

GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

1. YFU Grievance Policy

1.1 Intent of this Policy

- YFU is committed to providing a work (paid or unpaid) and student exchange environment that is safe, fair and free from discrimination for all members of the YFU community. YFU has a responsibility under government legislation to ensure staff, volunteers and exchange students are not subjected to behaviour that may constitute unlawful discrimination, harassment, vilification or victimization.
- An essential part of developing such an environment is ensuring that all members of the community are encouraged to come forward with their grievances feeling confident that responsible persons in YFU will take prompt and effective action to address complaints of discrimination and harassment. YFU recognizes that grievances that are not addressed have the potential to grow into major problems
- This policy complements the YFU Code of Conduct. Both the YFU Grievance Policy and the Code of Conduct provide guidance on standards of behaviour expected of staff, volunteers, exchange students and host families

1.2 Scope of this Policy

- The Policy applies to all YFU staff, volunteers, host families and exchange students. It covers all grievances of unlawful discrimination and harassment.

What is a Grievance?

- Grievance may involve unlawful discrimination if it contains allegations of unfair and inequitable treatment on the basis of a person's race, ethnic and ethno-religious origin or nationality; sex or sexual preference; marital status; status as carer; pregnancy or potential pregnancy; age, disability, religious or political affiliation. Vilification on the grounds of race, homosexuality, and HIV/Aids status is also unlawful. Unlawful harassment is unwelcome as are offensive or intimidating behaviour, comments or images based on any of these grounds. The most common forms of harassment are racial and sexual harassment.

1.3 Principles of this Policy

- Members of the YFU community should take care to respect the sensitivities of others especially where there may be differences in the interpretation of acceptable behaviour resulting from diverse ethnic backgrounds and cultural values. Different social or cultural backgrounds may lead people to perceive the same conduct differently. What one person may accept as reasonable behaviour another could find offensive, humiliating or intimidating
- Grievances should be treated seriously and sensitively, having due regard to procedural fairness, confidentiality and privacy

- Grievances should be handled as quickly and as close as possible to their source
- Wherever possible, grievances should be resolved by a process of discussion, co-operation and conciliation. The aim is to reach an acceptable outcome that minimizes any potential detriment to ongoing relationships
- Both the staff member, volunteer, host family member or exchange student raising the grievance (the complainant) and the person against whom the grievance is made (the respondent) will receive appropriate information, support and assistance in resolving the grievance. Parties may bring a support person to any interview.
- No person should be victimized because they raise a complaint or are associated with a grievance
- Staff students, host families or volunteers should not instigate grievances that are frivolous or malicious.
- Grievance resolution is recognized throughout YFU as an important procedure and an important part of the roles and responsibilities of Area Co-ordinators, the Chief Executive Officer and Board Members and as such is part of their role description

2. Grievance Procedures

2.1 Preliminary action

Before initiating the grievance procedures a complainant is encouraged to try to resolve the grievance directly with the person concerned.

Note: A student is not expected to approach a member of YFU with whom they have a grievance. In the first instance students should contact their YFU Area Representative or the National Office staff member who is the designated contact for emergencies

2.2 Step 1

Talk to Area Representative or designated National Office staff member

2.3 Step 2

Where the complainant has been unable to resolve the grievance him or herself he or she should take the matter up with an Area Representative. Where the grievance involves that person the complainant should refer the matter to the designated member of the YFU Board of Management

2.4 Step 3

The Area Representative or other designated member of YFU should address the grievance with a view to resolving it as quickly as possible, normally within two weeks of receiving the complaint.

This would usually involve:

- carefully listening to the person's concerns and the desired outcomes:
- explaining the grievance procedures and the range of options open to them

- attempting to resolve the matter or referring it to a designated member of the Board of Management
- fully informing the respondent of the allegations made against them and providing them with an opportunity to respond
- Ensuring that in any action taken there is procedural fairness for all parties involved

2.5 Step 4

Keep all those involved informed about the progress of the matter and monitor the situation during and after the resolution process

2.6 Step 5

At the end of their direct involvement with the matter, the YFU designated grievance officers should make appropriate file notes on the grievance resolution process and outcome which should be stored in a separate and confidential grievance files held in National Office.

2.7 Referral to the Chief Executive Officer of YFU

- If the complainant believes the grievance has not been resolved to their satisfaction they can refer the matter to the Chief Executive Officer. The CEO may require the complainant to put the grievance in writing. The CEO will normally try to resolve the matter within three weeks of receiving the grievance
- Any determination made by the CEO will be final except for the right for the complainant to pursue the matter outside YFU.

3. Outcomes

There can be a number of outcomes from following the above grievance procedure. Outcomes could include but are not limited to:

- The complainant (host family, student, volunteer, staff member) gaining a better understanding of the situation and no longer feeling aggrieved
- The complainant receiving a verbal or written apology: the respondent receiving a verbal or written reprimand
- One or both parties agreeing to participate in some form of counselling or mediation
- A student being given the opportunity to move from the host family
- A student moving schools after consultation with the school authorities concerning the grievance
- Disciplinary action where a YFU Policy or Code of Conduct were found to have been breached, and , or where misconduct / serious misconduct or unsatisfactory performance has occurred
- Disciplinary action may also be taken where
 - i) A grievance is found to have been malicious or vexatious
 - ii) A person victimizes another person because of their involvement in the grievance
 - iii) Unnecessary disclosure of information or a breach of confidentiality has occurred

4. Grievance Procedure Review

- The YFU Grievance Procedures will be monitored and a review carried out at the end of each calendar year.
- The Chairperson of the Board of Management of YFU will be responsible for initiating the review.