

Community Connections Support Services

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Annual Complaint Review 2013

Background

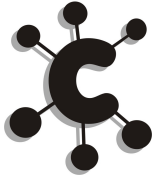
Community Connections Support Services began providing supports for people living with a disability in 1991. For many years, CCSS operated as a very 'flat' organization that provided a limited amount of supports in a few areas of service. As such, any complaints that were filed during those years were done so with the Director of the agency and usually in a very informal manner. Complaints were typically dealt with immediately and solutions were implemented as soon as possible without much need for analysis or documentation.

Today

Over the past number of years, CCSS has expanded its services and has become one of the largest agencies throughout the Kootenay and Central Okanagan that provides a number of different services to people living with a disability. As a result, a management support team has been established and CCSS has dedicated much effort to quality improvement and accountability to ensure excellent services for the people we support.

Over the past number of years, it became obvious that existing policies and procedures for receiving, addressing and tracking complaints were in need of significant upgrade if the agency were to be successful in supporting people receiving services, employees, stakeholders and the general public in dealing with complaints. As a result, CCSS formalized its policies and procedures for Complaint Management and has provided for several methods by which a concerned party has the ability to file a complaint.

It is the agency's intention to continue to stream-line this process and ensure that all relevant information is captured, addressed and analyzed in the interest of identifying trends, possible causes, solutions and areas of service requiring improvement. We feel that in doing so, our agency can operate with a higher level of transparency, accountability and focus on quality improvement.



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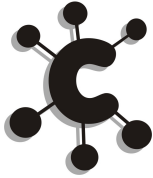
Findings for 2013

CCSS has received a total of eleven (11) documented complaints for the period of September 2012–August 2013. In addition, CCSS conducted eight (8) investigations regarding allegations against contracted Home Share Providers.

Complaints

CCSS received and responded to eleven (11) formal complaints during this reporting period (Please see Appendix A for a breakdown of these complaints). The following trends have been identified:

- Four (4) complaints were concerning Agency Procedures.
 - CCSS has remained open to revisiting and changing policies and procedures to ensure effective communication with all stakeholders.
 - CCSS has taken measures to consistently address on-going issues (ie. Complaints, incidents, etc) to ensure that matters are adequately documented, addressed in a timely way, and communicated to relevant parties.
 - Where applicable, CCSS has addressed complaints by educating the complainants on the agency's commitment to existing CCSS responsibilities, functional lines of communication and the agency's Policies and Procedures.
- One (1) complaint was concerning Agency Performance.
 - In this case, the complainant was informed of agency policies and procedures. Further, CCSS outlined its commitment to continuous quality improvement and developed an action plan to address outstanding concerns.
- Five (5) complaints were registered regarding Employee Conduct.
 - Where applicable, CCSS has encouraged all parties to follow functional lines of communication in accordance with the agency's Conflict Resolution and Lines of Communication Policy. There were a number of cases where the agency elected to terminate employment with the person in question, based on performance issues.
- One (1) complaint was concerning the conduct of a Home Share Provider.
 - In this case, the agency successfully worked with the identified Home Share Provider to reach a better understanding of contractual obligations as well as expectations of service.



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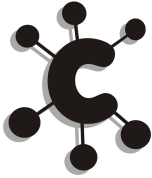
Allegations

During the period between September 2012 – August 2013, CCSS investigated a total of eight (8) allegations against Home Share Providers contracting with the agency. In all cases, investigations have been conducted with relevant parties to establish facts and develop action plans. Where applicable, Home Share Providers have received support from their Home Share Coordinators and the Agency to follow applicable CCSS Policies and Procedures. CCSS continues to implement a formal investigation process whereby interviews are conducted, findings are determined and recommendations are established. Comprehensive investigation reports are written and shared with all relevant parties. In addition, investigation summaries are provided to the party being investigated. 'Open Complaint' files are regularly reviewed to ensure that all on-going investigations are conducted within agency established time-lines and all parties are kept informed as to the status of the investigation. Where resolution has been reached by way of ending Home Share contract, the matter has been considered 'Closed'. In cases where investigations have been inconclusive or it was determined that the Home Share Provider remained a positive support to the person served, CCSS continues to monitor outcomes for the people supported and/or has assisted in developing Safeguard Plans to ensure the safety and success of the people supported.

Areas needing performance improvement

Efforts have been made to stream-line and standardize the agency's complaint management process within the last reporting period. As a consequence, the agency has responded consistently with comprehensive and timely reports to all parties involved. Agency policy specifies that CCSS is committed to address complaints and allegations within one (1) month of receipt. Due to the agency's consistent approach to complaints and allegations, we believe we can further improve responsiveness by comprehensively addressing complaints and allegations within a twenty-one (21) day period, ensuring that action plans are implemented much more efficiently.

Community Connections Support Services strives to manage conflict and complaints in a much more positive fashion. In the past, complaints were not viewed as an opportunity for growth but rather a criticism of work that was being done. This had the potential to impact the agency's responsiveness and create further conflict with stakeholders as employees at the agency could be perceived as being defensive. Over the last year, many efforts have been made to improve the attitudes of agency members to foster a culture of openness to feedback and continuous quality improvement. Though the agency has made significant progress in this area, we believe it is an area requiring on-going growth and attention.



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Occasionally, Community Connections Support Services receives notice of an allegation against a Home Share Provider or employee where it would be inappropriate for that party to be interviewed by their direct supervisor. As a consequence, it would be important for the agency to have multiple parties trained in Complaint Management and Investigation procedures in the interest of maintaining objective reporting.

Actions To be Taken

Community Connections Support Services is committed to continuous quality improvement and intends on addressing need areas in the following ways:

1. On-going training for Management Support Team regarding Conflict Resolution, Complaints and Investigation, Personal vs. Professional.
2. Increased feedback loop. Ensure that CLBC is kept abreast of the status of an investigation (ie email status to CLBC two (2) weeks after receipt of allegation/complaint to report emerging evidence and expected date for finalized report). Shorten the time-lines for addressing an allegation or complaint from one (1) month to twenty-one (21) days.
3. Cross-train Management Support Team members in procedures for Complaint Management and Investigations.

Supporting Documents

Copies of all complaints reflected in this report can be made available upon request.

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October 2013
Jacqueline Burnham
Quality Assurance Manager