

Making a complaint with DCP

Factsheet for carers

Carers have the right to make a complaint. We are here to support you throughout the process and will take your concerns seriously.

The Department for Child Protection (DCP) is committed to listening to, and responding to, your concerns and complaints. We know that it may be stressful and upsetting when issues arise. We want to best support you through this time and will address complaints in a timely and efficient way. We hope this reduces the impacts of any concerns or worries and will help to maintain respectful and professional relationships within the care team.

Additionally, by understanding and resolving carer concerns, we are able to inform best practice for our staff. Importantly, complaints help DCP to meet our commitment to carers and remain accountable.

If you feel particularly unhappy with a DCP decision, experience or interaction a complaint can be made.

This factsheet explains how to get your complaint heard, acknowledged and resolved.

Key messages

- **Carers have the right to make a complaint.**
- DCP staff will take your concerns seriously and work with you to resolve complaints.
- The DCP complaints process includes resolution at a local, central or external level.

I have a complaint, where do I start?

We recommend that you discuss your concerns with your foster agency support worker or your kinship care support worker prior to following the 3-level DCP complaints process (below). This can be in-person, or by a phone call or email.

This step helps you feel supported from the beginning of the process and can help you to work out *how* you think the care team can work together to solve the problem or worry.

By knowing how you would like the issue resolved right at the beginning of the process, it is easier to communicate your concerns and expectations. This is important when maintaining respectful relationships with the care team and ensuring that any issues are tackled together.

Often minor concerns can be resolved quickly and effectively, allowing less time for stress and worry to creep in.

DCP complaints process

1 Local complaint resolution

DCP staff at your local office attempt to resolve your complaint. In the first instance, please discuss your concerns with your case worker. If you feel the complaint is not addressed, or you do not feel comfortable discussing it with the case worker, then you should raise the issue with the supervisor or office manager of your local DCP office.

Some tips for successful complaints resolution at the local level:

- Address your concerns early. The earlier the complaint can be worked through, the better the outcome.
- Maintain professional and respectful communication with your case worker and the care team.
- Come prepared with a clear explanation of your complaint, including what happened, who was involved and what resolution you are seeking. Writing this out on paper (or on a computer/phone) can help to organise your thoughts.

- Contact your local DCP office (phone numbers listed below) to find out the name of the supervisor or office manager in your area.
- If you feel like you're getting 'stuck' at any time, please contact the Complaints and Feedback Management Unit for support and guidance.

2 Centralised complaint resolution

If you are not satisfied with the resolution provided at the local level, or, if no progress has been made at the local level, discuss your concerns with the central Complaints and Feedback Management Unit (CFMU). The CFMU will provide support, guidance and conduct further assessment of your complaint. To lodge your complaint for central resolution, you can complete the online complaints and feedback form on the DCP website, or phone or write to CFMU.

Complaints and Feedback Management Unit details

Department for Child Protection

GPO Box 1072 Adelaide SA 5001

Telephone: 1800 003 305

3 External complaint resolution

If you are not satisfied with the DCP outcome, you can escalate your complaint to the external statutory authority, the Ombudsman SA for independent and impartial review. The Ombudsman SA deals with complaints about administrative acts, misconduct and maladministration. For example, your complaint might be about:

- a decision-making process
- a failure to act or delay in taking action
- an unreasonable or unfair decision or requirement
- the conduct of staff or delivery of a service
- the irregular and unauthorised use of public money or substantial mismanagement of public resources.

The Ombudsman SA assesses all complaints against their own criteria for investigation, to decide whether investigation is necessary or justifiable.

External supports and advocacy

Ombudsman SA

Ombudsman SA deals with complaints about South Australian state and local government. The services of Ombudsman SA are free to the public.

Phone: 1800 182 150

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.sa.gov.au

Website: www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au

Connecting Foster and Kinship Care SA Inc.

Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers - SA Inc (CF&KC-SA) is the independent, peak representative body for foster and kinship carers across South Australia. CF&KC-SA advocates for, and supports, all carers across our state.

Phone: 1800 732 272

Email: support@cfc-sa.org.au

Website: <https://cfc-sa.org.au/>



To note...

Some complaints may fall outside of DCP staffing or functions, and potentially relate to external agencies.

In these instances, **DCP CFMU staff will work with you** to find the best avenue for feedback and complaints.

Common questions

We understand that speaking up can feel like a big decision. We are here to support you throughout the process, listen to your feedback and address any concerns in a prompt manner.

If you would like additional support, you can have a personal support person present, such as a family member, friend, another carer or community member to help you feel comfortable throughout the process. If you would like a support person to speak on your behalf, a signed consent from you must be provided.

If you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and would like to speak with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person directly, or have an Aboriginal

or Torres Strait Islander person present for support, please inform the CFMU staff.

If you identify as living with a disability, additional supports from DCP or external services may be available to ensure the complaints process is inclusive and accessible. Please speak with your case worker or CFMU staff for more details.

When can I make a complaint?

You can make a complaint with DCP if you feel unhappy, uncomfortable or uninformed during your interactions with DCP as a carer. Common areas of complaints include (but are not limited to):

- miscommunication or minimal communication
- contact arrangements as a function of case management
- removal of a child or young person
- uninformed of necessary information
- care concerns
- disagreement with care arrangement decisions.

Do I need to talk to my case worker first?

No. While we recommend resolving complaints at the local level first, if you are not comfortable raising your concern with your case worker, please contact the local office to speak with the office manager. If this is not successful, you can contact the CFMU for support and guidance. We will work with you.

What if no one believes me?

You will be believed. All DCP staff are expected to take complaints seriously and document all information in a timely and accurate manner.

Will I be treated differently by DCP staff because I'm making a complaint?

No. We value your feedback, both positive and negative. DCP staff are not to treat you any differently based on the complaints process. If this occurs, please inform senior staff or the CFMU. We are here to support you.

Do some complaints take priority in assessment?

No, once submitted to the CFMU all complaints are allocated to a team member and addressed in the set timeframes.

Where can I learn more?

More information can be found in the:

[DCP Complaints Feedback Management Policy \(PDF 814KB\)\(PDF\)](#)

[DCP Complaints Feedback Management Procedure \(PDF 1MB\)](#)

This policy and procedure can also be found on the DCP website here:

<https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/contact-us/complaints-reviews-and-feedback/making-a-complaint>

What happens next?

To start the complaints process, please speak with your case worker. Alternatively, contact your local DCP office on:

Head Office	8124 4185
Woodville	8304 0120
Noarlunga	8207 3000
Elizabeth	8207 9000
Playford	8182 8888
St Marys	8374 6111
Blair Athol	8269 8300
Hindmarsh	8406 2777
Inner South	8177 4400
Inner North	8209 4910
Ceduna	8626 2444
Port Lincoln	8688 3344
Whyalla	1800 245 242
Cooper Pedy	8298 0854
Port Augusta	8648 5060
Berri (Riverland)	8595 2400
Murray Bridge	8535 6200
Port Pirie	8638 4311
Kadina	8828 0400
Mount Barker	7424 7888
Gawler	8521 4444
Mount Gambier	8735 1700

For more information and support, please contact the CFMU team on 1800 003 305.

Meeting our commitment

The information in this factsheet is aligned with the Statement of Commitment to foster and kinship carers and our promise to inform, support, consult, value and respect all carers. Find out more at [childprotection.sa.gov.au/soc](https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/soc)