



# Receiving and Documenting Complaints and Referral Mechanisms

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  - Referrals
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# Receiving a complaint

- Receive initial complaint
- Consider immediate protection needs
- Establish nature of complaint
- Decide who deals with complaint
- Follow up complaint

# Role of complaint recipient

- Encourage reporting and receive complaints
- Give guidance on what happens with the report
- Pass report through appropriate channels
  - Make referrals as necessary

**REMEMBER:**

**Person receiving complaint is:**

**NOT an investigator**

**NOT a counselor**

# Qualities of effective complaint recipient

- **Knowledge:** Must know what s/he is talking about. All information given must be consistent & accurate.
- **Responsibility:** To facilitate the interview in a way that respects complainant's values, personal resources & capacity for self-determination.
- **Neutrality:** Should not project own biases or offer own judgments.
- **Patience:** Should give complainant ample time to tell her/his story.
- **Focus:** Should only ask relevant questions.

# Principles of receiving complaints

- Protection, safety, and security
- Identification of welfare support required and referrals
- Preserve confidentiality as far as possible
  - absolute confidentiality may not be possible, as reacting to the allegation may require interventions
- Involve as few people as possible
- Support the victim in referring to local authorities if a there is a crime
- Forward the allegation for action via established mechanisms

# Basic phases of an interview

- Rapport-building
- Information-gathering
  - Free narrative
  - Questions
- Closure and next steps

# Rapport-building

- Introduce yourself and **welcome** the complainant
- Make them feel **comfortable**
- **Reassure** them that they did the right thing in coming
- Explain your role is to take the complaint – that you are not making any decisions, simply **gathering information**
- Explain the boundaries of confidentiality and **obtain their consent** to your sharing the information on a “need-to-know” basis



# Information-gathering

- Let them tell their story in a free narrative
  - Do not interrupt
  - Show you are listening by concentrating, remaining attentive & focused
  - Silence is OK; allow complainant time to think and choose words
- Ask for clarification to make sure you have understood
- Use open rather than leading questions
  - “what did you mean?” and “then what happened?” **not** “did you mean X?” or “did you then do X?”
- Do not make judgments; avoid “why” questions
- Use simple language

# Anonymity

- If the person reporting wishes to remain anonymous, all other information must be forwarded through appropriate channels.
- An anonymous complaint might be more difficult to investigate – the person needs to know this.
- In this case they will be told that his/her identity will not be disclosed during the investigation *without his/her permission.*

# Closure and next steps

*This reassures complainants their complaint is taken seriously*

- Let them know what may happen next – do not guarantee an outcome
- Explain how long the process might take
- Explain that you (or someone else) will be in touch again
- Provide contacts if the complainant has questions
- Explain that someone else will decide what happens next
- Explain that the allegation will be followed up
- Tell them they will be informed of the outcome

# Special considerations for children

- Children may be as reliable as adults
- Take their report seriously
- Children may have special needs with regard to interviews, i.e., timing, language
- Consider whether parent or caregiver should be present

# Receiving complaints

- Be prepared to receive complaints from:
  - UN staff
  - NGO staff
  - Local community - family, friends, neighbors, witnesses
  - Victims themselves
  - Others?

# Documentation

- Keep a written record
  - e.g., the IASC Model Complaint Form
- Forward complaint for action as soon as possible, as per agency reporting procedure

# Assessing physical safety & welfare

## DISCUSS:

- How do you assess?
- How do you organize referrals?

## SEA victim assistance

- UN Resolution (2007) A/Res/62/214 obliges assistance and support to SEA victims



# Identifying services & creating a referral pathway

- Conduct an assessment of available services and gaps in services in health, legal, psychosocial, and material support
- Develop a referral plan and list of referral agencies for basic support and extended support
- Identify victim support facilitators to assist the complainant/survivor to access services
- Identify standards for confidentiality, data collection, coordination among service providers