

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

The 519 welcomes input. We investigate, examine and analyze complaints to help address, adjust and improve the way we do our work. The 519 accepts complaints from members of the public, including program participants, community, volunteers, and neighbours. We do not investigate complaints that are made on behalf of other people. Complainants will be asked to provide specific details so that complaints can be adequately and fairly investigated.

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

We are committed to providing an accessible complaints process and maintaining a safe and welcoming environment whenever possible that complies with our legislative and funder obligations. Accommodation through the complaint process is available at all stages in line with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and The 519's Accessibility policy [The-519-Accessibility-Policy-approved-03-25-2024-1.pdf](#) (paper copies available upon request).

The 519 seeks to achieve a constructive resolution to all complaints where possible.

- Complaints will be investigated promptly and resolved as quickly as possible
- We will investigate, review and gather information in a non-biased manner so that we are able to fairly assess and respond to the complaint.
- Our employees are expected, at all times, to foster an atmosphere of respectful, professional, helpful community and public service.
- Employees are expected to act in good faith throughout an investigation and will not engage in reprisals and are expected to treat complaints as confidential and protect complainant's privacy
- Complainants will be advised of their options to escalate their complaint if they are dissatisfied with the process or outcome
- Complainants will be provided with clear and understandable reasons for how decisions on the complaint were made
- Updates are provided to complainants during investigations
- Complaints are used to assist in improving services, policies and procedures

### **COMPLAINT DEFINITION**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with The 519's policies, procedures, employees or quality of community / public service. Examples include, but are not limited to, the perception of:

- the types of services or programs we provide and/or the way we operate
- failure to observe our policies and procedures
- our expectations of behaviour and community services standards
- the impact of programs and services in the neighbourhood
- decisions about meeting space allocations and other policy-based decisions
- lack of access to information or services (i.e. language or disability barriers)
- discourteous actions/statements by employees
- unacceptable delay or error
- fraud such as the improper use of The 519's resources; vendor misconduct or conflict of interest; etc

## The 519 Complaints Policy Overview - 2025

The 519 is a City of Toronto Board of Management. We are required to meet conditions and obligations as a City agency, as well as funder requirements and various regulations and legislation. The 519's strategic directions and organizational mandate are approved by the Board. The responsibilities related to the operations of The 519 including matters involving employees are delegated to the Executive Director/Agency Head.

Complaints regarding allegations of harassment and discrimination are be managed in accordance to the City of Toronto's Anti-harassment and Discrimination policy and complaints procedures (paper copies available upon request):

- [Human-Rights-and-Anti-Harassment Discrimination-HRAP-City-of-Toronto.pdf](#).
- [Human-Rights-and-Anti-Harassment Discrimination-Complaint-Procedures-City-of-Toronto.pdf](#)

### **EXPECTATIONS OF COMPLAINANTS**

Complainants are expected to comply with The 519's policies, including ensuring that they treat employees and/or other community members, volunteers, students, members of the public, and members of the Board with dignity, respect and courtesy throughout the process.

### **OVERVIEW OF THE GENERAL COMPLAINTS POLICY**

1. A complaint may be received verbally, in-person, by telephone or in writing by hand delivery, mail, or email.
2. The Complainant is encouraged to speak first with an employee regarding the issue/complaint. Employees are expected to work with Complainant to try and achieve a positive resolution in line with organizational policy. If resolution is not achieved or possible at this stage, the employee will explain the next step in the complaint process which is to refer the matter to the relevant management employee including providing the contact information.
3. If the Complainant chooses to elevate the complaint to the assigned management employee the Complainant is expected to provide relevant information that includes the complaint details and requested resolution – wherever possible this should be put in writing.
4. The assigned management employee will review the information provided by the Complainant and staff and work to achieve an appropriate resolution where possible. This may include a number of steps including meeting with the Complainant and or requesting a written complaint outlining details; completing a review of relevant information provided; interviewing the Complainant and staff. At the conclusion of the process the management employee will document the issue/complaint, steps taken to investigate and resolve the complaint and the decision regarding the complaint including identifying changes in policy/practice that need to be addressed or the process to appeal the decision. These findings will be shared with the Complainant, where appropriate this includes meeting with the Complainant to discuss the findings.

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5. If resolution is still not achieved at this stage, the Complainant may appeal the decision to the Director/Executive Director. This may include a number of steps including meeting with the Complainant and or requesting additional information for clarity including providing additional written complaint details; completing a review of relevant information provided; and interviewing staff. At the conclusion of the process the Director/Executive Director will document the issue/complaint, steps taken to investigate and resolve the complaint and the decision regarding the complaint including identifying changes in policy/practice that need to be addressed, and process to appeal the decision.
6. If a resolution is still not achieved and the Complainant wants to appeal the Executive Director's decision the Complainant must submit a written complaint to The 519's Board Chair. The Board Chair will determine the next steps including documenting the final decision in writing to the Complainant and information regarding the City of Toronto Ombudsman (see below).

### **TIME LIMITS**

Complaints need to be submitted within a reasonable time frame otherwise the ability to investigate and resolve may be limited. All complaints will be dealt with in a timely manner while considering the seriousness of the complaint, impact of the issue on community/individual, and organizational resources and the time required to adequately investigate the complaint.

### **ROLE OF EMPLOYEES**

The 519 creates space for change, contributing to the advancement of 2SLGBTQ+ justice, equity and inclusion in Toronto and beyond through service, space and leadership. The 519 is committed to creating and maintaining an environment that supports and fosters positive appropriate interpersonal interactions in our day-to-day work. The 519 values honesty, ethical conduct, positive solution-based decision-making, integrity and the fair, equitable, respectful treatment of all people regardless of their circumstances. Our employees are expected, at all times, to foster an atmosphere of respectful, professional, helpful community and public service.

Employees in the course of their duties are expected to comply with the policies and procedures of The 519 and all other applicable legislation and regulations. This includes but is not limited to, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, Municipal Freedom of Information, Privacy and Protection Act (MFIPPA), the Ontario Human Rights Code, and various policies including Anti-Harassment and Discrimination, Wrongdoing and Reprisal Protection, Conflict of Interest policy, Workplace Violence, employment standards and other relevant policies and regulations.

### **ASSITANCE TO MAKE A COMPLAINT**

A Complainant may engage an outside support person in the complaints process. The support person must consent to this role, be prepared to abide by the process and rules related to confidentiality. Formal consent documentation may be required.

### **ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS**

Anonymous complaints are difficult, if not impossible, to fully assess or investigate and will not be dealt with through the complaint handling process. The 519 may receive an anonymous complaint and may undertake an investigation based on the information received; however, the effectiveness of the investigation, follow-up, and resolution may be limited as a result of the inability to exercise a complete investigation and communicate the results. The 519 will act in good faith throughout an investigation and will not engage in reprisals. Complainants are encouraged to provide contact information that permits a fulsome investigation.

### **DEFINITION OF FRIVOLOUS AND VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS**

A frivolous complaint is one found upon investigation to have no reasonable grounds, does not make sense or is not serious in nature. A vexatious complaint is made without reasonable or probable cause or excuse and is instituted maliciously or on the basis of improper motives.

The 519 treats all complaints seriously. In all cases, an internal review process is undertaken before a complaint is defined as frivolous or vexatious. In cases where complaints are deemed either frivolous or vexatious, The 519 will not conduct additional follow-up or continue to investigate the complaint. In such cases, Complainants will be directed to the Ombudsman of the City of Toronto for review should the complainant feel there is a procedural breach and they wish to complain further.

### **COMPLAINT ABOUT THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

A complaint about the Executive Director must be put in writing and directed to the Board Chair of The 519. The Board Chair will review the complaint and determine follow-up including reviewing the Complainant's written submission and management's response. At the end of that review, the Board Chair will inform the complainant in writing of the decision. All complaints regarding the Executive Director will be dealt with in a timely manner subject to the circumstances.

### **COMPLAINT ABOUT THE 519 BOARD**

Complaints about the Board or members of the Board must be put in writing and directed to The 519 Board of Management care of the Board Chair. Formal complaints are managed by the Integrity Commissioner of the City of Toronto. For information about the process, please visit: <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/accountability-operations-customer-service/accountability-officers/integrity-commissioner>.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The 519 is required to comply with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) and other related legislation. The release of information recorded by The 519 is governed by the legislative requirements of the MFIPPA. All requests for information under the complaint process must be processed through the Corporate Access and Privacy office – contact The 519 Privacy Officer for more information [privacy@the519.org](mailto:privacy@the519.org).

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### **ROLE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON OF THE CITY OF TORONTO**

The City of Toronto Office of the Ombudsman is an independent impartial investigator of the public's complaints about the administration of the City government, including City agencies such as The 519. The Ombudsman may be approached to look at problems when The 519's procedures and processes have not resolved a complaint to the Complainant's satisfaction <https://www.ombudsmantoronto.ca>. The Ombudsman is a place of last resort and may make recommendations to agencies to change conduct, practices, or policies to create a system of administrative justice and fairness.

### **QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROCESS**

Contact [info@the519.org](mailto:info@the519.org)