

## **Complaints Policy**

**Approved February 24, 2011**

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### **Purpose**

All partners in the Toronto Site At Home/Chez Soi Project (the "Project") are committed to providing professional and appropriate responses to complaints. This Policy outlines our process for addressing complaints that are:

- made directly to one partner about a concern with that partner;
- made to one partner about a concern with another partner;
- made to any partner about a concern that impacts more than one partner or a program policy
- made to request a review of a response made initially to a complaint (a review).

The objective of our policy is to:

- To ensure a professional, timely and consistent resolution of complaints by all project partners
- To collect, evaluate and analyze all complaints so that patterns can be noted and adjustments or improvements made to programs and services.

This policy addresses complaints about the At Home / Chez Soi project. Complaints related to other activities of any of the Partners are not addressed through this policy. The Partners to the Toronto Site project are listed in Appendix A.

This policy is a public document. It should be provided to any individual seeking information on how to make a complaint about the Project.

### **What is a Complaint?**

Complaints are written, formal expressions of an individual's concerns and where the individual expresses that they are seeking a formal, written response.

A written complaint is required to distinguish formal complaints from the regular business of responding to inquiries and resolving issues.

Complaints may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Complaint about a research, service, or housing team staff member or MHCC staff member

- Complaint about service provision or research practice or decision

Complaint providers may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Study Participants - directly or through a third party with written consent
- Community members /agencies - In the case of a complaint from a non-Participant source about a service decision (e.g., referral source regarding discharge), consent must be given by the participant in order for the complaint to be considered. What this means is that generic information may be provided about project policies and approaches, however, specifics about a particular situation cannot be addressed without consent to protect privacy.

Complaint providers requiring assistance to put their complaint in writing will be offered assistance by the Partner Agency receiving the complaint.

Where the complaint is being made on behalf of someone else, evidence of that person's consent is required. For example, a community service provider making a complaint on behalf of a participant in the Project.

The individual making the complaint must agree that they are making a formal complaint, and must be advised that in making the complaint, personal information such as their name and the details of the complaint will be shared with others involved in the Project for the purpose of investigating, responding to and resolving the complaint. All complaints related to discharges shall be directed to the Executive Committee, a group comprised of senior representatives of all Partners.

Anonymous complaints will not be accepted except in rare circumstances. A complaint may remain anonymous where, in the opinion of the Partner receiving the complaint, there is a serious issue that must be addressed despite that the individual does not wish their name to be used or to make a formal complaint. In such cases, the Partner receiving the complaint may obtain such information as it needs to stay in contact with the individual and investigate, but will not share personal information with other Partners.

## **Procedure:**

### **Submitting a Complaint**

1. Individuals seeking to provide a complaint will be requested to first connect with the Partner most directly involved in the matter to be addressed (the "Relevant Partner"). In most cases, it is expected that the Relevant Partner and the individual will be able to resolve the matter informally. If not, the individual shall be advised of their right to make a formal complaint, and the process for doing so.
2. Where the individual first connects with the incorrect Partner, they will be referred to the Relevant Partner (see step 1).
3. Where the individual prefers not to connect with the Relevant partner, they will be provided with information about how to make a formal complaint, and may submit their complaint in writing to the Relevant Partner, or any Partner (and that partner will forward it to the Relevant Partner).
4. If the complaint is related to a discharge, the Relevant Partner shall notify the Executive Committee in writing of the complaint (via email).
5. If the complaint is related to MHCC local or national, or a policy matter, the complaint shall be made or transferred to the MHCC Site Coordinator.

### **Resolving a Complaint**

6. The Relevant Partner is lead in resolving the complaint according to their organization's policies. At their discretion, the Relevant Partner may consult with other Partners and/or the Executive Committee in determining a resolution. The Relevant Partner shall be responsible for all communications with the complaint provider (with the exception of situations where the individual making the complaint does not want to be in contact with the Relevant Partner, in which case the MHCC Site Coordinator will be the contact).
7. Where the complaint is related to a discharge, MHCC, or a policy matter, the MHCC Site Coordinator shall be the lead in managing the complaint and responding to the individual who made the complaint.

### **Learning from Complaints**

8. To ensure that we learn from complaints, the Relevant Partner will notify the MHCC Site Coordinator or their delegate when a complaint has been made along with a short description of the issue within 30 days of receiving the complaint. When the complaint is resolved, the Relevant Partner will notify the MHCC Site Coordinator or their delegate that a resolution has occurred along with a short description of the resolution, within 30 days. Updates about complaints received and resolved shall be a regular agenda item for the Site Operating Team. At the discretion of the Relevant Partner,

further information about the complaint (other than personal information) will be provided to the Site Operating Team.

9. In addition, Complaint Providers are invited to provide feedback about the way that their Complaint was addressed.

### **Requests for Review of a Resolution**

10. Where the complaint provider is not satisfied with the response of the Relevant Partner, then they may request a review by the Executive Committee. The Review Request should include reasons for the request.
11. The Review Request should be in writing to the MHCC Site Coordinator. As with Complaints, any Partner may accept and forward such requests, and requests made on behalf of others must include evidence that the individual has proper consent.
12. The MHCC Site Coordinator will notify the Relevant Partner that a review has been requested, and provide documentation of the request.
13. Where the Relevant Partner has internal processes for reviews, these processes may first be used at the discretion of the Relevant Partner. If the matter is resolved by the Relevant Partner, they shall communicate with the Complaint Provider, and notify the MHCC Site Coordinator that the matter has been resolved.
14. Where the matter has not been resolved through internal processes, the Executive Committee will consider the matter. The Executive Committee will undertake the review and make a final decision. Their decision will be communicated by the MHCC Site Coordinator.
15. Where the individual making the complaint is not satisfied with the results of the review processes, they may follow up with other relevant oversight bodies at their own discretion. If requested, the MHCC Site Coordinator will provide information about external avenues to address the complaint.

### **Records Management and Privacy**

16. Complaint files shall be maintained by the Relevant Partner most directly related to the complaint in accordance with their record management and privacy policies, or MHCC policies, whichever is stricter.

### **Updates and Further Information:**

Updates to this policy shall be made, as required, by the MHCC Site Coordinator in consultation with the Partners. For further information on this policy, contact the MHCC Site Coordinator (see Appendix A for contact information).

## Appendix A: Partners

Partner or Sub-Contract	Contact for Complaints	Comments
Centre for Research on Inner City Health	Dr. Vicky S. {insert contact info}	Research lead; responsibilities include enrollment of study participants and ongoing surveys with participants.
Toronto North Support Services	Susan Meikle{insert contact info}	Service providers. Each of the three organizations provides support services for up to 100 participants in the project.  For complaints made on behalf of a participant in the project, written consent from the participant is required in order to address the complaint.
Across Boundaries	Aseefa Sarang{insert contact info}	
COTA Health	Pam? or Sylvia? {insert contact info}	
City of Toronto, Shelter Support & Housing Administration Division	Katherine Chislett Director, Housing & Homelessness Supports & Initiatives. 55 John St. (Metro Hall) 6th Floor, Toronto ON M5V 3C6. (416) 397-0260 <a href="mailto:kchisle@toronto.ca">kchisle@toronto.ca</a>	Service lead; responsibilities include delivery of housing and People with Lived Experience Caucus. These functions have been subcontracted. Initial contacts on complaints should be made to the sub-contract, and escalated to the City of Toronto if not

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Connections</li> <li>• People with Lived Experience Caucus</li> </ul>	<p>Paul Chisholm, Acting General Manager, {insert contact info]</p> <p>Dawnmarie Harriot {insert contact info}</p>	<p>resolved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible for assisting support service teams to access housing units for participants.</li> <li>• Responsible for supporting the People with Lived Experience Caucus – an advisory group to the Toronto At Home/Chez Soi project comprised of individuals with lived experience of homelessness and mental health issues.</li> </ul>
<p>Mental Health Commission of Canada</p>	<p>Faye Moore, MHCC Site Coordinator, {insert contact info}</p>	<p>MHCC is a national organization. The MHCC Site Coordinator is the local representative, and also chair of the group responsible for overall project delivery in Toronto.</p>

Executive Committee: Senior representatives of all Partners and the MHCC Site Coordinator.

Site Operating Team: Senior representatives of all Partners, the MHCC Site Coordinator, and the Caucus of People with Lived Experience.