

Policy name	Complaints Policy
Source	Oxfam Canada
Responsibility	Governance, Anti-Racism, Reconciliation and JEDI Committee of the Oxfam Canada Board of Directors
Date first approved	2013
Date last updated	2022, 2025
Next review date	2028

BACKGROUND

Oxfam believes that anyone has the right to make a complaint, have that complaint addressed and receive a response. In the event of a mistake, wrongful action, or breach of the codes to which Oxfam Canada subscribes, Oxfam Canada will acknowledge and take appropriate steps to remedy the error or breach.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to:

- Beneficiaries and community members
- Donors, supporters, and members of the public
- Partner organizations
- Staff, volunteers, students, and contractors.

This policy covers complaints related to our work, staff, students, or volunteer conduct, misuse of resources, or breaches of policy. It does not cover internal staff grievances, which are addressed through our HR procedures.

A complaint can be made in the following instances

- Poor quality or delayed services
- Unfair treatment
- Breaches of organizational policy
- Staff, students or volunteer misconduct
- Fraud or misuse of resources
- Safeguarding or protection concerns

PROCEDURE FOR MAKING A COMPLAINT

This policy is available on our website and at the Oxfam Canada offices. The Oxfam Canada website provides information on how to make a complaint about Oxfam Canada's activities.

- Complainants are encouraged to submit their concerns by email to speakup@oxfam.ca. The information will then be forwarded to the relevant person for follow-up as appropriate.

- For allegations of exploitation, abuse, fraud and corruption, complainants are encouraged to make a confidential report via Oxfam's Misconduct Webform.

GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING A COMPLAINT

Oxfam Canada will make every effort to address and resolve all complaints. Frivolous or vexatious complaints will not be investigated.

All non-frivolous or vexatious complaints will be logged and referred to the relevant person for follow up as appropriate.

- If the complaint is against a member of staff, the Executive Director will handle the complaint.
- If the complaint is against the Executive Director or a member of the Board of Directors (other than the Co-Chairs/Chair of the Board), the Co-Chairs or Chair of the Board (or their delegate) will handle the complaint.
- If the complaint is against one of the Co-Chairs/Chair of the Board, the Vice-Chair of the Board will handle the complaint.

Oxfam Canada will endeavour to respond to all complaints within five (5) business days, and to assess, investigate and respond to complaints in writing within thirty (30) business days. Complainants will be kept informed of delays in the investigation process (e.g. due to unavailability of relevant personnel, etc.).

If the complaint is well founded, Oxfam Canada will endeavour to provide redress (e.g. a retraction, or recompense, etc.). Where this is not possible or appropriate, a formal written apology will be issued.

If the complainant concludes that a complaint has not been satisfactorily addressed, they can request to raise the issue directly with the Oxfam Canada Board of Directors.

Guiding principles

- **Fairness and impartiality:** Complaints are assessed objectively and without bias.
- **Confidentiality:** Information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.
- **Non-retaliation:** Individuals making complaints will not face negative consequences.
- **Accessibility:** We will ensure the process is inclusive and easy to use.
- **Timeliness:** We aim to resolve complaints quickly and efficiently.

Safeguarding concerns

Any complaint involving child protection, or sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment will be treated urgently, following our Safeguarding policies (One Oxfam Policy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse; One Oxfam Youth Safeguarding Policy; One Oxfam Digital Safeguarding Policy; One Oxfam Child Safeguarding Policy).

Concerns related to fraud or misuse of resources

Any complaint related to the misuse of Oxfam resources will be treated following our One Oxfam Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and our One Oxfam Anti-Terrorism Financing and Financial Crime Policy.

Confidentiality and data protection

All complaints will be recorded securely. All personal information related to a complaint is handled in line with applicable privacy laws, including the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) and other relevant legislations. We store complaint records securely and strictly limit access to authorized personnel only.

Escalation and appeals

If unsatisfied with the outcome, the complaint may be appealed within ten (10) business days of receiving the response. Appeals will be reviewed by the Executive Director or a Board Member not previously involved.

Learning

Patterns and trends will be reviewed regularly and reported to the Senior Leadership Team and the Oxfam Canada Board of Directors to improve practices.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE POLICY

Complaints from staff related to workplace harassment or violence are governed by Oxfam Canada's Workplace Harassment Policy and Workplace Violence Policy.

Complaints from unionized staff related to their employment conditions are handled through the grievance procedure set out in the Oxfam Canada Collective Agreement or by other processes as appropriate.

GLOSSARY

- **Complaint:** A statement of dissatisfaction requiring a response, related to services, conduct, or policies.
- **Complainant:** The person or party making the complaint.
- **Feedback:** General comments or suggestions that do not require a formal response.