

# QUICK TIPS

## COMPLAINTS PROCESS SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST



OMBUDSPERSON  
BRITISH COLUMBIA

The following checklist provides a quick reference guide for organizations to conduct a self-assessment of their current complaint process and identify areas for improvement. By following this checklist and the key principles featured in our full [Complaint Handling Guide](#), organizations can build the framework for an effective complaint management system that will assist them in responding well to concerns from service users.

### 1. Do we foster an organizational culture that welcomes complaints from service users?

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Do the leaders of our organization view complaints as a valuable source of feedback and an opportunity for improvement?

Do we make it easy for people to raise concerns about our organization?

Does our organization take action on issues identified through the complaints we receive from service users?

Do we provide support to staff who are the subject of a complaint and inform them that the focus is on learning from the experience, and not on apportioning blame?

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### 2. Do we have an adequate complaints policy and procedure for our organization?

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Does our complaint policy include a definition of a 'complaint'?

Do we have a three-tiered complaint process that encourages early resolution of complaints?

Do we provide clear guidance to staff on how to acknowledge and respond to a complaint, including standard timelines for response?

Are there clear procedures that direct staff on what kinds of complaints can be resolved informally at point-of-service, and what complaints require escalation/investigation?

Do our procedures describe our organization's standards for investigating complaints?

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### 3. Is our complaints process accessible and responsive?

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Is information about our complaints process publicized on our website, including specific contact information for staff who have responsibility for receiving complaints?

Do we accept complaints in a variety of formats (e.g., online, telephone, in writing, in person)?

Do we have translator services available for people who require it to submit their complaint?

Do we have systems in place to assist more vulnerable people who may need help bringing their concerns to us?

Have we addressed and removed any barriers that might prevent someone from contacting us with their concerns?

Are staff informed of their authority to resolve complaints at point-of-service?

Do we ensure timeliness in our complaints process?

Do we keep people informed of the progress of their complaint?

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### 4. Is our complaints process fair and person-focused?

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Are complaints reviewed by a staff member who is unbiased – one who was not involved in the original decision giving rise to the concern?

Do service users have an opportunity to submit additional information as part of the complaints process, and an opportunity to comment before the review is finalized?

Do we provide clear reasons for decisions after reviewing or investigating a complaint, including the issues and information considered, the analysis and conclusions drawn, and any resolution to the complaint?

Do we tell service users of the option of seeking further external review from an oversight body, such as the BC Ombudsperson?

Do we ensure privacy and confidentiality is respected for people who raise complaints about our organization throughout the complaints process?

Are our staff aware of and sensitive to the unique needs of services users from diverse backgrounds?

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## 5. Are we adequately supporting our staff who respond to complaints?

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Do we have adequate recruitment strategies to attract staff who are skilled in complaint resolution?

Do we provide training to staff in effective communication and conflict resolution?

Are we trauma-informed in the way we respond to complaints from our service users?

Does our complaint policy guide staff on how to deal with unreasonable conduct?

Do we have a practice of debriefing with staff who are dealing with more challenging complaints?

## 6. Do we adequately document and learn from the complaints we receive?

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Do we have an adequate system for documenting, tracking, analyzing and reporting out on complaint outcomes?

Does our organization regularly review complaint trends and take action to address systemic issues?

Do we publicly acknowledge areas of improvement that are identified through complaints?

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The Office of the Ombudsperson is an oversight office, independent of government, that investigates complaints about administrative unfairness and makes recommendations for system-wide improvements. The office also offers advice and investigates allegations of serious wrongdoing from BC public servants. Our Consultation and Training Team offers educational webinars, training workshops and individual consultation with public organizations to support fairness and continuous improvement across the public sector. For more information, please contact us at [consult@bcombudsperson.ca](mailto:consult@bcombudsperson.ca).

