

FOREST FAMILIES



Complaints Procedure

1. Introduction

Forest Families Forest School is committed to maintaining high standards in our programs and relationships with participants, families, staff, and volunteers. We recognize that occasionally, concerns or complaints may arise. This procedure provides a clear, fair, and straightforward process for addressing complaints to ensure that they are resolved promptly, respectfully, and transparently.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to:

- Provide a clear framework for raising and addressing complaints.
- Ensure that complaints are handled in a timely, fair, and consistent manner.
- Encourage open communication and early resolution of concerns to maintain a positive environment.
- Use feedback from complaints to improve our programs and services.

3. Scope

This complaints procedure applies to:

- Participants, including children, families, and caregivers.
- Staff, volunteers, and contractors.
- Community members, partners, and any individuals involved with Forest Families Forest School.

4. Types of Complaints

Complaints may relate to:

- The quality or nature of the programs and services provided by Forest Families Forest School.
- The conduct of staff, volunteers, or other participants.
- Accessibility, inclusivity, or health and safety concerns.
- Any other issues or concerns that arise during interactions with Forest Families.

5. Informal Resolution

We encourage anyone with a concern or complaint to try to resolve it informally first. Often, concerns can be addressed through direct communication and collaboration.

Steps for Informal Resolution:

1. **Raise the Concern:** Speak directly to the staff member, volunteer, or individual involved, if comfortable, to discuss the issue and try to find a resolution.
2. **Speak to the Program Leader:** If the concern cannot be resolved directly, or if the complainant is uncomfortable addressing it with the individual involved, they should speak with the Program Leader or designated staff member.
3. **Provide Suggestions for Resolution:** The complainant may suggest how they would like the issue resolved. The Program Leader will aim to resolve the concern promptly and respectfully.

If the issue is not resolved informally, the formal complaints procedure outlined below should be followed.

6. Formal Complaints Procedure

If a concern cannot be resolved informally or if the issue is serious, a formal complaint may be submitted. The formal complaints procedure is designed to address more significant or unresolved concerns in a structured manner.

Step 1: Submitting a Complaint

- Complaints can be submitted in writing (via email or letter) or verbally.
- **Contact Information:** Complaints should be directed to the Forest Families Complaints Officer at info@forestfam.com
- If the complaint involves the Complaints Officer, the complaint should be submitted to the Forest Families Director or another senior staff member.

The following information should be included in the complaint:

- Full name and contact details of the person submitting the complaint.
- A detailed description of the issue, including dates, times, and the names of any individuals involved.
- Any actions that have already been taken to try to resolve the issue.
- Any desired outcomes or suggestions for resolution.

Step 2: Acknowledgment of Complaint

- Forest Families will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days of receiving it. The acknowledgment will include:
 - Confirmation that the complaint is being reviewed.
 - The name of the individual handling the complaint.

- The expected timeline for investigation and resolution.

Step 3: Investigation

- The Complaints Officer or designated individual will conduct an impartial investigation into the complaint. This may involve:
 - Speaking with the complainant to gather additional information.
 - Interviewing any staff, volunteers, or other individuals involved.
 - Reviewing any relevant documentation or records.
- The investigation will be completed as quickly as possible, usually within 10-15 working days. If additional time is needed, the complainant will be informed of the revised timeline and reasons for the delay.

Step 4: Outcome and Resolution

- Once the investigation is complete, the complainant will receive a written response that outlines:
 - The findings of the investigation.
 - Any actions that will be taken to address the complaint.
 - Any changes or improvements that will be implemented as a result of the complaint.
 - If the complaint is upheld, potential solutions may include apologies, changes to procedures, or other remedial actions.
- If the complaint is not upheld, an explanation will be provided as to why.

Step 5: Appeal Process

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, they have the right to appeal.
- Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Forest Families Director or another senior member of the team within 10 working days of receiving the outcome.
- The appeal will be reviewed by a different individual or panel to ensure impartiality.
- The appeal decision will be communicated to the complainant within 10 working days and will be final.

7. Confidentiality

Forest Families is committed to handling complaints with confidentiality and sensitivity. Information about a complaint will only be shared with those who need to be involved in the investigation and resolution process.

- Personal data related to the complaint will be processed in line with our Data Protection Policy and applicable laws.
- Anonymous complaints will be reviewed, but action may be limited if we cannot follow up for additional information.

8. No Retaliation

Forest Families is committed to ensuring that individuals who raise concerns or submit complaints will not face retaliation or negative consequences. All complaints are treated with respect, and we aim to foster an open and supportive environment.

9. Monitoring and Improvement

All complaints will be recorded and monitored to help Forest Families identify any patterns or recurring issues. These insights will be used to improve our programs, policies, and services. Regular reviews of complaints will be conducted to ensure continuous improvement.

10. Complaints Involving Safeguarding Issues

Complaints that involve safeguarding concerns (such as the safety and welfare of children or vulnerable adults) will be handled in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy. These complaints will be treated with the utmost seriousness and escalated immediately to the Safeguarding Officer for investigation.

11. External Review

If the complainant feels that Forest Families Forest School has not adequately addressed their complaint, they may escalate the matter to external bodies, such as:

- Local authorities.
- Regulatory bodies or governing organizations that oversee forest schools or educational programs.
- Legal bodies, if appropriate.

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