GRIEVANCE AND COMPLAINTS POLICY.

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POLICY RATIONALE

TeamKids encourages children, parents, guardians and community members to provide feedback on our policies, procedures and services and welcomes each feedback as a means of improving its service delivery and upholding positive relationships between TeamKids and its stakeholders.

TeamKids provides guidelines on managing disputes and incidents in a fair and equitable manner, as well as within a reasonable timeframe. TeamKids recognises the rights of all children, families and community members to have a clear, concise and transparent Grievance and Complaints procedure.

Where possible, complaints will be addressed by the responsible person / person in day-to-day charge at the venue. If the complaint is about an issue that our team considers to be outside their control, or the person does not feel they wish to share it with the educator, the person may be directed to our Customer Service team for their complaint to be resolved. This may be verbally or in writing.

TeamKids has an obligation to inform the relevant regulatory authority of complaints alleging that the safety, health or wellbeing of a child or children was or is being compromised while that child or children is or are being educated and cared for by the service.

PROCEDURES

- All families will be informed of complaints and grievances procedures, through the availability of this policy on the service website, or a hard copy can be provided from the head office on request (R168).
- Feedback will be sought regularly from families and children to provide them with an opportunity to provide feedback and ways in which the Service might be improved.
- If a parent would like to raise a concern about the service, they are encouraged to discuss the matter with the service Coordinator or Director of Service. Families are encouraged to make a time with the service Coordinator or Director of Service, so that educator to child ratios are not impacted.
- If the parent and/or Coordinator/Director of Service would like to discuss the matter further, they can contact the TeamKids Customer Service team, between 8:00 am – 6:00pm Monday-Friday, on 1300 035 000 or via email info@teamkids.com.au .
- Families are also provided with the name and contact details of the person to whom complaints can be made, through the clear display of a sign at the main entrance of the service. This will be on display at all times that the service is in operation.
- If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved, the parent and/or Coordinator/Director of Service matter will be escalated to the Customer Service Manager and Operations Manager.
    - Family can also contact the relevant Regulatory Authority with contact details on display at the main entrance of each service or on:
        - 1300 307 415 (Victoria)
        - 1800 619 113 (New South Wales)
        - (07) 3328 6780 (Queensland)
    - If they still feel their grievance has not been resolved. Further information for families can be found on the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) website: www.acecqa.gov.au

- Any complaints / grievances about the health and wellbeing of children, or an allegation that a section of the Education and Care Services Law Act (2010) or a regulation of the Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011) may have been breached, will be notified to the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours in writing, as required in the Education and Care Services National Law Act (2010) Section 174 and supported by the Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011), Regulation 176. The grievance or complaint may also require notification of relevant authorities such as Police, Child Protection and the Commission for Children and Young People, if it involves elements that fall into the jurisdiction of these agencies. The Quality and Compliance Team will support this process, reflecting on relevant laws of notification.

- Whilst any investigations are underway, where the health and wellbeing of a child is the subject of a grievance or complaint against an educator, staff member or volunteer, TeamKids will consider the risks to children and may elect to suspend an educator, staff member or volunteer, from working directly with children. This will be determined in partnership with the People and Culture Team. If the grievance or complaint is against another child, TeamKids will work with families/guardians to ensure the children are not provided with an opportunity to impact the health and wellbeing of any child. This may involve suspending the education and care of children if required.

- During investigations of a grievance or complaint, TeamKids will support privacy and employment law.

- All elements of any investigation of a grievance or complaint will be documented and record keeping will support the TeamKids Record Keeping Policy.

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WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF AN EDUCATOR / STAFF MEMBER MAKES A COMPLAINT?

Any complaints or reports of a breach of the TeamKids Code of Conduct, discrimination, harassment or bullying will be addressed quickly, seriously and empathetically.

- The complaint will be investigated promptly and thoroughly, with resolutions made effective within 48 hours of the time the complaint is received, where possible.
- All complaints will be investigated fairly and impartially, whilst supporting privacy and employment law.
- The complaint and investigation procedure will be kept entirely confidential, however, TeamKids are unable to guarantee confidentiality depending on the nature of the complaint.
- A complaint may be withdrawn at any stage.
- It is unlawful to disadvantage or victimise a person for making a complaint of discrimination. Under no circumstances will any person victimise or retaliate against another person who makes a complaint.
- Where the complaint is about a Team Member, the individual will be notified of the complaint, and its nature, as soon as possible. The Team Member will be given an opportunity to have a right of reply and will be required not to communicate with the complainant about the complaint during this period.
- If the complaint is assessed to be substantiated, the resolutions will be discussed and agreed between all parties.
- If, following investigation, a complaint is assessed to have no foundation, both parties will be informed and the reasons will be explained.
- All steps within the process, including findings, will be documented to further inform policy and procedures review, staff professional development opportunities and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) development.

COMPLAINTS MADE BY A CHILD

- TeamKids recognises that children have the right to raise concerns or complaints with educators, TeamKids management and if necessary outside agencies. In this way, TeamKids promote children's voice, empowerment and participation. TeamKids support and embed the rights of the child at all times.
- TeamKids provides guidance to children in services, as to how to raise safety concerns for themselves, their friends or peers, through the use of simple and easy to understand posters within the service. These are discussed in group times, to assist children to understand the complaints process.
- If a child wishes to raise a complaint against another child at the Service, they will be encouraged to talk to their preferred Educators about the issue. Educators will support children to manage their relationships and behaviours at the service in accordance with policies on 'Interactions with Children' and procedures on guiding children's behaviour.
- If a child wishes to raise a complaint against an educator at the service, that may be a breach of the TeamKids Code of Conduct, the child will be encouraged to talk to another educator, or the Coordinator/Director of Service. Children are supported to discuss their experiences at the service with their families.
- If a child wishes to raise a complaint against a Parent/Guardian or other adult, the Coordinator/ Director of Service will assess the complaint and discuss any serious issue with their Regional/Area Manager who will advise on the resolution of this. For any serious allegations, refer to the 'Child Protection Policy'.
- If a child has a concern about anything or anyone at the service, they are encouraged to discuss the issue with the educator they know best.
- Educators support children to talk about things they like and things they don't like with their families.
- Families may need to assist their children to communicate with educators about issues at the service and time to talk about these may be arranged at pick up or collection times.

- Although it is not a formal requirement, children are welcome to submit their complaint verbally or in writing. To help in the resolution of the complaint, if the complaint is in writing TeamKids asks that the following information is provided by the child, with the assistance of a family member:

  Date(s) and time(s) of the occurrence(s) causing the complaint.

  Where the problem happened.

  Who was involved.

  What's caused the problem; and

  Steps taken to date to try and resolve the problem.

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COMPLAINTS MADE BY A PARENT/GUARDIAN

- If a Parent/Guardian wishes to raise a complaint against a child or other Parent/Guardian at the service, the Coordinator/Director of Service or the Regional/Area Manager will discuss with the Parent/Guardian raising the complaint about the issue. The child or Parent/Guardian who the complaint is about will not be included in any conversation or confrontation by the Parent/Guardian that is the complainant, and in allegations of a serious nature the Coordinator/Director of Service and the Regional/Area Manager will use professional discretion when assessing the other child and their family's involvement.

- If a Parent/Guardian wishes to raise a complaint against an educator at the service, this is to be communicated with the Coordinator/Director of Service or by contacting the TeamKids Customer Service team, between 8:00 am – 6:00pm Monday-Friday, on 1300 035 000 or via email info@teamkids.com.au

- If a Parent/Guardian wishes to raise a complaint against the Coordinator/Director of Service, the complaint must be communicated by contacting the TeamKids Customer Service team, between 8:00 am – 6:00 pm Monday-Friday, on 1300 035 000 or via email info@teamkids.com.au

- If families/guardians have any queries, concerns or issues regarding the care of the children or the management of the service they are asked to address these concerns to the TeamKids Customer Service team. If this is deemed inappropriate, given the nature of the concern, or the Parent/Guardian feels their issue was not adequately addressed, the matter will be escalated to the Customer Service Manager and Operations Manager.

- Following a grievance or complaint being lodged, the family/guardian will be kept updated on the progress and conclusion of the investigation of that grievance or complaint, whilst also maintaining obligations regarding confidentiality and privacy. The process for updating families/guardians will be determined by notifying them of this part of the process and asking them how often and in what manner they would like updates. For example, a phone call or email preferred and would they like updates as the investigation progresses or at the conclusion of the investigation. This communication will be recorded on the TeamKids management record keeping data base.

- It is preferable that all complaints are submitted in writing. If a written complaint is not possible, a verbal complaint is acceptable. To help in the resolution of the complaint, TeamKids asks that the following information is provided:
    - Date(s) and time(s) of the occurrence(s) causing the complaint;
    - Where the problem happened.
    - What caused the problem; and
    - Steps taken to date to try to resolve the problem.

COMPLAINT MADE BY A CHILD OR AN ADULT ABOUT A CHILD'S BEHAVIOURS

- If a complaint is made alleging a child is exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours, the service will follow the procedures in the Child Safe Standards Policy (including Reportable Conduct Scheme). This will ensure the child's behaviours are considered for their age/stage of development, any knowledge of previous incidents at home/school, can be considered. The Information Sharing Scheme can be used to share relevant information with outside agencies if this meets the requirements.

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References:

ACECQA National Quality Framework Resource Kit (2012)

Quality Area 1 – Educational Program and Practice.

Quality Area 2 – Children's Health and Safety

Quality Area 7 – Leadership and Service Management

Education and Care Services National Law Act (2010), S 168, S 174

Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011),R173&176

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