

Complaints and Feedback			
Section			
Authorized by	Board	Date	April 9, 2024
Applies To	All Staff, Students & Volunteers	Archive version(s)	May 17, 2023; August 2020; September 2017
Reference:	Policy Directives 1.0; Policy Directives Updated for January 1, 2021		Page 1 of 7

## Policy

Aptus Treatment Centre has a process for receiving and addressing feedback and complaints about the services and supports it provides that may be received from a person receiving services and supports from the service agency, a person acting on behalf of a person receiving services and supports from the agency and the general public.

## Definitions

**Feedback:** May be positive or negative (including complaints) and is related to services and/or supports that are provided by a service agency. Feedback may be solicited (such as information and comments collected through a satisfaction survey or a comment box) or unsolicited (such as a letter from a person or family member about the services and supports an agency provides). Feedback may be formal (like a survey or letter noted above) or informal (such as a verbal complaint expressed to a staff person).

**Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction related to the services and/or supports that are provided by a service agency. A complaint may be expressed by a person with a developmental disability who is receiving services and supports from the service agency, on a person acting on their behalf, or by the general public, regarding the services and supports that are provided by the service agency. A complaint may be made formally (such as a letter written to the agency) or informally (such as a verbal complaint expressed to a staff person). A complaint does not include feedback on matters unrelated to the agency and the services and supports that it provides.

## Procedure

Aptus Treatment Centre is committed to maintaining quality and excellence in services. In order to do this, there must be an established culture of open, supportive communication. To facilitate communication, people receiving supports and services, employee/agents, students, volunteers, contracted workers or anyone authorized to conduct work on behalf of the agency, families, guardians, advocates, the general public and/or other stakeholders must have ways to discuss and bring forth their concerns or complaints about service quality constructively. By providing mechanisms to do this, we can work cooperatively to address and correct issues and/or resolve differences in a timely fashion.

- If the complaint or concern is about abuse, neglect or exploitation, Aptus Treatment Centre's policy regarding Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation must be followed.

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Reference:	Policy Directives 1.0; Policy Directives Updated for January 1, 2021		Page 2 of 7

- If the complaint or concern is about a rights restriction, Aptus Treatment Centre’s policy regarding Rights and Fair Review processes will be followed.

The complaints/feedback process may include a designated individual and/or committee that is responsible for investigating and responding to complaints, concerns and/or suggestions made by people supported, families, employee/agents, students, volunteers, contracted workers or anyone authorized to conduct work on behalf of the agency, families, guardians and/or advocates/others affiliated with Aptus Treatment Centre regarding service quality. Where a complaint or concern has been identified, appropriate parties will towards a resolution with the appropriate individuals.

The complaints/feedback process supports fair treatment of people receiving supports and services. It is understood that this process provides an objective review of any complaints/concerns to ensure that the agency is responding to people’s complaints/concerns.

Information about the complaints/feedback process will be accessible to people who receive supports at Aptus Treatment Centre in plain language and/or ways that are meaningful to the person and/or a person acting on his/her behalf (where applicable).

Aptus Treatment Centre will take all complaints seriously and review and investigate all matters. In accordance with Policy Directives for Service Agencies, updated January 1, 2021, where reasonable or necessary, and in accordance with the Regulation on Quality Assurance Measures and agency policies and procedures, Aptus will investigate complaints and feedback it receives. Aptus will determine whether it is necessary to investigate the complaint or whether the complaint is insufficient and an investigation is no longer required. Aptus Treatment Centre is not expected to attempt to resolve complaints that are determined to be frivolous or vexatious.

A copy of this policy may be provided to anyone who requests it.

**The Complaints/Feedback Process includes, but is not limited to:**

1. Mechanisms to receive and/or respond to all complaints or concerns identified within a reasonable time frame;
2. Investigation on what steps have been taken to help resolve complaints/concerns that have been identified. Where steps have not been taken, the designated individual and/or committee will support the person with the proper channels to resolve.
3. A review of complaints/feedback annually to identify organizational trends;
4. A review and recommendations to respond to complaints/concerns and act as a support resource to people;

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Reference:	Policy Directives 1.0; Policy Directives Updated for January 1, 2021		Page 3 of 7

5. Forwarding complaints/feedback that cannot be resolved to the CEO/President or designate;
6. Oversight and recommend training around complaint/concern mechanisms to ensure that people understand them and that the mechanisms are effective.
7. Follow up activities on complaints made to assess the effectiveness of remedial action, as appropriate.

The following individuals and/or positions are recommended to have representation in the Complaints/Feedback Process. The roles of these individuals/positions may include receiving complaints/feedback, documenting, investigating, resolving and providing notification or confirmation with the person who submitted the complaint/feedback:

- Person who Receives Support from Aptus Treatment Centre
- Program Supervisor
- Manager and/or Director
- Direct Support Professional
- An Administrative and/or Finance Team Member (as possible)

**Conflict of Interest:**

A verbal conflict of interest disclosure must be made in advance of hearing a complaint/concern when applicable. Individuals involved in the hearing a complaint shall declare a conflict of interest when that individual has a professional relationship with a person or is involved in the complaint or concern that may affect his/her judgment.

**Reporting:**

The designated individual and/or committee will provide a summary of complaints statistics to the CEO/President and Board of Directors annually or as otherwise requested as to the number of complaints/concerns that have been identified, the nature of the complaints/concerns by category, and the status of the resolution and/or action plan. The summary may include a report on the assessment of remedial action to inform future directions of the committee. The review and analysis of complaints/feedback received will consider the need to revise Aptus policies and procedures.

Aptus will share information about its complaints and feedback process, and/or about its complaints and feedback, as a part of Aptus' risk assessment upon request by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.

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Reference:	Policy Directives 1.0; Policy Directives Updated for January 1, 2021		Page 4 of 7

Complaints regarding service quality may be reported to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services in accordance with Serious Occurrence protocols.

Complaints that may include/constitute a criminal offence (as per O. Reg. 299/10) may be reported to the police.

## Making a Complaint – Steps

### Step 1

If a person receiving supports and services and/or his/her families/guardian/advocate/ other has an issue or concern regarding his/her supports and services, the issues should be directed verbally, pictorially, in writing or in any other manner that suits that person's communication style, to any employee/agent. It is the responsibility of the person/staff/relevant team receiving the complaint to address the concern and work towards achieving resolution at the time that the complaint is received. Receipt of the complaint will be made within 1 business day of having received the complaint.

**Note:** *a complaint may be made on behalf of a person receiving services by him/herself, an employee/agent, student, volunteer, contracted worker or anyone authorized to conduct work on behalf of the agency, families, guardians and/or advocates and/or other stakeholders. Every effort will be made to notify the person if a complaint has been made on his/her behalf.*

### Step 2

If the response from Step 1 is unsatisfactory, the person, with assistance as needed or requested, will be supported/advised to forward a letter indicating the ongoing concerns/issues to a designated individual and/or committee at Aptus Treatment Centre. The designated individual/committee will review and respond to the concern/issues within a reasonable time frame (e.g., 2 business days). The complaint, relevant details and the response will be tracked by the designated individual/committee.

### Step 3

If the response from Step 2 is unsatisfactory, the complaint will be forwarded to the CEO/President/designate. The CEO/President/designate will review and respond to the concern/issues within a reasonable time frame (e.g., 3 business days).

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Reference:	Policy Directives 1.0; Policy Directives Updated for January 1, 2021		Page 5 of 7

#### Step 4

If the response from Step 3 is unsatisfactory, then the person receiving supports and services/family/guardian/advocate or other party making a complaint on behalf of a person will be supported/advised to forward a letter indicating ongoing concerns/issues to the President of the Board of Directors. The intent to forward the concern/issue to the Board should also be communicated to the CEO/President in writing and entered into the database. The President of the Board will meet with the CEO/President and other people involved, as appropriate, to review the initial complaint and the CEO/President's response. They must meet within thirty (30) working days from the date of receipt of the letter requesting further action through the Board of Directors. A written response will be forwarded to the person receiving services and supports/family/guardian/advocate or other party within ten (10) days from the date of this meeting.

#### Step 5

Is the last step available within Aptus Treatment Centre. Any further action by the person receiving supports and services/family/guardian/advocate must be directed to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. The CEO/President must provide the contact information, address and the person's name to which the correspondence must be addressed upon request.

#### Guarantee from Recourse

Any person, who makes a complaint or identifies a service related concern in good faith will not suffer recourse. Making a complaint in good faith is safe. The person will not suffer loss of job or placement, intimidation, coercion, decrease in salary, changes in working conditions, loss of volunteer position, or psychological pressures, as applicable, as a result of such reporting before, during or after a complaint has been made. A person making a complaint/providing feedback will not be subject to coercion, intimidation or bias, either before, during, or after the review. Aptus Treatment Centre will ensure that a person receiving support from Aptus will not be at risk of having his/her services and supports negatively impacted or withdrawn, as a consequence of submitting the complaint/feedback. The agency must make the person aware that their services and supports will not be negatively impacted or withdrawn in any way.

#### Confidentiality

Complaints that are made to the designated individual/committee are confidential and any information related to the complaint(s) will be restricted to people directly involved. These

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Reference:	Policy Directives 1.0; Policy Directives Updated for January 1, 2021		Page 6 of 7

people may include, but are not limited to: employee/agents who directly support the person, the person receiving services (who made the complaint or for whom a complaint was made on his/her behalf) and any person contacted in the channels of necessary communication.

### Annual Reporting

In compliance with Regulations 299/10 of the Social Inclusion Act, the Director of Programs and Services/Designate will prepare a report that includes a review of complaints and the outcomes to the Board of Directors annually. The Board of Directors may make recommendations regarding practices to address complaints/feedback.

### Media

In the event that there is media involvement resulting from a complaint, the CEO/President/designate will be the media contact. Under no circumstances will information be provided to the media *“off the record”* by employee/agents.

### MECHANISMS FOR EXPRESSING COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS

The following mechanisms for making a complaint or expressing a concern can be used if efforts at immediate resolution cannot be achieved. These processes can be used by any person connected to Aptus Treatment Centre:

- **Complaint to any employee/agent/person affiliated with Aptus Treatment Centre:** A person can state his/her complaint or concern to any support staff, including but not limited to, a direct support professional, supervisor, manager, director, contracted worker or anyone authorized to conduct work on behalf of the agency. It is the responsibility of the person/staff/relevant team receiving the complaint to address the concern and work towards achieving resolution at the time that the complaint is received. Please refer Step 2 in the policy if this is not satisfactory.
- **Designated Individual/Committee:** A person can complete (or have assistance to complete) a complaint/concern form (or use a regular piece of paper or other medium to identify their complaint/concern) and forward it to the designated individual and/or a committee member. The individual/committee member will respond to the complaint/concern within reasonable time frame. Refer to policy.
- **Complaints/Feedback Boxes:** A person can complete (or have assistance to complete) a complaint/concerns form (or use a regular piece of paper or other medium to identify his/her

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Reference:	Policy Directives 1.0; Policy Directives Updated for January 1, 2021		Page 7 of 7

complaint/concern) and place it in the complaints/suggestions box. The Complaints forms will be publicly posted, along with boxes, at 40 Samor Road and other program locations.

Complaints/concerns will be retrieved by the designated individual and/or a member of the committee on a regular basis.

- **Voicemail:** a person may leave a voicemail with the designated individual and/or committee members.
- **Email:** a person may email the designated individual/committee members.
- **Regular Mail:** a person may send their complaint/concern through Canada Post.
- **Fax:** A person may send their complaint/concern through APTUS TREATMENT CENTRE's fax, attention to the designated individual and/or the committee.

**Special Considerations:**

Please also refer to Human Resource Policies and Procedures manual for the Problem Resolution Process and Customer Feedback Process in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

There are some complaints that are (or must be) reported directly to senior management and may subsequently not be appropriate for review by the designated individual and/or committee.

Aptus Treatment Centre will ensure that a complaint is reported to MCCSS as a Serious Occurrence as appropriate, based on the nature of the complaint. Refer to Policy and Procedures on Serious Occurrence Reporting.