



Department of
Education

Complaints and notifications framework

Effective date: 19 November 2024

This framework must be read in conjunction with the Complaints and Notifications Policy.

Table of contents

1. Framework	3
1.1 Introduction	3
1.2 Processes for managing complaints and notifications	3
Receipt of a complaint or notification	3
Reporting a complaint or notification to external agencies	4
Manage the risk and categorise the complaint or notification	4
Communicate with the person making the complaint or notification	5
Mandatory reporting obligations	5
Public interest disclosures	5
Oversight agencies	5
Engage specialists support	6
Assessing complaints and notifications	6
Complaint or notification resolution	7
Parent Liaison Office	7
Internal review	7
1.3 Related documents	7
Relevant legislation or authority	8
Related Department policies	8
Other Documents	9
2. Definitions	9
3. Contact information	11
4. More information	11

This framework must be read in conjunction with the Complaints and Notifications Policy.

1. Framework

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of the Complaints and notifications framework is to guide the management of complaints and notifications, consistent with the Complaints and Notifications policy.

Complaints and notifications are best managed locally, wherever possible. A person making a complaint should contact their school as their first point of reference.

The framework is intended to:

- describe the process to manage and resolve complaints and notifications
- where appropriate, identify any aspect of service delivery which requires review or change to effect improvement
- prioritise student support, safety and wellbeing.

1.2 Processes for managing complaints and notifications

Receipt of a complaint or notification

People making a complaint or notification are encouraged, in the first instance, to contact their school to discuss their complaint. Additionally, complaints and notifications can be received by the Department of Education at:

- the school
- the education regional office or residential college
- the central services business area
- the Standards and Integrity directorate.

At all stages of the process, records should be kept in accordance with the Records Management policy and procedures.

A complaint or notification can be made verbally (for example, in person or by phone) or in

written form (for example, email, mail or through the [Online complaints form for parents and members of the public](#), or the [Online notification form for staff \(staff only\)](#) or through [Safe2Say](#).

People making a complaint or notification may have a support person present when making a complaint and/or throughout the management process. For additional information, refer to [Understand the role of a support person \(staff only\)](#).

People making complaints or notifications can remain anonymous, however this may impact the ability to appropriately resolve the complaint.

Reporting a complaint or notification to external agencies

People making complaints or notifications can elect to report the matter to another relevant agency at any time. Suggested relevant agencies include:

- a. The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
- b. The Australian Human Rights Commission
- c. The Commissioner for Children and Young People WA
- d. The Corruption and Crime Commission
- e. The Equal Opportunity Commission
- f. The Information Commissioner
- g. The Ombudsman of Western Australia
- h. The Public Sector Commission
- i. The Teacher Registration Board
- j. The WA Police Force
- k. Worksafe.

Manage the risk and categorise the complaint or notification

The complaint or notification must be reviewed for risk factors, such as:

- Health and safety
- Education delivery
- Cultural safety
- Fraud and corruption.

Determine whether the matter relates to staff conduct and whether the complaint could be managed under the Complaints and Notifications policy. Refer to [Manage complaints and notifications \(staff only\)](#) for further information. If the complaint or notification reflects a risk to student safety and wellbeing, exercise professional judgement in reporting the matter to

the Standards and Integrity directorate. You can seek the directorate's guidance in relation to risk management strategies at any time. If the complaint or notification includes allegations of staff conduct, report the complaint or notification to the Standards and Integrity directorate.

Note: Allegations and convictions of sexual offences, sexual misconduct or physical assault on or in the presence of a child, significant neglect of a child and any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child by a Department employee, contractor or volunteer, must be reported to Standards and Integrity directorate without delay.

Use the [Complaints and notifications categorisation schedule \(staff only\)](#) if you are not sure of what matters must be reported to Standards and Integrity directorate.

Communicate with the person making the complaint or notification

The complaint or notification should be acknowledged to the person making the complaint or notification within two working days, where possible. Refer to [Acknowledge the complaint or notification \(staff only\)](#) for further information and a template response for acknowledging complaints and notifications.

Locally managed complaints or notifications should be completed and resolved within a reasonable timeframe after receipt and assessment. Ensure regular communication occurs with the person making the complaint or notification.

Mandatory reporting obligations

If a complaint or notification involves allegation(s) subject to Mandatory Reporting under [section 124](#) of the [Children and Community Services Act 2004 \(WA\)](#), the receiving officer must ensure compliance with the relevant requirements set out and the mandatory reporting obligations outlined in the [Child Protection in Department of Education Sites policy](#), and the corresponding procedures.

Public interest disclosures

Complaints and notifications reported under the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003 \(WA\)](#) should be managed with the utmost confidentiality and not disclosed or made available to any person not involved in the management or resolution of the complaint or notification. These matters must be reported to the Standards and Integrity directorate. Failure to comply with the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003 \(WA\)](#) confidentiality requirements may result in prosecution and/or penalty.

Oversight agencies

The Department has an obligation to notify and report specific allegations to the Teacher Registration Board, the Public Sector Commission, Corruption and Crime Commission, the

Ombudsman WA and the WA Police Force. Refer to the Complaints and notifications categorisation schedule (staff only) for guidance on identifying which matters require reporting to the Standards and Integrity directorate.

Other than mandatory reporting obligations under section 124 of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA)*, Standards and Integrity will make the notifications to the relevant oversight agency.

Engage specialists support

Consideration should be given to engaging with Statewide Services for matters involving students with a disability, students with special needs or behaviour and wellbeing support.

Assessing complaints and notifications

Complaints and notifications will be assessed by the relevant receiving area in accordance with the following steps:

- a. They will be categorised using the Complaints and notifications categorisation schedule (staff only) as either
 - i. Conduct related
 - ii. General
 - iii. Out of scope (for example, grievances, underperformance matters or student behaviour).
- b. Complaints and notifications will be managed by a school in the first instance, an education regional office or residential college, business area or the Standards and Integrity directorate.
- c. If matters deemed out of scope of the Complaints and Notifications policy are within the scope of another Department policy or procedure, that policy or procedure should be followed.
- d. The managing area will take action to provide an outcome for the complaint or notification. The Standards and Integrity directorate will provide guidance and assistance to Schools, Education Regional Offices or Residential Colleges and business areas at any stage in the process.
- e. Complaints made by students or involving students must be managed with support for the student and with a focus on ensuring student safety and wellbeing. Wherever possible complaint management should include student participation ensuring students are informed of their rights and empowered to participate in decisions affecting them.

- f. Procedural fairness must be provided during the management of the complaint or notification
 - i. The person managing the complaint or notification should do so impartially, fairly and without prejudice or bias
 - ii. In the event that an allegation relates to staff conduct, the person managing the complaint or notification should ensure the reported staff member is afforded reasonable opportunity to respond to the allegation(s) and provide their account.
- g. Manage complaints and notifications (staff only) has been developed to assist schools, education regional offices and the Standards and Integrity directorate when managing complaints and notifications.
 - i. Guide - Schools and Education Regional Offices
- h. The report outlining the outcomes and actions taken to resolve the complaint or notification should be recorded consistent with the Department's record keeping requirements.

Complaint or notification resolution

The resolution should be communicated, where possible, to the person making the complaint or notification verbally or in writing. Email correspondence is acceptable and encouraged.

If the person making a complaint or notification does not understand or is not satisfied with the resolution, the managing area will make every effort to assist the person in gaining an improved understanding of the management and decision-making process.

Parent Liaison Office

If the managing area requires Parent Liaison Office support, contact the Parent Liaison Office by email at parentliaison@education.wa.edu.au. For further information about engaging the Parent Liaison Office, refer to Parent Liaison Office (staff only).

Internal review

The person making the complaint or notification may request an internal review of the management of their complaint or notification. Only one internal review will be conducted unless additional information, not already considered, is provided or exceptional circumstances exist. For further information and a template response to a request for a review, refer to Review the resolution process (staff only).

1.3 Related documents

Relevant legislation or authority

Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA)

Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003 (WA)

Disability Services Act 1993 (WA)

Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth)

Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 (Cth)

Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1971 (WA)

Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003 (WA)

Public Sector Management Act 1994 (WA)

Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)

School Education Act 1999 (WA)

School Education Regulations 2000 (WA)

School Education (Student Residential Colleges) Regulations 2017 (WA)

State Records Act 2000 (WA)

Teacher Registration Act 2012

Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004 (WA)

Working with Children (Criminal Recording Checking) Regulations 2005 (WA)

Related Department policies

Child Protection in Department of Education Sites policy

Complaints and Notifications policy

Records Management policy

Staff Conduct and Discipline policy

Working with Children Checks in Department of Education Sites policy

Other Documents

Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (2019) (Cth)

2. Definitions

Assessment

To carefully evaluate the nature, reliability, significance and risk of information and to gather additional relevant information to inform a decision on the categorisation, allocation and management of the complaint or notification.

Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction with an aspect of government education made to the Department by any person other than a staff member unless the complaint relates to the staff member's child and the child is a student at a public school, as prescribed under section 55(2)(c) of the School Education Regulations 2000 (WA). It may be general in nature and relate to matters including, but not limited to:

- the provision of education services or a process
- the actions or behaviour (conduct) of a staff member (including a staff member involved in regulatory services supported by the Department), contractor or volunteer
- the application or appropriateness of a policy, practice or procedure
- a decision by a staff member, contractor or volunteer, or a business area of the Department.

Complaints management

A process implemented to acknowledge, respond to, assess and manage complaints.

Internal review

A process conducted by the Department, on the request of the person making the complaint, to examine whether the complaints management process was fair, reasonable and appropriate.

The staff member must be separate from the original complaint management process and in a position at least equivalent to the person who managed the original complaint.

An internal review is not a re-examination of the original complaint or notification.

Locally managed

A complaint managed by a school, education regional office, residential college or central services business area.

Notification

A report by a staff member regarding the conduct or decision of a staff member, contractor, volunteer, or a business area of the Department.

A notification does not include any matter that should be managed under another relevant Department framework or policy such as the Department's Grievance Framework, Work, Health and Safety policy, Employee Performance policy, Equal Opportunity, Discrimination and Harassment policy or Bullying in the Workplace policy.

Person making a complaint

Any person, organisation or their representative making a complaint about an aspect of Western Australia Government education including the conduct or decisions of a staff member, contractor or volunteer engaged by the Department of Education. This includes students, parents, members of the public and Department staff where their complaint relates to their child and the child is a student at a public school.

Person making a notification

Any Department staff member, contractor or volunteer making a notification about the conduct or decisions of a staff member, contractor or volunteer engaged by the Department of Education.

Resolve

To make a finding about an allegation arising from a complaint or notification or a decision to undertake improvement action without a finding and communicate that to the person making the complaint or notification. A resolution occurs when the complaint has been managed in accordance with the Department's [Complaints and Notifications policy](#).

3. Contact information

Policy manager:

Director, Standards and Integrity

Policy contact officer:

Manager, Standards and Integrity
Standards and Integrity Directorate

Department of Education
151 Royal Street
East Perth WA 6004

Complaints Advice Line: 1800 655 985

4. More information

Supporting content

Policy

[Complaints and Notifications Policy](#)
