



Introduction

The Australian Kinesiology Association (AKA) is committed to leading the industry in best practice management and administration. As such, it upholds the philosophy of the Better Practice Guide to Complaint Handling in addition to the NSW Health Complaint Policy which describes the five elements of effective complaint handling as follows:

- Culture:** Organisations must value complaints as a means of strengthening their administration and improving their relations with the public.
- Principles:** An effective complaint handling system must be modelled on the principles of fairness, accessibility, responsiveness, efficiency and integration.
- People:** Complaint handling staff must be skilled and professional.
- Process:** The seven stages of complaint handling - acknowledgment, assessment, planning, investigation, response, review, and consideration of systemic issues - should be clearly outlined.
- Analysis:** Information about complaints should be examined as part of a continuous process of organisational review and improvement.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is:

- an expression of dissatisfaction with a service offered or provided, or
- concern that provides feedback regarding some aspect of the service that identifies issues requiring a response.

A complaint may be about policies, procedures, practitioner conduct and provision of information, quality of communication or service, or access to and promptness of a service.

This broad definition of a complaint underpins the value of a consumer-focused service where the flow of feedback serves to identify system failures or practitioner issues that require attention.

The Value of Complaints

Effective complaint handling offers many practical benefits. Complaints deliver direct information from clients and members about faulty decisions, poor practice delivery and defective programs. Organisations should use this information in several ways:

To provide a suitable resolution to a complainant: A person who has been disadvantaged by poor practice should be given a remedy that will deal fully and finally with the problem.

To maintain good relations with the public and build client loyalty: Public support should be important to all organisations. Improved client support will be reflected in better interaction between the industry and its clients.

To evaluate and improve programs and services: Complaints should be used to repair weaknesses in an organisation, by highlighting areas for improvement in its services and programs.

To inform decision making about future service delivery: Organisations need to think ahead; they need to develop and implement new programs in accordance with industry regulations and practices. Complaints

help an industry see what is needed and how to make systems work more effectively. Complaint information is a valuable resource for evaluating possible strengths and weaknesses in programs and services.

Complaint analysis should be part of the continuous cycle of review and improvement in the association.

Complaints Procedure

The Australian Kinesiology Association (AKA) will document and implement policies and procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals as required. These policies and procedures must ensure that:

- each complaint and appeal and its outcome is recorded in writing;
- each appeal is heard by an independent person or panel; and
- each appellant:
 - a) has an opportunity to formally present his or her case; and
 - b) is given a written statement of the appeal outcomes.
- In the event that a complaint is found to be substantiated the MC will respond as appropriate including any disciplinary actions if necessary.
- The Complaints Committee endeavours to facilitate the resolution of issues between both parties.

The role of the Complaints Committee is:

1. To hear the relevant issues from all parties, ensuring that all parties are aware of the nature of the dispute.
2. To facilitate a fair, accessible and visible process that is responsive to the needs of all parties.
3. To ensure this process is accountable and recorded appropriately.
4. To ensure constructive action is taken to eliminate the root cause or causes of the complaint and to improve the quality of industry processes.

Complaints are documented according to the following process:

1. All complaints must be lodged using the official AKA Complaint Form.
2. The Complaint will be registered on the 'Complaints Register';
3. Each Complaint and its outcome is recorded in writing;
4. Complaints are heard by an independent person or panel; with each party being able to present his or her case;
5. Each party is given a written statement of the outcome including reasons for the decision.
6. Either party may appeal the decision in writing to the Management Committee.
7. Both the complainant and the complaine e may be able to view responses from the other party at the discretion of the committee (*refer to Rule 5.8c (iv) of the constitution*).
8. The Committee may ask for any current or previous correspondence between parties in relation to the complaint.

Why do we have a Complaints Committee?

- If the matter cannot be resolved between the parties, the nominated person from the AKA Complaints Committee will attempt to resolve the dispute. If they are unsuccessful the Management Committee must be consulted and a Complaints Committee will be convened. All parties have the right to have an independent support person to assist them in this process.
- The Management Committee is responsible for ensuring that the Complaints and Appeals Process meets requirements set out in the Australian Standard ASISO 1002-2006.
- All persons involved in the dispute must be informed and consulted and be given appropriate time to consider the dispute.
- A complainant must be treated fairly. Fairness rests on three qualities - **impartiality, confidentiality and transparency**.

Impartiality

- Impartial investigation is vital to the credibility and success of a complaint handling system.

- Complaint handling staff should not be defensive about their organisation's management. Nor should a complainant be obliged to prove they are right or the agency is wrong. A complaint should be treated on its merits, with an open mind and without prejudice arising from any previous contact between the complainant and the agency.

Confidentiality

- Complainants have a right to expect that their privacy will be respected and their complaint will be investigated in confidentiality and courtesy and remains within the stated Complaints Handling Process.
- Information privacy principles spelt out in privacy legislation, such as the Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth) should be observed when collecting, storing, using and disclosing personal information obtained in complaint handling.
- Both the complainant and the complainee may be able to view responses from the other party (*refer to Rule 5.8c (iv) of the constitution*).

Transparency

- A complainant is entitled to know how a complaint will be handled and the outcome of the investigation. An agency's complaint procedures should ensure that:
- at the time of making a complaint, complainants are advised of the steps in the complaint process and expected timeliness standards for handling the complaint
- a complaint reference number is given to each complainant, preferably with the name of a contact person
- a report on progress is provided if a complaint is not resolved promptly.

This is an effective customer-centred resolution process where everyone involved can focus on arriving at a satisfactory outcome.