

Grievance and Complaints Handling Procedure

Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW

This procedure provides staff and volunteers with information about available pathways, should they ever experience or witness unacceptable or unlawful behaviour at Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW, including but not limited to acts of discrimination, harassment or bullying.

This procedure also sets out what needs to be in place for families or supporters who wish to raise concerns or make a complaint about the services they receive, or about the behaviour or actions of staff, volunteers or contractors associated with Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW.

Purpose

Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW is committed to:

- Fostering a safe and supportive work environment where grievances or complaints can be raised confidentially. It is important that open and transparent communications with the person raising the complaint is established and maintained. This includes being clear about the process to be followed after a complaint has been raised.
- Taking all complaints regarding the treatment of a child or young person seriously. This includes promptly referring concerns of harm or risk of harm to children and young people to the appropriate authorities, such as the police or child protection services.
- Encouraging and supporting, the resolution of any grievance or complaint at the lowest level possible, however when appropriate, we may use an external, independent third party to undertake an investigation.
- Resolving any grievance or formal complaint with the relevant parties in a fair, equitable, respectful and timely manner.
- Protecting anyone who raises a grievance in good faith from any act of reprisal, vilification, victimisation or exclusion.
- Ensuring procedural fairness in any grievance or complaint process or investigation and maintaining appropriate confidentiality where possible.

Scope & Responsibilities

Scope:

This procedure applies to everyone working for Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW, paid or unpaid, including board directors, permanent and casual employees, contractors and sub-contractors (and their employees), employees of labour hire companies assigned to work at the Chapter, work experience students, interns and volunteers.

This procedure also sets out what needs to be in place for families who wish to raise concerns or make a complaint about the services they receive, or about the behaviour or actions of staff, volunteers, contractors or other people associated with Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW.

Responsibilities:

Confidentiality and anonymity

Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW will handle all grievances and complaints with sensitivity and discretion. Anyone working for Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW, both paid and unpaid, may request confidentiality and anonymity and, to the extent possible, their choice will be respected. However, if this is not possible due to the seriousness of the matter and action required by Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW, this will be discussed with them, along with how they will be protected throughout the process.

Making the grievance process accessible

Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW recognises the importance of having a grievance and complaints handling process that is clear and accessible to all people, including those with a disability or those who have communication difficulties. If there are measures that any family or anyone working at Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW, paid or unpaid, feel that the Chapter can put in place to better facilitate participation in the grievance handling process, Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW encourages them to make these known so that they can be considered.

Being fair and reasonable

Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW will make sure that all the people involved in the grievance or complaint have an opportunity to share their account or respond to concerns raised. Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW will not draw any conclusions or take any action until all the relevant information has been collected and considered. All parties are welcome to involve a support person at any stage during the grievance or complaint process.

Grievances must be legitimate and made in good faith

All grievances and complaints that are raised will be regarded as genuine and will be responded to in line with this procedure. If a grievance is found to be false, misleading or vexatious, the person involved may be subject to disciplinary action.

Retaining records and documentation

Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW may take notes and retain records in respect of any grievances made under this procedure. Anyone working at Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW is welcome to take their own notes in any meetings convened, however they are not permitted to record the conversations without the express permission of the other parties involved in the meeting.

Procedure

Grievances may be resolved by following an informal or formal resolution pathway.

Informal resolution pathway (Grievances raised by employees or volunteers)

Often the best way to resolve any grievance that may arise is informally, by having a conversation directly with the person involved. People who are behaving inappropriately can be unaware that their conduct is unwelcome and causing offence and/or distress.

The informal resolution process is intended to:

- give the parties the opportunity to resolve the matter informally without the formal involvement of management and/or HR; and
- provide the person who is alleged to have acted inappropriately the opportunity to correct their conduct.

Informal resolution process (Grievances raised by staff or volunteers)

If a person working at Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW experiences behaviours that they find unacceptable and they feel safe and comfortable doing so, they are encouraged to tell the other person they have an issue with their behaviour and ask that it stop. The feedback may give them the opportunity to change their behaviour(s). The person with the grievance may also consider suggesting an alternate way of behaving in the circumstance that is acceptable to them.

If the person with the grievance is not comfortable addressing the behaviour in the moment, they can address the behaviour at a neutral time, once they have had time to plan what they would like to say.

It is recommended that they:

- Act as early as possible;
- Choose a quiet, private area or book a meeting room to hold the discussion in;
- Provide examples of the behaviours of concern - explain how the behaviour makes them feel or the reactions they have observed by others;
- Focus on remaining calm. People react differently to feedback about their behaviour(s). Allow the person the time to process what they are hearing. Remember to remain focused on the actions – avoid comments about the person that may detract from the message they are trying to get across.

Formal resolution process (Grievances raised by staff or volunteers)

A formal grievance should be made if:

- The person with the grievance is not comfortable pursuing an informal resolution pathway;
- The person with the grievance may have attempted to resolve their grievance informally but have not been successful; or
- the grievance is of a particularly serious or sensitive nature.

If the person with the grievance wishes to lodge a formal grievance, they should provide their complaint in writing to their manager, their second level manager (if the complaint is about their first level manager) or the Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW CEO. At the time of publishing, this is Eoghan O'Byrne, ceo.act@ronaldmcdonald.house.org.au.

If the complaint is about the Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW CEO, complaints should be raised with the Board Chair. At the time of publishing, this is Michelle Thinius, michelle.thinius@ronaldmcdonaldhouse.org.au.

The complaint should set out the nature of their concerns, including as many specific details as possible, including dates, times, what was done/said and any potential witnesses, as well as their contact details.

Speak Up Service

Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW is committed to fostering a culture where everyone feels safe to speak up. The [Speak Up Service](#) provides a safe, confidential and accessible channel for everyone to report concerns that can impact the organisation's reputation, such as misconduct, unethical behaviour, and breaches of policy or law. Reports will be treated seriously and reviewed appropriately. A person making a report will have the same protections aligning with the Ronald McDonald House Australia Whistleblower Policy.

We recognise that disclosures may have implications for individuals and the organisation. We are committed to managing these impacts responsibly while upholding procedural fairness.

Complaints made by Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW families

The complaint resolution process should be clear, fair, timely and supportive, especially when involving vulnerable families and individuals. Families may raise complaints about Programs, services, behaviours or decisions:

- Complaints may be made verbally or in writing.
- A clear point of contact should be established for families who wish to make complaints.
- The complaint should be acknowledged as soon as possible, but at least within two working days.
- The acknowledgement should include a brief explanation of the process for resolution.
- The complaint should be reviewed to determine its severity. The method of handling will follow the 'Responding to formal complaints' process outlined below, except in the case of Safeguarding Children and Young People concerns which should be escalated immediately following the Safeguarding Policy and Suspected Child Abuse Procedure.

Responding to complaints from families, employees, contractors and volunteers

Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW's response to the complaint and the actions taken may vary depending upon the nature of the allegations.

Once Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW has received a written complaint, we will work with the person to determine the best response, considering their perception of the seriousness of the grievance and how they think it can be resolved. These factors will be balanced against Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW's understanding of the issues raised by the person, the Chapter's values and culture, and relevant policies and procedures.

If a decision is made to investigate the complaint, in lieu of another acceptable course of action such as mediation, the following steps will be followed, unless Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW determines there is justifiable reason to depart from standard investigation procedure:

- The complaint is received and allocated to an authorised contact person who will be responsible for the complaint being followed up.
- The contact person will either conduct the investigation themselves or arrange for someone else to conduct the investigation.
- The person responsible for the investigation will speak with both the complainant (the person who made the complaint) and the respondent (the person against whom the complaint is made) about the allegations.
- The person responsible for the investigation will collect other available evidence that may assist in proving or disproving the allegations. This may include speaking to witnesses, reviewing documentation, emails, texts, CCTV footage etc.
- The person responsible for the investigation will make findings whether the allegations are substantiated or unsubstantiated, taking into account the evidence and whether it is more likely than not that the alleged conduct occurred (standard of proof – balance of probabilities).
- The findings of the investigation will be communicated to the relevant parties by an appropriate person.
- Any decision to take disciplinary action against the respondent will be communicated in writing with the respondent who may also be required to make an apology, receive counselling, participate in mediation, attend training etc. For privacy reasons, the complainant will not be given information concerning any disciplinary action taken against the respondent in relation to their conduct.

During the investigation process, parties may be required to stay away from work, work in another location, or carry out different work until the matter is finalised.

Parties to the investigation, including witnesses, must provide full, accurate and factual responses to any questions asked regarding the allegations. Failure to do so impedes the investigation and may result in disciplinary actions.

Employee support

Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW staff or volunteers can contact their manager, the Chapter's CEO or McDonald's Employee Relations Hotline. The role of the ER Hotline is to provide you with information, advice and support in relation to the application of this policy. ER Advisors can assist you by talking through the options available for resolving your concerns but cannot provide you with legal advice. You can contact the Employee Relations Hotline on (02) 9875 7200 or by emailing employee_relations@au.mcd.com

Confidential Employee Assistance Program

Ronald McDonald House ACT & South East NSW staff or volunteers may seek assistance from Sonder employee assistance program, which provides free, confidential wellbeing support and advice for any work or personal issue you may be experiencing. Sonder can be contacted through the Sonder app or by calling 1800 234 560.

Compliance with this procedure

Interaction with laws

This procedure is not intended to override any rights or obligations under any applicable legislation or industrial instrument.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Discrimination	Workplace discrimination is unfair treatment based on attributes like race, gender or age. It can involve hiring, promotions, wages or a hostile environment.
Harassment	Workplace harassment is unwelcome, offensive or intimidating behaviour based on attributes like sex or race.
Bullying	Bullying is repeated and intentional behaviour that causes distress or harm, often involving a misuse of power in relationships.
Grievances or complaints	A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about an issue or workplace concerns that require resolution.
Informal resolution process	A flexible approach, often using mediation or discussions to settle complaints or grievances.
Formal resolution process	Follows structured procedures, like investigations or hearings, to settle complaints or grievances.
Vexatious	Actions taken to cause unreasonable worry, distress or annoyance.

Related Policies & Legislation

Associated policies:

- Code of Conduct and Ethics
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
- Suspected Child Abuse Procedure
- Privacy Policy
- Crisis Media Policy
- Respectful Workplace Policy

Appendix 1



