

IX. Complaints Policy

	Canadian Mental Health Association	Policy Title: Complaints Policy
	Association canadienne pour la santé mentale	
POLICY MANUAL		
Approved by: Board	Date of approval: Jan 27, 2024	Next review: Jan 27, 2027

Purpose

This policy applies to external complaints received by the Canadian Mental Health Association National Office (CMHA National) about our activities, programs, services, products, staff, contractors, consultants or volunteers. This policy is intended to ensure complaints received by CMHA National are responded to in a prompt, fair and respectful manner.

Guiding Principles

As an organization that serves the public, it is vital that our stakeholders, including the general public, volunteers, staff, donors, partner organizations, and government, can submit a complaint to CMHA National that is addressed promptly and appropriately.

Therefore:

- it is in the interest of all parties that complaints are resolved as quickly as possible without fear of reprisal;
- that the review of complaints is fair, impartial, and respectful to all parties;
- that complainants are provided clear and understandable reasons for decisions relating to complaints; and
- that updates are provided to complainants during review processes.

As a federation, we are committed to continuous learning and improvement. Consequently, it is crucial that we document, report on, and learn from the complaints we receive to drive improvements in our services, policies, and procedures.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is a statement expressing dissatisfaction with the service, actions or lack of actions from CMHA National or anyone associated with CMHA National as a staff member, volunteer, Board member or contractor.

These actions could include (but are not limited to):

- perceived failure of CMHA National to do something previously agreed upon;
- perceived failure to observe CMHA National policy or procedures;

- perceived error made by a CMHA National staff member or volunteer; or
- unfair or discourteous actions/statements by a CMHA National staff member or volunteer.

Anyone personally affected can submit a complaint.

Ensuring Privacy

Personal information of anyone submitting a complaint will be handled sensitively and disclosed only to those appropriate individuals at CMHA National (or the appropriate CMHA Division) for the purposes of responding to and resolving the complaint.

Documentation

CMHA National will keep written records of all complaints made. A summary of the complaints received including number, type and outcome/resolution will be reported to CMHA National's Board of Directors annually.

Procedure: Submitting a Complaint

Complaints may be made to CMHA National in three ways:

1. **By Email:** info@cmha.ca
2. **By Phone:** 416-646-5557
3. **By Mail:**
Canadian Mental Health Association, National
500-250 Dundas Street West
Toronto, ON
M5T 2Z5

In order to effectively address and resolve complaints, the following information should be provided:

- approximate date and brief description of the incident/issue;
- name of CMHA member or volunteer to whom the complaint pertains (if relevant and appropriate to share);
- contact information; and
- how the complainant relates to CMHA (volunteer, training attendee, program participant, donor etc.).

Note: If the complainant prefers to submit their complaint anonymously, they should refrain from including any contact information. CMHA National will investigate anonymous complaints; however, if submitted in this manner, CMHA National will not be able to reach out to the complainant for follow-up or to provide updates on the status of the complaint.

Procedure: External Complaints Regarding CMHA National

Scope: This procedure pertains to complaints associated with CMHA National or individuals linked to CMHA National as staff members, contractors, volunteers, or Board members.

i. Acknowledgment of Complaints

Complaints submitted to CMHA National will be acknowledged within 5 working days. At a minimum, a CMHA staff member will initiate contact with the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the complaint and to organize a time to have a discussion to address their concerns.

ii. Resolution with the Involved Parties

The individual with the complaint will be encouraged to first communicate their concerns directly to the person most closely connected with the situation. This step is crucial to ensure that every effort is made to resolve the complaint in a direct, open, and constructive manner.

iii. Escalation Process

If conveying the complaint to the directly involved individual is:

- Not feasible (e.g., the individual with the complaint does not feel comfortable or safe doing so), and/or
- Unlikely to resolve the complaint,

the individual will be encouraged to express the complaint to the individual's manager, who will provide a response within ten working days.

iv. Further Escalation

If conveying the complaint to the individual's manager is not feasible and/or is unlikely to resolve the complaint, the complainant may contact the CMHA National Chief Executive Officer (or designate). The CMHA National Chief Executive Officer will provide a written response to the complaint within 10 working days of receiving it.

v. Complaints Escalated to the Board of Directors

If the complaint is regarding the CMHA National Chief Executive Officer and/or the CMHA National Chief Executive Officer is unable to reach a resolution satisfactory to the individual or organization, the individual/organization involved may appeal to the Chair of the CMHA National Board of Directors. The Board Chair will refer the complaint to the other Board Executives, who will jointly investigate the complaint and furnish a written response within two months of receiving the complaint.

In the case that the complaint is regarding a CMHA Board member, the person with the complaint can contact the Chair of the CMHA National Board of Directors. The Board Chair will provide an initial response within 10 days of receiving the complaint.

vi. Complaints About the Board Chair

If the complaint is directed at the Board Chair, it will be referred to the Vice Chair of the Board. The Vice Chair will establish an ad hoc committee of Board members to investigate the complaint and provide a written response to the individual/organization involved within two months of receiving the complaint.

vii. Progress Updates

Complainants will be kept informed of the progress during the investigation process.

viii. Follow-up Actions

Depending on the nature of the complaint and the outcome of the investigation, follow-up actions may be considered.

Note: If the received complaint is assessed as posing a moderate to critical organizational risk to CMHA National or the Federation, please refer to the document "Issues + Crisis Planning and Process" for further action.

Procedure: Complaints directed at CMHA Divisions, Branches or Regions

Scope: This section outlines the procedures for addressing and resolving complaints directed at CMHA Divisions, Branches or Regions that are received by CMHA National. The goal is to establish a transparent and effective process that encourages local resolution while providing a mechanism for escalation when necessary. CMHA has a federated structure and each CMHA Division, Branch and Region is its own separate organization. Therefore, **any complaints regarding the above actions from a CMHA Division, Branch or Region must be directed to them for resolution.**

i. Acknowledgement

When CMHA National receives a complaint related to a CMHA Division, Branch, or Region, a staff member from CMHA National will reach out to the individual with the complaint to acknowledge its receipt. Individuals with complaints about specific CMHA Divisions, Branches, or Regions will be encouraged to first direct their concerns to the respective local entity following the local complaint resolution policy. The CMHA staff member will also convey that the complaint will be duly forwarded to the relevant Division. This response will be initiated within 5 working days of receiving the complaint.

ii. Forwarding the Complaint

Complaints concerning a CMHA Division, Branch, or Region sent to CMHA National will be subsequently directed to the CEO/Executive Director, designated contact, or Board Chair (depending on the nature of the complaint) within the respective Division. CMHA National Staff will seek confirmation of receipt and confirmation of the complaint's allocation to the relevant Branch/Region (if applicable).

iii. CMHA National Intervention

The CMHA National Office will only intervene in the resolution process if:

- a) the complainant has followed the local policy and procedure and can demonstrate that the local articulated process has not been followed by the organization, and/or
- b) the received complaint poses a moderate to critical organizational risk to the CMHA Federation or CMHA National. Refer to the document *"Issues + Crisis Planning and Process"* for specific guidelines.

In these situations, the CMHA National Office will work with the appropriate Division to support the resolution of the complaint.

Revision/Review Process

Revisions to this policy will be made every 3 years with changes communicated in a timely and transparent manner to all relevant stakeholders.