

<b>POLICY AND PROCEDURE</b>	
SUBJECT/TITLE:	Complaint Management and Resolution Policy
APPLICABILITY:	All Staff
CONTACT PERSON & DIVISION:	Health Commissioner, Administration
ORIGINAL DATE ADOPTED:	April 17, 2025
LATEST EFFECTIVE DATE:	April 17, 2025
REVIEW FREQUENCY:	Every 5 Years
BOARD APPROVAL DATE:	N/A
REFERENCE NUMBER:	800-060-P

#### **A. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear and consistent procedures for receiving, investigating, and responding to complaints submitted to Canton City Public Health. Complaints may include, but are not limited to, customer service concerns, community health issues, or potential misinformed complaints from individuals known as the "Worry Well."

This policy applies to all employees and divisions within Canton City Public Health involved in receiving, addressing, and responding to complaints from the public.

Note: Employees should be aware that divisions may have their own policies for reporting/responding to program-specific complaints. If unsure about which reporting mechanism to follow, they should consult with a supervisor. The division responsible for investigating the complaint (the 'owner' of the complaint) is also responsible for completing and documenting the investigation when following this policy.

#### **B. POLICY**

Canton City Public Health is committed to addressing all complaints with respect, professionalism, and thorough investigation. We aim to maintain transparency and fairness throughout the process while protecting the integrity of our operations and resources.

#### **C. BACKGROUND**

Canton City Public Health recognizes that effective communication and responsive service are essential components of maintaining public trust and ensuring community well-being. As a government agency tasked with promoting and protecting public health, we understand that complaints from the public, whether related to customer service, community health concerns, or service delivery, are an important source of feedback. These complaints can offer valuable insights into areas of improvement, opportunities for growth, and potential issues that may require attention.

It is equally important to distinguish between legitimate concerns and complaints that may be driven by misinformation, misunderstandings, or personal anxieties. These "Worry Well" complaints can consume valuable resources and time if not properly managed and assessed. Therefore, having a structured and transparent approach to receiving, investigating, and responding to complaints is essential to ensure Canton City Public Health can address issues in a fair, effective, and timely manner.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear and consistent framework for the handling of all complaints, ensuring that each is processed and evaluated according to its nature and validity. By establishing a formal procedure, Canton City Public Health aims to uphold accountability, ensure equitable treatment of all complainants, and continually improve the quality of service and care provided to the public.

This policy reflects Canton City Public Health's commitment to transparency, professionalism, and a high standard of service, and ensures that all complaints are handled with respect, confidentiality, and diligence.

#### D. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction regarding services, actions, or policies of Canton City Public Health.

**Customer Service Complaint:** Complaints related to the delivery of services, interactions with staff, or general dissatisfaction with Canton City Public Health's customer service.

**Community Health Complaint:** Complaints regarding public health concerns, health policies, environmental hazards, or other issues that affect the community's well-being.

**Misinformed Complaint ("Worry Well"):** A complaint made by an individual or group that is exaggerated, incorrect, or speculative, often driven by personal anxiety rather than factual concern.

#### E. PROCEDURES & STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

##### I. Procedure for Receiving Complaints:

###### 1. Complaint Intake:

- Complaints may be received via phone, email, in person, online via the city's SeeClickFix program or through Canton City Public Health's complaint form (Appendix A – Complaint Documentation Form). [If a complaint is identified on a social media site, the complainant should be directed to submit their complaint through the appropriate methods listed above.] The person receiving the complaint should document the complaint in detail, including the following:
  - Complainant's name, contact information (if available)
    - 1. If the complainant does not want to be part of the public record, they can request to remain anonymous and no information about them will be recorded. The complaint will then follow Section VI. below
  - Date and time of complaint
  - Detailed description of the complaint
  - The alleged issue or service failure

NOTE: Please avoid including personal health information in the complaint unless it is essential to the investigation.

###### 2. Complaint Categorization:

- **Customer Service Complaints:** Should be directed to the relevant Division/Program or staff member for response.
- **Community Health Complaints:** Should be forwarded to the relevant Division/Program or designated staff member for response. If unsure what Division/Program, the employee shall ask their supervisor.
- **Misinformed Complaints:** Should be categorized as "potentially misinformed" for further evaluation.
- **Program-Specific Complaints:** Complaints such as those regarding air quality, open burning, asbestos, dust, waste, water, hoarding, pests, and animals should be forwarded to the relevant Division/Program (APC, EH, etc) Director for review and follow-up. On 800-060-01-F Complaint Documentation form, enter date the complaint/form is forwarded to the Division/Program.

###### 3. Acknowledgment and Response:

- All complaints will be acknowledged within 48 hours of receipt, if applicable, with the complainant

notified of the investigation process and an expected timeline for response.

- A formal response should be provided to the complainant within ten business days after a decision or response has been reached.

## **II. Determining Validity of a Complaint:**

### **1. Initial Review:**

- The complaint will be initially reviewed by the individual receiving the complaint. This includes gathering all pertinent details and considering the nature of the complaint.
- If the complaint is specific to a Division/Program the individual receiving the complaint will hand off to his/her supervisor who will pass on to the appropriate Division/Program for investigation. If the complaint is program-specific, the Division/Program will follow their own policies for program-specific complaints instead of following the remaining steps of this policy.

### **2. Fact-Finding and Investigation:**

- A formal investigation will be conducted into all community health complaints. This may involve reviewing relevant data, inspecting sites, and interviewing parties involved.
- Customer service complaints will be investigated by Canton City Public Health leadership, if necessary, based on employee conduct or process failures.

### **3. Handling Misinformed Complaints:**

- Misinformed complaints will be identified through careful investigation, including fact-checking, reviewing historical data, and corroborating details from multiple sources.
- Complaints identified as misinformed may be handled by:
  - Educating the complainant about the accuracy of information.
  - Offering resources or referrals to address underlying concerns (e.g., mental health or anxiety).
  - Documenting the misinformed complaint in Canton City Public Health's records for future reference and pattern identification.

### **4. Escalation Process:**

- If a complaint cannot be resolved through the standard process, it should be escalated to the Health Commissioner.
- In cases of persistent or recurring misinformed complaints, the complainant may be referred to appropriate mental health resources.

## **III. Responding and Follow-Up:**

### **1. Response:**

- Canton City Public Health will strive to respond to complaints in a timely and effective manner. The response may involve:
  - Corrective actions (e.g., changes in service delivery, policy modifications)
  - Staff retraining or disciplinary action
  - Referral to relevant agencies or Division/Program.

### **2. Feedback to Complainant:**

- Once a response has been made, the complainant will be informed of the outcomes and any corrective measures taken.
- The feedback should be clear and transparent, explaining the outcome of the investigation and any actions taken to address the complaint.

### **3. Documentation:**

- All complaints and actions taken will be recorded on the 800-060-01-F Complaint Documentation form or documented through program-specific methods/database as appropriate and will be retained as part of Canton City Public Health's retention policy.

- Records will include:
  - The nature of the complaint
  - Actions taken during investigation
  - Final response
  - Any follow-up or ongoing monitoring required
- 4. **Monitoring and Improvement:**
  - Regular reviews of complaint data will be conducted to identify trends, areas for quality improvement, and lessons learned.
  - Policies or procedures may be revised as needed based on the outcome of complaint investigations.

#### **IV. Confidentiality:**

All complaints will be handled confidentially to the extent possible, and personal information about the complainant will only be disclosed to those involved in the response process. Note that many program-specific complaints are public records and cannot be considered confidential.

#### **V. Non-Retaliation:**

Canton City Public Health will ensure that no individual will face retaliation for making a complaint, even if the complaint is ultimately determined to be unsubstantiated.

#### **VI. Anonymous Complaints:**

1. **Receipt of Anonymous Complaints:**
  - Anonymous complaints may be received through any of Canton City Public Health's communication channels (phone, email, in person, via SeeClickFix, or the complaint form).
  - The complainant's identity will not be requested or recorded if they choose to remain anonymous. However, Canton City Public Health will encourage the complainant to provide as many details as possible for proper response.
2. **Documentation:**
  - All anonymous complaints will be documented on the 800-060-01-F Complaint Documentation Form or through program-specific methods/database, with a focus on the details provided regarding the issue or concern.
  - The lack of contact information may have an impact on Canton City Public Health's ability to follow up directly with the complainant but will not prevent the complaint from being investigated.
3. **Investigation:**
  - Anonymous complaints will be reviewed and investigated based on the available information. The department will make reasonable efforts to address the concern raised, even without the ability to contact the complainant for further details.
  - Canton City Public Health may need to consult other sources of information or gather additional evidence to assess the complaint's validity and take appropriate action.
4. **Resolution and Feedback:**
  - While anonymous complainants cannot be directly notified of the response or corrective actions, Canton City Public Health will take steps to address the concern raised.
  - If the complaint leads to broader systemic issues, Canton City Public Health may issue general updates or changes to policies or services that address the concern, ensuring transparency.
5. **Confidentiality:**
  - The identity of the anonymous complainant will be protected to the fullest extent possible, first by

not recording any information about the complainant, in accordance with privacy and confidentiality guidelines.

#### F. CITATIONS & REFERENCES

- None

#### G. CONTRIBUTORS

The following staff contributed to the authorship of this document:

- Diane Thompson, MSN, RN

#### H. APPENDICIES & ATTACHMENTS

N/A

#### I. REFERENCE FORMS

800-060-01-F\_Complaint Documentation Form

#### J. REVISION & REVIEW HISTORY

Revision Date	Review Date	Author	Notes

#### K. APPROVAL

This document has been approved in accordance with the “800-001-P Standards for Writing and Approving PPSOGFs” procedure as of the effective date listed above.