

Complaint Handling Guidelines for Centres



Introduction

Little Athletics NSW is committed to the provision of quality services. A consistent approach to the handling of complaints across all levels of Little Athletics NSW, is integral to effective service delivery.

These guidelines are intended to assist Little Athletics centres with determining procedures and requirements for effective handling of any complaints received. They serve to ensure that complaints are dealt with fairly and impartially by the centre and strive to provide a mechanism to satisfactorily resolve disputes between the centre and complainants in a timely fashion.

Little Athletics NSW and its centres have a duty to address behaviours which offend community standards, as well as those standards set by Little Athletics NSW.

Definitions

Complaint

A complaint is defined as a formal expression of dissatisfaction with some aspect of the centres services, policies and procedures, whether justified or not.

A complaint does not include a request for information or clarification of centre rules, policies, procedures or decisions.

Complainant

The person lodging the complaint.

Minor Complaint

A complaint dealing with a matter that can be explained or resolved by existing rules, policies and procedures.

Lodging a Complaint

Complaints may be lodged with a centre:

- in person
- by telephone
- by facsimile, email or letter

and should detail the name, address and contact phone numbers of the complainant, together with a brief description of the problem.

Confidentiality

The centre should not disclose the identity of a complainant if that complainant requests that their details remain confidential.

Committee Appointment

The centre should look at appointing a person who shall be responsible for handling any complaints received. This should be an appropriate member of the committee (ideally someone other than the president). This 'Grievance Officer' should be made known to the membership and any complaints should be directed to this person.

Procedures

Minor verbal complaints

1. On receipt of a verbal complaint, the Grievance Officer should immediately determine if the complaint is of a minor nature and whether they are able to attempt immediate resolution.
2. If the complaint is one to which the Grievance Officer is able to attempt resolution, then they should listen to the complaint in accordance with the guidelines set out in Appendix A of these guidelines.
3. The Grievance Officer should address the complainants concerns in a detailed and complete manner, outlining how or why the situation or incident occurred, being clear on what solutions can be offered. The Grievance Officer should aim to answer the points raised in positive, professional and caring manner.
4. If the complaint requires further investigation, the complainant should be advised of the course of action and

provided with a target date for providing a response.

5. If, after discussion and/or investigation, the complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved it should be referred for further discussion by the centre committee.
6. If it is determined that the centre has made an error, the matter should be referred to the committee to determine the appropriate course of action.
7. The Grievance Officer should document all verbal complaints on a Complaint Form (sample attached), detailing the name address and contact details of the complainant, together with a brief description of the problem and the resolution/outcome. The completed form should be passed onto the secretary for filing.

Written Complaints

1. All written complaints should be lodged with the secretary, and then referred to the Grievance Officer. If the complaint is about the Grievance Officer, it should be referred to another member of the committee.
2. Within seven days of receipt of the complaint, the secretary or their appointee shall write to the complainant to acknowledge the complaint and explain the procedure to be applied. A target date for providing a response should also be advised.
3. If the complaint is about another person, they should also be told about the procedure and the target date for resolution.
4. All complaints should aim to be resolved within 28 days.
5. The Grievance Officer should review the complaint and investigate as they consider appropriate. This may include contacting/interviewing witnesses and/or other persons involved. Written records should be kept of all meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.
6. If there is any concern regarding the legal implications of a complaint, the matter should be immediately referred to Little Athletics NSW and resolution of the matter should be based upon the legal advice provided.
7. Once all of the relevant facts have been established, the Grievance Officer should discuss the findings with the centre committee.
8. Once a course of action and/or response has been determined, the Grievance Officer should ensure that the secretary or an appointee provides a written response to the complainant. Such response should include a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it and where applicable and appropriate, what action the centre will take to resolve the complaint.
9. If following the response from the centre, the complainant remains unsatisfied and renews the complaint; the complaint should be referred to the zone coordinator or Little Athletics NSW.
10. If the complainant remains unsatisfied following any review and further investigation, the complainant may seek external mediation, in accordance with the centre constitution.

Review:

The volume and type of complaints should be reviewed by the centre on a regular basis. This review should be used as a basis for assessing needs and attitudes towards the centre's services and activities and determining appropriate corrective actions. All complaints received should be analysed to identify trends and areas of dissatisfaction. This information should then be considered when reviewing policies, procedures and rules.

APPENDIX A

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE COMPLAINT HANDLING

Treat all complaints seriously	However small or trivial it may seem to you, the complaint will be an important problem for anyone who takes the trouble to complain.
Treat every complaint individually	Even if you have already received several similar complaints the same day, it is probably the person's first chance to have their say.
Listen	Listening is the first step in reducing tension
Be courteous and patient	Be sympathetic, courteous and helpful, but avoid laying on blame to other colleagues. Acknowledge the complainant's feelings.
Identify yourself	If you are unknown to the person, introduce yourself.
Ask for their name and use it	Anonymous complaints are acceptable only where there are special circumstances.
Take time to find out exactly what the problem is	It is easy for someone to forget to tell you an important detail, particularly if they are upset or annoyed. Ask the necessary questions. Confirm details received.
Don't take the complaint personally	To an angry or upset person, YOU are the centre, and the only one they can put their feelings to right now. Do not be defensive. Do not argue with the complainant.
Stay cool and calm	Do not argue with the person – be polite and try to find out exactly what the person thinks is going wrong, or has gone wrong.
Check you are being understood	Make sure that the person understands what you are saying. Don't use jargon – it can cause confusion and annoyance to someone "not in the know".
Don't rush	Take your time. Let people have their say, and let off steam if they need to. Listen carefully and sympathetically to their problems before replying and attempting to find a solution or offer a next step.
Don't create false expectations	Explain courses of action that are realistically available.
Ensure a satisfactory outcome	Ask if the complainant is satisfied with the explanation or action taken / proposed. If not, give advice about available alternatives.
Ensure a timely resolution	Make sure that the complaint is finalised within a reasonable timeframe (aim for 28 days). Do not let the complaint 'sit', hoping it will go away. This will only increase frustration and dissatisfaction and could escalate the problem.

COMPLAINT FORM

Complainants Personal Details

Date lodged.....

Name:

Address:

..... Postcode:

Phone:h) (w) (m)

Fax: Email:

Complaint Details

If the complaint is about a person or organisation, please provide details:.....

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Details of the complaint:.....

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..... (If insufficient space, continue over page)

Has the complaint been brought to the attention of the person/s involved / concerned?

Yes No

If yes, what was the outcome?

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Centre feedback / advice given:

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Complainant satisfied: Yes No

Signed:

Date finalised: