



Complaints Policy

1 SUMMARY

This document describes the policy and procedure to be followed at any time a complaint is received from a patient, staff member, visitor or any other person raising an issue by way of complaint. The aim of this policy is to ensure that complaints are dealt with in a manner that is fair, simple and aims to lead to a prompt resolution to the satisfaction of the complainant.

Most complaints can be dealt with immediately by reception staff or referred to the Complaints Manager who can deal with it immediately or by a phone call. However, for serious complaints which require a formal process to be conducted, all staff must comply with this policy.

2 POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 Purpose

Every practice is legally required to have a procedure in place for handling complaints from patients or their representative.

For many complaints there may be a crossover with incident and event management; complaints can often be used as a learning opportunity for the practice.

2.2 Background

The Health and Disability Commission's Code of Rights establishes a legal requirement for every medical practice to have a complaints policy in place. The Code of Rights sets out timeframes to be met as well as information that should be made available to the complainant as part of the complaints process

2.3 Scope

This policy applies to all staff engaged in any activity carried out at Doctors on Riccarton. This also applies to any external person or group carrying out any activity benefiting the Medical Practice.

A complaint may be received verbally or in writing by letter, e-mail or other means and is not limited to formality in any way.

2.4 Responsibilities

All staff working at Doctors on Riccarton are responsible for ensuring that this policy and the Complaints Process (see Appendix 1) is followed.

The designated Complaints Officer for Doctors on Riccarton is the Practice Manager. The Complaints Officer is responsible for the implementation and management of this policy and for keeping a register recording all complaints, actions that were taken, copies of all correspondence and the eventual outcomes.

The Complaints Officer is also responsible for actioning requests for information that the Practice receives from the Health and Disability Commissioner or Privacy Commissioner; and actions any recommendations that the Health and Disability Commissioner or Privacy Commissioner makes following an investigation.

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2.5 Definitions & Abbreviations

Complaint - A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction regarding an event that has occurred, or about a system or process within the practice or about a staff member. This can be written or stated verbally.

Consumer - Means a health consumer or a disability services consumer and includes a person entitled to give consent on behalf of that consumer

2.6 Related Policies and Documents

- Open Disclosure Policy
- Role of DOR Complaints Officer
- Incident Management Policy
- Privacy Policy

3 POLICY DETAIL AND PROCEDURE

- The practice has a nominated Complaints' Officer, the Practice Manager.
- It is best if the complaint can be received in writing e.g. a letter, note or email; if this is not possible then it should be written down by the staff member receiving the complaint on the Complaints Investigation Form (see Appendix 2) and then read back to the patient to ensure its accuracy.
- The complaint can be made by the patient or their representative.
- Unless resolution can be achieved within 5 working days an acknowledgment of receipt of the complaint must be sent. This should be in writing and include details about the practice's complaints' policy; they should be advised that they have the right to make a complaint to Health and Disability Commissioner or the Privacy Commissioner.
- The Complaints' Officer should investigate, collect all the facts and ensure that everything is properly documented.
- All complaints will be investigated thoroughly in a timely, caring and concerned manner.
- Staff associated with a complaint will be advised prior to the investigation process commencing.
- Within the next 10 working days a decision should be made on whether or not the complaint is justified. If the investigation of the complaint will take more than 20 working days then the complainant should be advised and given an explanation for why extra time is required.
- Ongoing updates should be sent to the complainant at least once per month.
- After the Practice decides whether to accept a complaint, it must advise the patient of:
 - the reasons for its' decision;
 - any actions that the Practice proposes to take;
 - any appeal procedure that the Practice has in place; and
 - the patient's right to complain to the Health and Disability Commissioner or the Privacy Commissioner - phone: 0800 11 22 33 or email: hdc@hdc.org.nz
 - the availability of the local Advocacy Service, South Island ph: 377 7501

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4 DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS – TIPS FOR STAFF

- Acknowledge the complainant's concerns.
e.g., "You sound very upset, would you like to come through to a room to discuss what's happened".
 - Do not get into an argument at the front desk. Offer the complainant a private place to continue the conversation.
 - If you feel threatened by the person's behaviour, leave the room and seek immediate help.
 - If you do not feel you are the appropriate staff member to receive the complaint, seek help from the practice manager or one of the doctors or practice nurses.
 - Remain professional and, where possible, establish a rapport:
 - a. Listen – without interrupting
 - b. Be honest
 - c. Do not be defensive
 - Find out what the complainant is dissatisfied with, or what their concerns are, and what they would like to see done. Focus on the issue not the person.
 - Provide an early apology, where appropriate. An apology does not mean you are admitting liability, or fault or attributing blame (remember to carefully word the apology). For example:
"You appear to have suffered an adverse reaction and I am sorry this has happened. I will find out how it happened and, if possible, make changes to prevent this from happening again."
 - Explain what you can do and cannot do:
 - a. The facts
 - b. That you will pass on the information to the Complaint's Officer who will investigate the incident.
 - c. That you cannot comment on any criticism until it is investigated and the person/s being complained of has/have the opportunity to comment.
'The Complaint's Officer will gather all the relevant information. He/she will investigate your complaint and contact you to discuss it further'.
10. Adequately document all complaints including the person's name and contact details in the complaints procedure folder and inform the Complaints Officer.

5 REFERENCES

- The Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights Regulation 1996.

6 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FORMS

Complaint process advice to consumers - Appendix 1

Complaint Investigation Form – Appendix 2

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APPENDIX 1 – Complaint Process (Template)

Complaint Process

Doctors on Riccarton endeavours to provide quality medical care. However, we realise that as a consumer there may be times when you are dissatisfied with the service received. If this occurs and you feel your grievance should be heard you may address your complaint (marked Private and Confidential) in writing or verbally to:

The Complaints Officer

Doctors on Riccarton

183 Riccarton Road, Riccarton, Christchurch 8041

Please include the following details:

- Time and date of incident(s).
- Details of the action, event, process or staff member
- Names of personnel involved (if possible).
- Brief description of the incident(s) that occurred.

Your complaint will be received in confidence and investigated thoroughly in a timely and caring manner. If not resolved within 5 working days your complaint will be acknowledged in writing and you will be informed on the actions taken as part of the investigation. At any time you may ask for a copy of the practice's Complaints policy.

If you feel that your complaint constitutes serious medical misconduct or you are unhappy with the treatment of your complaint you may at any time contact:

Health and Disability Advocacy – Christchurch – Phone 03 377 7501 or 0800 555 050

Or

The Health and Disability Commissioner

P O Box 1791

Auckland

Phone 0800 11 22 33

Thank you.

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APPENDIX 2 – Complaint Investigation Form

Complaint Investigation Form

Patient's Name:		Date:	
Contact Ph No.		Email Address	
Address			

Person responsible for handling complaint:

Is anyone else authorised to represent the patient in this matter? (eg solicitor, advocate)

If someone is representing you,
Name of your representative:
Organisation:
Postal address:
Telephone No:

Staff involved:

Description of event/incident:

1. What happened?

2. Where did it happen?

Date:	Time:
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3. Did anyone witness what happened?

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

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

Has complainant indicated their expected outcome?

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**Patient's
name:**

Discussion about complaint:

Decision:

Action to be taken:

Patient advised in writing of decision:

Date:

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