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| Form: OCP-DN- XXX | Dispute Resolution and Complaints Policy |  |
| Revision: 1 | | |
| Review Date: 05/2026 | | |

1. **Purpose.** Disputes and complaints can happen in any workplace or program environment. A dispute exists when one or more people disagree about something and the matter remains unresolved. Often disputes can be settled quickly and informally in the course of everyday work. However, if people can't agree on a way forward or if the dispute is about a serious matter, a more formal approach may be required to bring the dispute to an end. This policy sets out the approach to dispute resolution to be applied by On-Country Pathways staff and program participants.

2. **What is Dispute Resolution?** Dispute resolution is how disputes are brought to an end. This can occur through:
 - **Negotiated Outcome.** This is where the parties concerned resolve the issue themselves, this approach is not suitable for minors (under 18 years)

 - **Mediated Outcome.** This is where an independent mediator helps the parties arrive at their own agreement, this is the initial approach when the issue involves a minor (under 18 years) or

 - **Arbitrated or Adjudicated Outcome.** This is where an independent arbitrator or court decides how the dispute should be resolved and makes a binding decision or order to that effect.

3. **Responsibilities.** If there is a dispute that remains unresolved, all parties are to apply this policy to resolve the matter with an expectation that each party will:
 - express the issues from their perspective

 - be open, honest, and respectful in their communications

 - listen.

Dispute resolution shouldn't interfere with day-to-day work or program activity unless this is unsafe. Where minors are involved (under 18 years) particular effort should be taken to ensure the minor is removed from any further contact until the issue is resolved. While the dispute resolution process is underway, all parties should continue to comply with directions and perform any work or program activity that is safe and appropriate.

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4. **Reporting Issues.** If a dispute cannot be resolved informally by the individuals concerned or the issue is serious, the matter is to be reported to a supervisor or manager. Any matter involving a minor (under 18 years) should be considered serious and reported to a supervisor or manager. A report or complaint can be made by any party involved OR by any staff member or program participant that may witness an ongoing dispute. A report or complaint may be in writing, or it can be made verbally. Reporting the issue or making a complaint will trigger the dispute resolution process. If the matter is not reported, it is likely to remain unresolved and this can lead to additional issues for the workplace environment and your colleagues.

5. **Managing Complaints.** Supervisors and managers are expected to manage complaints reported to them as soon as possible through facilitated mediation. Sometimes it is not appropriate, or a matter may be too serious for a supervisor or manager to facilitate mediation – in this case the supervisor or manager should seek additional support from the executive management team and/or use an external service provider to support a mediated outcome.

6. **Escalation Process.** If a dispute cannot be resolved internally through either a negotiated outcome or a mediated outcome, the next option is to escalate the dispute to an arbitrated or adjudicated outcome. This takes the matter out of the hands of the workplace and involves a more formalised process, conducted externally by an independent arbitrator. If a matter is to be escalated to an arbitrated or adjudicated outcome, the parties involved should be directed to seek advice from the Fair Work Ombudsman [Welcome to the Fair Work Ombudsman website](#)

7. **Documentation.** When a complaint is made, or a dispute is reported the details and nature of the incident should be documented in the attached ***Dispute Resolution and Complaints Form***. This form is used to document the process and the outcomes. It is kept as a record on personnel files for disputes or in a Complaints Register for complaints. A copy of the completed form, when an outcome is achieved, should also be provided to all parties concerned with the matter.

8. **Communication.** All employees and program candidates should be made aware of this policy during induction and this policy shall be reviewed every 2 years. Following the resolution of a complaint, timely feedback is provided to all those involved, including families of minors (under 18 years) if applicable.

APPENDICES:

- 1 - Dispute Resolution and Complaints Form

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|-----------------|-------|-------|
| Employee Name: | Sign: | Date: |
| Inductees Name: | Sign: | Date: |

Appendix 1 - Dispute Resolution and Complaints Form

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| Section 1 – Persons Involved | |
| Contact Details of Person Reporting Dispute or Complaint: | Full Name: Mobile: Email: |
| Person A - Full Name: | |
| Person B – Full Name: | |
| If more than two people are involved, list others: | |
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| Section 2 – Details of Dispute or Complaint |
| Briefly describe the nature of the dispute or complaint: |
| What Happened? |
| When did it happen? |
| Where did it happen? |
| What outcome(s) are you seeking? |
| Additional Information: |
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| Section 3 – Action Taken to Resolve Dispute or Complaint | |
| Date/Time: | |
| OCP Staff Member: | |
| Notes: | |
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| The dispute/complaint is being resolved through: | |
| <input type="radio"/> - Negotiated Outcome <input type="radio"/> - Mediated Outcome <input type="radio"/> - Arbitrated Outcome | |

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| Section 4 – Outcome of Dispute or Complaint | |
| Dispute and Complaints Register No: | |
| Outcome Achieved: <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No | |
| Notes: | |
| | |
| OCP Staff Member: | |
| Signature: | |
| Date: | |