

 Policy #: PG-4	Effective Date:	Page #:
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COMPONENT: PROGRAM DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT - PROGRAM GOVERNANCE

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY OR PARENT COMPLAINTS

POLICY: To establish and maintain a procedure for working with grantee agency to resolve community and parent complaints about the program.

PROCEDURE:

This policy describes how community members and/or program participants (parents/guardians) may present complaints about the Head Start program, any Head Start Center staff member or Highland Rim Economic Corporation/Head Start staff member. For staff grievances, Head Start staff members are referred to the Grievance Policy of Highland Rim Economic Corporation/Head Start as their avenue for dealing with any complaints.

The Community Complaint procedure may be used when the complainant feels Head Start policies have been violated. Appropriate cases might include alleged:

1. Unfair or arbitrary application of enrollment policy
2. Violation of Head Start policies and procedures
3. Inappropriate practices with children
4. Suspected abuse
5. Breach of confidentiality
6. Unethical conduct
7. Discriminatory actions

Informal Resolution of Complaints

Complaints about local center issues should first be brought to the Family Service Manager. Most complaints can be resolved by informal discussions between the complainant and the staff member or Family Service Manager.

Formal Complaints

1. Any community member or Head Start parent may use the complaint procedure.
2. Formal complaints pertaining to Highland Rim Head Start staff or a Family Advocate shall go immediately to the Family Service Manager in a confidential manner.
3. There will be no retaliation against a complainant or their child for using the complaint procedure. Such alleged action shall constitute grounds for a separate complaint.

Responsibility of person filing complaint

1. The person receiving the complaint will put the complaint in writing on the Comment and Complaint Form.
2. Should the complaint come directly to the Family Service Manager via phone call or meeting the Family Service Manager will be the individual to fill out the Comment and Complaint Form.
3. The complaint must be specific and describe conditions or circumstances of the concern
4. The complaint must include information on how to contact the person making the complaint.
5. The complaint should be sent directly to the Family Service Manager at the Erin, TN Central Office.

Responsibility of the Family Service Manager Receiving the Complaint

1. The Family Service Manager will conduct a thorough investigation of the complaint, which may include a telephone call or meeting with the complainant.
2. The Family Service Manager will then complete the Comment and Complaint Follow-up Form in writing no less than five (5) working days after the written complaint is received. A copy will be given to the Head Start Director. Both copy and original will be locked up for confidentiality purposes.
3. This written response will clearly state either:
 - a. That the Family Service Manager denies the validity of the complaint, or;
 - b. That a plan for corrective action has been designed and will be fully implemented in a prompt manner.
 - c. That the Family Service Manager has been able to resolve the complaint.
 - d. The response will be sent via mail directly to the complainant. Director will approve prior to sending.

Right to Appeal Decision of the Family Service Manager

If a complaint is denied by the Family Service Manager, the complainant will be advised that he/she has a right to a further hearing of his/her complaint if he/she is not satisfied with the response. He/she may choose to pursue further his/her concern either through a local agency's community complaint policy or by sending his/her complaint to the Highland Rim Head Start Director.

Appeal Process

1. The Head Start Director will conduct an investigation of the complaint including contacting the Family Service Manager, Site Supervisor/Family Advocate as appropriate, and shall respond in writing within 15 working days of receiving the appeal.
2. In the event that the complaint is still not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, he/she may request a formal meeting with the Head Start Director, the Policy Council Chairperson and one other member of the Policy Council. A decision on the complaint will be made by the three people as stated above. The final decision will be in writing within 10 working days of receiving the appeal.