



POLICY TITLE:	<u>COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES</u>
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Policy

At any time, a parent or guardian using Xavier's services is free to make a complaint about any aspect of the service including suspected abuse or negligence by Xavier Staff. Issues raised will be treated confidentially, fairly, dealt with promptly and without retribution. The Board of Management and Staff of Xavier Children's Support Network respect the right of parents to make complaints and have disputes resolved.

At all stages of the complaints and disputes process, response to the complaint will be made promptly and fairly. The complaint will be discussed with people directly involved in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

In cases of reported complaints of suspected abuse, assault or neglect by Xavier staff, see the Preventing and Responding to Abuse, Assault and Neglect of a child with a disability by Xavier Staff policy and procedures.

Xavier's Complaints and Disputes policy is publicly available and provides open and accountable procedures for dealing with complaints and disputes. This policy is contained in Xavier's Parent Information Booklet provided to all new parents and is regularly published in Xavier's newsletter.

The handling of all complaints or disputes is dealt with in a manner consistent with the organisation's policy on privacy, dignity and confidentiality. Individuals wishing to have a complaint or dispute resolved may seek the support of an advocate at any stage of the dispute resolution process.

G. Lynn Card
Chief Executive Officer

COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES PROCEDURES

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Each parent or guardian is free to raise and have resolved any complaints or disputes he or she may have regarding the organisation or a service.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

All staff

Procedure

Preliminary Action – Talk to your Keyworker

In the first instance the parent should discuss their concerns with their Keyworker. Parents should raise concerns as early as possible after the incident/s occurred. It is hoped that most issues can be resolved to the parent's satisfaction in dialogue with their Keyworker.

If the matter is not resolved to everyone's satisfaction, then a complaint can be made to the Regional Manager.

Complaint Stage 1 – Talk to a Manager

The parent can approach the manager directly to raise their complaint. The Manager will address the complaint with a view to resolving it within 7 days of receiving the complaint. The complaint will be registered by the manager on the complaints file and relevant forms see attached.

If not resolved with the Regional Manager, the parent can approach the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Xavier Children's Support Network.

Complaint Stage 2 – Talk to the CEO

The CEO will require the complaint to be placed in writing. The CEO will use the Complaint Report Form, attached, to document the action taken. The CEO may attempt to resolve the issue by convening a meeting of relevant parties. Both parties of the dispute will be provided with information on alternatives for conflict resolution, including mediation, counselling and advocacy services.

Should the complaint remain unresolved, the parent can request that the complaint be forwarded to the Xavier Board.

Complaint Stage 3 – Refer to Xavier Board

Any determination made by the Board with regard to the complaint will be final save for the parties right to pursue the matter outside Xavier Children's Support Network.

Principles Underpinning Xavier's Complaints and Disputes Resolution Process

No person will be victimised because they raise a complaint or are associated with a complaint.

At any time during the process the parent can select to use an advocate to assist them in the resolution process. The advocate may be a friend, family member or a person from an external advocacy service.

The parent will be made aware of external avenues of dispute resolution such as the Disability Services Queensland's Complaints Process.

Where possible, complaints should be resolved by a process of discussion, cooperation and conciliation. The aim is to reach an acceptable outcome that minimises any potential detriment to ongoing relationships.

To maintain confidentiality, disclosure of information relating to a complaint should be limited to as few people as possible, and only to those who are legitimately involved in the process of resolving the complaint.

The principle of natural justice refers to a process that displays fairness to all parties. It includes the right to be heard, the right to be treated without bias, the right to be informed of all allegations being made and be provided with an opportunity to respond to them.

At the completion of the complaints resolution process, outcomes will be recorded and the process will be reviewed with the parent. Outcomes will vary from case to case depending on the nature and circumstances of each complaint but could include: the complainant gaining a better understanding of the situation and no longer feeling aggrieved. Records on the complaints resolution process and outcomes will be stored in a separate and confidential complaints file.

Management will review complaints annually as part of Xavier's auditing and monitoring schedule.