

# ECEC COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

## Version Control Panel

Document Number:		CEO.T&L.2310.1.1		Approved by:		CEO Director	
Effective Date:		04/11/2024		Responsibility of:		Teaching and Learning CENT	
Version Number:	2.0	Review due:		04/11/2026	Contact Person:	Leader Education and Care	

## POLICY STATEMENT

This policy provides information for Nominated Supervisors, Directors and staff of CENT Preschools, Early Learning Centres and Outside School Hours Care Services for:

Employees will act as role models in line with the WH&S standards and will report safety issues. Staff are required to adopt all protective measures put in place as part of employee WH&S responsibilities.

CENT Services will:

- Ensure a clear, accessible and documented complaints procedure is made available to all families, educators/staff and children.
- Ensure that the process is fair to all parties involved.
- Ensure complaints are dealt with promptly.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Maintain records of complaints, processes and outcomes.
- Require the Nominated Supervisor, or delegate, to notify the regulatory body within 24 hours of any complaint that alleges the safety, health or wellbeing of a child was or is being compromised, or that the law has been breached.
- Require the Nominated Supervisor, or delegate, to notify the regulatory body within 24 hours of any complaint that alleges any incident or allegation that physical or sexual abuse of a child or children has occurred or is occurring while the child or children are being educated and cared for by the service or an allegation a child is exhibiting sexual behaviours that may be harmful to the child or another child.

National Regulations: 12; 76-83; 85-88; 93-96; 97; 99; 102; 123; 155-157; 168; 170-171; 173; 176  
National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care: Element 1.3.3; Standard 6.1; Element 7.1.2

Signed:



Date: 04/11/2024

**Paul Greaves**  
Director of Catholic Education

# Complaints Procedure

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to:

- a) provide the requirements, according to the Complaints Policy
- b) provide the guidelines for safe practices that are child focussed in accordance with National Principles for child safe organisations
- c) provide templates and/or checklists

## RATIONALE

The service is required to have a documented procedure for dealing with grievances and complaints in order to promote the communication between families and the centre.

A complaint defined by ACECQA, includes a concern, grievance or statement that something is unsatisfactory or unacceptable. Complaints may be made verbally or in writing (letter, email, SMS, social media platforms, or digital applications used by the provider, etc) by a staff member, parent, child, or member of the public

There is a legal responsibility to notify the Regulatory Authority of certain matters within a stated time frame. One of these matters is where a complaint is made in relation to either of the following:

- a complaint alleging that the safety, health or wellbeing of a child was or is being compromised
- a complaint alleging a child exhibited sexual behaviours that may be harmful to the child or another child
- that the law has been breached.

CENT takes complaints about the service, its staff, educators, practices and procedures seriously. There are processes in place to ensure all grievances and complaints are addressed, investigated fairly and documented in a timely manner.

## SCOPE

This Procedure will commence from the date of approval. It replaces all other Complaint Procedures for Early Learning Centres, Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) facilities and Preschools of Catholic Education Northern Territory (whether written or not).

## GUIDELINES

### General

- The Complaints Policy and procedures will be made available to families on enrolment. The service's policy document will also contain the Complaints Policy and procedures and will be available to families at the service.

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- Staff will access the Complaints Policy and procedures through the documents containing all the policies (Prescribed Policy booklet) and staff handbook issued on employment and whenever an updated version is issued.
- The service will display the name, email and telephone number of the person at the education and care service to whom complaints may be addressed.
- The service will display the contact details of the Regulatory Authority.
- From time to time staff complaints arise. In the interest of the children and the professional operation of the service, these complaints are investigated promptly, thoroughly and confidentially
- Appropriate staff managing complaints must be aware that there may be situations where a conflict of interest arises and take action as required to manage such situations in complying with the CENT Conflict of Interest policy

Complaints can be made in the following manner:

- verbally (recorded as a statement on the appropriate form)—in person or by phone
- in writing (letter, email, SMS, social media platforms, digital applications used by the service)
- complaints form supplied by CENT

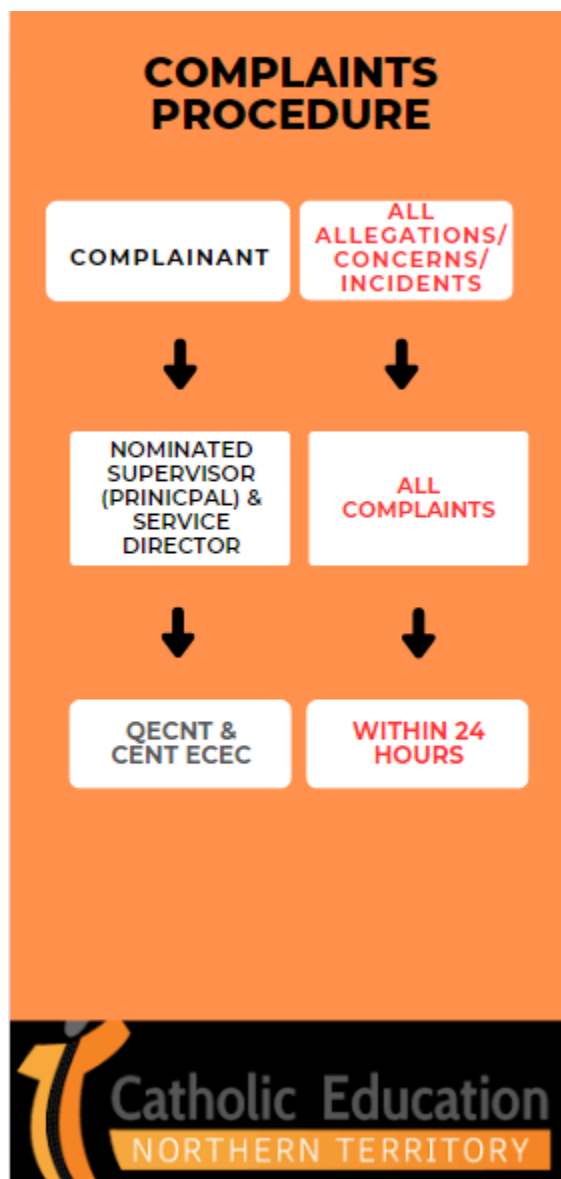
#### **Procedure for families lodging a complaint**

- Families are requested to not discuss complaints in front of children. It may be that an appointment with the Nominated Supervisor or Assistant Director will need to be made.
- Complaints regarding any aspect of the service should be addressed with the Director/Assistant Director in the first instance. If the complaint is about the Director/Assistant Director, it should be addressed to the Nominated Supervisor.
- In the event that you feel you are unable to discuss your complaint with the Director/Assistant Director or in the event that discussion proves unsatisfactory, your complaint can be directed to the Principal, as the Nominated Supervisor.
- In the event that you feel uncomfortable in dealing with a complaint personally, you may nominate an advocate to mediate on your behalf.

#### **Procedures for educators lodging a complaint**

- If the complaint is of an industrial nature, the requirements of the relevant Award must be addressed and followed. External advice may need to be sought.
- Some complaints may be resolved by presenting the matter for discussion at a team meeting.
- In the event that you feel you have a complaint with any aspect of the service, please make time to speak with the Director/Assistant Director.
- If you feel the Director/Assistant Director has not dealt with your complaint satisfactorily, you may approach the Nominated Supervisor.

## Complaint handling process flowchart



- A complaint includes a concern, grievance or statement that something is unsatisfactory or unacceptable. It is an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. Where a serious breach of the health and safety of a child has occurred or is occurring
- A concern, not serious, may be defined as an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought
- The Nominated Supervisor (the school principal) or delegate, as line manager of the service will be informed when there are complaints and will be responsible for ensuring that any complaint that alleges a breach of legislation or a serious incident is reported to the Approved Provider and the Quality Education and Care NT, via the NQAITS portal

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- In the event of a complaint being made, the Nominated Supervisor or delegate is responsible for ensuring that:
  - The Approved Provider is informed
  - Notification is sent to the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of any complaint that alleges a breach of legislation or where the safety, health or wellbeing of a child was or is being compromised. This includes:
  - Any incident where you reasonably believe that physical and/or sexual abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring while the child is being educated and cared for by the service, please also refer to [CEO.T&L2324.1.1 ECEC Mandatory Reporting Policy](#) regarding reporting obligations
  - Any allegation that sexual or physical abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring while the child is being educated and cared for by the service, please also refer to [CEO.T&L2324.1.1 ECEC Mandatory Reporting Policy](#) regarding reporting obligations
  - Any allegation that alleges a child is exhibiting sexual behaviours that may be harmful to the child or another child, please also refer to [CEO.T&L2324.1.1 ECEC Mandatory Reporting Policy](#) regarding reporting obligations
  - A copy of the Acknowledgement of the Notification is emailed to the Approved Provider
- The following details are required in the notifiable complaint report:
 

[CENT ECEC Services Grievance and Complaints Form](#)

  - Date complaint received
  - Complainant's name and contact details
  - Name of child/children to whom complaint relates (if relevant)
  - Copy of written complaint (or written summary) and any other relevant documentation (including correspondence, photographs, statements)
  - Steps taken/actions planned by the site in response to the complaint.
- The Approved Provider and/or Nominated Supervisor will:
  - Investigate complaints promptly and thoroughly with the understanding that the complainant will not be disadvantaged through the process.
  - Listen/read the complaint and document the exact details of the complaint.
  - Seek further information, to clarify the issues and investigate the complaint, including speaking to other parties involved as required.
  - Seek additional advice from line managers and other agencies, including legal advice as required.
  - Refer to any State or National Regulations or organisational policy that may provide clarity to the complaint, as required.
  - Assess the complaint fairly and determine the best possible resolution.
  - Inform the complainant of the outcome in writing or verbally, as required, in a timely manner.
  - Ensure that the complaint process and its outcome are documented and that all documentation is treated and stored confidentially, referring to the [Complaints](#)

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[Checklist](#). Complaints not resolved at this level may be referred by either the complainant or the Approved Provider to the external agency identified by the Approved Provider to investigate the matter.

- o If the complaint is still not resolved the formal complaint will be referred to the Regulatory Authority [NQAITS Portal](#) as per Notification requirements within 24 hours of receiving the formal complaint and also [CENT ECEC Complaints Register](#) within 24 hours of receiving the formal complaint

## TRAINING

The approved provider inducts the nominated supervisor regarding the complaints policy and procedure including processes to be completed. The nominated supervisor and director of the service ensure all complaints are discussed with procedures followed and recorded.

## VARIATIONS

CENT reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this Policy and Procedure as needed

## ACCOUNTABILITY

This Procedure applies to all employees and volunteers of Early Learning Centres, preschools and OSHC. It is the responsibility of the service provider and nominated supervisor to ensure that all staff, whether paid or unpaid, receive induction and training in the complaints procedures. All staff must fulfil their responsibilities and obligations in following this policy and procedure.

## REFERENCES

### Related Policies, Legislation and Documents

These documents should be used to support the Complaints Policy and Procedure.

- [Fair Work Act](#)
- [Information Sharing Guidelines \(1 July 2012\) \(Northern Territory\)](#)
- [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)
- [National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care](#)
- [Approved provider reporting requirements about children under National Law and Regulations](#)
- [The ACECQA National Decision Tree](#)
- [Australian Institute of Family Studies](#)
- [True](#)
- [CEO.T&L2324.1.1 ECEC Mandatory Reporting Policy](#)
- [CENT Mandatory Reporting Policy](#)
- [Mandatory Report Harm Form](#)
- [Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [CENT Code of Conduct](#)
- [National Catholic Safeguarding Standards](#)
- [02 Safeguarding Commitment Statement](#)

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