

# S-105 COMPLAINTS FROM CLIENTS



*In this document, words used in the masculine gender apply to anyone.*

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(previously DG-08)

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## **Object**

This policy is intended to explain the course of action to follow if dissatisfied with a service at Valoris. Beyond courtesy, respect and understanding, people who receive our services have clearly specified rights under the various laws, regulations, policies and guidelines that govern each sector of service.

## **Policy**

Valoris personnel undertake to offer quality services to its clients in full conformity with their rights guaranteed by laws, regulations, policies and guidelines. These include:

- Easy access to services within a reasonable timeframe;
- Participation in decisions that concern them and be informed of these decisions;
- Consent to services;
- Service in the language of their choice;
- Access or non-access to their files;
- Confidentiality and discretion in the offer of service;
- Possibility to file a complaint and access information about the complaints investigation procedure;
- Representation by a legal counsellor or other authorized person when required.

Sometimes a person is dissatisfied with the way they were treated in their request for service and/or of the quality of services they received. They have the right to freely express their opinion and criticism concerning services they are receiving or should be receiving; they have the right to lodge a complaint without being subject to retaliation, direct or indirect. Valoris undertakes to take customer complaints seriously and see an opportunity to improve its services.

Staff must respond to complaints, concerns or disagreements from customers or other persons in the community in accordance with the procedure outlined below.

The staff does not have to follow all the steps of the complaint process, if it can be resolved quickly. However, if the disagreement persists, separate steps will be followed according to a clear and transparent procedure for the customer. There will be pre-established communications measures informing the client of the decision made for this complaint.

In cases of child welfare services, a copy of this policy and Child and Family Services Review Board (CFSRB) brochures may be handed to the person for their information. The

complainant may decide to submit the complaint directly to the CFSRB under section 19 of the CYFSA. Also, they may submit their complaint to the Board (CRSRB) at any stage of the internal complaints procedure.

## **Procedure**

### **1. Who can file a complaint?**

- a. Any person who receives or requests our services who is not satisfied with our service response or offer of service.

### **2. How are complaints filed?**

- a. A person may submit a complaint by telephone, letter, fax, Internet or in person at one of our service locations. An administrative assistant or other Valoris employee must direct the person to the supervisor of the employee in charge of the file concerned, or to the supervisor on call on the premises, depending on the nature of the complaint.
- b. Regardless of the position of the person whom the complaint concerns, we must encourage the complainant to follow the course of action of the process, ensure impartiality and avoid any conflict of interest.

### **3. Reception and processing of the complaint**

- a. Each complaint must be examined to assess whether it is legitimate. An acknowledgement of receipt is transmitted to the complainant within twenty-four (24) hours following receipt of the complaint. All complaints are well documented and must be dealt promptly.
- b. The worker or his superior has five (5) working days after receiving the complaint to convey a decision to the complainant or inform them of the next steps, such as an investigation. If it is necessary to proceed with an investigation, it must begin within five (5) working days of receipt of the complaint and it may take a maximum of thirty (30) days. Investigation results are shared to the complainant within five (5) working days after the end of the investigation.
- c. The complainant should begin by communicating his dissatisfaction to the person concerned. If the complainant is not satisfied of the outcome, he can be directed to the person's immediate superior. Understandably, some complainants may not wish to speak to the person concerned since that person's actions are at the source of the complaint. In this case, the complainant should address the complaint to the superior of the staff member. The superior may decide to meet with the complainant, whether or not in the presence of the employee concerned.
- d. If there is no solution to the problem at this first stage, the complainant may appeal to the director of service.
- e. The complainant must be informed of the existence of the internal complaints procedure of the internal complaint review committee who can follow up on the complaint.

- f. Any complaint deemed serious or reported in the media is immediately reported to a Director to ensure to follow up. The Executive Director must be notified if there is the possibility that a customer complaint goes to the media, and in this case, he must inform the Board of Directors.
- g. Complaints related to the CYFSA containing facts and decisions that have been dealt with in court or that are currently being heard in a family or other court will not be dealt with. They will be referred to the complainant's solicitor failing which he will be encouraged to seek legal counsel.
- h. Complaints about a manager/supervisor must be forwarded to that person's immediate superior. If the complaint concerns a director, the complaint resolution process shall be assumed by the Executive Director. Complaints concerning the Executive Director shall be forwarded confidentially to the President of the Board of Directors.

#### **4. Outcome of complaints**

- a. The conclusion of the investigation will be shared in writing, either by letter or e-mail to the complainant, informing them of the result.
- b. A serious, legitimate complaint (abuse, unethical behaviour, breach of policy, etc.) concerning an employee may lead to disciplinary action according to current Valoris policies.

#### **5. Internal Complaint Review Committee**

- a. A complainant may appeal to the internal complaint review committee if they are not satisfied with the conclusion of the complaint. They may request and we may propose this step in case there is no progress in resolving the problem. In child welfare services, complainants must present their complaint on the official form of the Ministry which is available on Valoris' website and they must send it to Valoris either electronically or on paper.
- b. The admissibility of the complaint must be determined by a director who has no direct involvement with the complaint. This person decides if the complaint is admissible for internal review after assessing the effort made to resolve the complaint at the service level. He may redirect the complaint back to the service if he judges that sufficient effort has not been made to resolve the complaint at that level.
- c. A written reply must be dated and sent to the complainant no later than seven (7) days following receipt of the complaint, informing him of its admissibility. It is indicated whether or not the complaint will be reviewed, the reasons for the decision, the date, time and place at which the internal review committee will hold its meeting and the name of the resource person the complainant can contact at Valoris with any questions. The admissibility of the complaint will be considered solely based on the facts at issue.
- d. If the complaint is admissible, a meeting between the complainant and members of the internal review committee will be set within fourteen (14) days after the written

notice of admissibility unless there are extenuating circumstances that would delay this meeting. The complainant may be accompanied at the meeting by a person of his choice. The purpose is to meet with the complainant to see whether the parties can resolve the complaint and agree on a course of action.

- e. In the fourteen (14) days following the meeting, the Committee shall send the complainant a written summary of the results of the meeting and the remedial action agreed upon. Senior management will be informed at this stage. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome and the complaint is admissible (see the conditions stated above), the complainant may appeal the decision to the Board (CFSRB).
- f. If the complainant is not satisfied with the recommendations made by the internal complaint review committee, the Committee Chair shall notify the Executive Director and the complainant shall be referred to the Program Supervisor at the Regional Office of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.

## Definitions, annexes and references

### Definition

**Complaint:** A complaint is a verbal or written expression of clients' dissatisfaction with the services they have or should have been provided. For the most part, anonymous complaints from clients shall be deemed inadmissible; the supervisor of the service where the complaint was filed shall ensure the safety of the people involved before disposing of it.

### Annex

- Child and Family Services Review Board: [Complain about services of a Children's Aid Society](#)
- Official complaint regarding child welfare services to Valoris' internal complaint review committee: <https://www.valorispr.ca/en/contact-us/submitting-feedback-on-our-services>

### References

- Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017 (CYFSA);
- Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008
- S-202 Rights and Responsibilities of Children in Care