

Complaints Policy

Child and Young Person's Complaint Policy and Process – Child Safety

Students of the World Ltd (SOTW Ltd) recognises the value of complaints as an important tool in responding to and evaluating the programs we provide for children and young people. SOTW Ltd is always seeking to develop a culture where children and young people are empowered to raise complaints and concerns.

Purpose

The organisation is committed to the rights and welfare of children and young people. The organisation management and staff respect the rights of children and young people to evaluate and complain about the standard of services provided by our staff and are committed to a fair and reasonable outcome for all complaints. SOTW Ltd is committed to demonstrating to children and young people they are valued and respected and works to build strong and trusting relationships. This policy and procedure sets out to:

- Recognise that children and young people have specific needs and require a complaints policy and procedure that fits their needs,
- Recognise that all complaints can be seen as an opportunity for change and provide valuable feedback and should always be looked at from a safeguarding point of view,
- Provide an open and transparent process that is age appropriate and respects children and young people,
- Establish a complaints policy and procedure that is easily understood by children and young people and if a child or young person needs support with the process,
- Provide information to children and young people on their rights and the variety of ways they can complain if their rights are being compromised or violated,
- Provide a fair, efficient and timely resolution of complaints and allow children and young people the opportunity to provide feedback,

Barriers to Access

It is important to remember that there are many reasons a child or young person may not report a concern and they include:

- Imbalance of power
- Fear of reprisals
- Repercussions outweigh benefit of disclosure
- Lack of knowledge about complaints system
- Not understanding their rights
- Have been told not to complain
- Fear they won't be believed
- Worried about confidentiality
- Let down previously by organisation
- Distrust of authority figures
- Lack of support
- Embarrassed or shameful

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- Review complaints to identify any gaps in policy or practice and make changes where necessary.

When a child joins SOTW Ltd

All children are to be given a copy of the UN Rights of the Child and explained their rights. They are also to be given a complaint form and the contact details for SOTW Ltd representatives including their local co-ordinator and child safe officers.

Making a Complaint

Complaints can be given face to face, by telephone or SMS, by using the SOTW Ltd Complaint Form (Appendix E) on paper (can be posted) or online (emailed to student) or via our website www.studentsoftheworld.com.au.

Responsibility for Person taking a telephone complaint

- Try not to pass the child or young person around. Ideally, the person who answers the call can take the complaint. Ask the child or young person what they would like to make their complaint about. Gain all relevant information, including, if possible their name, and contact details,
- Explain that while all complaints are important and acted on it is also helpful to have more information in writing and ask if they are happy to fill in a form if you post or email it to them or if they would like to have a meeting with one of SOTW staff. Ask them if there is a staff member they feel comfortable with to have a meeting. Invite the child or young person to ask questions. Check to see if they understand the information you are giving them by asking them to repeat back to you.

Responsibility of Person taking a face to face complaint

- Those working with children and young people in relation to a complaint are responsible for ensuring the child and young person is treated with respect, fairness, and equity, regardless of age, and has a support person present if necessary. Invite the child or young person to ask questions. Check to see if they understand the information you are giving them by asking them to repeat back to you.

Procedure

This procedure aims to ensure that the SOTW complaints policy for children and young people is done quickly, efficiently, and fairly. All complaints will follow this procedure process.

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Taking Complaints

- The person taking the complaint will:
 - Explain what will happen including the process for a written complaint and provide the child or young person with the complaint form and help the child or young person to complete the form if needed (a written form may be an obstacle to disclosure, so a verbal interview with notes can be taken instead),
 - Ensure the child or young person feels empowered by the process,
 - Invite questions and feedback from the child or young person,
- If possible, complaints should be acknowledged within 48 hours,
- Consult with the child or young person and document the complaint in child friendly language,
- A copy of the complaint will be given to the child or young person,
- Ask the child or young person if they would prefer future contact to be by phone, email or in writing,
- It is important to remember not only your legal obligations but also the organisation's position regarding the reporting of all possible incidences of child abuse. For more detail please refer to the SOTW Ltd Child Safe Policy (Appendix M),
- The person who took the complaint will brief their Managing Director,
- The Managing Director will review all complaints in line with risk management procedures to determine if any steps need to be taken to prevent further complaints.

Follow up - Written Correspondence

- Complaints should be resolved as soon as is practicable. It is important to remain in regular contact with the child or young person, so that they know their complaint is important to the organisation.
- All correspondence should be mindful of the child or young person's age and English speaking and literacy level. Use short sentences, dot points and headings.
- Address the child or young person by their first name.
- Send an initial summary of the complaint so they can share with a parent/carer/advocate.
- At the end of the complaints process, give the student a written summary of the outcome of the process and/or appeal and ensure the reasons for the decision are clearly communicated.
- Ensure children are aware that they have the right to take the complaint to the relevant State/Territory registration body if they are unsatisfied with the outcome.

Confidentiality and Communication

- All allegations are to be treated in the strictest of confidence. This includes the alleged victim, the victim's family, witnesses and alleged perpetrator.

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- Only those people who need to know will be informed of an allegation. Any such information will be held in the strictest confidence by those involved. Any breaches of confidentiality will be treated seriously and disciplinary action may be taken in those circumstances.

Associated Policies and Procedures

The following list of related documents which should be read in conjunction with this **Complaints Policy**.

- Appendix A - Outbound Student Orientation Handbook
- Appendix B - Inbound Student Orientation Handbook
- Appendix C – Complaints Policy
- Appendix D - Complaints Form
- Appendix E – Consent Form
- Appendix F – Safety Card
- Appendix G – Student Behaviour Agreement
- Appendix H – Staff Handbook
- Appendix I – SOTW Ltd Code of Conduct
- Appendix J – Host Handbook
- Appendix K – Hosting Code of Conduct
- Appendix L – Employee Referee Check
- Appendix M – SOTW Ltd Child Safe Policy
- Appendix N – Employee Agreement
- Appendix O – Hosting Application Form
- Appendix P – Hosting Reference Check
- Appendix Q – House Assessment Form
- Appendix R – Hosting Interview Form
- Appendix S – Reporting Guidelines and Response Procedures
- Marketing and Recruitment Plan
- Student Homestay Application Forms – France, Italy & Spain
- Complaints Form for Students NSW / SA
- Incident Report Form
- School Expectation
- Privacy Policy
- Orientation Program for Inbound & Outbound Student (inc outbound programs from our partner agencies)