

Feedback, Complaints & Appeals

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Authorised by: Five Bridges Directors	
Version Number: V2	Reviewed by: Five Bridges Directors & CEO

Policy context: This Policy and Procedure outlines the Five Bridges systems for collecting, recording, and responding to feedback, complaints and managing an appeals process if required.	
Human Services Quality Framework	Standard: 5. Feedback, Complaints & Appeals Indicators: 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4
Other Standards	Principle 5: Confidentiality – Practice Standards for Working with Women Affected by Domestic and Family Violence
Legislation or other requirements	Human Rights Act 2019 Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)

Purpose Statement

Five Bridges has effective processes for receiving, acknowledging, documenting, and acting on feedback and complaints by recording in service informal feedback communications and through the provision of a structured Feedback, Complaints & Appeals process.

Scope

This Policy and Procedure applies to all Five Bridges Community Programs including but not limited to Murri Sisters Mobile Support Service (MSMSS) and the Five Bridges Alcohol Support Program (ASP).

Policy Statement

Five Bridges is committed to listening to clients using our service. We take on feedback, both positive and negative as a source of ideas for improving our services and processes.

We implement strategies that support our clients' right to provide feedback or make a complaint about our service, to appeal a decision we have made that directly concerns them, and to ensuring that their complaint or appeal is fairly assessed and responded to promptly.

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Definitions

Allegation – a claim that an illegal act has occurred. Allegations are always investigated and sometimes an external authority undertakes the investigation such as the police.

Concern – a notification that a client is worried that something is not working, has gone wrong or is otherwise not as it should be.

Complaint – formal advice that an incident has occurred, something is not working the way it should, something is inappropriate, or someone is at risk. A serious incident process is required for legal and contractual purposes when a complaint is about a serious incident.

Principles

- Everyone has the right to provide feedback, complain or appeal a decision.
- Clients making complaints should be supported to access the complaints process.
- Complaints processes should be sensitive to any cultural requirements.
- Feedback & complaints processes and systems are an important part of quality service management and help safeguard clients.
- Complaints identify risks to clients but also visitors and staff as well as supporting Five Bridges to meet its occupational health and safety obligations.
- Feedback and complaints identify opportunities for Five Bridges to continuously improve its services.

Policy

Our services encourage feedback from our staff, clients, and stakeholders. Feedback can be provided to us by individual clients, their advocates, or stakeholders on their own initiative or in response to a formal survey process undertaken by Five Bridges.

Five Bridges values feedback and complaints from people who use our services, families, carers, referring service providers and funding bodies to ensure people are treated fairly when they use our services.

Complaints and feedback are an important source of information and are used to improve our services wherever possible.

Five Bridges has developed a range of documents that promotes the process for our clients to provide feedback, complaints and if required undertake the appeals processes. Our MSMSS and ASP Client Welcome Kits include a service brochure, Clients Rights & Responsibilities Statement, Feedback & Complaints Easy Read Guide, and other information sources such as our website. This information covers how clients can if they feel necessary escalate their complaint to relevant external agencies.

These publications are designed in formats that are easily read and understood by clients using our services.

Five Bridges will respect client's right to privacy and confidentiality in managing their feedback and complaints and all such information is securely stored in line with our documented records & information processes.

Procedure

Complaints or feedback can be received verbally, in writing or another way that suits the person providing the feedback or making a complaint. Families, carers, referring organisations and advocates can also complain on behalf of the client that they support.

If someone talks to a staff member to make a complaint, that staff member is responsible for recording the key information within their relevant services Case Management Systems, Feedback & Complaints Register and following procedures.

Complaints should be documented on a Feedback & Complaint Form within 24 hours of being made. It is important that the staff member checks with the person making a complaint that the relevant information has been recorded accurately.

Should the feedback or complaint be anonymous the focus of the process will be on successfully addressing the key issues raised and not identifying the source.

Any anonymous feedback or complaints should also be documented within the relevant services Feedback & Complaints Register.

Complaint information is private and must not be shared with people outside of the complaints process.

The Community Programs Manager will contact the person lodging the complaint within five working days to discuss the matter.

Details of the complaint and any response will be documented. The Community Programs Manager and relevant staff will work with the person lodging the complaint to identify desirable outcomes to resolve the complaint within three weeks (21 days).

If the complaint is against a staff member that person will not have contact with the complainant while the complaint is resolved.

At any stage of the complaints process, the complainant can receive support from an independent advocate.

Where a matter needs to be referred to an outside agency or otherwise investigated, all staff will cooperate with the inquiry and produce material requested.

There are systems and reporting Incident Management requirements for:

- serious incidents
- allegations of abuse, neglect or exploitation
- theft
- accidents, injuries, or death.

The Community Programs Manager will decide whether other Policies and Procedures apply such as Safeguarding and determine whether measures need to be included in a Risk Management Plan (Risk Register).

The client and other stakeholders involved in the process will be advised of the outcome of a complaint in writing within 30 days of completing the assessment of the complaint.

Five Bridges will never discontinue, reduce, or in any other way take any retaliatory action in relation to a client or any other stakeholder making a complaint. We will only take action, if a complaint raises an issue, to ensure the safety of clients and others, or to prevent harm to the same.

All client contact staff and Five Bridges Board Members will be required to undertake an awareness building process covering the services client feedback, complaints & appeals documentation during their induction period. Further training and supervision activities will be provided based on identified individual needs.

Referring Complaints Externally

If a complaint is made that raises an issue that needs to be externally reported (e.g. abuse), staff will report it to the relevant body.

Clients can, at any time, access an external complaints agency or make a complaint to the department, including if they are not satisfied with how we have responded to their complaints.

Staff can find how clients can make a complaint to the relevant Queensland Government Department by going to the department's website and searching for complaints. This includes:

- avenues for escalating a complaint (including to the Queensland Human Rights Commissioner) and options for appealing/asking for review of outcomes
- processes for referring complaints for external investigation/mediation.

If a complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they may seek review of Five Bridge's decision by referring their complaint to an external dispute resolution body appointed for this purpose by Five Bridges.

The details for the external body and contact details are:

Resolution Institute
(02) 9251 3366 / 1800 651
650 Level 1, 13-15 Bridge Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Five Bridges will give due consideration to any recommendations arising from the external review.

The costs of an external dispute resolution process must be borne by the complainant and Five Bridges will inform the complainant of such costs in writing.

During training, supervision or meetings feedback is sought from Board Members and staff that confirms they understand the processes used to refer people to external complaints and appeal bodies.

The CEO and Community Programs Manager will also secure feedback from client contact staff that confirms they use the best practices when informing client about the supports available when contacting an external complaints or appeals body.

These supports may include using an interpreter, advocate, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations, multi-cultural organisations, community members, and Elders.

Feedback, Complaints & Appeals Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for the consistent implementation of the feedback, complaints, and appeals procedure. This includes encouraging and supporting clients accessing Five Bridges services to raise any concerns or complaints they have on any issue.

The Community Programs Manager is responsible for ensuring complaints are recorded, actioned, and recorded within the relevant services Feedback, Complaints & Appeals Register.

The Community Programs Manager is responsible for communicating with clients, family, carers and other key stakeholders during a complaints process.

The CEO and Five Bridges Board is responsible for the oversight of all feedback, complaints & appeals processes, and information.

Reporting

All staff will report all serious incidents to the Community Programs Manager immediately and follow the documented Incident Management processes.

The Community Programs Manager will contact police, CEO and a representative of the Board where there is an allegation of a criminal offence.

De-identified feedback and complaint activity collated from individual services Feedback & Complaints Register is routinely reported to the Five Bridges Board as part of ongoing quality assurance and continuous improvement.

The CEO & Board will review relevant service standards and legislative requirements in conjunction with this information to ensure that Five Bridges is meeting its responsibilities.

Review and Evaluation

Five Bridges will communicate with service clients about quality evaluations and encourage their participation in evaluating our services through verbal consultations and provision of Survey Forms.

The CEO and Community Programs Manager will at a minimum annually analyze feedback and complaints data within individual services, Feedback, Complaints & Appeals Registers.

The CEO will report these review findings to the Five Bridges Board. This process will assist in identifying service gaps, issues or trends in practice, procedures or policies that need to be amended to better safeguard clients accessing Five Bridges as part of the Five Bridges Continuous Improvement Plan.

Our feedback record keeping includes information from clients using our services demonstrating their awareness of our external feedback, complaints and appeals processes and how to access them. These records will where relevant demonstrate how the individual needs of clients using our services were considered when referrals to external agencies were made, such as age, culture, gender identity, sexuality, religious beliefs, ability, communication needs.

The Community Programs Manager and delegated staff will maintain the organisations Continuous Improvement Plan to ensure the following information is reviewed and considered:

- Records from each services Feedback, Complaints & Appeals Register are analysed for tracking feedback and complaints, timeframes for managing the process, individual outcomes and actions recommended for improvement.
- Records demonstrating that all complaints have been addressed in line with existing documented processes are collated and used to identify patterns and ongoing issues and reported to the Five Bridges Board by the CEO or Community Programs Manager as part of our review process.
- Records of all parties involved in a complaints process being advised of the outcome
- Records showing satisfaction levels of clients using Five Bridges services and its feedback and complaints process.
- Documented information confirms that clients know how to provide feedback or make a complaint and are comfortable making a complaint.
- The Five Bridges culture enables clients to provide feedback and make complaints without fear of retribution or loss of support services.
- Documented feedback from clients and stakeholders confirms that the Five Bridges Feedback, Complaints & Appeals processes are culturally appropriate.
- The Community Programs Manager will monitor and tracks any changes to the services feedback, complaints & appeals improvements that are implemented as part of Continuous Improvement Plan to completion.

Documents related to this policy	
Related policies	Operational Management PP1
Forms or other organisational documents	Feedback & Complaints Register (MSMSS & ASP) Feedback & Complaints Form Client Survey Form Stakeholder Survey Form Feedback & Complaints Easy Read Guide Continuous Improvement Plan Risk Management Plan (Risk Register) Service Brochure (MSMSS & ASP) Clients Rights & Responsibilities Statement

Policy review frequency: Annually, and as needed should updates be identified	Responsibility for review: CEO and delegated staff
Review process: Review relevant documents, feedback, changes in service requirements and legislation. Consult with relevant stakeholders Update as required Review and finalize If changes are made the document will be submitted to the Five Bridges Directors for approval	
Documentation and communication: Update any document registers to record completed review process Include document updates within relevant staff meetings Provide relevant staff with training where necessary Management to encourage two-way communication and feedback Relevant staff to sign off on a new or changed workplace documents	