

Interpersonal Grievance Framework

Preamble:

From time to time, in every community, issues arise, misunderstandings occur, and sometimes offensive or hurtful behaviour happens between individuals. This is normal in human life and interactions. In anticipation, this document is designed to assist individuals find an appropriate pathway to see their issues and concerns addressed within a faith community context.

The core Christian values that support this process are truth-telling (Eph 4:15,25), justice-seeking (Micah 6:8), grace-giving (Col 3:13) and peace-making (Matt 5:9, Eph 4:2-3). The general approach is outlined in Matt 7: 1-5, Matt 5:23-24, and Matt 18:15-20 where Jesus indicates not only the steps but also that God's presence is promised in the process of resolution and also that God places heavenly significance on the earthly outcome reached. While the Matthew approach is focused on the local church setting it has principles that apply to the Reach Australia context.

Once begun this process should be followed with care and a concern to deal with the situation quickly so that it does not become complex and a commitment to the values above.

Step One - Personal Reflection

Take some time before God to pray and reflect on the offence or injury you have received. In some situations, it is appropriate to overlook the offence. In other situations important principles may be at stake, and the situation needs to be taken further toward resolution.

If you are unsure about the right response and feel the need to seek wise counsel for yourself before taking the situation further, it is appropriate to do so only at a one-to-one level. Seek a godly counsellor, pastor, leader or mentor to share with. The focus of this is to gain clarity on the right path to take and to be accountable in the situation to act with integrity, wisdom and towards making peace.

Note: This personal consultation must be distinguished from gossip or sharing the incident with others in order to gain sympathy and support. These are both inappropriate. If you are called upon to provide this role, ensure the person is willing to go to the other and offer to support them in this. Do not be party to spreading dissension and gossip.

Step Two - Informal One to One Discussion

A key step in resolution is to go to the other person informally and in private and share your concern. Seek to understand the perspective and viewpoint of the other. Be willing to receive an apology or respond to a process of restoration if it is offered. If the matter is resolved, no further action is needed.

If you are on the receiving end of a discussion of this nature, be quick to listen, make sure you understand what the person is sharing. Guard yourself from simply reacting. If you need time to reflect, ask for it.

If you can see what you have done and can accept responsibility for it, apologise and seek forgiveness.

Step Three - Informal Discussion with a Witness Present

If step two fails to reach a resolution, ask the other party if they will agree to have a third-party person, acceptable to both of you, present in the next conversation. Here the person is invited to be involved as an objective listener, not an active participant. At this level it is appropriate that some record be kept of what occurs. If resolved, no further action is required. The meeting should be pre-arranged and both parties agree to the third-party person witnessing the conversation.

Step Four - Discussion between the parties and the Executive Director

If step three fails to reach a resolution, then ask the Executive Director to convene a meeting between the parties to try to resolve the issues satisfactorily. If the Executive Director is a party to the grievance, then the Board Chair should be asked to convene a meeting between the parties to try to resolve the issues satisfactorily.

Step Five - Formal Mediation

If step four fails to reach a resolution and all the parties agree, the Executive Director or Board Chair (where the Executive Director is a party), could appoint a trained mediator. The mediator will meet with both parties and then facilitate a discussion together. Opportunities for interpersonal reconciliation are usually given. Points of agreement and disagreement are usually documented along with the outcome. Usually, a solution which is acceptable to both is negotiated. If agreement is reached, no further action is required. A confidential report is given to the Executive Director or the Board Chair (where the Executive Director is a party) as well as to the individuals. Keeping the agreement is a matter of trust on both sides. At this level both parties may bring support people (who are present but not involved).

Step Six - Consider making a Formal Complaint

If the matter has still not been resolved, then you can consider making a formal complaint according to the Reach Australia Complaints Policy.

Approvals

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