
A.9 Organizational Learning

Karis Disability Services wishes to foster a culture that promotes organizational learning and on-going quality improvement.

A.9.1 Feedback and Complaints Resolution Policy

In promoting organizational learning and on-going quality improvement, Karis Disability Services encourages all interested parties (i.e., people receiving services, family members/advocates, community partners, other service agencies, funders, donors, employees, volunteers, or members of the broader public) to provide feedback about our organization and about the services provided. Feedback may be positive, neutral, or negative, and may include general comments, thoughts, ideas for improvement, concerns, or complaints. *See also Section B – Karis Disability Services’ Commitment to and Expectations from Persons Supported.*

A.9.1.1 Feedback

1. General or specific feedback may be requested through research or knowledge gathering activities (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups, consultation sessions). Karis Disability Services will invite feedback on services or specific projects and initiatives periodically.
2. These activities will follow appropriate procedures to make sure that each person is protected, that privacy and confidentiality are maintained (unless not required by law), and that people who choose to provide feedback do not experience repercussions or retaliation for sharing their thoughts. For more information *see also Section A – Research Ethics Policy* and *Section B – Karis Disability Services’ Commitment to and Expectations from Persons Supported.*
3. Karis Disability Services will take all feedback seriously and feedback will be shared while maintaining confidentiality as per our Privacy Policy (*see also Section A – Privacy Policy*). Those providing feedback will be offered the opportunity to share their name and contact information should they require any specific follow-up conversations. In keeping with Karis Disability Services’ desire for open communication, those who may be interested in providing feedback to Karis Disability Services may do so through various means (*see also Section A – Accessibility & Customer Service*):
 - Through standard mail to Karis Disability Services, to the attention of Complaints and Feedback 26 Peppler Street, Waterloo, ON N2J 3C4;
 - Through email to complaints@karis.org;
 - By phone, to the Waterloo Office at 1 (800) 267-7337;
 - By providing feedback through a Karis Disability Services website; or
 - Service-related feedback can be provided through the above methods or through local service locations or offices.
4. If a person providing feedback has requested a follow-up conversation, this follow-up conversation will take place within three business days.
5. Feedback with regards to services will be documented in the file of the person supported to whom it pertains. It will be reviewed and used to identify areas for potential improvement or change in the context of each person’s Personal Plan and/or service agreements.
6. Persons supported and/or their family/designate shall be given formal opportunity to share their feedback as part of each Personal Plan and Personal Plan review. *See also Section B – Personal Plans.*

7. All persons supported (children and adults) and their family members/designates (as required), upon entering service, and annually thereafter, will be informed of the organizational Feedback and Complaints Resolution Policy and given the opportunity to discuss any concerns and complaints. The information must be shared in a manner which the person supported and/or their family/designate can understand. Copies of the relevant handbooks will be provided. *See also Section B – Orientation for New Persons and Their Family/Designate.*
8. Karis Disability Services invites current employees and volunteers to provide feedback through existing procedures and structures within the employment or volunteer relationship. *See also Section E – Commitments to Employees* and *Section C – Complaint Procedures for Volunteers*.
9. All interested parties will be made aware of this policy in an appropriate manner (e.g., through the public website, information booklets and communication materials).
10. At least on an annual basis, all received and documented organizational feedback (including general concerns and complaints) will be compiled and analyzed in order to identify potential areas of learning and improvement across the organization, and relevant to services provided. This information will be made available to the Board of Directors.

A.9.1.2 Concerns

1. Karis Disability Services desires to resolve all concerns and issues, including those raised by people supported and/or their family/designate relating to the supports and services Karis Disability Services provides.
2. A general concern is feedback that is negative in nature, and may be expressed in various ways (e.g., direct expression, through knowledge-gathering, research activities, or as a result of an open invitation).
3. A service-related concern is feedback that is negative or an informal statement of desire for change relevant to services, and it is provided by people supported and/or their family/advocate. The focus of a service-related concern is on improvement by making changes to a person's Personal Plan and/or service agreement, or to the delivery of services.
4. Should the person sharing the concern desire and provide consent to forward a concern, it will be forwarded to an appropriate representative (e.g., manager of the specific support or service provided, or an appropriate member of leadership). Receipt of the concern will be acknowledged within one business day, will be tracked in the same way as other feedback received, and followed up in an appropriate manner as needed. *See also Section A – Feedback* and *Research Ethics Policy*. The person receiving the concern will confirm that the concern has been documented appropriately.
5. Service-related concerns must be documented in each person's personal file (e.g., using progress notes, contact logs, or other service-related documentation), and must be followed up appropriately with follow-up documentation in each person's personal files.
6. Service-related concerns should be discussed with support teams (e.g., at team meetings), especially when a concern cannot be immediately resolved, when it is necessary to generate ideas about how to resolve the concern, or when it is necessary to make all team members aware of how specific concerns have been resolved (e.g., through changes to protocols, service agreements, or to practice).
7. Service-related concerns will be resolved using a person-directed approach, and in a collaborative manner. A person supported has the option of choosing someone to advocate on their behalf in resolving and/or discussing concerns and how to resolve them (e.g., Adult Protective Services Worker, community service worker, advocate, pastor, friend).
8. Service-related concerns, and how they have been resolved, should be reviewed and discussed with each person and their family/designate during annual reviews of Personal Plans or service agreements, and in order to identify areas of improvement or changes to be made to service planning and delivery.
9. Current employees and volunteers can share concerns through existing procedures and structures within the employment or volunteer relationship. Employees who may have a concern, and who are under a collective agreement, must follow the provisions in their collective agreement.

10. Every effort will be made with the person sharing a concern to resolve their concern. If a concern is not resolved or addressed in a timely manner to the satisfaction of the person sharing that concern, or if a concern has been documented more than once, it may result in documenting a formal complaint.

A.9.1.3 Complaints

1. A complaint is a formal expression of dissatisfaction, or request for change, about Karis Disability Services' services or business practices that has been made by any person (including neighbours, community partners, other service agencies, funders, donors, employees, volunteers, members of the broader public, or people receiving services and/or their family/designate). Complaints made by people receiving services and/or their family/designate about the services they receive are considered to be service-related complaints.
2. Formal complaints are typically more serious in nature, or they represent longer-term patterns of concerns that have not been followed up to the satisfaction of the person raising those concerns. A formal complaint must be documented in the following situations:
 - a. A person or entity has requested to document a formal complaint and/or requests follow-up as a formal complaint.
 - b. A concern has been previously documented more than once and has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the person raising the concern.
 - c. A concern has been previously noted, that represents a breach of commitments made through Personal Plans or service agreements that have not been resolved in an agreed-upon timeframe.
 - d. A concern represents a breach of policy or procedure, including employee codes of conduct and expectations for employees, and/or of regulatory requirements.
 - e. A concern represents a disclosure or allegation of abuse. In this case, an identified representative (i.e., manager or senior leader) will follow abuse reporting procedures (*see also section B – Abuse Prevention and Response*). In these situations, the ability of Karis Disability Services to maintain confidentiality is limited. A criminal act other than acts of abuse will involve the police as appropriate.
3. A complaint may be expressed in a format that meets each person's needs or preferences (e.g., verbally, phone, email, in writing). A complaint may be made to any employee of Karis Disability Services including employees providing direct support or leadership from other offices or departments.
4. Any employee who receives a complaint has the responsibility to:
 - a. Acknowledge the complaint within one business day and communicate appropriate plans for further response, using the preferred method of the person making the complaint;
 - b. Document all information detailing the complaint using the **Form S-4:1 Occurrence / Incident Report** (*see also Section B – Occurrence / Incident and Serious Occurrence Reporting*); and,
 - c. Forward all information and documentation to an appropriate manager or senior leader (e.g., a Program Manager/Team Leader overseeing services about which a complaint has been made) and confirm receipt of information.
5. Karis Disability Services will attempt to resolve all complaints through collaborative conversation with the appropriate manager.
6. The appropriate manager will enter all information and updates using form **S-4:1 Occurrence / Incident Report** into the Operations Case Management System. *See also Section B – Occurrence / Incident and Serious Occurrence Reporting*.
7. The appropriate manager will respond to the person who raised the complaint within three business days. This response will include information about any investigation conducted or follow-up completed to date, as well as any timelines for next steps and additional follow-up planned. In addition, the appropriate manager will follow up with the person making the complaint after the complaint investigation has been completed to confirm that the complaint was resolved to the best possible outcome.

8. The progress update timelines and/or response timelines must be agreed to by Karis Disability Services and the person who raised the complaint. Response timeframes will require flexibility depending on the nature of the complaint and scope of the exploration/review process. People's preferences regarding communication methods (verbal, written, email) will be accommodated when sharing information. However, for any child (under the age of 18 years) communicating a complaint, if an update was requested, a response will be provided within 14 days, and at least every 14 days thereafter until the complaint has been resolved. All communication and updates must be documented on form **S-4:1 Occurrence / Incident Report** into the Operations Case Management System. *See also Section B – Occurrence / Incident and Serious Occurrence Reporting.*
9. If the complaint cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the person raising the complaint through collaborative conversation with the appropriate manager, the manager will immediately notify the appropriate next level supervisor (e.g., Area Manager), and they will attempt to resolve the complaint with the person.
10. If the complaint remains unresolved, the Executive Director or Director may attempt to resolve the complaint, may form a Complaint Resolution Committee, or bring in external mediation.
11. At any step, exploration/review into specifics of the complaint (e.g., gathering additional information) may be required.
12. The Complaint Resolution Committee will include a manager from another community, a member of the District Office, and an employee of the Quality, Research and Practice Initiatives Department. The team may also consult self-advocacy groups or external mediators as deemed appropriate.
13. An employee will not be invited to participate in a Complaint Resolution Committee if they have a conflict of interest in the situation (e.g., the complaint is specifically about that employee). *See Also Section A – Conflicts of Interest.*
14. The Complaint Resolution Committee will review all information and supporting documentation, will interview those involved, and will document any recommendations for resolution on a final report, to be presented to the Executive Director or Director, and the person making the complaint, within three business days of the completion of the review.
15. If the person making a service-related complaint is still not satisfied with the resolution presented, the Executive Director will contact the appropriate Ministry authority, the appropriate member of Senior Leadership, and will begin to plan further steps, which may include transition to another service type or location, or termination of service and transition to another service provider, in line with procedure. *See also Section B – Service Transitions.*
16. Resolution or lack thereof will be documented in the **S-4:1 Occurrence / Incident Report** into the Operations Case Management System (*see also Section B – Occurrence / Incident and Serious Occurrence Reporting*). It will also be noted whether Karis Disability Services has the ability to resolve the complaint or not (i.e., following government regulations).

A.9.2 Opportunities for Learning

1. Learning shall be fostered through a number of mechanisms:
 - Team meetings at all levels of the organization must include time designated as learning specific to the function of the team (e.g., support programs would have learning focused on matters relating to direct supports and/or program administrative functions; the Human Resource Department team meeting learning time would have learning focused on human resource specifics, etc.).
 - All employees that attend a training, workshop, conference, (internal or external) must share key learning with their team following the training opportunity.
 - Data generated at various levels of the organization will be reviewed to determine key opportunities for learning. *See also Section B – Occurrence/Incident and Serious Occurrence Reporting* and *Evaluating Service*.

2. Karis Disability Services shall use data and information from internal/external reviews (e.g., evaluations, audits, compliance reviews) to direct continuous quality improvement across the organization.
3. Karis Disability Services will invite feedback on services or specific projects and initiatives periodically. As working groups and committees are established, efforts will be made to acquire wide representation to inform the process (e.g., where appropriate, committees may include persons supported, families, employees).
4. Karis Disability Services endeavors to ensure that learning from any review influences services across the organization. Where formal reviews are undertaken within a particular geographic area, department, or area of service, the District(s) and/or department(s) involved in the review are responsible to summarize and share the information with other Districts, Directors or departments, as appropriate.