

Complaints policy and procedure

This policy and procedure applies to complaints received by Cuso International about our activities, programs, services, staff or volunteers.

a. Guiding Principles

- It is in the interest of all parties that complaints are dealt with promptly and resolved as quickly as possible. Review of complaints is fair, impartial and respectful to all parties.
- Complainants are advised of their options to escalate their complaint to a more senior staff person if they are dissatisfied with treatment or outcome.
- Complainants are provided clear and understandable reasons for decisions relating to complaints.
- Updates are provided to complainants during review processes.
- Complaints are used to assist in improving services, policies and procedures.

b. Types of Complaints

Definition: A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the service, actions, or lack of action by Cuso International as an organization or a staff member or volunteer acting on behalf of Cuso International.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- perceived failure to do something agreed upon;
- failure to observe policy or procedures;
- error made by a staff member/volunteer; or
- unfair or discourteous actions/statements by staff member/volunteer;

Anyone person directly affected can complain and their complaint will be reviewed in accordance with this procedure.

c. Complaint Receipt and Handling

A complaint may be received verbally (by phone or in person) or in writing (by mail, fax, email). An employee or volunteer who receives a complaint should first determine the proper person to handle it. This will generally be the person who has the primary relationship with the complainant or has the specific knowledge that is needed to resolve the problem. It is the responsibility of the person who receives the complaint to either resolve it or transfer it to another person who can resolve it. If the complaint is transferred, the recipient must acknowledge to the transferor that he/she has received it and will act on it.

The person who initially receives the complaint should acknowledge to the complainant that the complaint has been received and will be acted on either by him/herself or another employee. If a timeframe for action can be determined, that should be included in the acknowledgement. Basic contact information including name, phone number and email address should immediately be recorded.

d. Resolving the Complaint

Every effort should be made to resolve complaints received in a timely fashion. When receiving a verbal complaint, staff should listen and seek to understand the complaint, and may attempt to resolve it immediately. Complaints received in writing should be acknowledged within 2 business days and staff should attempt to resolve the matter within 10 business days.

Where a complaint cannot readily be resolved, it should be referred to the relevant Manager or Director. If the Manager or Director cannot resolve the complaint, it will be escalated to the Executive Director. If the complaint is about the Executive Director, it will be handled by the Chair of the Board of Directors. Complainants should be kept informed of the status of their complaint. Every attempt should be made to resolve escalated complaints within an additional 10 business days so that all complaints are resolved within a month of having been received. If it is not possible to reach an agreed resolution, Cuso International will provide the complainant with a written explanation of its position.

e. Documenting the Complaint

It is necessary to keep a record of any complaint that involves a dispute over money or with financial implications as well as any complaint that cannot be resolved immediately (on the same day it is received). Information about such complaints must be recorded on the complaints tracking worksheet, which shall be maintained in the Executive Director's Office. Information recorded on the worksheet includes a description of the complaint, who handled it, what was done to resolve the complaint, timeframe, and a description of the resolution.

A summary of the complaints received including number and type will be reported to the Cuso International Board of Directors annually.