

Policy Section: Organizational	Effective Date: December 2024	Reviewed Date:	Approved By: Board of Directors
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Complaint Procedures for Clients of ARFHT

PURPOSE

Anyone receiving the services of health care providers and administrative staff and volunteers at Ancient Rivers Family Health Team (ARFHT) is entitled to be treated in a fair and ethical manner.

Situations may arise when a client of, or visitor to, ARFHT believes they are the recipient of unfair or discriminatory practices by a staff member or volunteer.

Professional regulation is designed for the protection of the public and to maintain the integrity of the professional, and the ARFHT Board of Directors believes that quality, competent and professionally delivered reception and care of all clients is the basis of ARFHT's care. The goal of the procedure is to gather and assess the allegations and supporting data in a fair and impartial manner. Subsequent actions follow the assessment of facts.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The investigative process attempts to preserve confidentiality, to the extent possible, during the complaint process.

Keeping confidential such documents as complaint forms, investigation reports and expert opinions, and the information they contain, helps to ensure the integrity of the investigative process and ensures that the rights and reputations of individuals affected by a complaint, including complainants, respondents and witnesses, are not unduly jeopardized.

Confidentiality also encourages individuals to cooperate with the processing and potential settlement of human rights complaints, thus contributing to more thorough and timely outcomes.

Complainants, respondents and witnesses are asked to avoid discussing the matters dealt with in complaints in a public forum or with the media during the complaint process.

DEFINITIONS

Complaint: A belief, statement of fact or event which leaves a client to either believe that ARFHT staff have either practiced unprofessionally in the delivery of their care (according to the Ontario Regulated Health Professions Act) and/or that the complainant has been treated in a discriminatory or harassing manner which has violated their rights and freedoms as defined by the Canadian federal or provincial Human Rights Code.

The ARFHT will not normally act upon a verbal or anonymous complaint.

Complainant: Anyone who believes that during their attendance at the ARFHT, they or a person they have legal medical responsibility or power of attorney for and who they know has been harmed, injured, discriminated against or harassed as defined by the Canadian Human Rights Code, by an interaction with a staff member or volunteer of ARFHT.

Complaint Form: The complaint form is a legal document that sets out the allegation of discrimination. It gives, in three pages or less, the complainant's version of events in sufficient detail for the respondent to understand what discrimination is being alleged. The ARFHT Board of Directors requires that the complainant completes ARFHT's complaint form.

(see Section 2 – Organizational Policies)

PROCESS

1. The Executive Director must decide within 30 days of receipt of the written complaint what action to take and must notify the complainant of the decision. The decision of the ED is final and is not subject to appeal.
2. Several courses of action are available. Examples of actions may include but are not limited to:
 - a. Encouraging the complainant and the team member to resolve the matter themselves;
 - b. With consent of both parties, attempting to assist them in resolving the matter;
 - c. Conducting or appointing an investigator to conduct an investigation;
 - d. Dismissing the complaint;
 - e. Directing the complainant to other regulatory bodies.
 - f. Where the complaint involves behavior or remarks of a sexual nature and/or other serious allegations, referring to the issue to the Board of Directors who may convene an ad hoc Panel of the Complaints Committee

This ad hoc committee of the Board of Directors carefully reviews all the documents and makes a decision as to how the complaint should be resolved. Neither the complainant nor the team member attends the Complaints Committee meeting.

The Panel must make this decision within 120 days of receiving the complaint.

Under the law there are a number of ways the Committee can proceed including:

- a. Taking no action;
- b. Referring specified allegations of professional misconduct or incompetence to the team member's professional college Discipline Committee if the allegations are related to the complaint.
- c. Taking appropriate action that complies with the Health Professions Act, the Code, the regulations or bylaw (such as negotiating a voluntary undertaking and agreement).
- d. Taking no action if the panel considers a complaint to be frivolous, vexatious, made in bad faith or otherwise an abuse of the process or if there is insufficient evidence.

It is important to note that the Panel convened to review the complaint is a screening committee and as such does not make findings of guilt to impose penalties. Also, the Complaints Committee does not have the authority to award costs or damages to clients.

All complaints, proceedings, and investigations are confidential.

The decision of the Board Panel is final and not subject to appeal.

*** In the event of a complaint against a health care professional who is governed by the Ontario Regulated Health Disciplines Act, that legislation identifies and defines the actions that must be followed in each case.

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Appendix A: Ancient Rivers Family Health Team Complaint Form

Filing a Complaint

Please note: There is an expectation that the complainant will have discussed the referred incident with the team member(s) and made every effort possible to clarify and resolve any such incident or incidents with the team member(s) against whom they are lodging the complaint prior to initiating the complaint process.

To initiate the process, please follow these important steps. All information gathered as part of an ARFHT investigation needs to be documented; therefore, the complaint and all other supporting information must be **in writing**.

Please note: ARFHT will not normally act upon a verbal or anonymous complaint.

1. Review the Complaints Process

Please review ARFHT's policy regarding the grounds for complaints and the steps involved in the complaints Process.

2. Complete the Complaint Form as provided - (signature required)

Please print out and/or copy the complaint form, complete, sign, and attach documentation and details of complaint as required.

3. Attach detailed description of complaint in writing

Please provide on a separate sheet, a detailed description of your complaint, including the following for each incident that is being reported:

Specific date(s) of incident

Name or description of witnesses to the incident

Detailed description of incident

Have your concerns been brought to the attention of the team member? If so, what was the outcome?

4. Attach any supporting evidence

Please forward any documents or information that supports the complaint.

5. E-Mail, mail or fax the completed complaint form and any other information that supports the complaint to:

The Executive Director
Ancient Rivers Family Health Team
100 Health Village Lane, Suite 101
Renfrew, Ontario
K7V 0C3
Fax: 613-655-2573
Info@arfht.ca