

TITLE: Open Door Policy and
Complaint Resolution Procedure

Policy Number: AM-HR-028

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

It is the policy of Neighbor To Family, Inc. (NTF) that employees should have an opportunity to present their work-related complaints and to appeal management decisions through a complaint resolution procedure.

PROCEDURE:

An appropriate complaint is defined as an employee's expressed dissatisfaction concerning any interpretation or application of a work-related policy by management, supervisors, or other employees. Matters that may be considered appropriate dispute under this policy include:

1. A belief that NTF policies, practices, rules, regulations, or procedures have been applied inconsistently;
2. Treatment considered unfair by an associate, such as discipline, coercion, reprisal, harassment (including sexual harassment), or intimidation;
3. Alleged discrimination because of race, color, gender, age, religion, and national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, or disability; and
4. Improper or unfair administration of employee benefits or conditions of employment, such as scheduling, vacations, fringe benefits, promotions, retirement, holidays, performance reviews, salary, or seniority.

Employees should notify NTF management in a timely fashion of any complaint considered appropriate for handling under this policy. The complaint resolution procedure is the exclusive remedy for employees with appropriate complaints. As used in this policy, the terms "timely fashion", "reasonable time", and "promptly" generally will mean five (5) working days.

The complaint resolution procedure has a maximum of four (4) steps, but complaints can be resolved at any step in the process. Complaints will be processed until the employee is satisfied, does not file a timely appeal, or exhausts the right of appeal under this policy. A decision becomes binding on all parties whenever an employee does not file a timely appeal or when

a decision is made in the final step and the right of appeal no longer exists.

Usually, the employee can get the answers to these questions through informal discussions with his/her supervisor who is available to assist and to ensure employees are treated fairly. If the supervisor is unable to provide a satisfactory answer, he or she will assist the employee in getting the correct information.

Step One – Promptly bring the complaint to the attention of the immediate supervisor. If the complaint involves the supervisor, then the employee may proceed directly to Step Two. If it is not a routine matter that he or she can handle promptly, he or she may ask the employee to put the complaint in writing so an answer may be provided later. The supervisor should investigate the complaint, attempt to resolve it, and give a decision to the employee within a reasonable time. The supervisor should prepare a written and dated summary of the dispute and proposed resolution for the employee's personnel file.

Step Two – Appeal the decision to the Executive Director if dissatisfied with the supervisor's decision, or initiate the procedure with the Executive Director if Step One has been bypassed. This appeal or initial complaint notification must be made in a timely fashion using a written format. A personal meeting can be arranged if the employee wishes. After the Executive Director has reviewed all the facts, he or she will provide the employee with a response. The supervisor's version of the complaint and decision will be submitted to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will, in a timely fashion, confer with the employee, the supervisor, and any other member of the management considered appropriate; investigate the issues; and communicate a decision in writing to all parties involved.

Step Three – Appeal an unsatisfactory Executive Director decision to the Vice President of Programs. The timeliness requirements and procedures to be followed are similar to those in Step Two. The VP of Programs will take the necessary steps to review and investigate the complaint and communicate a decision in writing to all parties involved.

Step Four - Appeal an unsatisfactory VP of Programs decision to the VP of Human Resources. The VP of Human Resources will take the necessary steps to review and investigate the dispute and will then issue a written, final, and binding decision.

Human Resources will provide training and support to supervisors and management in dealing with employee complaints. In addition, employees should be encouraged to consult with Human Resources, their supervisors, or other members of management on a less formal basis regarding employee complaints or disputes.

Final decisions on complaints will not be precedent-setting or binding on future disputes unless they are officially stated as NTF policy. When appropriate, the decisions will be retroactive to the date of the employee's original dispute notification.

Information concerning an employee dispute should be confidential. Supervisors, Executive Directors and other members of management who investigate a complaint may discuss it only with those individuals who have a need to know about it or who are needed to supply necessary background information or advice. Implementation of the dispute resolution procedure by an employee does not limit the right of NTF to proceed with any disciplinary action.

Time spent by employee in dispute discussion with management during normal working hours will be considered hours worked for pay purposes.

Employees will not be penalized for proper use of the complaint resolution procedure. However, it is not considered proper use if an employee raises complaints in bad faith or solely for the purpose of delay or harassment or repeatedly raises merit less complaints. In addition, employees and supervisors are prohibited from retaliating against an employee who properly uses the complaint resolution procedure.

NTF may, at its discretion, refuse to proceed with any dispute it determines is improper under this policy. Further, this policy does not alter the employment-at-will relationship in any way.