

INCA COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMUNITY COMPLAINT POLICY

Policy:

This policy describes how community members and/or program participants may present complaints about an agency program or staff member. It is the policy of the agency to resolve all complaints made by community members in a timely and effective manner and, as far as is practical, to the satisfaction of the complainant. This procedure is a problem-solving mechanism in which every attempt is made to resolve issues at the lowest level of authority, with the least possible amount of program disturbance. For staff grievances, staff members are referred to the employee grievance policy.

Informal Resolution of Complaints:

1. Complaints about local program issues should be submitted first to the relevant staff person at the local center or office. Most complaints can be resolved by informal discussion between the complainant and the staff member or the local supervisor or other management staff in that location.
2. Before a formal complaint can be filed, direct discussion must take place between the person(s) involved in the complaint. More than one attempt to resolve the problem or conflict must be taken by the parties involved. The date(s) and time(s) of the informal discussion shall be noted.
3. Failing resolution at that level, the person with the complaint must attempt to resolve problems or concern at the local supervisor level. More than one meeting must occur prior to the issue becoming a formal complaint.

Formal Complaints:

1. Any community member may use the formal complaint procedure after informal discussion process fails.
2. Formal complaints pertaining to staff or the program shall go immediately to the program director. Complaints relating to the program director shall go immediately to the executive director and complaints relating to the executive director will be taken to the Board of Directors.
3. There will be no retaliation against a complainant for using the complaint procedure. Such alleged action shall constitute the grounds for a separate complaint.

Procedure:

The following procedures apply to processing a complaint which is not resolved locally.

1. Responsibility of person filing complaint
 - a. The person filing the complaint will put their complaint in writing using the

agency's Community Complaint Form. Must have the complaining party's original, handwritten signature.

- b. The complaint must include information on how to contact the person making the complaint.
- c. The complaint must be specific and describe conditions or circumstances of their concern.
- d. No anonymous complaints will be accepted or considered.
- e. The complaint should be sent to the agency's administrative assistance located at the central office in Tishomingo who will see that the appropriate official receives the complaint. The names and addresses for any of the above officials can be obtained by calling any of the local offices or at our website www.incacaa.org.
- f. Complaint Resolution Hierarchy
 - i. Originator
 - ii. Supervisor, manager or coordinator/designee
 - iii. Program Director
 - iv. Grievance Review Board
 - v. Executive Director
 - vi. Board of Directors

2. Responsibility of the Official Receiving the Complaint

- a. The official will conduct a thorough investigation of the complaint which may include a meeting with the complainant. The content of all meetings will be kept confidential. They will then respond in writing to the complainant. This response should be in a timely manner and clearly state either:
 - i. That the official denies the validity of the complaint, or;
 - ii. That a plan for corrective action has been designed and will be fully implemented in a prompt manner.

3. Right to Appeal Decision

- a. If a complaint is denied, the complainant will be advised that they have a right to a further hearing of their complaint if they are not satisfied with the response.
- b. Appeal Process
- c. The complainant may appeal the decision by written notice to the Executive Director. The appeal must be mailed certified, return receipt requested, within ten days of receiving response.
- d. Complaint Hearing - The Grievance Review Board will be convened by the Executive Director. This review board shall be composed of the following members:
 - i. Administrative Assistant serves as permanent chairman.
 - ii. Two supervisory employees appointed by the Executive Director to serve as members on the review board.
 - iii. When the grievance is filed by a Head Start employee, one of the two members selected will be a representative of the Policy Council.
 - iv. Grievance Review Board members shall not serve in a review capacity in grievances concerning employees under their supervision. In the event

that a grievance is filed by an employee under some review board members supervision the Executive Director shall appoint a replacement for that hearing.

- e. An individual desiring to appeal an action has the following rights:
 - i. To review all pertinent documents to assist him/her with the appeal action.
 - ii. To provide supporting information
 - iii. To be represented by a person of his/her choice.
 - iv. To present witnesses in his/her choice.
- f. The Grievance Review Board shall meet within a timely manner of receipt of the notice of appeal by the complainant. The Grievance Review Board shall review grievances, receive testimony and evidence of the parties, and provide a report of its findings and recommendations to the Executive Director. The review board may uphold the original action, recommend modification of the decision of the program/project director, or recommend that no action be taken.
- g. The recommendations of the review board are subject to the final decision of the Executive Director.
- h. Once the complaint has been taken through all levels, the complaint may not be returned to the lower level under any circumstances.