



Complaint Handling Procedure

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Complaint Handling Procedure

Purpose

To provide clear, practical steps for receiving, recording, triaging, investigating, resolving, and learning from complaints raised by or on behalf of children and young people, ensuring that Everything Suarve's (**ESuarve**) responses are safe, timely, consistent, accessible, culturally safe, and trauma-informed.

Scope

This Procedure applies to any complaint or concern raised by a child/young person or their representative (parent/carer/guardian, advocate, peer, Elder/liaison), about:

- Behaviour of staff/volunteers or other children/participants
- Program activities, environments (physical/online), and safety arrangements
- Cultural safety, accessibility, discrimination or racism
- Handling of a previous complaint

Complaints may be received via any channel (in person, phone, SMS, email, online form, drawings, voice notes, social media private message, through a trusted adult). Anonymous complaints are accepted and handled to the extent possible.

This includes

- All children and young people engaged with ESuarve programs or services
- Parents, carers, families, and community members
- All ESuarve employees, volunteers, contractors, directors and officers
- Third-party providers and partners

Definitions

Accessibility

Communication channels and formats adapted to the child's needs (e.g., interpreter, pictograms, quiet spaces, assistive technology) and other supports reasonably required for an individual Participant.

Child

Any individual under 18 years of age participating in ESuarve programs or services.

Complaint

Any expression of dissatisfaction or concern raised by a child, young person, or their representative, about any aspect of ESuarve's services, staff, or environment.

CRM/Case System

The secure system of record for complaints (role-based access; audit trail)

Cultural Safety

Environments and responses in which identity, culture, and community protocols are respected; free from racism and discrimination.

Issue

A concern or problem resolved at first contact, without escalation to a formal complaint.

Mandatory Reporting

The legal duty to notify Child Safety Services and/or Police where harm/abuse/neglect is suspected or disclosed.

Representative

Parent/carer/guardian; advocate; peer/friend; Elder/liaison officer—acting with the child's consent wherever feasible.

Young Person

Any individual 18 years of age or over participating in ESuarve programs or services.

Introduction

Children and young people (or their representatives) may contact ESuarve through any communication channel. Every interaction is recorded in ESuarve's secure CRM to ensure transparency, continuity of support, and continuous improvement.

To support safe and consistent practice:

- All employees, volunteers and contractors (**staff**) receive baseline training in child-centred intake, cultural safety, accessibility, and trauma-informed communication, enabling them to properly receive, reassure, record, and refer.
- Child-friendly resources (posters, easy-read guides, translated materials, and forms/flowcharts) are displayed across ESuarve sites and provided digitally, ensuring age-appropriate, culturally safe, and accessible pathways for children and young people to speak up.

Where a complaint involves immediate safety risks, staff act without delay to safeguard the child and notify the Complaints Officer. If statutory authorities (Child Safety Services or Police) are engaged, ESuarve focuses on safety and support, while deferring fact-finding to those authorities. All subsequent steps (acknowledgement, triage, investigation, resolution, and learning) are undertaken in accordance with the Procedure and read in conjunction with the Complaint Handling Policy.

Complaint Process

1. Making a Complaint

Children and young people can raise complaints in any way that works for them. Staff must actively enable and never gatekeep access.

Complaints can be made directly to any staff member, the Child Safety Officer, or via a trusted adult or advocate. Information about how to make a complaint is provided in accessible, age-appropriate, and culturally relevant formats (**Appendix A**).

Any staff may receive a complaint. They must:

- Listen, acknowledge & reassure (plain, age-appropriate language; avoid blame; thank the child).
- Check immediate safety (see Step 2: Risk Triage).
- Ask consent for supports (advocate, Elder, interpreter, disability support).
- Record the complaint using the child's own words, drawings, or chosen medium.
- Confirm preferences: how the child wants updates (e.g., SMS, call, email, pictogram), who can be present, and any cultural or accessibility needs.
- Notify the Complaints Officer within 24 hours (immediately if risk indicators).

Minimum intake data (record in CRM):

- Child's preferred name/pronouns (or "Anonymous").
- Contact/update preferences and consent settings.
- Representative(s) authorised by the child (if any).
- Cultural/disability needs and supports requested.
- Summary of the complaint in the child's own words.
- Date/time/channel, staff receiving, immediate safety notes.

2. Risk Triage

The Complaints Officer assesses the complaint to determine urgency, risk, and the appropriate response pathway. Where the complaint involves potential harm, abuse, or neglect, mandatory reporting obligations are followed immediately.

Frontline quick screen (within 0–2 hours if any hint of harm):

- Indicators: Disclosure or suspicion of harm/abuse/neglect; self-harm; threats; grooming; serious bullying; discrimination/racism; unsafe environment; staff misconduct.
- Actions:
 - If suspected harm/abuse/neglect to a child: Do not investigate—immediately inform Complaints Officer; commence mandatory reporting to Child Safety Services and/or Police per Mandatory Reporting Procedure.
 - If urgent safety (imminent risk): Call 000, secure the child and inform Complaints Officer.
 - If non-urgent but concerning: Fast-track triage; arrange supports and supervision.

3. Investigation Pathways

The Complaints Officer selects one pathway. If facts change, the pathway may be upgraded to statutory at any time.

3.1 Pathway decision

A. Statutory Pathway (Child Protection / Police Lead)

Any disclosure or reasonable suspicion of harm, abuse, neglect, grooming, sexual misconduct, serious assault, or immediate danger.

- Immediate safety actions (secure environment; support child; contact emergency services if required).
- Mandatory reporting to Child Safety Services and/or Queensland Police per ESuarve's Mandatory Reporting Procedure.
- Do not conduct internal fact-finding interviews beyond what is necessary for safety; do not test evidence.
- Maintain support (advocacy, Elder liaison, interpreters, disability supports) and provide updates in the child's preferred format.

- Preserve records/evidence appropriately and restrict access (privacy & confidentiality). Statutory authorities lead all investigative steps. ESuarve cooperates and continues child-centred support.

B. Staff/Volunteer conduct (internal investigation)

Alleged behaviour by ESuarve staff/volunteers that is not clearly criminal (e.g. inappropriate language, boundary concerns, unfair treatment) or is criminal but there is no mandatory reporting obligation (e.g. abuse to a young person).

- Assign an internal Investigator with no conflict (if not feasible assign external investigator); follow Code of Conduct and HR processes.
- Keep the child or young person safe and supported (liaison/Elder/advocate/interpreter as requested).
- If evidence suggests harm/abuse to a child at any point, upgrade to Statutory pathway immediately.

C. Peer Behaviour / environment (internal investigation)

Bullying, discrimination or racism by other participants; unsafe spaces/equipment; program rules causing distress.

- Investigator leads with child voice central; implement a safety plan first.
- Use restorative approaches only if safe and the child or young person wants them.
- Apply cultural protocols (Elder/liaison) and disability supports throughout.
- Upgrade to Statutory if harm/abuse indicators to a child emerge.

D. Service quality (internal investigation)

Complaints about service reliability, timeliness, communication, access, or previous complaint handling.

- Investigator reviews practice and systems; co-design fixes with the child/young person/family/community member where feasible.
- Track corrective actions to closure

3.2 Internal Investigation Steps (for non-statutory pathways B-D)

- 3.2.1 Investigation plan (scope, questions, evidence sources, people to consult, cultural protocols, timeframes).
- 3.2.2 Child or young person participation (choices about how/where to share—words, drawings, audio; presence of trusted adult/Elder/advocate; breaks; quiet spaces).
- 3.2.3 Evidence gathering (records/logs/rosters/environment checks/witness accounts/CCTV if applicable). Avoid leading questions; do not re-interview the child unnecessarily.
- 3.2.4 Cultural safety & accessibility (engage First Nations liaison/Elder with consent; interpreters; communication aids; adapt methods to community expectations).
- 3.2.5 Findings & recommendations (fact-based, balanced, plain language).
- 3.2.6 Manager approval (Director or CEO reviews findings and approves outcomes/actions).

- 3.2.7 Outcome communication (accessible explanation to child/young person/representative—reasons, actions, timelines, safety measures, and how to appeal or escalate internally/externally).

3.3 Upgrading/Hand-off rules

- If new information indicates harm/abuse/neglect/grooming to a child or immediate danger to a child or young person, stop internal fact-finding and move to Statutory pathway (report immediately).
- Continue support and safety planning while authorities lead.
- Record the handover, advice received, and any reference numbers in the CRM; restrict access.

4. Resolution and Feedback

- What will happen next, who will be involved, and how privacy is protected.
- Whether the matter must be reported to authorities (and why).
- When they can expect updates, and in which format (SMS/easy-read/email/call).
- Their rights to appeal or escalate (internally to a Management Committee delegate; externally to Queensland Family and Child Commission, Child Safety Services, Queensland Police).

5. Documentation & privacy (all pathways)

- Use ESuarve's secure CRM with role-based access and an audit trail.
- Record intake details, triage rationale, pathway, supports offered/accepted, plans, evidence register, findings, actions, communications, and satisfaction/feedback.
- Share information strictly on a need-to-know basis; mask sensitive fields.
- Feed lessons learned and actions into dashboards and quarterly reviews.

6. Recordkeeping and Continuous Improvement

- Retain in ESuarve's CRM.
- Use unique case IDs; avoid duplicate storage in unsecured locations.
- Data is regularly reviewed to identify trends, gaps, and areas for improvement.
- Policy and procedure are updated based on feedback, incident reviews, and changes in legislation or best practice.
- Children, young people, families or community members are invited to provide feedback on the complaints process.

Related Documents

- *Complaint Handling Policy*
- *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*
- *Child Safety Code of Conduct*

Review

ESuarve reviews this procedure annually to ensure it meets business needs and best practice guidelines. If needed, an ad hoc review outside the scheduled review period is undertaken in order to evaluate the performance of our complaint management process.

- Information used to inform the review may include:
- Feedback received from children, young people, families or community members
- Future best practice.
- Any changes in procedure, legislation or organisational structure.

Version Control

Version	Approved By	Date of Approval	Reference
2.0	CEO	23/03/2026	CS-0004

Appendix

Flow Chart

