

Complaints Policy for External Stakeholders

Approved by Board Executive – May 30, 2018

Intent:

The intent of this policy is to set out a clear process by which external stakeholders, including donors, supporters and members of the general public can make a complaint about AIS' activities, programs, services, staff or volunteers.

AIS uses complaints to assist in improving services, policies and procedures.

AIS has formally adopted Imagine Canada's Ethical Fundraising and Financial Accountability Code in order to ensure the highest standards in the treatment of donors, in our fundraising practices and in our financial transparency.

Definitions:

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the service, actions, or lack of action by AIS as an organization or a staff member or volunteer acting on behalf of AIS.

Procedure:

AIS is committed to dealing with complaints promptly and resolving them as quickly as possible. All complaints are reviewed fairly, impartially and in a manner that is respectful to all parties.

Complaints can be made in person, by phone, mail, fax or email. AIS requests that the complainant include their name and a means of contacting them: a phone number, email address or mailing address. Please note that although all complaints are taken seriously it may not be possible for AIS to respond or act

on a complaint if it is made anonymously or does not include contact information.

Complainants are informed that they have the option of escalating their complaint to a more senior staff person if they are dissatisfied with treatment or outcomes. Complainants are also provided with clear, understandable reasons for decisions made regarding their complaint.

If the resolution of a complaint takes an unduly long time, complainants will be updated during the review process.

Procedures:

A complaint can be received verbally (by phone or in person) or in writing (by mail, fax or email).

Any AIS staff member or volunteer who receives a complaint from an external stakeholder will use the following guideline in handling the complaint:

Acknowledge Complaint: The person who receives the complaint should acknowledge to the complainant that the complaint has been received and will be acted upon either by him/herself or by another staff member. If a timeframe for resolution is available, it should be included in the acknowledgement.

Inform Immediate Supervisor: When a staff or volunteer receives a complaint, first determine the proper person to handle it. This will generally be the person who has the primary relationship with the complainant or the person with the specific knowledge needed to resolve the problem.

Basic contact information for the complainant – name, phone number and email address – should be recorded immediately.

It is the responsibility of the person who receives the complaint to either resolve it or transfer it to another person who can resolve it. If a complaint is transferred, the person to whom it is transferred must acknowledge that he/she has received it and will act on it.

- **Extend apologies to the Complainant**

Regardless of the nature or validity of a complaint, it is not AIS' intent to cause distress or inconvenience to a supporter or member of the public. It is appropriate for the person receiving the complaint to apologize for any distress or inconvenience experienced by the complainant and thank the complainant for making contact.

- **Finding a Resolution for the Complaint**

Every effort should be made to resolve complaints in a timely fashion. When receiving a verbal complaint, staff should listen and seek to understand it, and may attempt to resolve it immediately. Complaints received in writing should be acknowledged within 2 business days. Staff should attempt to resolve all complaints within 10 business days.

Where a complaint cannot be easily resolved, it should be escalated to the relevant Senior Staff. If this person cannot resolve the issue it should be escalated to the Executive Director. If the complaint is about the Executive Director, it will be handled by the board chair.

Complainants should be kept informed of the status of their complaint. If the complaint cannot be resolved within the allotted time, the complainant should be informed and every effort made to resolve it within an additional 10 days.

All complaints should be resolved within 1 month of being received.

- **Documenting Complaints**

All complaints should be documented including a description of the complaint, who handled it, the timeframe and what was done to resolve it.

A complaint that cannot be resolved immediately should be followed-up after it is resolved to review the nature of the complaint, how it was resolved, and whether it can be used to improve services, policies or procedures.

Reporting on Complaints:

At least once a year, the board is informed of the number, type and disposition of complaints received under this policy.