

MEDICAL MUTTS SERVICE DOGS INC.

Complaints and Grievance Policy

Approved by Board on December 2nd 2021



1. Purpose and Scope

This policy provides guidance to Medical Mutts Service Dogs (Medical Mutts or MM) clients, staff, Board members, students and volunteers in making, receiving and responding to complaints, grievances and other feedback.

2. Principles

Medical Mutts welcomes complaints regarding all areas of the service including operations, management, or employee conduct.

Any person or organization involved with Medical Mutts, or those affected by its operations, have the right to give feedback or make a complaint without fear of retribution.

Medical Mutts is committed to using the information gained in the complaints process to improve the organization.

Medical Mutts recognizes that people need avenues to give feedback, including how to make a complaint to Medical Mutts, and are entitled to have their concerns addressed fairly, promptly, and transparently.

Medical Mutts understands this information may be sensitive and will respect the person's right to confidentiality and handle complaints in a fair and timely manner.

Medical Mutts has industrial and legal responsibilities to take all reasonable steps to identify and resolve grievances in the workplace.

3. Outcomes

- An atmosphere is fostered in which complaints and independent monitoring are viewed positively.
- Resolution of complaints at a local level through alternative dispute resolution is encouraged.
- Each complaint is respected, taken seriously, and acted upon.
- Responses to complaints and grievances are delivered in a consistent and timely manner.
- Conflict resolution is consistent across Medical Mutts, regardless of who is managing the

process.

- Conflict is managed equitably and transparently and to the satisfaction of all parties, where possible.

4. Functions and Delegations

Position	Delegation/Task
Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Respond to complaints and grievances relating to the Executive Director (ED).● Respond to complaints and grievances relating to the Chairperson.● Respond to higher level or escalated complaints as required.● Act as facilitators in resolving grievances.
ED and Operations Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Respond to higher level or escalated complaints as required.● Attempt to resolve grievances informally in the first instance.● Contribute to resolving grievances once a supervisor or other third party becomes involved.● Maintain a record of grievances and related actions and decisions.
Team Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Act as facilitator to resolve complaints and grievances.
All staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Receive complaints and other feedback and respond appropriately.● Make complaints and grievances when required.● Contribute to resolving grievances once a supervisor or other third party becomes involved.

5. Policy Detail

All attempts will be made to resolve complaints and appeals promptly and simply.

5.1 Service User Rights

Nobody who lodges a complaint or appeal against Medical Mutts, its staff or management will be penalized for their action, and they will continue to receive respectful service.

5.2 Definition of a complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the Organization.

Complaints may come from clients, donors, board members, volunteers, and staff who we contact about our work, or any other person or organization with an interest in the Charity and its activities.

A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email, or in writing.

5.3 Communicating the Complaints and Grievance Policy

Information is available to clients, donors, board members, volunteers, and staff about how to make a complaint or an appeal. This information is available on the website and publications as appropriate.

Information to be included consists of:

- how to make a complaint or provide feedback to Medical Mutts;
- the complaints process, confidentiality, timelines and management of feedback;
- how people can access an advocate to support them during a complaint resolution; and
- the process for pursuing the complaint through an external body in the event that a satisfactory resolution of the complaint cannot be reached.

5.4 How Medical Mutts Receives Feedback

When feedback is received, staff, volunteers, students and/or Board members will:

- respond with respect, in a positive, non-defensive manner;
- courteously thank the person for providing feedback;
- acknowledge impact of the issue on the person providing feedback;
- recognize reasonable expectations of clients; and
- clarify whether the feedback is an observation, suggestion for improvement, compliment or complaint.

If there is uncertainty about the feedback being an observation or a complaint, questions may be asked of the person giving feedback, such as *“is this an issue we should consider as a complaint?”* or *“would you like me to arrange for you to speak to the ED about this?”*

5.5 How Medical Mutts Receives Complaints

Anyone who wants to make a complaint, whether it is minor or serious should, if possible, first speak to the direct supervisor, Operations Manager or ED.

Complaints can be accepted verbally or in writing by any staff, volunteer or Board member of Medical Mutts.

Written complaints should be sent to Medical Mutts, 6120 Allisonville Rd. Indianapolis IN 46220.

Verbal complaints can be made by phone at 317-991-5400 or in person to any staff, board member, or executive of Medical Mutts.

5.6 Serious Complaints

If the matter is serious or complex, the Operations Manager will help the complainant complete a written statement (if this is required or requested). The Operations Manager will then immediately notify the ED and Chair of the Board, who will convene an executive meeting to consider the matter as soon as possible.

If the complaint involves the ED or Operations Manager, or the person is not satisfied with the ED or Operations Manager's response, the ED or Operations Manager must inform the complainant of their right to speak to the Board and give them the relevant contact details. The complaint can be taken to any Board member, who must notify the Executive as soon as possible.

Any complaint that appears to indicate physical or sexual abuse, or other criminal activity, will involve reporting to external parties such as the Indianapolis Metro Police Department (IMPD).

5.7 Initial Response to a Complaint

In responding to complaints, staff and Board members should:

- acknowledge the concerns and experiences of the person making a complaint, particularly if the issue has caused distress or considerable inconvenience;
- attempt to resolve the complaint directly with the complainant - clarify the specific issue that the individual is complaining about and their desired outcomes. It may be necessary to contact the complainant to ask for more information;
- detail how the complaint will be investigated - provide clear time frames and the contact details for an appropriate person who can be contacted by the complainant, if necessary; and
- consider the sensitive and/or confidential nature of a complaint and the privacy of the individual making the complaint. Staff should carefully consider what information is recorded and to whom within the organization the information is communicated. When completing a Complaints Record Form, only record factual information that can be supported by evidence or note that the information is not yet substantiated.

Medical Mutts aims to investigate and resolve all complaints within a month of receiving the complaint. If this timeframe cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the reasons why and of the alternative timeframe for resolution.

5.8 Dispute Resolution

Where the complaint appears to be referring to a conflict between two people, it may be

appropriate to use the organization's Dispute Resolution Process.

5.8.1 Registering and Reporting

Medical Mutts keeps records of all complaints and appeals using Complaint Forms. The confidentiality of individuals is of the utmost importance and is maintained at all times. The complaints process will be regularly reviewed as part of the annual planning process so that Medical Mutts can make changes to its operations as appropriate, to adequately meet the needs of clients and staff.

5.9 Taking Action on the Complaint

The Operations Manager should attempt to deal with simple matters directly and quickly.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, one or more of the following actions may be appropriate:

- Recording the information (if communicated verbally) and passing the information on to the Operations Manager;
- recommending use of the Dispute Resolution Process;
- raising the information at a regular staff and/or Board meeting;
- passing the complaint on to the chairperson of the Board to be dealt with by the executive;
- recording the information in the relevant staff, client or project file;
- making operational changes based on the content of the complaint; or
- including any complaints received in reports to the Board.

5.10 Keeping the complainant informed

Written communication will be sent to the complainant (or the complainant's nominee) within 5-7 working days of the complaint being received. The response details what is being done to investigate and resolve the complaint.

The complainant or person appealing a decision will be informed of the progress of their complaint at all stages of the process, including how to appeal a decision if they are not satisfied with the outcome.

5.11 Complaint Resolution and Follow Up

Following resolution of a complaint, Medical Mutts will contact the complainant to assess whether the actions taken are adequate.

The complaint's register is regularly reviewed to inform service planning and continuous quality improvement.

5.12 Support for People Making a Complaint

Clients, donors, board members, volunteers and staff have the right to use an advocate of their

choice to negotiate on their behalf with the staff and/or management of Medical Mutts.

The Operations Manager is responsible for ensuring complainants are aware of Medical Mutts appeals process and ensuring that complainants are directed to external agencies that can help them appeal.

5.13 Resources and Training

Written information about how to complain and appeal a decision will be available and presented in an accessible way. The staff/management/Board member who is approached will also take time to clearly explain the procedure.

People will also be informed of how to access advocacy organizations or individual advocates to help them complain or make an appeal.

The Board will be regularly informed of the number of complaints and appeals, the issues complained or appealed about, the time taken to resolve and the outcomes of complaints and appeals.

5.14 Complaints Involving Staff Members

Complaints involving staff members, excluding the ED, are forwarded to the Operations Manager who will coordinate a response to the complaint in conjunction with the staff member's supervisor.

Responding to the complaint may involve:

- 5.14.1 investigating the complaint and providing the staff member with an opportunity to respond to issues raised;
- 5.14.2 attempting to mediate the dispute and/or attempt to resolve the matter; or
- 5.14.3 taking further action necessary to resolve the issue (e.g. external mediation and dispute resolution services).

Complaints involving the ED should be referred to the Board Chair. The process for complaints involving the ED is the same as for complaints involving other staff, except the Chair helps resolve them.

5.15 Complaints Involving Board Members

Complaints concerning a Board member or a member of a Board subcommittee should be referred to the Board Chair. The Chair, or an approved delegate, will attempt to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the complainant. Where the Chair is the subject of a complaint, the complaint should be referred to another Board member.

A response to the complaint may involve:

- investigating the complaint and providing the Board Chair or member of a Board subcommittee with an opportunity to respond to issues raised;
- if appropriate, attempting to mediate the dispute and/or otherwise resolve the matter to

- the satisfaction of the complainant;
- taking further action necessary to resolve the issue (e.g. external mediation and resolution services).
- recommending use of the Dispute Resolution Process;
- raising the information at a regular staff and/or Board meeting;
- passing the complaint on to the chairperson of the Board to be dealt with by the executive;
- recording the information in the relevant staff, client or project file;
- making operational changes based on the content of the complaint; or
- including any complaints received in reports to the Board.

6 Grievances

A grievance raised by Board members, staff, volunteers or students is considered separate and independent from disciplinary processes undertaken to manage performance or conduct matters identified by the employer.

If a grievance is raised during disciplinary or performance management processes, the grievance is to be addressed as per this policy and the disciplinary or performance management process continues independently.

6.1 Informal Grievance Resolution

In the first instance, a grievance should be resolved between the complainant(s) and the person(s) about whom the complaint rests.

Where the grievance cannot be resolved between the two parties informally or the complainant does not feel able to approach the respondent or the respondent does not feel able to participate, a formal grievance resolution procedure is to be undertaken.

6.4.1 Formal Grievance Resolution

A complainant may make formal notification of a grievance by lodging details of it with their manager.

Where the grievance is about a complainant's manager, the complainant should lodge the grievance with the next in line supervisor or the ED/Operations Manager.

If there is potential of a conflict of interest for the supervisor in managing the grievance, the next in line supervisor or the ED/Operations Manager shall manage the grievance resolution procedure.

Where the complainant's manager is the ED or Operations Manager and is also the respondent to the grievance, the complainant shall lodge the grievance with the ED or Operations Manager

(whichever one is not the respondent to the grievance) or the Chair of Medical Mutts Board.

The person who has received formal notification of a grievance shall acknowledge receipt of the grievance in writing within five working days.

The person managing the grievance shall interview the complainant to clarify allegations and details, discover desired outcome(s) and advise of the process to be followed.

After action has been taken to resolve the grievance and no further response is received from the complainant, the grievance is considered closed.

Where a grievance remains unresolved, the person managing the grievance may seek a more senior staff member or the Medical Mutts Board Chair to contribute to the resolution process. Additionally, external mediation may be undertaken in an attempt to resolve the dispute.

The complainant and/or the respondent may request union or other representation during external mediation.

The complainant and/or the respondent and/or Medical Mutts may seek help from a relevant industrial tribunal.

6.4.2 Withdrawing a Grievance Complaint

The complainant may withdraw the grievance complaint at any time through written notification.

6.4.3 Documentation

All details of a formal grievance are to be documented by the person managing the grievance.

Any complaint that appears to indicate physical or sexual abuse, or other criminal activity, will involve reporting to external parties such as IMPD.