

AHO Complaints Policy

Introduction

The Affordable Housing Office (AHO) strives to operate in a professional and courteous manner. It is also focused on treating its partners in an equitable, transparent and timely manner. In keeping with these principles, the AHO has established this complaints policy to provide external individuals and organizations as well as City divisions with a clear procedure to follow when lodging a complaint about the AHO. Equally, the policy provides the AHO and its staff with a clear process for handling and resolving complaints.

The Affordable Housing Office collects your personal information under authority of the City of Toronto Act, 2006, s. 136(c) and the City of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 169, Article I, ss. 169-1, 169-2, and 169-4. The information you provide will be used to investigate the complaint and may be used for contact purposes related to the investigation. Questions about this collection can be directed to the Director, Affordable Housing Office at the 7th Floor, Metro Hall, 55 John Street, Toronto, ON M5V 3C6 or by telephone at 416-338-1143.

Complaint Definition and Form

- A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with the AHO's policies, procedures, employees or quality of service. Examples include, but are not limited to, the perception of:
 - failure to do something agreed to do;
 - failure to observe policies or procedures;
 - unacceptable delay;
 - staff error;
 - discourteous actions/statements by staff.

A complaint may be received verbally in person or by telephone or in writing by hand delivery, mail, fax or email.

Receipt of Complaint

- Written complaints are date-stamped and immediately referred to the staff person involved, the manager and the director. Receipt of the complaint is acknowledged within 48 hours by the AHO in the same medium as the complaint (e.g. letter, e-mail). This reply also includes the following paragraph:

The Affordable Housing Office collects your personal information under authority of the City of Toronto Act, 2006, s. 136(c) and the City of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 169, Article I, ss. 169-1, 169-2, and 169-4. The information you provide will be used to investigate the complaint and may be used for contact purposes related to the investigation. Questions about this collection can be directed to the Director, Affordable Housing Office at the 7th Floor, Metro Hall, 55 John Street, Toronto, ON M5V 3C6 or by telephone at 416-338-1143.

- Complaints not within the AHO's jurisdiction are forwarded to the appropriate Division and the complainant is advised.
- Anonymous complaints are referred to the manager and director.

Procedure

The AHO uses a clear four-step process to handle complaints.

First Step:

- The staff member involved in the complaint should attempt to resolve it, with input from his or her manager and, if necessary, the director.
- If the complainant asks to be referred to the manager, the staff person should immediately comply.
- If the complaint concerns the conduct of a staff person or if it cannot be resolved, staff should immediately refer it to the manager and inform the complainant of the manager's name and contact information.
- If the complaint is made directly to management, the staff member involved shall be notified.

Second Step:

- Management reviews the complaint, and may attempt to resolve it immediately with the involvement of the staff member.
- If further investigation is required, the manager, with the involvement of the director, records the complaint and contact details, investigates the complaint to determine its validity and proposes a resolution (see Investigations below).
- The manager may request that a verbal complaint be put in writing, especially if it involves a serious or complex matter.
- For all verbal and written complaints requiring investigation, the manager indicates to the complainant when they will be contacted with a resolution or update.

Third Step:

- If not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, at the manager's discretion or at the complainant's request, it is referred to the Director.
- The director reviews the complaint, and may attempt to resolve it immediately.
- If further investigation is required, the director records the complaint and contact details, investigates the complaint to determine its validity and proposes a resolution (see Investigations below).
- The director may request that a verbal complaint be put in writing, especially if it involves a serious or complex matter.

- For all verbal and written complaints requiring investigation, the director indicates to the complainant when he or she will be contacted with a resolution or update.

Fourth Step:

- If not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, at the director's discretion or at the complainant's request, it is referred to the Deputy City Manager, Cluster A.
- The Deputy City Manager reviews the complaint, and may attempt to resolve it immediately.
- If further investigation is required, the Deputy City Manager records the complaint and contact details, investigates the complaint to determine its validity and proposes a resolution (see Investigations below).
- The Deputy City Manager may request that a verbal complaint be put in writing, especially if it involves a serious or complex matter.
- For all verbal and written complaints requiring investigation, the Deputy City Manager indicates to the complainant when he or she will be contacted with a resolution or update.
- Where a complainant is dissatisfied at the end of the fourth stage, they are advised of the opportunity for external review by the Ombudsman.

Investigations

- Investigations may be conducted during the second and third step. The investigation may include:
 - Discussion(s) with the complainant to clarify the complaint, confirm common understanding, clarify outcome sought and explain complaint procedures.
 - Discussion with staff involved (with union representative, if applicable).
 - Review of background information such as policies and procedures, previous written communications and other documentation.
 - Obtain and review other expert opinions or perspectives.

At each stage of escalation, it should be determined whether the previous investigation has been adequate.

Notice of Decision and Resolution

- Written complaints receive a written notice of decision.
- Verbal complaints receive written or verbal notice at the director's discretion.
- If investigation determines that the reasons for the complaint are not justified, and no further action is required, the complainant is notified.
- If investigation determines that the complaint is justified, the complainant is notified of corrective action to be taken and any remedy proposed.

Record of the Complaint

- During complaint escalation, staff maintain a record at all stages including:
 - name of the complainant
 - details of the complaint
 - communications with complainant and other parties
 - the decision and action taken, and
 - the complainant's response.

Guiding Principles

- Complaints are dealt with promptly and resolved as quickly as possible.
- Staff treat complaints as confidential and protect complainant's privacy.
- Complaint investigations are fair, impartial and respectful to parties involved
- Complainants are advised of their options to escalate their complaint if they are dissatisfied with treatment or outcome.
- Complainants are provided clear and understandable reasons for how decisions on the complaint were made.
- Updates are provided to complainants during investigations.
- Complaints are used to assist in improving services, policies and procedures.

Contact Information

Mail:

Director
Affordable Housing Office
7th Floor, Metro Hall,
55 John Street,
Toronto, ON M5V 3C6

Telephone: 416-338-1143

Fax: 416-392-4219

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