



## DISABILITY BUSINESS AND ADVOCACY SERVICES

# when i'm at work: solving complaints

a fact sheet for supported employees



## What is a complaint?

A complaint is when you have a problem or worry about your work that you need to tell someone about.

Something or someone could be making you feel unsafe, uncomfortable, or unhappy at work. This might make it hard for you to do your job. When this happens, you need to do something about it. You need to get help to sort it out.

## Different types of complaints

Things that might lead to a complaint at work are:

- ▶ the way your supervisor or workmates treat you
- ▶ your pay
- ▶ your hours of work
- ▶ where you work
- ▶ the safety of your job
- ▶ being treated unfairly.

## Is your complaint serious or just a grumble?

We all grumble about things at work now and then, but we may not need to make formal complaints about them all. Talking to a friend or co-worker who you trust can help you decide this.

There is a difference between problems that you need to make a formal complaint about and the 'grumbles' we sometimes have about work.



## Example of a workplace grumble

Your workplace gives all its supported employees a morning tea every Friday. You might grumble about not getting a morning tea every day, but this is not a problem that you would make a formal complaint about.

## Example of a complaint

You bring money to work every day so that you can buy your lunch. Twice last week someone took the money from your locker. This is a serious problem and you should make a formal complaint about that.

## How can you tell the difference between a grumble and a complaint?

Asking yourself these questions might help.

- ▶ Is it the first time this has annoyed me?
- ▶ Has this been annoying me for a long time? Is it going to keep happening?
- ▶ Is it making me work badly?
- ▶ Is it making someone else work badly?
- ▶ Is it making me or anyone else unsafe?
- ▶ Is it making me or my workplace look bad?

## When should you make a complaint?

You should make a complaint when you have a problem or worry at work that you cannot work out on your own.

When you first start work, part of your induction explains how to make a complaint if you have a problem.

The Australian Government has rules called Disability Services Standards that tell your workplace how to do things. Standard 7 is one of these rules. It says that your workplace must help you to get something done about your complaint, if it is related to work.

Ask your supervisor for a copy of the Disability Services Standards, or look for them on the Internet at:

[www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/disabilities/services-standards\\_qa\\_publications.htm](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/disabilities/services-standards_qa_publications.htm)

Source: Department of Family and Community Services nd, *Disability Services Standards: Early English version*, FaCS 1437.0401, Department of Family and Community Services, Sydney.



## Complaints can make things better

You have the right to make complaints. Your workplace must try to sort them out quickly for you.

It is important to fix something if it is wrong. That is how things improve and become better. That is why you need to let someone know about the problems you have.

## Your right to complain

You have a right to complain and also to know how your workplace must deal with your complaint.

It is your right to know:

- ▶ what your workplace will do to make sure that you can make a complaint if you want to
- ▶ how your workplace will look after your complaint
- ▶ who to go to if you want to make a complaint
- ▶ what information you will need to give
- ▶ how you will be treated
- ▶ how long it will take before something is done
- ▶ what might be written down about your complaint
- ▶ what you can do if you are not happy with the way your complaint is looked after.

## Do not be afraid to complain

Remember that:

- ▶ you should not be scared to complain about something
- ▶ your complaint should be treated seriously
- ▶ you should not be treated badly if you make a complaint and tell your side of the story.

## What happens when you make a formal complaint?

You make a formal complaint about a problem at work if the problem is serious.

Making a formal complaint means that your workplace will do special things to help you sort the problem out.

- ▶ You will have to tell the whole story about the problem.

- ▶ Other people will have to tell their whole stories about the problem too.
- ▶ Someone will write down everything that you and other people say about the problem.
- ▶ You and any other people who tell their stories will have to sign what was written down.

Making a formal complaint is very serious. You have to tell the whole truth when you make a formal complaint.

Remember that if you have complained about someone else, that person has the right to know what has been said about them but they do not have to know who has said it.



## What happens if people do not take your complaint seriously?

If you make a complaint at work, the people you talk to about it must respect what you say. They must not tell anyone else what you say.

If you feel that people do not take your complaint seriously, then you have a right to tell someone else about it.

For example, if you are not happy with the way your supervisor looks after your complaint, then you should tell your manager about your complaint. If your manager does not take your complaint seriously, then you have the right to talk to other people about it.

Your workplace must tell you who to talk to if you think that people do not take your complaint seriously.

## Tips for making a complaint

If you need to complain about something or someone at work, you can start by doing these things.

- ▶ Talk to a friend, your team leader or supervisor if you are not sure what to do.
- ▶ Try to sort the problem out yourself if you want to, and you think you can.

When you tell someone about the problem, talk about:

- ▶ exactly what is happening
- ▶ who or what is involved in the problem
- ▶ how long this has been going on
- ▶ what it means to you
- ▶ what you think should change.

If you make a complaint, the decision will not always be in your favour. If you are not happy with the decision made, there are further steps you can take.



## Making decisions about complaints

The people who help sort out your complaint will listen to all sides of the story before they decide what to do.

If you are not happy with what they decide, you can ask other people to help you.

## Getting help from other people or services

Your workplace will give you information about how you can make a complaint. You can attend training about how to make a complaint properly.

If you are not sure about what you need to do, ask your supervisor or someone else who you trust and are comfortable with.

If you think you are not getting a fair go at work, your complaint has not been handled properly, or there are serious problems at work that you cannot talk to others about, you can get help with this.

People from disability advocacy organisations can help you if you need someone else to talk about your complaint for you, and sort it out quickly. People called 'advocates' can help you and speak for you if you have a workplace complaint that needs to be sorted out.

Your workplace will be able to give you the contact details if you need someone to advocate for you. Speak to your supervisor about this.

The **Complaints Resolution and Referral Service (CRRS)** is one place you can contact. The people there can help you sort out work problems.

If you do not think that you can do it yourself, you can ask a family member, a friend, or someone else who you trust to contact them for you. Remember, anything that you say to the people at CRRS is confidential. They will not tell anyone else about what you say without your permission.

Contact the CRRS:

- ▶ 1800 880 052 (free call)
- ▶ <http://www.crrs.org.au>

People at the **Australian National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline** can help you if you are experiencing abuse and neglect. You can call the Hotline to talk about your problems or to find out more about what the Hotline can do to help you.

If you need support to make a complaint, people at the Hotline can find an advocate to help you. The Hotline can also make referrals to other services that can help you with your problems.

The Hotline is open from 8.00am to 8.00pm across Australia, seven days a week.

Contact the Hotline:

- ▶ 1800 880 052 (free call)
- ▶ <http://www.disabilityhotline.org>

You can talk to the people at the **Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission** if you want to. They look after your rights as a person. They make sure that your workplace is being fair to you.

Contact the Commission:

- ▶ 1300 656 419 (free call)
- ▶ <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/>