

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Principles

1. An accessible and effective complaints policy is important to the integrity of Don Valley Community Legal Services (“**DVCLS**”), and for maintaining public confidence in DVCLS.
2. The right to complain will be posted in the reception area and on the website of DVCLS. In addition, any person who requests a copy of this Complaints Policy will be provided with one.
3. A Client, or anyone else who is affected by the legal services provided by DVCLS, excluding current and former staff, can register a complaint.

“**Client**” in this Complaints Policy means someone who has received legal service, is receiving legal service, or has requested legal service from DVCLS.

4. The complainant must give their name. Under no circumstances will anonymous complaints be given consideration under this Complaints Policy.

Complaints

Complaints may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. The quality of legal services provided to a client.
2. The way DVCLS staff treat a client.

Notwithstanding the above, the following scenarios will not be considered a formal complaint, and this Complaints Policy will not apply to such scenarios:

1. Informal complaints or feedback on the processes or legal services of DVCLS and its staff.
2. Requests to be served by a different member of DVCLS staff that are unrelated to the quality of legal services provided to a client, or the way the client was treated by DVCLS staff.
3. Denials of service where DVCLS staff have already provided legal services to the client, but the client continues seeking service for the same legal issue, with no circumstantial changes affecting the legal issue.
4. Complaints where the complainant makes essentially the same complaint to DVCLS as they have already made to Legal Aid Ontario, the Law Society of Ontario, or to any court or tribunal.

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Procedure

1. Any time periods in this Complaints Policy may be extended on mutual agreement of the complainant and DVCLS.
2. A complaint must be made in writing within one month of the incident giving rise to the complaint, and it may be submitted to any staff member. If, due to literacy or other issues, the complainant has difficulty putting their complaint into writing, DVCLS staff will provide them with assistance.
3. Complaints arising from the provision of legal services by a staff member will be forwarded to the staff member's Team Lead, and to the Director of Legal Services ("**DLS**"). After speaking with both the complainant as well as the staff member and DLS, the Team Lead will subsequently respond in writing to the complainant within 10 business days.

If the complaint arises from the provision of legal services by a Team Lead, the complaint will be forwarded directly to the DLS, and disposed of pursuant to step 4.

If the complaint arises from the provision of legal services by the DLS, the complaint will be forwarded directly to the Executive Director ("**ED**") as though they were the DLS, and disposed of pursuant to step 4.

If the complaint concerns the ED, it will be forwarded directly to DVCLS's Board of Directors (the "**DVCLS Board**"), and disposed of pursuant to step 5.

Complaints arising from the denial of service pursuant to DVCLS's Zero Tolerance Policy for Abusive Behaviour towards Staff will be forwarded directly to the DVCLS Board, and disposed of pursuant to step 5.

All other complaints will be forwarded directly to the ED, and disposed of pursuant to step 4.

4. If the complainant is unsatisfied with the Team Lead's written response to their complaint, they may ask in writing for their complaint to be appealed to the DLS. After receiving the complainant's request, the DLS will further investigate the complaint before providing a written response to the complainant within 15 business days.
5. If the complainant is unsatisfied with the DLS's written response to their complaint, they may ask in writing for their complaint to be further appealed to the DVCLS Board. The complainant must sign a consent form allowing confidential and privileged information relating to their complaint to be provided to the DVCLS Board.

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6. Upon receiving the complainant's written request and signed consent form, the DLS will forward the initial complaint, the Team Lead's response, the complainant's written appeal, the DLS's response, and any other relevant documents to the DVCLS Board. After receiving the aforementioned documents, the DVCLS Board will review same and provide a written response to the complainant within 60 business days. Prior to issuing its response, the DVCLS Board may, in its sole and absolute discretion, invite the complainant to attend a meeting of the DVCLS Board to present their complaint. Moreover, the DVCLS Board may, in its sole and absolute discretion, appoint a sub-committee of the Board to investigate and respond to the complaint.
7. If the complainant is unsatisfied with the DVCLS Board's written response to their complaint, they may request Legal Aid Ontario's ("**LAO**") Vice President, Clinic Law Services Division, review their complaint. To begin this process, the complainant must contact LAO's Complaints Department directly, in accordance with LAO Complaints Policy (<https://www.legalaid.on.ca/making-a-complaint/>):

Mail: Complaints Department
Legal Aid Ontario
20 Dundas Street West, Suite 730
Toronto ON M5G 2H1

Email: complaints@lao.on.ca

Phone: 416-204-7104 or 1-866-874-9786 (toll-free)

Fax: 416-204-4718