

The Terrace Medical Centre

Complaints Policy

Purpose:

The Terrace Medical Centre (the practice) acknowledges that under the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights 1996, right 10, everyone has the right to make a complaint without this affecting any current or future care or treatment.

The practice will endeavour to:

- Provide an 'open door' policy for complaints
- Provide a fair, simple and fast process
- Be sensitive to the person/s involved and to all the information provided
- Use complaints as an opportunity to learn and to improve services.

Parties:

Everyone who receives care or treatment at the practice, and all doctors, nurses, receptionists and others working at the practice

Principles:

1. All complaints, whether verbal or written, will be recorded using the practice Reportable Event Management process
2. All complaints, including the process surrounding the complaint, will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.
3. All complaints will be reported to the practice Complaints Officer.
4. The Complaints Officer is responsible for coordinating the processes around a complaint, including developing an improvement plan where appropriate, aiming to seek a resolution that is the best way possible for all parties and within legislative requirements.
5. All documentation relating to complaints will be held in a secure file at the practice.
6. There will be no barrier to receiving anonymous complaints. Such complaints will be entered on a Reportable Event form and forwarded to the practice Complaints Officer. An investigation will be undertaken to the extent that it is possible.

Procedures

1. On receipt of a complaint:

Thank the complainant for contacting the practice about their issue/experience.

- Do not pass judgement about the person's experience or situation
- Do not provide any personal opinions
- Avoid any comments that invoke defence of either party
- Do not attempt to resolve the complaint
- Ensure the complaint is given to the Complaints Officer immediately

Details to be recorded with the complaint should include:

- The name and contact details of the complainant
- The person or the service to which the complaint refers
- The general nature of the complaint
- The outcome the complainant is seeking
- The date of the source of the complaint (i.e. when it happened)
- The date of the letter if it is written or the date the complaint is made, if verbal

2. Acknowledging the complaint

Within 5 working days of the practice receiving the complaint the Complaints Officer will:

- a. Notify the parties involved in the complaint that a complaint has been received.

- b. Acknowledge in writing receipt of the complaint, including a copy of the practice complaints policy and Health and Disability Commissioner Act (unless the complaint has been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant within that period).
- c. Patients (especially when they have a complaint) will be advised of their rights under the Code of Rights and the Privacy Code, and receive the relevant pamphlets and information about their right to have the free services of a Health and Disability Commissioner's office Advocate.

3. Following up the complaint

Within 10 working days of giving written acknowledgement of a complaint, the practice will decide whether the practice:

- a. Accepts that the complaint is justified; or
- b. Does not accept that the complaint is justified; or
- c. Requires more information before a decision can be made. If this option is taken the Complaints Officer will determine how much additional time is needed. If that additional time is more than 20 working days, the complainant will be informed and given the rationale for the decision

As soon as practicable after the practice decides whether or not to accept that the complaint is justified, the Complaints Officer will inform the complainant of:

- Reasons for the decision; and
- Any actions the practice proposes to take.

4. Investigating the complaint

The Complaints Officer will allocate the most appropriate person/s to investigate the complaint.

An investigation will normally be completed within 7 working days of receipt and will be conducted in a manner that meets the following principles:

- a. Is fair and thorough
- b. Makes every attempt to resolve the issue
- c. Respects the rights to privacy
- d. Consults with all those involved
- e. Respects the rights to cultural values

Process for investigating complaints

In the first instance, the complainant and the person about whom the complaint is made, will be encouraged to resolve the complaint directly and a full investigation may not be warranted.

If the complaint is not resolved directly:

- Ascertain what outcome the complainant would like from the practice
- Gather information from the complainant and any other persons involved in the complaint
- Make progress towards a resolution, including developing an improvement plan if appropriate
- For complaints that take some time to fully resolve the complainant will be advised about the progress of the complaint each month.
- At any time the complainant requires, the practice will provide all the information that we hold that is or may be relevant to the complaint.

5. Completing the investigation and closing the complaint file

At the completion of the investigation, the complaints officer will advise the complainant in writing of the outcomes of the investigation and will include:

- A summary of the complaint
- A summary of findings (including whether or not the complaint is accepted as justified)
- A conclusion, noting if any further action is to be taken
- Advice to the complainant of further options available to him/her if unsatisfied with the outcomes

6. Quality Improvement

The complaints process is used as an opportunity for learning and to improve quality. Complaints and their resolution are discussed with the practice team as a continuous quality improvement activity.

References:

Health and Disability Commissioner. Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights 1996. Retrieved June 2010 from <http://www.hdc.org.nz>

Medical Assurance Society HealthyPractice. Retrieved June 2010 from <http://healthypractice.co.nz>

Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners. *Managing Complaints: Process and Strategies*. Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners, New Zealand, 2003 (and amendments February 2009)

Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners. *Significant Event Management A general practice guide*. Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners, New Zealand, 2002 (and amendments February 2009)

Compass Health Wellington Organisational Quality, Policies, procedures and guidelines\Complaints policy – retrieved March 2016 from <http://www.compasshealth.org.nz/>

This policy has been approved by:

Robin Macandrew

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| Manager name | Signature |
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Julian Foster

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| GP name | Signature |
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June 2010; reviewed October 2013; reviewed April 2015; reviewed March 2016; reviewed May 2018, reviewed DEC 2019

Date

Appendix 1: The Terrace Medical Centre Complaints procedure – information for patients

Appendix 2: COMPLAINTS – patient information poster for waiting room

Appendix 3: Complaint template: a form for complainants to record complaints.

See also: HDC Complaint resolution agreement for ongoing actions (triplicate forms), and The Terrace Medical Centre Incident Reporting register

The Terrace Medical Centre

Complaints Procedure

You can make a complaint about any aspect of the care or treatment you have received from us. We will give you information on the process involved in making a complaint so it is easy for you to do so. Your treatment should not suffer if you do make a complaint. If you, or a family member or a friend, are unhappy about your treatment or any matter related to this practice, a complaint can be made either verbally or in writing. If you wish to make a formal complaint then the matter must be in writing. If you would like assistance to make a complaint, you have the right to access the free services of a Health and Disability Commissioner's office Advocate. Information about this service is available within the medical centre.

If you make a complaint to us we will:

- Let you know that we have received your complaint within five working days unless it has been resolved to your satisfaction within that time
- Let you know within ten working days whether or not we feel your complaint is justified. If we need more time to investigate your complaint we will advise you of this and why more time is needed.

Once we have made a decision regarding the acceptance or otherwise of your complaint we will:

- Provide you with reasons for our decision
- Advise you of actions we propose to take
- Advise you of the practice appeal procedures and your rights to complain to the Health & Disability Commissioner or the Privacy Commissioner.

For complaints that take some time to fully resolve we will advise you about the progress of your complaint each month.

At any time you require we will provide you with all the information that The Terrace Medical Centre holds that is or may be relevant to your complaint.

COMPLAINTS

If you're not satisfied, we need to know.

We treat complaints seriously and respond promptly and fairly.

Every complaint is an opportunity to look carefully at how we do things and to see if we can improve the way we provide health care. We aim to achieve a mutually satisfactory conclusion and, where appropriate, take action to ensure the situation does not arise again. It is helpful if complaints are received as soon as possible after the event.

WILL MY TREATMENT BE AFFECTED?

No, the complaint process is confidential. We do require details so that we may investigate a matter fully.

HOW DO I COMPLAIN?

If you are unhappy about the way you were treated, you may take your concerns directly to the person who provided the service to you. If you are still not satisfied or you do not feel able to talk to them, you may talk to or write a letter to the person responsible for overseeing satisfactory resolution of complaints (the Complaints Officer) in this practice. Our complaints officer is the practice manager.

If you would like assistance to make a complaint, you have the right to access the free services of a Health and Disability Commissioner's office Advocate. Information about this service is available within the medical centre.

WHAT HAPPENS THEN?

The Complaints Officer will thoroughly assess the complaint, decide what actions need to be taken and communicate with you on how best to resolve the issue.

WHERE ELSE CAN I COMPLAIN TO?

Everyone using a health or disability service has the protection of the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights and the Health Information Privacy Code. A copy of the Code is available for you on request.

The Terrace Medical Centre Complaint Template

Part A: Patient's Details

Name:

Address:

Telephone No: (H)

(W):

If you are complaining on behalf of someone else:

Your name:

Your relationship to the patient:

Is the patient aware that you are complaining on their behalf?

If someone is representing you (e.g. solicitor, advocate):

Name of your representative:

Organisation:

Postal address:

Telephone No:

Part B: What happened?

Describe the event that you want us to know about on the next pages.

Please give us all the dates and other details that you can remember.

1. What happened?

2. Where did it happen?

Date?

Time?

3. Did anyone witness what happened?

4. What is your complaint about? (e.g. your complaint could be about a person/process/service)

5. Is there anything else that you want to tell us?

6. What do you want to happen as a result of this complaint?

Part C: Further information

Have you tried to resolve your complaint in any other way? (e.g. by obtaining a second medical opinion). If so, please give details.