

Board Policy

Public and Stakeholder Complaints

Amendment History

Date	Details	Board Resolution
October 2025	New Policy	

POLICY

The District of Nipissing Social Services Administration Board (DNSSAB) is committed to delivering good customer service to the public and external stakeholders, in alignment with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) – Accessible Customer Service Standard (Regulation 429/07).

The DNSSAB Board of Directors (“the Board”) values public input. This policy outlines the types of complaints received from the public and establishes a structured approach for resolving them in a manner that supports positive relationships. It applies to formal complaints, where a member of the public or an external stakeholder chooses to document their concern and requests follow-up. Informal complaints, in contrast, are those resolved immediately without the individual requesting formal documentation or follow-up.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Board of Directors

The DNSSAB’s Board is committed to providing, respectful, and accessible service to the public, while also reporting any incidents of harassment or violence to the CAO. In alignment with DNSSAB’s mission to support accessible human services in the Nipissing District, the Board is committed to conducting all interactions with professionalism and ensuring timely responses.

Communications and Executive Coordinator

The Communications and Executive Coordinator will forward formal complaints to the appropriate department Director or designate. The Coordinator will also inform the CAO and HR, where appropriate. DNSSAB strives to address and resolve all complaints in a timely manner.

DNSSAB Senior Management or Designate

DNSSAB senior management or their designate is responsible for managing formal complaints within their department. They must notify the CAO of the complaint in a timely manner and consult with them as needed throughout the investigation and resolution process. Responsibilities include conducting the investigation, determining

appropriate next steps, implementing corrective actions, responding to the complainant, or escalating the issue when necessary.

CAO

The CAO must be informed in a timely manner of all formal complaints, investigations, and their outcomes, and be consulted as necessary during the investigation and resolution determination process. If necessary, the CAO will provide supports to maintain the health and safety of those affected and provide information on the procedures associated with this policy. The CAO will demonstrate and promote the maintenance of confidentiality at all stages of the investigation. For complaints involving allegations of harassment, discrimination, or violence, the CAO will consult with Human Resources (HR) in accordance with the DNSSAB Workplace Respect Policy.

Human Resources (HR)

HR will act as the investigator when allegations of harassment, discrimination or violence are made. HR will take all complaints seriously and will respond to every threat and incident. If HR cannot be impartial in the investigation process, if they are named as a party in a complaint, or if they feel the situation warrants it, a third-party investigator may be used. If a member of senior management or the CAO is named as a party in a complaint, it must be forwarded to a third-party investigator for investigation. The DNSSAB will deal with all complaints or incidents of workplace harassment in a fair and timely manner in accordance with the DNSSAB Workplace Respect policy (includes harassment, discrimination, violence).

REPORTING PROCEDURE

The Board recognizes that the public may wish to make an informal or formal complaint about the organization or its employees. In accordance with this policy, the CAO of the Board is responsible for making reasonable efforts to ensure the complaint resolution process is fair and consistent in collaboration with senior management or designate of the department.

Formal Complaints

When a Board member receives a formal complaint as defined in this policy, they will forward the complaint to the CAO, who will forward it to the appropriate department for review and action.

Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints

If the complaint is found to be frivolous, vexatious, or has been submitted dishonestly or in bad faith, the DNSSAB may dismiss the complaint and a letter or e-mail to the complainant, where contact information is available, will be sent explaining why the complaint is being dismissed.

Anonymous Complaints

To ensure a fair and thorough investigation process and to take any necessary corrective action, DNSSAB is unable to consider anonymous complaints. Individuals must identify themselves when raising complaints. This approach upholds principles of fairness, transparency, and accountability, while allowing all parties the opportunity to respond appropriately.

Board Member Safety

DNSSAB maintains a zero-tolerance policy for violence and harassment in the workplace. Any threat attempted or actual harassment or violent behavior by a member of the public toward a Board member while performing or related to their duties must be reported to the CAO or designate as soon as safely possible, in accordance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA).

If an incident of violence occurs or is likely to occur and immediate assistance is required:

- move away from the threat and find safe location, when safely able;
- Immediately call 911;
- Immediately notify the CAO or designate when safely able;
- Complete an incident report where applicable.

Informing the Public or External Stakeholders of Progress

All complaints will be reviewed and acted upon, if the person includes their name, mailing address and/or email address and/or telephone number. The personal details and their complaint are kept secure and are not shared with third parties unless DNSSAB receives their written consent.

The Communications and Executive Coordinator will respond in writing, e-mail or telephone acknowledging receipt of the complaint and advise that their complaint will be forwarded to the appropriate department for review and action, if appropriate. The DNSSAB strives to resolve all complaints within a timely manner.

Documentation

All complaints will be kept on file and stored securely by the Communications and Executive Coordinator. These documents will be reviewed periodically for trends and to make internal improvements and saved in accordance with the DNSSAB's retention policy.

RESOLUTION

If a complaint cannot be resolved by the usual complaint process, it will be referred to the appropriate department, and the complainant will be informed and given an amended timeframe for resolution. If the complaint remains unresolved to the complainant's satisfaction, the senior management member or designate of the department will inform the complainant of the appropriate avenues for further action. e.g. CAO, Ministry, other legislative body, etc.

DEFINITIONS

Formal Complaints: an expression of dissatisfaction by an identified individual regarding a DNSSAB program, service, or staff member that cannot be resolved by Board members and where the complainant wishes to formally document the issue and receive follow-up. For example, a complaint regarding a service provision, a change in entitlement, condition, or activities in housing properties.

A formal complaint is distinct from:

- Request for a service: a general or specific request for a program made by an individual that can be resolved at the point of service delivery.
- Feedback: sharing an opinion or comment regarding DNSSAB.
- Compliment: an expression of approval for a service, employee, or program.
- Suggestion: an idea submitted by an individual with the aim of improving services or programs.
- Request for Internal File Review: administered by various programs in compliance with their governing legislation.
- Fraud Allegation.
- Complaints by employees: must be handled in accordance with the DNSSAB's HR policies.
- Litigation: handled outside the Feedback and Complaints policy and procedure.
- Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (MFIPPA) or Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA) or File Requests: handled outside the Feedback and Complaints policy and procedure.

Informal Complaints: occur when the complaints are resolved at the first point of contact, meaning the issue is immediately resolved, and the complainant does not wish to file a formal complaint or submit their contact information for any follow-up.

Workplace Harassment: workplace harassment is defined in the OHSA as engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace, including virtually through the use of information and communications technology, that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome, and includes workplace sexual harassment.

Workplace Violence: the OHSA defines as:

- the exercise of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker,
- an attempt to exercise physical force against a worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker,
- a statement or behaviour that it is reasonable for a worker to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker.

This definition of workplace violence is broad enough to include acts that would constitute offences under Canada's Criminal Code.

Discrimination: the unequal treatment of a person on the basis of a prohibited ground. In general, discrimination is an act or practice that intentionally or unintentionally causes a type of disadvantage prohibited by the provisions of the Ontario Human Rights Code.