

POLICY NAME: **Dispute Resolution**

CATEGORY: COMMUNICATION

POLICY:

ETHOS staff and management recognize the importance of maintaining positive relationships with our stakeholders; clients, staff, service providers, subcontractors, government bodies, community partners and the general public.

Should disputes arise with any of our stakeholders, ETHOS has a series of progressive steps. This process allows for a quick, effective and mutually-acceptable outcome, which will also provide an opportunity for the organization to learn and improve.

STANDARDS:

ETHOS staff and management follows the dispute resolution process in an objective, fair and transparent way that is respectful of all parties, timelines, confidentiality, and also allows for third-party representation and protection from victimization. ETHOS staff and management adhere to the following standards:

Confidentiality:

The dispute resolution process is highly confidential. Those responsible for dealing with issues and their resolution must not discuss the matter with anyone else, except for the people that initiated the dispute and those that are directly involved. A breach of confidentiality is seen as a serious issue of misconduct, which may lead to disciplinary action.

Any documentation, either paper or electronic, generated from the dispute resolution process must be stored in a secure place.

Documentation:

Every step of the dispute resolution process is documented, from the initial complaint to the final decision. If the Integrated Case Management (ICM) system is in use for client-related complaints, then all steps of the dispute resolution process must also be documented in ICM as they occur by the ETHOS staff member or Manager involved in that step.

Transparency:

ETHOS staff and management provide an expected response time to the complainant at every step of the dispute resolution process. Progress updates of the dispute resolution process are shared with all parties at a minimum of one-week intervals.

Representation:

Complainants may initiate a dispute on their own behalf, or have an appropriate third party initiate the dispute and represent their interests in the dispute.

Protection from Victimization:

Complainants who are involved in disputes must not be treated less-favourably because of their involvement in this process. Such treatment is regarded as victimization, and may be viewed as discrimination or harassment.

If a complainant believes they are being victimized in any way, they must immediately notify the CEO or another Senior Manager.

PROCEDURES:**1. Step One – Informal Resolution**

ETHOS encourages any stakeholder to attempt to resolve issues that may include service quality, wait times, health and safety concerns etc. in an informal way with the person(s) involved as soon as they occur.

If this attempt at resolution is unsuccessful, the complainant may then either contact ETHOS staff or management, who will provide the complainant with the Dispute Resolution Policy and the Dispute Resolution Form (Appendix A). The complainant may also access the policy and form via the ETHOS website.

At the complainant's request, ETHOS staff or management will review this policy and form with the complainant, and, if requested, assist the complainant in completing the Dispute Resolution Form. The completed form will be forwarded to the appropriate ETHOS Manager within one (1) business day. The resolution process will then progress to Step Two.

2. Step Two – Resolution Meeting

Within two (2) business days of receiving the Dispute Resolution Form, the appropriate ETHOS Manager will contact the complainant to obtain more details of the issue(s). The Manager will also contact the staff person (if any) involved in the complaint, and any advocates or witnesses the complainant has identified as being knowledgeable of the issue(s).

Within ten (10) business days of receiving the Dispute Resolution Form, the appropriate ETHOS Manager will arrange for a resolution meeting with all parties, in an attempt to resolve the dispute with a mutually agreeable outcome. The meeting will include the

communication of the issue(s) from each party's perspective, a review of any supporting documentation, a gathering of consensus on the issue(s), and developing a plan on how to resolve the issue(s).

If there is consensus for a mutually agreeable outcome at this meeting, then all parties and the CEO or designate will receive a written summary of the meeting and the plan to address the issue.

The Manager conducting the meeting is responsible for following through with the requirements of the agreed resolution and will document the steps towards completion

If the meeting does not result in a consensus for a mutually-agreeable outcome, then all parties and the CEO or designate will receive a written summary of the meeting and the dispute will progress to Step Three.

3. Step Three – Executive Resolution

Within ten (10) business days of the resolution meeting, the CEO or designate will review all documentation from Step Two, and arrange a meeting with the complainant in an effort to resolve the dispute.

The CEO or designate will provide a written decision to all parties within five (5) business days of the final meeting. This decision is final with respect to ETHOS' decision-making.

4. Step Four – Decision Review Process

In the event the decision by the CEO or designate in Step Three results in a client being refused a service, and the client believes that the refusal was not justified, the CEO or designate will offer the client an opportunity to have the decision reviewed by a neutral third-party reviewer who has sufficient knowledge and expertise to provide a fair, objective and informed opinion.

The neutral reviewer will provide the CEO or designate with the findings of the review in writing. The results of the review will be shared with the client and the CEO or designate must make the review available to the appropriate governing body upon request.

The CEO or designate is responsible for ensuring decisions follow the principles of administrative fairness.

APPENDIX A:

Dispute Resolution Form

**CROSS-REFERENCE: Client Harassment Policy
 Staff Harassment Policy**

EFFECTIVE DATE:

Passed by ETHOS Directors on September 20, 2003, Revised May 10, 2019.