



YMCA of  
Hamilton | Burlington | Brantford

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

*Approved March 2015 by the  
YMCA Board of Directors*





### Intent

The YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford is committed to service excellence in the delivery of YMCA programs, services and supporting our charitable mandate. We recognize that from time to time there may be concerns or complaints, that our stakeholders have the right to raise such complaints or concerns, and that they need mechanisms to do so. This policy is intended to create a transparent, timely, and fair method of responding to public complaints. The YMCA recognizes that when a person has a complaint about the YMCA, the way in which his/her complaint is handled is critical to the person's ongoing relationship with our organization.

### Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all complaints received from members of the public about our activities, programs, services, policies, staff, or volunteers. This policy serves as a companion to the organization's Whistleblower Policy and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act [AODA] Policy. This policy **does not** apply to employees or volunteers, as there is a Dispute Resolution Policy and Whistleblower Policy available in the Human Resources Policies and Procedures to address concerns or complaints that may arise.

### Guiding Principles

- It is in the interest of all parties that complaints are dealt with promptly and resolved as quickly as possible.
- Review of complaints is fair, impartial and respectful to all parties.
- Complainants are advised of their options to escalate their complaint to a more senior staff person if they are dissatisfied with treatment or outcome.
- Complainants are provided clear and understandable reasons for decisions relating to complaints. Updates are provided to complainants during review processes.
- Complaints are used to assist in improving services, policies and procedures.

### Definition

Complaints are defined as an expression of dissatisfaction with regard to a service/program, an action or lack of action or a decision taken by the YMCA, or the way in which YMCA employees or volunteers carry out their duties. Complaints typically arise when a person believes:

- The YMCA has failed to do something agreed upon or expected
- A YMCA policy or procedure has not been followed
- A YMCA policy or procedure is unfair or inadequate
- An error has been made
- YMCA employees or volunteers acted in a wrongful way

A complaint is distinct from an inquiry, feedback, or a suggestion.





## Procedure

### Informal Complaint

If you have a complaint or concern, you are encouraged to discuss the matter with the staff who is most connected to the concern/situation, either in person, by phone, or by email. If your complaint is not resolved or if you are uncomfortable discussing the issue with the relevant person, you can inform the supervisor, manager, or General Manager for the program or service. This informal process can be used to resolve many inquiries or matters of simple error that can be corrected to your satisfaction. If the matter is not resolved at this stage, you have the opportunity to make a formal complaint.

Every effort will be made to resolve complaints in a timely fashion. When receiving a verbal complaint, staff should listen and seek to understand the complaint, and may attempt to resolve it immediately. If follow-up is required, basic contact information including name, phone number, and email address should immediately be recorded.

### Formal Complaint

If you have been unable to resolve your concern through the informal process described above, a formal complaint may be made in writing to:

#### *Complaints*

*c/o Vice President, Communications*

*YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford*

*79 James St South, Hamilton, ON L8P 2Z1*

or via email to [feedback.hbb@ymcahbb.ca](mailto:feedback.hbb@ymcahbb.ca)

Please provide your contact information, as the YMCA will not respond to anonymous complaints. If you are unable to register the complaint in this manner due to a disability, you may contact the YMCA to request accommodation, which will be provided appropriate to your needs and circumstances.

### Process

Once you have registered a complaint, the YMCA is committed to handling the complaint promptly, consistently, and fairly. You will be treated with respect and kept informed of the status of the complaint. The YMCA will respond to your complaint within 2 business days of receiving the complaint to confirm the complaint has been received, and indicate expectations for how long the investigation will take if it can be reasonably assessed at that point.

The YMCA aims to resolve all complaints within 10 business days of receiving them. If this timeline cannot be met, you will be informed of the reasons and given a revised timeframe. Upon completion of the investigation, you will be provided with clear reasons for the decisions relating to the complaint.

### How Your Complaint Will be Dealt With:

Formal complaints are received through the Communications Office who are assigned to direct inquiries to the appropriate department. Departments will either respond by sending a formal letter, email or telephone the individual.



Where a complaint cannot be easily resolved, it will be escalated to the relevant Vice-President.

A Vice-President may involve the President & CEO.

Complaints about the President & CEO, Board Members and/or Board Policy will be directed to the Chair, YMCA Board Development Committee.

### **Appeals**

If you are not satisfied with the findings or the corrective action, you may submit a written appeal to the CEO or Designate within 10 business days of the receipt of the communication.

### **Confidentiality/No Retaliation**

The YMCA will make every effort to ensure confidentiality for the person reporting a complaint or concern. In some programs that receive funding from partner agencies, complaints may need to be shared with those agencies. No person who in good faith and under this policy submits a concern/complaint shall suffer harassment or retaliation.

### **Records**

Serious complaints and their resolutions will be recorded as Serious Occurrences and reviewed by the Vice President for the program or service area. A complaint is defined as serious if it is one of the following:

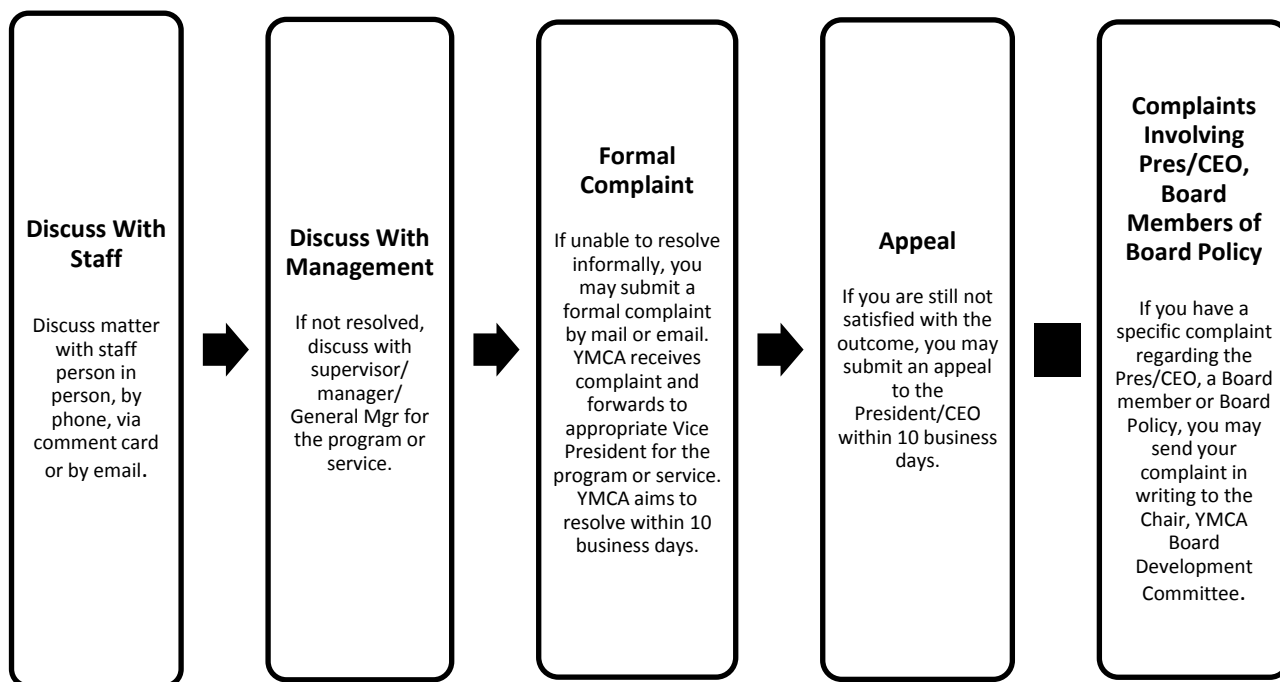
- Any complaint about the operational, physical or safety standards of the service that is considered serious by the Operator including reports of adverse water quality. Other examples include reports of lead exceedance, hazardous/dangerous substances (poison, flammables), medication error (not resulting in medical treatment), missing or stolen files, neighbor complaint about noise or physical appearance of the property (only where the municipal authorities are involved), etc.
- Any complaint made by or about a child, or any other serious occurrence involving a child that is considered by the Operator to be of a serious nature, e.g. inappropriate disciplinary techniques (excessive, unsanctioned).

Information recorded includes a description of the complaint, who handled it, timeframe, and a description of the resolution. A summary of Serious Occurrences received including number and type will be reported to the YMCA's Board of Directors on a quarterly basis.





## SUMMARY OF OVERALL PROCESS





**YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford  
Complaints Policy**