



## Feedback, Complaints and Disputes Policy

BECIS values the feedback of client families, staff members and the wider community in helping to ensure the program meets the needs of children and their families. We encourage open communication through opportunities for families and other interested community services to feedback on services provided by BECIS.

A component of this feedback is the ability to put forward a complaint and have this managed appropriately with due consideration for accountability and quality improvement. Continuous improvement of our Service occurs where there is reflection and constructive feedback given from the service community which results in positive change and improvement. Complaints are managed well, lead to quality improvement and are conducted in a safe manner in a secure environment.

All complaints will be accepted by BECIS on face value and investigated appropriately and fully. We will:

- Provide opportunities for consultation, evaluation and review of the Program
- Develop a process for making and managing complaints
- Communicate the option and process of making a complaint
- Handle complaints diligently and confidentially.

**Aim:** Each family has the right to raise and have resolved any complaints they may have regarding the Bathurst Early Childhood Intervention Service (BECIS). The complainants' views are respected, they will be informed as the complaint is dealt with and they will have the opportunity to be involved in the resolution process.

**Objective:** The objective of the Complaints Policy and processes is to provide information and encourage families to access the processes for dealing with complaints when they arise in a fair, confidential and timely manner. The Complaints Policy and processes will promote improved Service quality and interpersonal relationship of the staff and families, and/or one family and another through a fair and just conflict resolution process.

**Defining Complaints:** Complaints are defined as any issue which families think is unfair, causes concern or which makes them unhappy with the quality of service delivery received from BECIS.

### **POLICY:**

BECIS recognises the right of families to raise and have resolved any complaints they have regarding the Service in a timely manner.

BECIS encourages all families to discuss any area of concern, with an appropriate member of staff, as soon as it arises. Written information on the Policy and processes for handling complaints will be available to all families, staff and Board members.

BECIS encourages the resolution of complaints on an informal level as quickly as possible, but where this is not possible, will endeavour to assist the family with more formal processes to ensure that all complaints are resolved to the family's satisfaction as soon as possible.

BECIS recognises the right of the family to raise and have resolved any complaint in a fair and equitable manner, with full confidentiality and without the risk of recrimination or prejudice.

BECIS has a mechanism for feedback and complaints to be made anonymously. Confidential feedback is sought through survey opportunities and a suggestion box is available. Anonymous complaints will be addressed at an appropriate level and will be reviewed as part of the continuous improvement process if applicable.

### **Policy Principles:**

- All staff members will respect the right of families to raise issues of concern, and will endeavour to create an atmosphere of open communication, equality, respect and trust.
- All complaints will be dealt with in a fair, just and dignified manner.
- All complaints raised will be treated with the utmost confidentiality, and information – verbal and/or written – will be supplied only on needs to know basis and with written permission from the family.
- Families have the right to make a complaint without fear of repercussion, reprisal or victimisation.
- All complaints will be settled as quickly as possible, and at the lowest possible level as outlined in the processes.
- The complaints process is seen by both the staff and families as a positive and productive means of improving the quality of service delivery supplied by, and interpersonal relationships within BECIS.
- Families have the right to use an advocate and/or interpreter to assist them through the raising and resolution of complaints. Staff members will inform about and encourage the use of advocates and/or interpreters when families want this support.
- If the complaint is not resolved a more formal complaint procedure will be initiated, with staff members informing the family about the next level of action to be taken.
- Should the complaint made be deemed a criminal act, a report will be made to the NSW Police Service and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.

### **Complaints Processes:**

NB: At all stages the use of an advocate is possible.

#### **Defining Advocates:**

An advocate is a person or group of persons standing up for, or speaking out for, or on behalf of, another person or group of persons, to help them acquire their rights and make decisions for themselves, providing that:

- there is no perceived conflict of interest, and that
- the advocacy has been requested by the one, or group, in need of it.

The purpose of the advocacy is to further empower or increase the capacity of the person or group of persons to act for them, to take personal responsibility and to make decisions independently.

An advocate may be the family itself, a relative or friend, or someone from an external agency.

An advocate may be used at any stage in the resolution of a complaint or dispute.

### **Informal Level**

Step 1: The family should contact the staff member most appropriate to assist with the issue causing concern, verbally or in written form, to discuss and resolve the matter as quickly as possible. (Time frame – within 2 weeks)

Step 2: The family and staff member may invite a representative of the Management Team to partake in informal discussions to assist with the resolution of the complaint within the 2 week time frame.

Step 3: The staff of the Bathurst Early Childhood Intervention Service will briefly record all meetings, decisions and actions decided upon.

### **Formal Level**

Step 4: The staff member on behalf of the family, or the family will organise a formal interview with a representative of the Management Team.

Step 5: The staff member or Manager will ascertain whether the family wishes to involve an advocate and/or interpreter if not previously used.

Step 6: The Manager and the family will discuss and work towards a satisfactory resolution of the complaint. (Time frame – 21 days)

A complaint form will record the nature of the complaint, possible solutions and final choice of action. This will be sent to the family for review, then dated and signed by the family; the original to be kept at the service and a copy to be given to the family.

Records of all meetings and outcomes will be kept in the complaints register/Echidna.

Step 7: The outcome of the resolution will be given to those who need to know, following the written permission of the family and a meeting will be arranged to review the outcome of complaint. (Time frame – within 4 weeks)

If the complaint is not resolved the Manager will inform the family of further courses of action available to them.

Step 8: The family will present a formal written complaint outlining the nature of the complaint to the Chairperson of the Bathurst Early Childhood Intervention Service.

Step 9: The Chairperson will acknowledge receipt of the written complaint within 5 working days.

Step 10: The Chairperson will access all relevant information about the complaint and arrange an interview with all parties concerned to negotiate a process of conflict resolution. (Time frame – within 21 days)

Step 11: The Chairperson will arrange a review meeting with all parties concerned to evaluate the progress of the conflict resolution implemented. (Time frame – 1 month after the conflict resolution process has been implemented)

## **External Level**

If the family cannot reach a satisfactory resolution to the complaint or dispute using the internal processes listed previously, then the following list of suggested external options should be given to the family. (Contact Details below updated 04/08/2020)

Disability Advocacy NSW 1300 365 085 <a href="http://da.org.au">da.org.au</a>	Ombudsman NSW 1800 451 524 <a href="http://ombo.nsw.gov.au">ombo.nsw.gov.au</a>	Quality and Safeguards Commission 1800 035 544 <a href="http://ndiscommission.gov.au">ndiscommission.gov.au</a>
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### **Things for staff members to keep in mind when a parents/carer makes a complaint:**

- Suggest a private place to talk.
- Find an opportunity to actively listen to the complaint. Using empathy and understanding, try to remain as objective as possible.
- Acknowledge the person will have strong feelings. Validate those feelings.
- Don't try to solve the problem, they may just want to talk. Could ask them what they would like to do/have happen.
- May need to put family in touch with other options, services etc.
- Staff members may need to recognise that they may not be the cause of the anger; anger can be a natural response to grief.
- Staff members should facilitate partnerships with families / carers based on trust, respect and open communication, recognising family diversity.
- Staff members will create opportunities for the family to acquire the skills to achieve resolution

#### **Related Proformas:**

- Complaints form (see below)
- Complaints Poster

#### **Related Policies:**

- Confidentiality & Privacy
- Employment and Staffing

#### **Resources:**

- [Complaints management | NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission \(ndiscommission.gov.au\)](http://ndiscommission.gov.au)

#### **Links to:**

- National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (Quality Indicators) Guidelines 2018
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (Provider Registration and Practice Standards) Rules 2018
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (Complaints Management and Resolution) Rules 2018
- NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission – [www.ndiscommission.gov.au](http://www.ndiscommission.gov.au)
- Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW)

Applies to: All staff	Version: 1.07
Specific responsibility: All Staff, Management Team and Board	Date approved: 20 <sup>th</sup> June 2006, reviewed 2009, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020, 2022
	Next review date: 2025



**Bathurst Early Childhood Intervention Service**  
Complaints Form

Name of complainant:	Date:
Address:	Phone Contact:
Staff member handling complaint:	
Complaint Description:	

Possible solutions negotiated:

Solution chosen:

**ACTION PLAN**

Action:	<u>Staff</u>	<u>Date</u>

Outcome/Resolution:

I _____ am happy with the way my complaint was handled.  Signed:  Date:	Staff Name:  Staff Signature:
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