

Inform Podcast
Episode 15: Complaints Resolution and Referral Service Transcript

Kirby Fenwick

Hello and welcome to Inform, a podcast where you'll be hearing from people with disabilities, as well as industry experts, on a range of topics.

I'm your host, Kirby Fenwick.

In this episode of Inform, we'll be discussing the Complaints Resolution and Referral Service or CRRS.

Tammy Cesana the Client Support Manager of the Complaints Resolution and Referral Service will be joining us to explain just what the CRRS is and how it works. We'll also look at why you might need to or want to make a complaint, how you can get in touch with the CRRS and Tammy has some advice on how to ensure you're ready to make a complaint.

Tammy Cesana

So, the complaint resolution referral service, also known as CRRS is a free service for people with disability who are users of disability employment services, Australian disability enterprises and advocacy services. It exists for people with disability to discuss any problem they might have with any of these Australian government funded services.

Kirby Fenwick

But the CRRS is not just an avenue for people with disability to discuss issues they may have with these services, crucially, it's an avenue for them to make a complaint.

Tammy Cesana

So, the CRRS can assist service users with different types of complaints. But what we focus on is if the service has breached the national standards for Disability Services, so it can be if they're not getting a service or support that should, they should be provided with, if they're not being allowed to make a complaint, or if the service has ignored their complaint, if they have been unfairly exited from a service, if they feel that they've been abused, neglected or mistreated within a service, if they're not receiving the support they need to find, keep or do a new job whilst they're registered with a disability employment service. If they've got unsafe or poor employment conditions while working in an Australian disability enterprise.

Tammy Cesana

We also do provide information and referrals. So, if they're not sure if their problem is about the national standards for Disability Services, we can go through any concerns that they might have and then we can also refer them to another service that might be able to help them.

Tammy Cesana

So, sometimes a service user might come to us and say that they've tried to lodge a complaint internally with the service. But no one's responded to them. You know, there hasn't been a follow up, they don't know what's happened. And so, then we kind of will work as a mediator between both parties to try and figure out what's going on and try and resolve it.

Kirby Fenwick

The CRRS can act as a mediator, as Tammy explained, but they can also investigate complaints.

Tammy Cesana

So, we have different ways of resolving complaints. We'll either assist the complainant and the service to resolve the complaint together and we basically raise the complaint with the service and then request that they actually speak to the complainant and try and resolve it between them two and then provide us with a response and a resolution at the end.

Or we would undertake an investigation where we'd contact the service and find out what happened. And we'd kind of be the ones that talk to the service all throughout the whole process, and then just give the feedback to the complainant.

Like I did say, the service providers are required to meet the national standards for Disability Services. So that's how we determine if there has been a breach or not. And we do, within the process we can request copies of file notes, job plans, emails, or any evidence that can assist with our investigation. And then based on the outcome of the investigation, we might offer that service improvement suggestion. So, it not only benefits those involved with the complaint, but it also helps with the service delivery improvement generally.

Tammy Cesana

The CRRS takes an outcome focused approach to resolve complaints. One of the most important values of our service is to focus on the individual and their desired outcomes. We obviously reinforce the work of CRRS by remaining impartial. With any complaint that's made, the CRRS doesn't take sides, we don't advocate on anyone's behalf. Instead, we work with both parties to identify the appropriate resolution or outcome. We ensure that the individuals

who use the service are listened to and treated with respect and understanding

Kirby Fenwick

So just how does the process work. If you contact the CRRS to make a complaint about government funded Disability Employment Services, Australian disability enterprises, or Disability Advocacy Services what happens?

Tammy Cesana

So, people who have a disability who are users of the government funded Disability Employment Services, the Australian disability enterprises, or the Disability Advocacy Services can lodge a complaint directly with CRRS.

Also, their family members, their advocates, their guardians, carers or friends can also lodge a complaint on behalf of the service user. But we would need to obtain their consent to follow through and contact the service.

Tammy Cesana

They would obviously initially contact us through email or online or over the phone, and we would do an intake with them. So, we would gather as much information as possible, dates of incidents, their employment consultant or their advocates' details, as much information as possible. And we would obviously document all that, we don't record our phone calls, we just take notes to ensure the information we have is accurate. Once we have documented all of that we do send them out a consent form, which they need to sign and send back to us. And then that gives us permission to act on their behalf. Once we receive that back, we would then put all of that information together that they gave us in the initial intake. And we would confirm all the details with them, see if there's anything else that they need to add, see if there's any evidence they want to attach. And then we would go directly to the management of that service and ask them to have a look into it and provide us with a response. And that basically starts the process of the complaint.

Kirby Fenwick

Tammy says that the CRRS aims to have all complaints resolved within 20 days.

Tammy Cesana

So, we like to act quite fast. If somebody contacts us, we like to send out the consent form the same day that they've contacted us, depending on how quickly they return that consent form is how quickly we can contact the service provider.

So, if they return the consent form, within one or two days, we're already contacting the service provider within one or two days.

We try to resolve all complaints within 20 days. So, we do give the Disability Services, maybe five business days to kind of have a look into it, investigate it internally, and then provide us with the response. And then we try to resolve it between both parties within the 20 days.

Some matters obviously you know that are kind of a little bit harder, there's a lot of evidence, there's a lot of detail, they can take a lot longer, but we try to resolve all complaints within 20 days.

Kirby Fenwick

If you're thinking about making a complaint to the CRRS, Tammy says one of the key things to note is the more information you can provide, the better.

Tammy Cesana

The more information we have the better. If there's you know dates of incidents, employment consultants or advocate names, any information that can help us put the complaint together and take it to the service and really have them investigate it. That makes it a lot easier and makes the process a lot smoother.

Kirby Fenwick

Tammy suggests taking some time before you get in touch with CRRS to think about what your issue is, what your ideal solution would be and make some notes before you get in contact with CRRS so you're as prepared as you can be.

Tammy Cesana

When lodging a complaint with us, it's important that callers provide clear and accurate information so we can offer the most suitable advice and support. As the CRRS takes an outcome focused approach we do encourage callers to think beforehand about a practical outcome they'd like to achieve through the complaint process. So, this is quite beneficial not only for the individual, but also for the service, as it may result in us providing a service improvement suggestion. It's also very important that callers know that we don't record any phone calls, we just take notes to ensure the information is accurate, and that we are an impartial service, and we aren't part of the government. We're just funded by the Department of Social Services to help resolve the complaint between both parties.

Kirby Fenwick

So how can you get in touch with the CRRS?

Tammy Cesana

So, the complaints can be submitted in different ways, they can contact us directly on our toll-free number, which is 1-800-880-052.

They can also email us directly at CRRS@workfocus.com. And they can also go onto the job access website and lodge a complaint there.

Callers who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment, can contact the National Relay Service by calling 1800-555-677 and then asking for CRRS, which is 1-800-880-052.

And anyone that is from a non-English speaking background can contact us using the translating and interpreting service.

Kirby Fenwick

Thank you for listening to Inform, a production of Independence Australia. Inform is hosted and produced by me, Kirby Fenwick. Our managing editor is Alison Crowe.

This episode of Inform was recorded and produced on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulan nation. We pay our respects to elders past and present.

You'll find links to the resources mentioned in this episode, plus more, in the show notes at informonline.org.au

Our thanks to Tammy Cesana and JobAccess for being a part of this episode.

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