

POLICY

Feedback and Complaints Management

Purpose

This policy and its accompanying procedures are designed to promote a consistent understanding and approach across VFST for responding to, managing, processing and recording feedback including complaints. Feedback will be used to improve and strategically develop our services consistent with our mission and vision.

Scope

This policy relates to feedback and complaints from any client or service user of VFST. A client is defined as anyone who is eligible for and receiving VFST direct services and is registered on the VFST database, Penelope. Service users are anyone who is not a client, but receives services from VFST. This includes, for example, people receiving training, VFST members, attendees at VFST events.

People receiving services from VFST's partners in rural and regional areas are not covered by this policy. They are covered by the policies and procedures of the rural/regional partner agency.

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and sub-contractors of VFST.

Policy statement

Feedback provides valuable information about levels of client and service user satisfaction. VFST takes feedback seriously and sees it as an opportunity to improve on all aspects of our service.

Feedback can include suggestions, compliments, and reflection on service experience. It also includes expression of concerns and complaints. Feedback can be about any aspect of our service.

Consistent with Standard 3 of the *National Standards for Mental Health*, VFST upholds the right of our clients 'to have their needs and feedback taken into account in the planning, delivery and evaluation' of VFST services. We acknowledge the right of all service users to express their opinion about our services, positive or negative, and we will provide them with opportunities to provide their feedback.

Feedback will be recorded for analysis and reporting, as well as for fair and timely resolution of complaints.

Policy details

VFST will establish and maintain a responsive, efficient, effective and fair feedback (including complaints) management system. As part of this, complaints will be resolved at the earliest opportunity in a way that respects and values the complainant.

Consistent with VFST's Client Rights and Responsibilities Policy and our obligations under the *Health Complaints Act 2016*, a client's right to provide feedback is explained to them, using an interpreter where necessary, both at the beginning of their engagement with VFST services and throughout interventions as

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required. In addition to this, other client engagement mechanisms will be used to encourage and solicit feedback.

Information for all service users on their right to provide feedback will be made available through relevant communication mechanisms (eg website, posters).

Feedback, including concerns or complaints, can:

- provide valuable indicators about the effectiveness of our service and areas we can improve
- provide examples of good practice that can be shared across the organisation
- offer opportunities to improve and strengthen service delivery
- offer opportunities for clients and service users to have their rights upheld and see them being upheld
- ensure that we are meeting our accountability responsibilities

Monitoring and review

The Direct Services Manager and Human Resources and Operations Manager will monitor and review the implementation and effectiveness of this policy. This will be achieved through:

- gathering feedback from Managers, Coordinators and Staff about the policy (through various mechanisms including team meetings and ad hoc individual feedback)
- regular auditing and analysis of feedback and complaints

Roles and responsibilities

Position	Roles and responsibilities
Direct Service Manager and HR & Operations Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop, monitor and review this policy through consultation with Managers, Coordinators and staff
Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver service consistent with this policy• Provide feedback to the Direct Service Manager about the operation of this policy
Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver service consistent with this policy• Provide feedback to managers about the operation of this policy
All staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver service consistent with this policy• Provide feedback to coordinators and managers about the operation of this policy

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Definitions and abbreviations

Term	Meaning
Client	Anyone who is: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• eligible for AND receiving VFST direct services¹ AND• is registered on the VFST database, Penelope.
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction made to VFST about any aspect of our service where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.
Compliment	Compliments are expressions of praise, encouragement or gratitude about VFST services. They provide valuable feedback about the level of satisfaction with our service delivery.
Feedback	Any communication from a client or service user about how our service compares with their expectations. ² Feedback can include suggestions, compliments, and reflection on service experience. It also includes expression of concerns and complaints. Feedback can be about any aspect of our service.
Service user	Any individual who comes into contact with VFST. This could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• other service providers• training participants• visitors to our premises
VFST direct services	These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• counselling (individual, family and/or group)• mental health clinic services• complementary therapies• group-based programs such as Ucan2

Associated documents

Foundation House documents

- Vision, Mission, Statement of Purposes and Principles
- Client Rights and Responsibilities Policy
- Client Rights and Responsibilities Procedure (DRAFT)
- Client Rights and Responsibilities Information Leaflet
- Complaints Procedure
- Complaint Form

¹ This means that people receiving services from VFST's partners in rural and regional areas are not covered by this policy. They are covered by the policies and procedures of the rural/regional partner agency.

² See Australian Government, *National Standards for Mental Health Services*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2010, p.33.

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External references and resources

- Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care, *Complaints Management Handbook for Health Care Services*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2005
- Australian Government, *Implementation Guidelines for Non-government Community Services*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2010. Available at: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-pubs-i-nongov>.
- Australian Government, *National Standards for Mental Health Services*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2010. Available at: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-pubs-n-servst10>.
- Australian Health Minister's Advisory Council, *A National Framework for Recovery-Oriented Mental Health Services: Guide for Practitioners and Providers*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2013. Available at: http://www.ahmac.gov.au/cms_documents/National%20Mental%20Health%20Recovery%20Framework%202013-Guide-practitioners&providers.PDF.
- Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT), *National Service Standards for Specialist Torture and Trauma Services: Self Assessment Manual*, Brunswick: FASSTT, 2006
- Victorian Department of Health, *The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights in Victoria*, Melbourne: Department of Health, 2010
- Victorian Department of Human Services, *Compliment and Complaint Management Policy Sample document for use by funded organisations*, Victoria: DHS, [2016], available at <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/facs/bdb/fmu/service-agreement/4.departmental-policies-procedures-and-initiatives/4.5-complaints-management>
- *Health Complaints Act 2016* (Vic)
- *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic)
- *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic)

Document control

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Policy area	Direct Service
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Policy stakeholders	All staff
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