

Policy Name: Formal Complaint Process

Policy Category: Accountability and Transparency

Purpose

The Formal Complaint Process Policy outlines the steps for documenting the escalation of a tenant concern. It is not intended to replace initial requests for service or informal complaints related to maintenance, tenancy management, neighbour disputes, or any other day-to-day issues in Halton Community Housing Corporation (HCHC) communities.

If a person wishes to file a complaint about service received in response to an initial request, they may begin a formal complaint process. HCHC will guide individuals through the progressive steps of the process. HCHC's goal is to address and resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity possible.

Scope

This policy applies to all residents of HCHC communities including tenants and occupants. This policy applies to formal complaints that HCHC tenants may make about a staff process, a policy, or a contractor working at an HCHC site. It does not address minor issues, such as those between tenants.

Standards and Values

HCHC treats all complaints they receive confidentially, and addresses them in a timely, fair, and equitable manner.

HCHC is a continuous improvement organization that strives for service excellence. HCHC's aspirational goal is to be best in class. Constructive feedback and open communication helps to measure how HCHC is achieving this goal and to identify areas for potential improvement.

Constructive feedback provides HCHC with a greater awareness of residents' needs. Tenant input is very important and assists HCHC in maintaining a high customer service standard.

Definitions

Complainant: The person who initiates the complaint.

Formal Complaint: A written complaint directed to HCHC staff.

Grievance Form: A form filed if a written complaint cannot be resolved.

Informal Complaint: A complaint received verbally or in writing that is generally easily resolved.

Initial Request: Any request received verbally or in writing for day-to-day services within HCHC.

Occupant: Any individual listed as a declared occupant under a lease signed with HCHC.

Ombudsman: An impartial investigator who looks into complaints about the administration of HCHC's services or programs where HCHC's internal complaint procedures and processes have not been resolved to the satisfaction of the tenant who made the complaint.

Staff: Employees of Halton Region.

Tenant: A person who has signed a lease with HCHC.

Policy Details

Tenants are encouraged to attempt to resolve their complaint where the request for service or issue originated. HCHC Tenant Services Advisors are the first point of contact in resolving most tenant issues, as they are most familiar with the property and tenants. For complaints about maintenance issues, tenants can call 311 or email the complaint to hchcmaintenanceservices@halton.ca.

HCHC recognizes that there may be times when tenants feel they need to file a formal complaint. The following complaint process outlines details the escalating steps that tenants should follow when submitting a formal complaint:

Step 1: Submit a formal written complaint

A tenant can submit a formal written complaint by letter or email to the Tenant Services Advisor for the property where the issue or concern took place.

The letter or email should include in the subject line, heading, or introduction that it is a formal complaint.

If the Tenant Services Advisor who receives the formal complaint is not the appropriate recipient to deal with the complaint, they will forward it to the correct contact and advise the tenant.

The Tenant Services Advisor may contact the tenant making the complaint for more information or to discuss the matter.

HCHC staff will provide a final response, in writing, to the tenant making the formal complaint within one month after having received it.

Step 2: Submit a formal grievance form

If the tenant is not satisfied with the final response to the complaint, they may submit a Formal Grievance Form (available online at halton.ca/hchc or by calling 311).

The tenant must submit the Formal Grievance Form to HCHC to the attention of the Chief Operating Officer of HCHC. All grievance forms must be signed and dated. Anonymous submissions may not be reviewed.

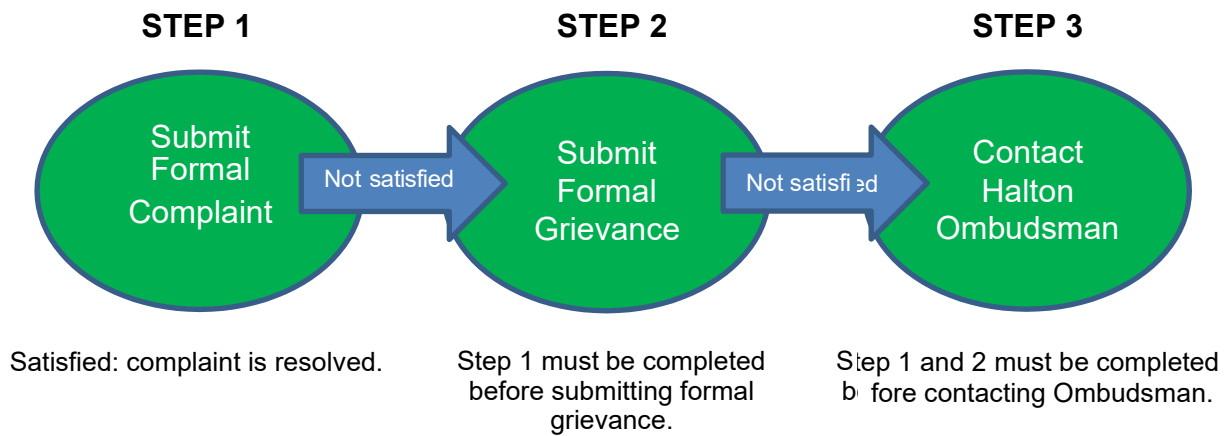
The Chief Operating Officer will investigate the grievance and reply in writing within 15 business days.

Step 3: Contact Halton Office of the Ombudsman

Tenants are encouraged to resolve complaints through Steps 1 and 2. If they remain unsatisfied with HCHC’s internal complaint procedures and processes to resolve the issue, they may contact the Office of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman can refuse to investigate the complaint and redirect tenants back to HCHC for resolution if they have not tried to resolve a complaint through these first steps.

A complaint may be filed with the Ombudsman only if it is related to the administration of HCHC. This step is **not** available for a request for service or an inquiry (for example, notifying the Region of missed garbage collection, asking for specific information related to a program or service).

The full Ombudsman process and contact information can be reviewed at: halton.ca/The-Region/Accountability-and-Transparency/Office-of-the-Ombudsman



Related Policies and Resources	Halton Region Office of the Ombudsman
Related Legislation	<i>Residential Tenancies Act, 2006</i>

HCHC policies can be found online at halton.ca/hchc