

Raising a Concern or Complaint

NQS: 7.3
Regulation 168 (2) (o)

Children's learning is at the heart of everything we do. Good relationships between home and the centre give our children a better chance of success. Our learning, teaching and care programs are underpinned by our commitment to the following principles:

- A constant focus on quality and standards
- Equity and access for all children and staff
- Accountability
- Partnership

This policy provides information about avenues of communication, which strengthen the partnership between parent/care providers and the Children's Centre. It acknowledges the importance of the relationship between caregivers/parents and staff.

Your concerns or complaint may relate to:

- Your child's progress and development
- Your child's behaviour
- Centre policies and practices
- Facilities
- Another child/parent
- Other centre related issue

Process for raising a concern or complaint

The usual procedure to be followed:

- In the first instance arrange to talk to the person who knows about the situation.
- It will always help the situation if you are calm and honest in your approach. You should not approach the children directly.
- Your concern or complaint deserves time in order to be resolved. Let the person know about your concern/complaint with a note or telephone call. This means they will be prepared and have all of the necessary information. A time can then be set up which suits you both.
- All personal matters such as those about children, parents or staff relationships should be raised directly with the centre through the Director or another senior staff member, in a confidential manner.
- There will be times when you feel, for a variety of reasons that you are unable to speak to the person described as the first point of call. If this is

the case, let the Director know. Where possible it is best if you speak directly to the person concerned.

- If at the end of this meeting the concern/complaint still is not able to be resolved you may seek support from the DECD complaints resolution service.

Roles and expectations

Parents/Children Can Expect:

- A safe learning environment
- A balanced curriculum
- Information about all aspects of children's education
- Information about Centre policies and procedures
- Opportunities to put their point of view and express opinions and concern
- To be treated fairly and equitably
- Opportunities to be involved and to participate in activities in the Centre
- Confidentiality

The Centre Expects:

- Support for Centre policies and procedures such as Behaviour Guidance, Sun Protection and Health Policies
- Parents to treat staff with respect and listen to their point of view
- Concerns/complaints will be raised at the Centre through the agreed channels including the Centre's documented Raising a Concern or Complaint (this policy)
- Confidentiality will be maintained

Mediators

Mediators are available in some communities to assist in the resolution of some concerns, such as counsellors or social workers.

Advocates

Support might be enlisted in specific areas about particular concerns, such as students with disabilities.

Support People

At times support people might be enlisted to assist in the resolution of concerns, debrief with the person or attend a meeting with another person.

Confidentiality Statement

It is important that your concerns are kept confidential, and although at times you may wish to seek support from friends or an advocate, it is important to do

this wisely.

When the matter is discussed in the child's hearing, it is important that the child understands that you have confidence that the issue will be resolved confidentially, at the Centre level. Criticism of the Centre or staff does not support the child's education as it can undermine trust and confidence.

Similarly, staff are expected to keep concerns that have been raised confidential and must not discuss the issue/s in front of children. Staff would also expect the matters to be resolved with parents and caregivers appropriately.

Making a complaint (sourced from Raising a complaint with DECD)

There are some simple points to keep in mind if you have a complaint about public education and care:

- Clearly identify the issue and let us know what you would like us to do about it.
- Write down key points to refer to when you report the problem.
- A friend or representative from a support organisation can attend any meeting with you. This person is not there to speak for you or to answer questions on your behalf. It's important that it's your opinions and feelings that are voiced and heard by all parties.
- If an interpreter is required, please let us know prior to any meeting.
- Written or verbal complaints should focus on the facts or details of what happened - avoid personal insults, inflammatory statements and threatening or intimidating comments.
- It's best to only discuss your complaint with people directly involved in the complaint or resolution process. This will help limit damage that can be caused by rumours.

Step 1 - tell the centre/preschool first

Contact the centre/preschool to arrange a time to meet with the staff member or have a discussion with them on the phone. They will look into your concerns and get back to you as soon as possible.

If the matter is not resolved, or if your complaint is about a staff member, you may want to meet with, or write to, the director. They will work with you and the staff member to resolve the issue.

If the complaint is about the director, contact your local Education Office of the Department for Education and Child Development.

The centre/preschool will aim to resolve your concern or complaint within days. The Director will aim to resolve your complaint within four weeks, although complex and contentious matters may take longer. If this is the case we will advise you.

Step 2 - contact the Complaints about education and early childhood services

Education Complaint Unit

Phone: 1800 677 435

Email: DECD.EducationComplaint@sa.gov.au

They can help you by:

- providing advice and support about issues behind the complaint
- advocating with local sites to ensure all options for resolution have been explored
- objectively reviewing complaints that have not been resolved at the local level, including through a formal review.

Step 3 - refer your matter to an external agency

If we can't resolve your issue through the previous steps, you may choose to seek independent advice and review by an external agency. The circumstances of your complaint will influence whether this option is available.

External agency contact point:

SA Ombudsman

Toll free: 1800 182 150

Phone: 8226 8699

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.sa.gov.au

Will I be treated fairly?

You will not be discriminated against if you make a complaint. All staff are bound by the [Code of Ethics for South Australian Public Sector](#) which requires staff to act impartially, fairly and equitably.

Also refer to the brochure: Raising a complaint with DECD

References:

Raising a complaint with DECD

www.decd.sa.gov.au

DECD Policy web link: www.decd.sa.gov.au/policiesreg168

Date Reviewed: March 2017

Review Due: March 2019