

Complaints about education and care services

Information Sheet

Read this information with the Complaints policy and Complaints procedures.

The Regulatory Authority manages complaints

Quality Education and Care Northern Territory (QECNT) is the regulatory authority in the Northern Territory (NT) responsible for receiving and investigating complaints arising under the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* (National Law).

The Regulatory Authority must appropriately manage complaints in accordance with best practice and ensuring the public interest is upheld in an ethical, impartial and apolitical manner.

Who can make a complaint

A parent, educator, staff member or a member of the public can make a complaint.

What I can complain about

You can make a complaint about education and care services in the NT to which the National Law applies including centre-based services, long day care, outside school hours care, preschools, and family day care services.

Complaints may also be made about:

- the approved provider or persons with management or control (PMC) of the education and care service
- a staff member, educator or volunteer at an education and care service
- matters relating to safety, health and wellbeing of children being educated and cared for by an education and care service
- non-compliance with the National Law and National Regulations.

How to make a complaint

Complaints can be made by:

- phone: 08 8999 3561
- email: qualityecnt.det@education.nt.gov.au
- post: Quality Education and Care NT
Department of Education and Training
GPO Box 4821
Darwin NT 0801

Privacy and confidentiality

A complainant may elect to remain anonymous or ask that their identity be withheld in certain circumstances. Our ability to undertake a fair and thorough assessment of anonymous complaints may be limited if the Regulatory Authority is unable to contact the complainant for further information or to discuss the complaint. If anonymity is requested and contact information is not provided, an outcome of the complaint or investigation may not be provided.

Timeframes

The severity and complexity of the complaint will inform the timeframe in which a complainant can expect an outcome. At times, the Regulatory Authority may need to conduct a formal investigation to resolve a complaint and it can take a significant amount of time to gather evidence, conduct interviews and weigh the information against the allegations to provide a fair and transparent outcome to all parties. In this context the Regulatory Authority will not be able to provide an accurate timeframe on the finalisation of a complaint.

Management of complaints

Initial contact

A complaint can be made by phone, in writing or online via the NQA ITS form (services and provider access only).

The Regulatory Authority will acknowledge a direct complaint within 5 working days. This can be done in person, by telephone, email or in writing. If acknowledgement is made verbally, it will be documented in NQA ITS by the Regulatory Authority. Indirect complaints will be acknowledged according to internal risk prioritisation guidance.

In our initial contact, authorised officers will:

- engage with the complainant, listen with care and seek to understand the complainants concerns
- clarify the complainants desired outcomes and manage outcome expectations the complainant is seeking
- provide information about the complaint process.

Assessment

The complaint will be allocated and assessed by an authorised officer. The authorised officer will gather enough information to ensure the complaint is assessed in its entirety and can be progressed to a meaningful outcome.

Final assessment

After gathering all the required information to appropriately assess the complaint, the authorised officer will:

- review all the information gathered and weigh it against the complaint allegations to determine if there has been a breach of the National Law or National Regulations
- review any steps taken by the service to resolve the complaint including mitigating actions taken or the outcomes of any investigations by the approved provider
- provide recommendations on actions to be taken.

Approval

The assessment and its recommendations will be forwarded to the appropriate delegate for approval.

Complaint outcome

The severity and complexity of the complaint will inform the timeframe in which a complainant can expect an outcome. The Regulatory Authority will ensure a complainant receives regular updates until the complaint is considered finalised.

All relevant parties to a complaint will be provided communication in writing about the outcome of the complaint.

Review

If a complainant is not satisfied with how their complaint has been dealt with by the Regulatory Authority, a request for review can be made to an external body such as the Office of the Ombudsman NT.

Unreasonable conduct

The Regulatory Authority is accessible and responsive to anyone who wants to make a complaint. However, the Regulatory Authority will take action to manage any unreasonable conduct connected with complaints. Unreasonable complainant conduct is behaviour which raises health, safety, and wellbeing issues for the Regulatory Authority and the authorised officers.