

Last reviewed: September 2019

Nillumbik Playhouse Policy

Dealing With Complaints

POLICY STATEMENT

Nillumbik Playhouses values the feedback of educators, staff, families and the wider community as a mechanism to support the continuous improvement of our service. Playhouses take complaints seriously and respects an individual's right to procedural fairness and natural justice. Complaints are managed in an ethical, confidential, timely, transparent and meaningful way. A positive and sympathetic approach is adopted to find solutions to resolve all disputes, issues and concerns.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the Primary Nominee, Approved Nominee, Accepted Nominees, Educators, Staff, Students on placement, Contractors, Volunteers, Parents/Guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of the Playhouse, including during offsite excursions and activities, and any other individual involved in this organisation.

LEGISLATION

Children's Services Regulations 2009 (v10)
Regulation 35; 40; 90-91; 105

Children's Services Act 1996 (Vic)
Part 4

Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)

Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

Education and Care Services National Regulations
75;76; 80; 88(2); 93(2); 93(5)(b); 94(2); 99; 157

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
Section 3(3)(a)&(e); 174(2)(b)&(4)

National Quality Standard
Element 1.1.4; Standard 6.1-6.2; Element 7.3.4

GOALS / What we are going to do

- Act in good faith and in a calm and courteous manner.

- Handle complaints objectively, demonstrate respect and understanding of other points of view and balance the rights and responsibilities of all parties.
- Maintain confidentiality of all parties in line with policy and legislative requirements.
- Seek to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties.
- Report any complaint that alleges an individual has contravened a Law or Act or compromised the health, safety or wellbeing of any child to the relevant authorities within the required time period.

EVALUATION

To ensure continuous improvement, the Primary Nominee will:

- Regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness, including children, families and staff.
- Monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy.
- Notify Parents/Guardians when making any changes to this policy or its procedures.
- Make updates to the policy as part of the service's policy review cycle, or in response to current legislation, research, policy and best practice updates, or as otherwise required.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

All Playhouse policies, forms and records.

RESOURCES

ACECQA

Using complaints to support continuous improvement

Reporting requirements about children

Key changes to notifications, incidents and complaints

Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership

www.aceaqa.gov.au

The Department of Education and Training- Making a complaint

www.education.vic.gov.au

Early Childhood Research Hub- Grievances and Complaints Management

www.ecrh.edu.au

Community Early Learning Australia- Complaints Handling

www.cela.org.au

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted on 30 September 2019.

REVIEW DATE

This policy shall be reviewed in December 2020.

PROCEDURE/ How it will be done

MAKING A COMPLAINT

The Primary Nominee will:

- Survey families regularly to provide them with an opportunity to identify areas of concern or ways in which the Playhouse could be improved along with areas of strength.
- Ensure a copy of the relevant regulations is available in the Playhouse for all to read at any time.
- Be available to address referred complaints from the Playhouse staff and inform all parties how the complaint will be handled and how the complainant will be informed of the progress to reach a resolution.
- Provide families with other means for input such as suggestion boxes, daily contact with their child's educator, or advisory committees.
- Ensure the complaints process is readily available to Parents/Guardians, educators, students, volunteers and visitors to the Playhouse.
- Make the name, address and phone number of the Department of Education and Training readily available in order to assist families that wish make contact.
- Be available to receive complaints from Parents/Guardians, educators, students, volunteers or visitors to the Playhouse, and explain how the complaint will be handled and how the complainant will be informed of the progress to reach a resolution.

The educators will:

- Discuss complaints procedures with children and encourage them to raise any issues they have.
- Be available to receive complaints from children, Parents/Guardians, students, volunteers or visitors to the Playhouse. If the problem is about an issue that is outside your control, refer the complaint to the Primary/Approved Nominee.

The Parents/Guardians will:

- Discuss any issue or concern directly with the parties involved:
 - Be clear about the topic or issue you want to discuss.
 - Focus on the things that are genuinely affecting your child
 - Be factual, respectful and constructive.

This practice ensures that both parties have a common understanding of the issue and can consider strategies to immediately respond to and address the grievance/concern.

- If a satisfactory outcome cannot be reached, Parents/Guardians may escalate the complaint to the Playhouse Coordinator, Approved Provider or in the instance of a serious incident, the Department of Education and Training on 1300 338 961.

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

- All complaints will be dealt with promptly and confidentially in a manner that:
 - Values the opportunity to be heard.
 - Promotes conflict resolution.
 - Ensures that conflicts and grievances are mediated fairly.
 - Is transparent and equitable.
- Where possible all complaints will be dealt with on the spot with the child's educator. If beyond the control of the educator, or the parent does not wish to raise it with the educator, the complaint will be referred to the Playhouse Coordinator.
- All confidential conversations/ discussions with Parents/Guardians will take place in a quiet area away from children, other families and educators/staff who are not involved.
- Where a family wishes their grievance to remain confidential this will be honoured. However, families will be advised that issues cannot always be resolved if they choose to remain anonymous.
- Where an educator or other staff member believes they will have to share a confidence with another person in order to resolve a complaint, or if the nature of the complaint requires that a third party has to be informed in order to meet legislative requirements, they will inform the family of this need prior to any further discussion on the matter.

STEPS TO MANAGING COMPLAINTS

- Feedback is welcomed and appreciated.
- A complaint will be documented and stored securely.
- Any legal requirement including the need to notify regulatory authorities will be considered. Any complaint that alleges an individual has contravened a Law or Act or compromised the health, safety or wellbeing of any child will be reported to the relevant authorities within the required time period.

Where a complaint has been made directly to the Victoria Police pertaining to the conduct of a staff member, student, volunteer or contractor regarding a child, the Reportable Conduct Scheme guidelines will apply, and no further investigation will commence without the authorisation of the police.

- The complainant will be asked to provide information regarding how the situation could be rectified to their satisfaction.
- The person receiving the complaint will clarify issues by actively listening and questioning the complainant to further understand the issues.
- If possible the problem will be resolved immediately. If this is not possible the complainant will be advised how the complaint will be handled and how they will be informed of the progress to reach a resolution.
- If the issues are complex or serious the complainant will be asked to put their concerns in writing. For written grievances, the complainant will receive a written response within 7 days.
- Where mediation is required, all parties will have the right to agree to the appointment of a mediator.
- If the problem is about an issue that is outside the control of the service, the person receiving the complaint will explain this to the complainant and let them know who they should contact if they wish to take the matter further.
- Any commitments made to the complainant in regard to addressing the issue will be followed up and the results given to the complainant as soon as possible.

- In due course after the incident the Playhouse will contact the complainant to find out if they are happy with the way the complaint has been resolved.
- Each complaint will be evaluated to determine how the Playhouse responded and whether further action is required.