

Children First Canada (CFC) has established an External Complaints Policy that outlines the process for receiving, reviewing, responding to, and documenting complaints from external stakeholders. The policy reflects the organization's commitment to accountability, transparency, respectful engagement, and continuous improvement.

The policy applies to complaints related to organizational conduct, programs, fundraising activities, communications, privacy concerns, and the actions of staff, volunteers, contractors, or Board representatives acting on behalf of the organization.

The policy establishes:

- Clear procedures for submitting complaints;
- Timelines for acknowledgement and response;
- Escalation procedures for complaints involving senior leadership or Board members;
- Documentation and record-keeping requirements;
- Annual reporting to the Board of Directors regarding complaints received and resolutions;
- Commitments to confidentiality, accessibility, and non-retaliation.

Children First Canada is committed to responding promptly and fairly to complaints raised by external stakeholders and to using feedback to strengthen organizational practices.

The External Complaints Policy will be posted in a readily accessible location on the Children First Canada website following Board approval.

Policy Owner: Governance and Human Resources Committee

Purpose

Children First Canada (CFC) is committed to transparency, accountability, professionalism, and respectful engagement with all stakeholders. The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear, fair, and accessible process for receiving, reviewing, and responding to complaints from external stakeholders.

CFC values feedback and recognizes that complaints can help strengthen organizational effectiveness, improve relationships, and support continuous improvement.

Scope

This policy applies to complaints received from external stakeholders, including:

- Donors and funders;
- Members of the public;
- Program participants and families;

- Partners and collaborators;
- Sponsors and vendors;
- Volunteers;
- Media representatives;
- Government and community stakeholders.

This policy applies to complaints regarding:

- Organizational conduct;
- Programs and services;
- Staff, volunteers, contractors, or Board representatives acting on behalf of CFC;
- Fundraising practices;
- Communications or public engagement;
- Privacy or confidentiality concerns;
- Accessibility or equity concerns.

This policy does not apply to:

- Internal employee matters covered through Human Resources policies;
- Whistleblower disclosures addressed through separate governance processes;
- Matters currently under legal proceedings.

Guiding Principles

Children First Canada will:

- Treat all complaints seriously and respectfully;
- Respond in a timely, fair, and objective manner;
- Protect confidentiality where appropriate;
- Ensure complainants are not subject to retaliation;
- Maintain records of complaints and resolutions;
- Use complaint trends to support organizational learning and improvement.

Submitting a Complaint

Complaints may be submitted in writing by email, mail, or through the contact information provided on the organization's website.

Complaints should include:

- Name and contact information of the complainant;
- Description of the concern or complaint;

- Relevant dates, individuals, or circumstances;
- Any supporting documentation.

Anonymous complaints may be reviewed at the discretion of the organization depending on the seriousness and credibility of the concern.

Complaint Review Process

Step 1 – Acknowledgement

Children First Canada will acknowledge receipt of a complaint within approximately five (5) business days.

Step 2 – Review and Assessment

The complaint will be reviewed by the appropriate staff member, manager, or senior leader depending on the nature of the concern.

Where appropriate:

- Additional information may be requested;
- Relevant parties may be consulted;
- The complaint may be escalated to the CEO, Board Chair, or Board Committee.

Complaints involving the CEO will be reviewed by the Board Chair and/or Governance and Human Resources Committee.

Complaints involving a Board member will be reviewed by the Board Chair or designate.

Step 3 – Resolution and Response

Children First Canada will aim to provide a response or resolution within approximately thirty (30) business days, where feasible.

Responses may include:

- Clarification or explanation;
- Corrective action;
- Policy or procedural changes;
- Referral to another appropriate process.

Where a complaint cannot be resolved within this timeframe, the complainant will be informed of the status and anticipated timeline.

Record Keeping and Reporting

Children First Canada will maintain records of complaints received from external stakeholders, including:

- Nature of the complaint;
- Date received;
- Actions taken;
- Resolution status.

Management will provide the Board of Directors with an annual summary report on external complaints received, including trends, resolutions, and any significant organizational risks or learning opportunities identified.

Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled with appropriate confidentiality and in accordance with applicable privacy legislation and organizational policies.

Information related to complaints will only be shared with individuals directly involved in reviewing or resolving the matter.

Non-Retaliation

Children First Canada prohibits retaliation against any individual who raises a complaint or concern in good faith.

Accessibility

Children First Canada is committed to ensuring that the complaints process is accessible and inclusive. Individuals requiring accommodations to submit a complaint may contact the organization for support.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors or an appropriate Board Committee at least every five years, or earlier if required due to legal, operational, or organizational changes.

Website Posting

This policy will be posted in a readily accessible location on the Children First Canada website.