enrolment period
- Keep a register of all grievances received, detailing action taken to address the matter, who was involved and the outcome

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### All employees will:

- Encourage parents/families to feel comfortable about making suggestions, raising concerns, by being open and positive in response
- Ensure any such suggestions, concerns raised with them are addressed at the earliest opportunity, whether they concern the employee personally or not
- Respond in a positive manner when a parent/family member has chosen to approach an educator/employee with a concern about another employee. Treat the matter with the utmost confidentiality, and raise the matter with management, as you feel appropriate.

If the grievance is against management, the employee may raise the matter with the nominated supervisor. Where a grievance raised by a parent/family member has been resolved, inform management of the success of that process.

Where you are uncertain about how to deal with a grievance raised by a parent/family member, you should seek support and assistance from either the nominated supervisor or management.

Where you are unable to deal with a grievance raised by a parent/family member, or where the grievance issue is outside your control, you should seek support or assistance from management. Maintain privacy and confidentiality for parents/families, children and other employees to the maximum extent possible. Parents/families will be encouraged by all employees to follow the following procedure:

- Parents/families are asked to raise all grievances at service-level first. This will give those most closely involved an opportunity to address any issues in the light of a detailed awareness of the everyday issues faced at the centre and a detailed knowledge of the parents/families and child.
- Parents/families are asked to remain aware that at any stage of a suggestion, grievance/appeal/complaint procedure, they may ask any other person to act as an agent, support, adviser or intermediary on their behalf. If appropriate, and parents/families feel comfortable doing so, the parents/families may approach the employees involved and if needed set a time where the matter can be discussed appropriately. Grievances at this level will normally be resolved by discussion and clarification of the needs or wishes of the parents/families, or by clarification by the employee of the centre procedures or policies.
- If the parent/family member does not wish to speak with the particular employee involved, then they may approach another employee with whom they do feel comfortable. With the parents/families consent, this employee may then approach the original person and explain the grievance.
- The service management or person in charge will subsequently be notified about the grievance and its outcome.

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## **VERBAL PROCEDURE AT CENTRE LEVEL**

The parents/families may raise their suggestions, grievance with the service management, if the previous step does not produce a satisfactory outcome to the parties involved, or if the person concerned feels it is not appropriate.

The service management will research the grievance/situation and work towards reaching a satisfactory outcome for all parties involved. Again, grievances at this level will normally be resolved by discussion and clarification of the needs or wishes of the parents/families, or by clarification by the service management of policies and/or procedures involved.

## **WRITTEN PROCEDURE AT CENTRE LEVEL**

Any suggestions, grievances or complaints that cannot be dealt with verbally and positively, should be put in writing (email) to the service management. Resolution may also involve the development of new policy or procedures if the matter or point of view raised has not previously arisen or been considered at the centre. Parents/families are asked to raise all suggestion, grievances directly and at service-level first. After exhausting all communication pathways i.e. verbal and/or written, with the appropriate employees/parents at the centre level, parents/families/employees may raise their suggestions or grievance with the nominated supervisor if the previous step does not produce a satisfactory outcome to the parties involved, or if the person concerned feels it is not appropriate.

The nominated supervisor will research the grievance/situation and try to reach a satisfactory outcome for all parties involved. Grievances at this level will not normally be able to be resolved by further discussion and/or clarification since such discussion will have already occurred. Resolution may involve the development of new policy or procedures or the provision of new information or viewpoints to support or explain the centre's existing policies and procedures. If mediation is required then the nominated supervisor will either act as mediator or ensure a mediator acceptable to both parties is available to assist.

## **OUTSIDE AGENCIES**

If satisfactory resolution could not be met at these levels the issue may be raised at the

### **Education and Care Regulatory Unit**

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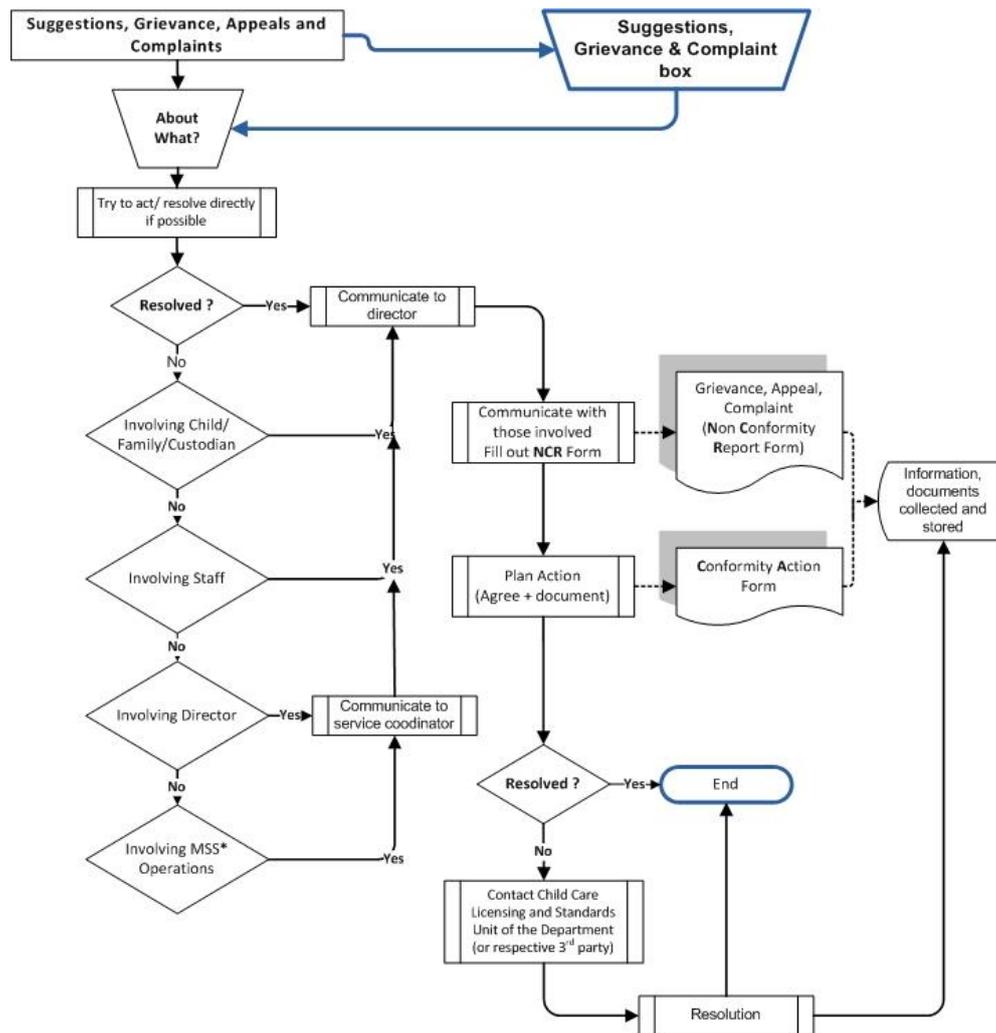
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