



External complaints procedure for the Netherlands Red Cross



The Netherlands
Red Cross

Complaints procedure for persons requesting help,
donors and other third parties

Foreword

Working at the Red Cross involves working with people and so sometimes things don't go as one would expect. We would then first like to talk to you to see if we can find a solution. If that fails and a formal complaint is lodged, then our aim is to handle it carefully and satisfactorily, while bearing the human aspects in mind. That is in the best interests of the person who has a complaint as well as the Red Cross. The Red Cross can then learn from feedback and complaints, and by doing so improve the organisation.

This document sets out how the Red Cross handles complaints filed by persons requesting help, donors and clients. The aim of this procedure is to offer easy-to-access and effective support and to settle complaints. The Red Cross's aim in this is to arrive at a satisfactory solution for all those concerned.

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1 General provisions

1.1 Key definitions

The key definitions in this complaints procedure are set out below. There is a detailed list of definitions in **Appendix 1** (*Definitions*).

1.1.1 Contact Centre

The Contact Centre is the first point of contact for Complaints lodged with the Red Cross. The Contact Centre registers the Complaints filed and looks for possible solutions for them. If necessary, the Contact Centre refers the case to the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator.

1.1.2 Integrity and Complaints Coordinator

The Red Cross Integrity and Complaints Coordinator is responsible for the impartial and independent receipt, mediation and settlement of Complaints. The Red Cross does not interfere in the way the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator performs its role in specific cases.

1.1.3 Disputes Committee

The Disputes Committee is an independent committee that the Complainant can turn to if he/she does not agree with the way in which a Care Complaint has been handled. Only care-related complaints (Care Complaints) can be brought before the Disputes Committee.

1.1.4 Complaint

Any expression of dissatisfaction about the acts or omissions of someone affiliated with the Netherlands Red Cross constitutes a Complaint. Reports of undesirable behaviour, breaches of integrity or wrongdoing are expressly not considered to be Complaints; see also Section 1.2.2.

1.1.5 Complainant

A Complainant is a person requesting help, a donor or other third party who files a Complaint. This also includes next of kin or representatives of the person requesting help, donor or other third party. A person who believes that he/she is unjustly considered not to be a representative is entitled to file a Complaint.

1.1.6 Employee

To provide assistance, the Red Cross works with Professional Staff Members and Volunteers. Wherever 'Employee' is mentioned, this may refer to a Professional Staff Member or a Volunteer.

1.1.7 Care Complaint

Care Complaints are a special category of Complaints. Care Complaints concern acts or omissions against a person requesting help in the context of receiving care. If a Complainant does not agree with the handling of a Care Complaint, then he/she is entitled to submit the Care Complaint to the Disputes Committee. Other Complaints cannot be submitted to the Disputes Committee. Wherever Complaints are mentioned in this complaints procedure, this also includes Care Complaints, unless expressly stated otherwise.

1.2 Scope of application of the complaints procedure

1.2.1 Who can file a Complaint

This complaints procedure is intended for external Complaints. These Complaints concern persons requesting help, donors and other third parties. This complaints procedure does not apply to complaints from Professional Staff Members and Volunteers.

1.2.2 Reports concerning undesirable behaviour, breaches of integrity and wrongdoing

This complaints procedure does not apply to reports concerning undesirable behaviour, breaches of integrity and wrongdoing. For this, the Reporting Procedure for Integrity Issues and Undesirable Behaviour must be followed. Persons requesting help, donors and other third parties can also use this reporting procedure to report undesirable behaviour or breaches of integrity or wrongdoing.

2 Complaints procedure

2.1 Manner in which Complaints are handled

There are various ways in which Complainants can bring a Complaint up for discussion:

- a. by discussing it directly with the Employee (or his/her manager) who is responsible for the act or omission about which the Complainant is dissatisfied;
- b. handling through the Contact Centre; or
- c. handling by the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator.

2.2 Discussing the Complaint with the Employee in question or his/her manager

The Red Cross believes it is important to have an open and accessible approach to finding solutions for Complaints. Experience shows that discussing the Complaint often presents solutions. If someone has a Complaint, we therefore encourage them to discuss it directly with the Employee concerned or his/her manager if at all possible. If the Complainant and the Employee or his/her manager cannot arrive at a solution together, the Employee or his/her manager will tell the Complainant how to submit a formal Complaint to the Contact Centre or the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator.

2.3 Handling by the Contact Centre

2.3.1 Submitting a Complaint to the Contact Centre

The Contact Centre offers low-threshold, initial support for Complaints. Submitting a Complaint to the Contact Centre via the digital complaint form on the Red Cross website is easy to do. You can also contact the Red Cross by telephone via the telephone number listed on the website. The Contact Centre may:

- a. handle the Complaint itself;
- b. refer the Complaint to an Employee or Red Cross branch for further handling; or
- c. refer the Complaint to the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator.

The Contact Centre will inform the Complainant about how the Complaint will be handled and will do so within five working days of receiving the Complaint. If necessary, the Contact Centre will contact the Complainant for more information.

2.3.2 The Contact Centre handles the Complaint itself

The Contact Centre may handle simple Complaints itself. The Contact Centre will inform the Complainant about how the Complaint will be handled. The Contact Centre also reports the Complaint, and the way it is being handled, to the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator.

2.3.3 Referral to an Employee or Red Cross branch for further handling

The Contact Centre may refer Complaints to an Employee or Red Cross branch for further handling. This will usually be the Employee or branch responsible for the assistance or activity that is the subject of the Complaint. The manager or HR adviser may assist the Employee in this.

If it is possible to resolve the Complaint to everyone's satisfaction, the Employee or branch informs the Contact Centre of the way in which the Complaint has been handled. The Contact Centre reports the Complaint, and the way it is being handled, to the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator.

If it is not possible for the Employee or branch to resolve the Complaint to the Complainant's satisfaction, the Complaint will be referred back to the Contact Centre. The Employee or branch will also state the details of the Complaint, the proposed course of action and the Complainant's objections.

2.3.4 Referral to the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator

The Contact Centre will refer the case to the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator if:

- a. the Complaint is complicated;
- b. the settling of the Complaint by Contact Centre (Section 2.3.2) or Employee or branch (Section 2.3.3) is not to the Complainant's satisfaction. In that case, the Contact Centre will state the details of the Complaint, the proposed course of action and the Complainant's objections; or
- c. the Complainant requests this him- or herself.

The Contact Centre then informs the Complainant in writing that the Complaint has been referred to the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator for handling.

2.4 Integrity and Complaints Coordinator's handling and advice

2.4.1 Integrity and Complaints Coordinator's work procedures

When performing its duties, the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator aims to arrive at the most satisfactory solution for the Complainant and the Red Cross. The Integrity and Complaints Coordinator informs the Complainant about the options offered by the complaints procedure, for example through mediation. If the Complainant so wishes, the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator can give additional written information to the Complainant.

2.4.2 Integrity and Complaints Coordinator's advice

The Integrity and Complaints Coordinator provides free advice to the Complainant on how to file a Complaint on request, and can assist the Complainant in formulating the Complaint.

2.4.3 Mediation by the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator

When performing its duties, the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator focuses on restoring the Complainant's confidence in the Red Cross and its Employees. An important way to restore this confidence is to hold a mediation meeting. The Integrity and Complaints Coordinator or a third party engaged by the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator may supervise this mediation interview.

In preparation for mediation, the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator will have a preliminary discussion with the Complainant and the Employee or branch involved. The Integrity and Complaints Coordinator records the specific agreements reached during the mediation meeting in writing and shares this report with the Complainant and Employee or branch involved. The manager or HR adviser may assist the Employee in this.

2.4.4 Handling of Complaints

The Integrity and Complaints Coordinator informs the Complainant in writing about the settlement of the Complaint. If applicable, the notice will state what improvement measures the Red Cross has decided to take and within what timeframe these measures will be implemented. The Integrity and Complaints Coordinator also records this information in the complaints register.

2.4.5 Complaints handling term

In principle, the Red Cross endeavours to settle Complaints within six weeks of receipt. The term starts once the Contact Centre has received the Complaint. If careful handling so requires, the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator may extend this period by four weeks. The Integrity and Complaints Coordinator will inform the Complainant in writing about this extension.

The Integrity and Complaints Coordinator and the Complainant may agree on another time period if this is necessary for the careful handling of the Complaint.

2.4.6 Options for appeal

In principle, there is no option to appeal the opinion given pursuant to 2.4.4. The exception to this is if the opinion concerns a Care Complaint. If the Complainant is not satisfied with the way in which a Care Complaint has been handled, this constitutes a dispute. The Complainant is entitled to submit the dispute regarding the Care Complaint to the Disputes Committee.

2.5 Dispute resolution for Care Complaints

2.5.1 The Disputes Committee

If a Complainant does not agree with the handling of a Care Complaint, then he/she is entitled to submit the Care Complaint to the Disputes Committee. The Red Cross is affiliated with the Medical Disputes Committee in the Netherlands. Contact details are available on the Disputes Committee's website: www.degeschillencommissiezorg.nl.

2.5.2 Filing Complaints with the Disputes Committee

Complainants can submit their Care Complaints using the form on the Disputes Committee's website.

2.5.3 Disputes Committee procedure

The Disputes Committee has its own procedure and regulations for handling disputes. More information is available on the Disputes Committee's website.

2.5.4 Support from the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator

The Integrity and Complaints Coordinator informs the Complainant about the options for submitting the Care Complaint to the Disputes Committee. If so requested, the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator can advise the Complainant about submitting the Care Complaint and how the Disputes Committee works. The Integrity and Complaints Coordinator can also help with formulating and submitting the Complaint.

2.5.5 Binding opinion

The Disputes Committee is authorised to give a binding opinion. This means that the parties have to abide by the opinion and that it is not possible to lodge an appeal against it.

3 Other provisions

3.1 Inadmissibility of Complaints

'Inadmissibility' means that the Complaint is not eligible for handling. A Complaint is inadmissible if:

- a. the Complaint can no longer be properly investigated because a certain period of time has lapsed or due to other circumstances; or
- b. the Complaint has already been handled and there are no new facts.

3.2 Stopping the handling of a Complaint

The handling of a Complaint is stopped if:

- a. the Complainant withdraws the Complaint;
- b. there is an urgent reason, for instance if a Complainant behaves aggressively or otherwise seriously misbehaves to the extent that the Red Cross cannot reasonably be expected to continue handling the Complaint.

3.3 Requests for compensation

If the Complaint also includes a request for compensation, the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator transfers all or part of the Complaint to the Red Cross Legal Affairs Department. The Legal Affairs Department will send an acknowledgement of receipt to the Complainant within five working days of receiving the notice of liability. The notice of liability will state the Complainant's contact details. The time limits for complaint handling mentioned in Section 2.4.5 also apply when the complaint is handled by Legal Affairs.

3.4 Handling of Care Complaints that concern several healthcare providers

If a Care Complaint concerns several healthcare providers, it may be handled jointly if the following conditions are met:

- a. the Care Complaint relates to care provided together with care, support or assistance provided by another healthcare provider;
- b. the Complainant states that he has also submitted the Care Complaint to the other healthcare provider(s); and
- c. the Complainant gives permission for this.

If the Complainant wants the Care Complaint to be handled jointly, the Red Cross Integrity and Complaints Coordinator will contact the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator of the other healthcare provider(s). Agreements are reached in joint consultation to arrive at a settlement of the Care Complaint that is acceptable to all those concerned.

3.5 Transfer of the Care Complaint

If the Care Complaint concerns the actions or omissions of another healthcare provider, the Red Cross Integrity and Complaints Coordinator will hand it over to that healthcare provider's Integrity and Complaints Coordinator. The Integrity and Complaints Coordinator will only do so if it has the Complainant's permission.

3.6 Confidentiality

Anyone who is involved in the handling of Complaints and in the process becomes aware of the confidential nature of the information, or ought reasonably assume that it is confidential, has a duty to maintain the confidentiality of the information. This does not apply if a statutory provision obliges him/her to disclose the information or if the necessity to disclose the information arises from the duty to implement this complaints procedure.

3.7 Archiving and retention period for complaints dossiers

The Red Cross retains all information related to a Complaint in a digital complaints dossier. The complaints dossier is kept for one year at most after the Complaint has been dealt with.

3.8 Reporting, evaluation and registration

3.8.1 Registration

The Integrity and Complaints Coordinator registers all Complaints reported to the Contact Centre or the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator in the Red Cross Complaints Register. Complaints that are resolved informally in accordance with Section 2.2 are not registered. The complaints register complies with laws and regulations in this respect, for instance the General Data Protection Regulation.

3.8.2 Reporting

Each year, the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator compiles a report on Complaints filed for the Managing Directors, the Governing Board and the Works Council. In addition to this, the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator reports on the implementation of the complaints procedure. This in any event includes the following:

- a. information about the number of Complaints and the number of those that resulted in a procedure being brought before the Disputes Committee;
- b. an indication of the nature/category of the Complaints; and
- c. general information on the experiences with reducing Complaints.

3.8.3 Evaluation

The Governing Board evaluates this complaints procedure within one year of coming into effect and subsequently as often as the Governing Board deems it necessary. For every evaluation, the Governing Board involves at least the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator and Legal Affairs.

3.9 Adoption and amendments to the procedure

This complaints procedure comes into effect on 1 July 2022. The Governing Board of the Red Cross adopts the complaints procedure and it may amend the procedure.

4 Appendix 1 – Definitions

Term	Description
Professional Staff Member	Members of staff who have an employment contract with the Red Cross, including interns and external contracted staff.
Contact Centre	The Contact Centre is the first point of contact for Complaints lodged with the Red Cross. The Contact Centre registers the Complaints filed and looks for possible solutions for them.
Integrity and Complaints Coordinator	The Red Cross Integrity and Complaints Coordinator is responsible for the impartial and independent receipt, mediation and settlement of complaints. The Red Cross does not interfere in the way the Integrity and Complaints Coordinator performs its role in specific cases.
Disputes Committee	The Disputes Committee is an independent committee that the Complainant can turn to if he/she does not agree with the way in which a Care Complaint has been handled. Only care-related complaints (Care Complaints) can be brought before the Disputes Committee.
Breaches of integrity	Has the meaning ascribed to it in the Reporting Procedure for Integrity Issues and Undesirable Behaviour.
Complaint	Any expression of dissatisfaction about the acts or omissions of someone affiliated with the Netherlands Red Cross constitutes a Complaint. Reports of undesirable behaviour, breaches of integrity or wrongdoing are expressly not considered to be Complaints; see also Section 1.2.2.
Complainant	A Complainant is a person requesting help, a donor or other third party who files a Complaint. This also includes next of kin or representatives of the person requesting help, donor or other third party. A person who believes that he/she is unjustly considered not to be a representative is entitled to file a Complaint.
Employee Reporting Procedure for Unethical Conduct and Undesirable Behaviour	A Professional Staff Member or Volunteer. The Reporting Procedure for Unethical Conduct and Undesirable Behaviour Netherlands Red Cross as adopted by the Red Cross on 29 April 2022.
Wrongdoing	Has the meaning ascribed to it in the Reporting Procedure for Integrity Issues and Undesirable Behaviour.
Undesirable behaviour	Has the meaning ascribed to it in the Reporting Procedure for Integrity Issues and Undesirable Behaviour.
The Red Cross	The Netherlands Red Cross Society with full legal capacity, with its registered office in The Hague.
Governing Board	The board of the Red Cross, comprising one or two executive director(s) ('Executive Director(s)') and non-executive directors ('Non-Executive Directors').
Volunteers	People who work for the Red Cross on a voluntary basis and without having an employment contract.
Care Complaint	Care Complaints are a special category of Complaints. Care Complaints concern acts or omissions against a person requesting help in the context of receiving care.

Wherever Complaints are mentioned in this complaints procedure, this also includes Care Complaints, unless expressly stated otherwise.

