

# Conflict Resolution Policy

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## Purpose

Autism Ontario is committed to providing a workplace where employees and volunteers are treated with fairness, dignity and respect. Autism Ontario has instituted this policy to provide employees and volunteers with an outlet to raise concerns regarding any conflict in the workplace or dissatisfaction with respect to issues related to their employment in an open and fair manner with provisions made to ensure their prompt and reasonable resolution. Under no circumstance should any employee fear discrimination or reprisal in the workplace as a result of a complaint.

Mutual respect is key to both the Mission Statement and the Core Values of Autism Ontario. To this end, staff and volunteers shall:

- Take time to listen to what people have to say, without interruption or assumption of message,
- Respect that individuals will contribute what they are able, whether that be time or money,
- Encourage a positive environment in which individual contributions are encouraged and valued,
- Acknowledge democratic principles and on important issues, encourage consensus decisions as well as ones that seek collaborative solutions rather than compromise.

## Recognizing Potential Causes of Conflict

Even the best workplaces are bound to have some sort of conflict at some point. Conflict is an active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles. It is important to understand and proactively avoid conflict before it happens. Here are some common causes:

- Poor communication and misunderstanding
- Assumptions and lack of clarification
- Different personal values, beliefs or perspectives
- Conflicting goals
- Conflicting work styles
- Stressful situations
- Personal situations



## Avoiding Conflict

We recommend that people try to anticipate and avoid conflict by:

- Being empathetic. Taking the time to understand and respect people's values, opinions, ideas, and desires;
- Deciding if the situation is worth disputing. Sometimes it is better to walk away;
- Being transparent and communicating openly. People should not be afraid to express their expectations;
- Setting healthy boundaries;
- Anticipating your responses. Look back at your previous methods for dealing with confrontation;
- Getting another perspective. Often times our emotions can cloud our judgements, it is best to have a composed state of mind before confrontation;
- Be the bigger person and confront. Do not let the situation fester. This can create an unhealthy work environment for everyone.

## Conflicts

The following conflicts should always be reported to Autism Ontario and we shall address them with reasonable resolutions in a timely manner.

- Perceived unfair or inequitable treatment.
- Harassment whether sexual, discriminatory, or personal in nature.
- Abuse of authority.
- Favoritism or bias.
- Workplace violence.
- Disputes between co-workers or managerial staff with unwanted and unresolved consequences.

## **Reporting Conflict Procedure**

### Informal Resolution Procedure

We suggest that people try and solve their own conflicts first with the following:

- Try and negotiate a compromise. Be reasonable and fair. Understand that you may not end up with everything.
- Explain the situation to a trusted individual outside of the organization to provide honest feedback about whether or not the situation is being treated fair and reasonably.
- Employees and volunteers are encouraged to discuss the unwanted behavior or actions with the offending party as the situation dictates.
- Apologize and set aside differences.



## Formal Resolution Procedure

We understand that conflict cannot always be solved between two disagreeing parties. Therefore, we have adopted a formal conflict resolution process as follows:

Firstly, the complaint will be determined if it is eligible for review. You will receive a response within *seven days* stating whether or not it is eligible for review and provided with next steps.

If eligible for review, an investigation will commence once it has been reviewed by your appropriate supervisor or management. All concerns are considered sensitive information and kept confidential. All formal complaints will be kept on file along with any accompanying documentation.

Complaints are not to be discussed with your colleagues or other volunteers. Formal complaints must be submitted within *14 days* from the date of the alleged incident(s). Once it is submitted, you will receive a response within seven days. Please e-mail or fill out a [complaint form](#).

Individuals seeking resolution are required to describe in writing:

- Names of all parties and witnesses involved, and any attempts made to resolve the issue heretofore. Anonymous complaints will not be reviewed.
- History and details of the circumstances (i.e. dates, location, time, etc.);
- Reasons they think are causing the problem
- How they would like the dispute resolved and their reasoning
- Concerns involving your supervisor should have their written complaint discussed with the appropriate manager or superior, up to and including the Executive Director and Autism Ontario's Board of Directors.



**\*PLEASE NOTE:** This chart is intended for **volunteers only**. If you are an *Autism Ontario Staff* - Please speak directly with your appropriate supervisor.

Autism Ontario takes all complaints seriously. All complaints will be acknowledged. We are all responsible for enacting preventative measures to ensure a safe and healthy work environment. All complaints received shall go through the appropriate channels and reviewed in a timely fashion by the appropriate supervisor or manager. The complainant will be informed throughout the process of next steps throughout an investigation.



## Reporting Conflict – Autism Ontario Volunteers

Conflict between:

*Volunteer and Volunteer – Contact the Chapter Support & Volunteer Coordinator*

*Volunteer and Staff - Contact the Staff member's supervisor*

*Staff and Staff – Contact your appropriate manager*

- A meeting and discussion will be arranged with the parties involved, as the situation dictates.
- In the event that these discussions fail to reach a reasonable resolution, the supervisor will bring in his/her supervisor up to and including the Executive Director to address the conflict with all parties involved.
- Should the matter fail to be sufficiently addressed at the Executive Director level, the party may choose to contact Autism Ontario's Board of Directors.

### **False or Frivolous Complaints**

Employees and volunteers should be cognizant of the fact that a formal complaint against another employee or volunteer is a serious allegation with repercussions. Where a complaint is found to be either false or frivolous, or where supporting documentation for a complaint has been falsified, the complainant or witness may be subject to disciplinary measures up to and including termination of employment or volunteer duties.

Last Edited: 2018-02-22



Acknowledgement and Agreement

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the Internal Conflict Resolution Policy of Autism Ontario. I fully understand the terms of this document and agree to abide by them.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Board, Employee or Volunteer Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Witness)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)