

## COMPLAINTS

### PURPOSE

Meditech is committed to ensuring that any person or organisation using Meditech services or affected by its operations has the right to lodge a complaint or to appeal a decision of the organisation. All concerns that are raised will be addressed in ways that ensure access and equity, fairness, accountability and transparency.

Meditech will provide a complaints and appeals management procedure that:

- allows any person to make a complaint or provide feedback
- facilitates complaints by cultivating a supportive environment in which they can be made
- is simple, accessible and easy to use
- is effectively communicated and promoted to all clients and stakeholders
- is proportionate to the size of the organisation and the services it provides
- ensures complaints or appeals are fairly assessed and responded to promptly
- is procedurally fair and follows principles of natural justice
- complies with legislative requirements.

### POLICY

Meditech will:

- Ensure that all clients, and their families, carers and advocates are encouraged and supported to raise any concerns they have about our services or organisation.
- Consider all complaints it receives regardless of whether or not the complainant is a client of the organisation.
- Treat all complainants with respect, recognising that the issue of complaint is important to the complainant.
- Maintain confidentiality of parties involved, keeping any information private to those directly involved in the complaint and its resolution. Information will only be disclosed if required by law, or if otherwise necessary.
- Ensure support and advocacy is available to clients who make a complaint and require support.
- Resolve complaints, where possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant.
- Ensure clients, families and advocates have access to the organisation's complaints management policy.
- Deal with all complaints in a timely manner and aim to provide a formal response to the complainant within 4 weeks of the complaint being received.
- Keep parties to the complaint appropriately involved and informed of progress of the complaint.
- Ensure that all senior management and staff are given information about the complaints procedure as part of their induction and are aware of procedures for managing client feedback and complaints.

- Ensure all service users, stakeholders and members are aware of the complaints policy and procedures.
- Ensure that all complainants are aware of and understand how to escalate their complaint to the relevant external body.
- Ensure that a complainant is not penalised in any way or prevented from use of services during the progress of an issue.
- Ensure that feedback data (both positive and negative) is considered in organisational reviews and in planning service improvements.
- Review and evaluate the accessibility and effectiveness of the complaints management system and continually improve its processes.
- Ensure that it formally reports complaints to the relevant external body (if required).

## SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees of Meditech, clients, their families, carers and advocates.

## DEFINITIONS

**Complaint:** is an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation regarding its staff, services or products that warrants response or resolution.

**Complainant:** is an employee, client, advocate, entity or member of the public who expresses their dissatisfaction about an organisation or its services to either the organisation itself or an external body.

**Escalation:** is the process of reporting complaints to the relevant external body if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint.

**Relevant External Body:** this could be the funding body (e.g. NDIS), regulatory body or the associated quality and safety agency.

## PROCEDURES

### Information for clients

Meditech's complaints and appeals policy and procedure is documented on the Meditech website and within the Client Handbook.

Meditech will provide support to access translation, advocacy, or other support services where appropriate.

All clients will be informed of their rights and responsibilities with regards to complaints and appeals at the earliest possible stage of their involvement with the organisation.

The Client Handbook and Meditech website contains information on the following:

- How to make a complaint or lodge an appeal, including an anonymous complaint.
- Contact person for lodging a complaint or appeal.

- How the organisation will deal with the complaint or appeal, the steps involved and the timelines.
- The rights of the complainant to an advocate, support person or interpreter.
- How the person will be informed about the outcome of their complaint or appeal.
- How to make a complaint to an external body including contact details.

### **Training procedures**

All Meditech staff will be trained on the complaints management procedure during their induction, and as part of ongoing refresher training.

Managers and relevant staff will undergo training for complaints management and resolution to support clients throughout the complaint process and appropriately respond to complaints in an empathetic manner. This will include open disclosure strategies such as acknowledging the grievance without being defensive and making apologies while accepting responsibility for what occurred.

### **Making a complaint**

A person wishing to make a complaint may do so in writing or verbally to:

- the staff member they were dealing with at the time;
- the direct Manager of that staff member;
- the Quality Manager or a Director; or
- the relevant external body.

Alternatively, a client wishing to make a complaint may also do so in writing or verbally to any contact person within Meditech they choose.

Complaints may be made by:

- Submitting a completed Feedback and Complaints form which is available on the Meditech website. The form link can also be emailed to the complainant on request.
- Written complaints may be sent via:  
Email: [quality@meditechstaffing.com.au](mailto:quality@meditechstaffing.com.au)  
Post: Meditech Staffing  
Attn: Quality Team  
PO Box 1439  
Strathfield NSW 2135
- Feedback and complaints via telephone may be made by calling (02) 9764 4488.
- Anonymous complaints may be made by post or via the Feedback and Complaints section on the Meditech website.

If the complaint is about:

- A staff member, the complaint will normally be dealt with by their direct Manager.
- A senior manager, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the Managing Director.
- The Director / Managing Director, the complaint will normally be dealt with by another Director.

## Lodging an appeal

Clients or their advocates may lodge an appeal if they disagree with a decision made by the organisation, or by a staff member. An appeal should be made in writing by email or post and submitted to the Managing Director.

## Procedure for complaints and appeals management

Any staff member may be a recipient of a complaint, and is responsible for:

1. Receiving the complaint:
  - Listening to the complainant, acknowledging the concern raised, and explaining the next steps to the complainant.
  - Depending on the type and severity of the complaint, either discussing with the complainant an agreed resolution (for smaller matters) or referring the complaint for further investigation and action within 24 hours as outlined in Table 1 below.
  - If the complainant is a client (including a service provider client), provide them with the opportunity to choose an alternative manager within Meditech to manage and investigate their complaint.

Table 1

Department	Complainant	Complaint Managed and Investigated By	Notify
Community	Client (Broker)	Case Manager or an alternative manager as requested by the client	Direct Manager, Quality Coordinator & Directors
	Client (Managed)	Case Manager or an alternative manager as requested by the client	Direct Manager, Quality Coordinator & Directors
	Support Worker	Team Leader – Community Coordinators	Direct Manager, Quality Coordinator & Directors
	Service Provider Client	Team Leader – Community Coordinator or General Manager Service Delivery	Direct Manager, Quality Coordinator & Directors
Nursing Agency	Service Provider Client (Facility)	Clinical Nurse Educator	Direct Manager, Quality Coordinator & Directors
	Service Provider Client (Head Office)	General Manager Service Delivery	Direct Manager, Quality Coordinator & Directors
	Agency Worker (RN, AIN, GSO)	Clinical Nurse Educator	Direct Manager, Quality Coordinator & Directors
Office Staff	Staff Member	Staff members upline Manager	Direct Manager, Quality Coordinator & Directors

### Note:

- Where a complaint is made directly to Reception, their direct Manager will decide who will investigate the complaint based on the table above.

The person managing and investigating the complaint will be responsible for:

2. Processing the complaint or appeal:

- Recording the complaint in the Compliments, Complaints and Suggested Improvement system (online form) (to be recorded in the Quality Register).
- Notifying other persons as per Table 1 above.
- Informing the complainant that their complaint has been received and providing them with information about the process and time frame in writing.
- Notifying any external authorities if required.

3. Investigating the complaint or appeal:

- Examining the complaint as soon as the complaint is received.
- Investigating the complaint and deciding how to respond. The following matters should be considered when developing a course of action:
  - A detailed summary of the complaint should be obtained and discussion with the complainant if further clarification is required.
  - Identification of possible witnesses who could provide information through interview.
  - Development of relevant questions which would assist in interviewing relevant witnesses / persons.
  - Documents or files which could be reviewed to provide relevant information.
- Informing the complainant by letter within 5 days of the complaint being received of what is being done to investigate and resolve it, and the expected time frame for resolution.

As far as possible, complaints or appeals will be investigated and resolved within 4 weeks of being received. If this time frame cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the reasons why and of the alternative time frame for resolution.

4. Responding to and resolving the complaint:

- Making a decision or referring to the appropriate people for a decision within 4 weeks of the complaint being received.
- Informing the complainant of the outcome and the reasons for any decisions made.
- Informing the complainant, if no further action can be taken, the reasons for this.
- Informing the complainant of any options for further action if required.
- Ensure that the appropriate person makes an apology and informs the complainant what Meditech intends to do to avoid further grievance.

5. Reviewing the complaint:

If the complainant is not satisfied with the investigation and proposed resolution of their complaint or appeal, they can seek a further review of the matter by contacting:

Mr Rod Laycock Managing Director Meditech Staffing	Direct phone: 02 9159 0008 Email: <a href="mailto:rod@meditechstaffing.com.au">rod@meditechstaffing.com.au</a>
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6. Referral to external procedure:

A formal external complaints procedure may follow Step 4 if the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome and wishes to escalate the matter. The complainant will be referred to the following relevant external body and provided information and support to make the complaint if necessary:

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission	<a href="http://www.agedcarequality.gov.au">www.agedcarequality.gov.au</a> or call 1800 951 822
NDIS Commission	<a href="http://www.ndiscommission.gov.au">www.ndiscommission.gov.au</a> or call 1800 035 544
NSW Ombudsman	<a href="http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au">www.ombo.nsw.gov.au</a> or call 1800 451 524

**Complaints involving specific staff members**

Internal complaints, where a staff member makes a complaint concerning another staff member, will be dealt with in accordance with Meditech’s Grievance Resolution policy.

External complaints by clients or stakeholders made against a staff member will be managed by their team leader, supervisor or manager as per Table 1 above, who will:

- Notify the staff member of the complaint and its nature.
- Investigate the complaint and provide the staff member with an opportunity to respond to any issues raised.
- Attempt to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the outside party.
- Take any other action necessary to resolve the issue.

Any disciplinary action against a staff member arising from a complaint will be taken in accordance with the procedures contained in Meditech’s Performance and Misconduct policy.

Complaints involving the Director / Managing Director will be managed by another Director.

**Complaints involving the Board**

Complaints made against a member of the Board will be referred to the Chairperson. The Chairperson, or their delegate, will:

- Notify the person (about whom a complaint is being made) of the complaint and its nature.
- Investigate the complaint and provide the person with an opportunity to respond to any issues raised.
- Attempt to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the outside party.

Where the Chairperson is the subject of a complaint, the complaint should be referred to the Secretary who in turn will refer the matter to the Board for the nomination of an appropriate person to manage and investigate the complaint. In this case, the Chairperson will be regarded as having a conflict of interest in the matter.

If the matter remains unresolved, the Chairperson or appointed office bearer will raise the matter at the next Board meeting. Depending on the seriousness of the complaint, the Board may deal with the matter at its meeting.

### **Cooperation in external investigations**

If any person makes a complaint about Meditech to an external body (including police, Ombudsman) the Managing Director or their delegate will be responsible for liaising with the body responsible for investigating the issue. Meditech will fully cooperate in any investigation which may take place. This includes participating in early resolution, conciliation, and/or reporting to the body about resolution and corrective actions if required.

### **Record keeping**

A register of complaints and appeals will be recorded in the Quality Register and kept for a minimum of seven years after the complaint has been made. The register will be maintained by the Quality Coordinator and will record the following for each complaint or appeal:

- Details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint
- Date lodged
- Action taken
- Date of resolution and reason for decision
- Indication of complainant being notified of outcome
- Complainant response and any further action

Copies of all correspondence will be kept in the relevant client and / or staff file.

The Quality Register and files will be confidential, and access is restricted to Senior Management and the Quality Team.

A statistical summary of complaints and appeals will also be kept in the Quality Register and maintained by the Quality Manager. The Quality Manager will be responsible for preparing a report on the number and types of complaints received at the monthly Quality Meetings and provide a report to the Board monthly.

Results from this report will be reviewed by the Senior Management team and used to:

- Inform service planning by including a review of complaints and appeals in all service planning, monitoring and evaluation activities.
- Inform decision making by including a report on complaints and appeals as a standard item on staff and management meeting agendas.

## **Continuous improvement of the complaints management system**

The complaints management system will be reviewed and evaluated annually. This will include:

- Review of all complaint and feedback policies and procedures.
- Client and staff feedback about the accessibility and effectiveness of the complaints management system.
- Implementation of a continuous improvement plan based on the review and feedback received.

## **RELEVANT DOCUMENTS**

- Abuse and Neglect
- Consent
- Decision-Making and Choice
- Documentation and Record Keeping
- Privacy, Dignity and Confidentiality
- Feedback and Complaints Form
- Performance and Misconduct
- Quality Register

## **LEGISLATION AND CROSS-REFERENCE**

Aged Care Act 1997

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Act 2018 (Act)

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Rules 2018 (Rules)

Aged Care Quality Standards: 6 - Feedback and Complaints, Requirements 3 (a), (b), (c) and (d)

National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013

National Disability Insurance Scheme (Complaints Management and Resolution) Rules 2018

NDIS Practice Standards

- Core Module:
  1. Rights and Responsibilities
    - Violence, Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation and Discrimination
  2. Provider Governance and Operational Management
    - Risk Management
    - Feedback and Complaints Management