



## Complaints Policy

### **PURPOSE**

The Humane Society of Oakville, Milton & Halton (HSOMH) is a registered charity that is committed to high standards of conduct. We acknowledge that from time to time there may be concerns or complaints identified, and we believe our stakeholders have the right to provide them to us. This policy is intended to ensure that complaints received from members of the public about the HSOMH services and programs, or the conduct of the HSOMH staff or its representatives are handled promptly, fairly, and respectfully in accordance with these high standards. HSOMH believes that complaints are an opportunity for continuous improvement and are critical to the person's ongoing relationship with the humane society.

### **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all complaints received from members of the public such as donors, community members, participants, partners, etc. about HSOMH operations which includes the conduct and behaviour of all employees and volunteers. This policy is for external stakeholders of HSOMH; it does not apply to internal complaints, which should be reported through management or via the organization's *Whistleblower Policy* as appropriate.

### **DEFINITION**

**COMPLAINT:** Complaints are defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about a service/program, policy, procedure, action, or decision taken by HSOMH, or the way in which HSOMH employees or volunteers carry out their duties. Complaints typically arise when a person believes:

- HSOMH has failed to do something agreed upon or expected
- An HSOMH policy or procedure has not been followed
- An error has been made
- An HSOMH employee or volunteer has acted in a wrongful way

A complaint is distinct from an inquiry, feedback, or suggestion.

**COMPLAINANT:** Complainant is defined as a member of the public who has/had any interaction with the HSOMH as a donor, volunteer, participant, partner, community member, etc.





**INVESTIGATOR:** An investigator is defined as the person or body responsible for reviewing the complaints and rendering a decision.

## **PROCEDURE**

### **Process for Raising a Concern**

Many problems can be resolved easily and quickly, often at the time they arise, by speaking with an HSOMH staff member. If a problem cannot be resolved in this manner, or if the member of the public wishes to make a formal complaint, the complaint must be submitted in writing to the Director of Operations at [shelter@hsomh.ca](mailto:shelter@hsomh.ca). If the individual is unable to register their complaint in this manner due to a disability, they may contact the Director of Operations to request accommodation, which will be provided in accordance with the individual's needs and circumstances.

### **How the Complaint Will Be Handled**

HSOMH will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within two business days. We will make every reasonable effort to investigate it as soon as possible in a fair and respectful manner. Some complaints may require more time and effort to address. The complainant will be kept informed of the status of the complaint, the investigative steps followed and expected timelines for resolution. An investigator will be assigned to the complaint, and he/she will consult with others to determine the facts, and if necessary, will escalate the matter to more senior levels for assistance in evaluating the findings and recommending a resolution. Throughout the process, confidentiality will be maintained without impacting the investigation.

The investigator will record the following information:

1. Name and position of the investigator
2. Name and contact information of the Complainant
3. Log the written complaint and the date it was received
4. Record the details of the complaint, key steps in the investigation, investigation notes and any other key documents gathered during the investigation
5. Other key personnel involved including any escalation to more senior authorities
6. The findings, recommended resolution, and rationale

Upon completion of the investigation, the complainant will be provided with clear reasons for the decisions relating to the complaint. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, he or she may have the matter escalated by way of written communication to the Executive Director or the Chair of the Board of Directors if the complaint involves the Executive Director.





Upon receiving the appeal, the Executive Director or Board Chair will review the complaint, undertake additional investigation if necessary and make a final determination. All decisions made through an appeal process are considered final.

HSOMH will maintain a database of complaints received for one year. The data will be reviewed to determine whether there are frequently recurring complaints of a similar type. If there are, an investigation will be initiated to determine whether there are systemic process issues within HSOMH that need to be addressed to eliminate recurring incidences.

The Executive Director will report to the Board of Directors at least annually on the number and types of complaints received and the resolutions.

*Updated Nov 2023*

