

Operating Policy	ADM-0500: Complaints Resolution
Board Policy Linkage	1.4.2
Date Operating Policy Approved	Date: June 2025

PURPOSE

VSTD shall provide and make accessible a process to encourage the resolution of complains relating to the rights of victims, as well as, VSTD representatives (Board members and employees). No victims will incur any repercussion regarding current and/or future access to services on the basis of registering a complaint.

VSTD representatives lodging a complaint about another VSTD representative shall follow the procedure outlined in the complaints policy and shall not be penalized when lodging a complaint in good faith and/or in the interest of ensuring appropriate service to clients and for the betterment of VSTD.

All information concerning a complaint is confidential unless disclosures are required by relevant legislation. Only parties involved in resolving the complaint should have information about the complaint. Documentation will be filed in the ED’s office, not in victim files. (Unless the complaint is about the ED in which case will be held by the Board).

Where findings associated with a complaint investigation substantiate concerns relating to the action(s) of a VSTD representative, this policy shall be used in conjunction with the HR-0900: Discipline.

Information about this policy should be widely accessible to all victims, impacted community members or service providers, and VSTD representatives. VSTD representatives shall assist complainants in completing the complaint where support is required.

2. PROCEDURE

STEP 1

Anonymous complaints can be made to VSTD by mailing an unsigned letter or forwarding a non-identifying email to the agency using the contact information listed on the website, or by contacting the main line via telephone. All anonymous complaints shall be immediately directed to the ED who will receive the complaint and determine the appropriate response. Anonymous complaints regarding the ED shall be immediately directed to the appropriate VSTD representative in accordance with this policy. Those investigating or responding to complaints shall ensure there is no conflict of interest with any involved party and where a conflict exists, will immediately relay the complaint to the Executive Director to be re-directed as appropriate.

Victims, other community members, service providers and/or VSTD representatives who wish to complain about the actions (or lack thereof) of a VSTD representative should be encouraged to speak directly with the person only where the complaint is minor in nature, an isolated event and it can be appropriately resolved with direct communication (i.e. a single call not returned promptly). Where the complaint is not minor in nature, not an isolated event, and/or there was a notable impact to another person or the reputation of VSTD, proceed directly to Step 2. Where the complaint is about the ED, proceed directly to Step 3.

Any VSTD representative receiving a complaint shall acknowledge the complaint and where appropriate ask the complainant if they are willing to have the person involved contact them directly to attempt resolution. If the client does not wish to do so, expresses discomfort with this approach, or where the VSTD representative involved feels it would not be appropriate, the complaint is to be directed to the Executive Director as soon as practical.

Should the complainant report directly to the involved VSTD representative or are agreeable to speak directly with the person involved, the VSTD representative shall respond to the complaint as soon as possible, but no later than 5 business days after the complaint was made. Should the representative be unable to respond to the complaint within 5 business days, the complaint should be directed to the ED.

Upon contacting the complainant, the responding VSTD representative is to acknowledge the complaint and avoid defensive statements that may exacerbate the situation. They shall advise the victim/complainant of any action(s) taken to investigate and address the complaint, and where appropriate, what will be done to avoid such situation(s) in future. The staff representative shall seek confirmation from the complainant that the matter was resolved to their satisfaction, and if confirmation is not obtained or is unclear, the complaint is to be directed to the ED as soon as practical.

Any victim/complainant lodging a complaint must be advised of their right to escalate the matter to a member of the ED should they feel the matter was not resolved adequately.

STEP 2

Complaints that are received by the ED shall be responded to as soon as possible and no later than 5 business days after the complaint was reported to them.

The Executive Director shall attempt to obtain as much detail relating to the complaint as possible, including the date and time of the alleged occurrence(s), what occurred or did not occur that led to the complaint, the individual(s) involved, any impact to the client/other person(s), and what the complainant believes should have been done differently. Where possible, complaints should be submitted in writing, and signed/dated by the complainant. Where not possible, or the complaint was received in an alternate format (i.e. via telephone), the complaint will be documented by the ED receiving the complaint. The complainant shall

be advised of an anticipated timeline for when a response to their complaint will be received and should occur as soon as possible.

The ED receiving and responding to the complaint shall investigate the complaint by:

- *Reviewing any and all relevant documentation or evidence (i.e. client chart, voice mails, text messages, emails etc.),*
- *Interviewing any involved VSTD representative, and with consent of the victim(s) and only where appropriate, any other person(s) impacted or involved. No attempts to contact individual(s) outside the agency shall occur without the expressed and written consent from all involved victim(s).*

Upon completion of the investigation and as soon as possible thereafter, the ED shall document the findings, and any action(s) that were taken to resolve the matter or avoid future incidents. Attempts shall be made to communicate findings as soon as possible, but within 15 business days to the complainant and where appropriate, shall be accompanied by a verbal summary of responsive action(s) taken, with consideration given to the involved person(s) right to privacy. Where findings or resolution extend beyond 15 days, complainants shall be notified as soon as possible of the delay, the anticipated timeframe, and shall document reasons for the delay. Documents shall be stored in a secure location for 7 years and thereafter destroyed. A written response to the complainant shall be provided only with ED approval.

STEP 3

If the ED's response to any complaint is unsatisfactory, or if the complaint is about the ED, the complainant should be directed to the Executive of the Board of Directors. Contact information for member(s) receiving the complaint should be provided promptly.

Victims who wish to complain about the actions of a Board member should direct their complaint to the Executive of the Board of Directors. If the complaint concerns a member of the Executive, that member shall remove themselves from the Executive discussion of the complaint.

The Board of Directors shall use the same procedures and timelines as found in Step two (2). The Board of Directors shall provide its decision, in writing, within fifteen (15) days of meeting to discuss and investigate the complaint.

This is the final step in the internal complaint process, and the decision of the Board of Directors shall be final and binding on all parties.

Complaints can be submitted to the Board Chair's email (dandawson50@gmail.com) and are accepted in either English or French.

3. Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services Requirements

- a) VSTD must report to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services any serious occurrences. VSTD must complete and submit the Serious Occurrence Report document supplied by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.
- b) Complaints related to discrimination in areas defined by the Ontario Human Rights Code can also be referred to:
- c) **Ontario Human Rights Commission 1-800-268-8333**