

SSSS Inc. Client Complaint & Whistleblower Policy

Approved October 2025

Introduction – Your Right to Speak up

Serbian Social Services and Support Inc. (SSSS Inc.) is committed to high standards of honesty, integrity and accountability. In line with our Values and Code of Conduct, we promote and support a culture of respect and ethical behaviour, corporate compliance and good governance.

When engaging with the SSSS Inc., your voice matters. We recognise complaints and whistleblowing as essential to maintaining high standards of care and ensuring that services remain person-centered, safe, and responsive.

Difference Between Complaint and Whistleblowing

Complaint: When you are unhappy with your care, services, or experience.

Whistleblowing: When you report serious wrongdoing such as abuse, fraud, or risks to other's safety.

Purpose of Policy

Purpose of this policy is to make sure older people, people who are close to them, and aged care workers can report information without fear that they will be punished or treated unfairly.

The policy aims to provide clear and safe pathways for clients to raise complaints and whistleblowing reports (while protecting their rights to speak up without disadvantage).

Who does Whistleblower policy applies to

Eligible Whistleblowers under this policy are current and former:

- Older person (clients)
- Board Directors
- Employees and volunteers of SSSS Inc.
- Individuals, organisations and their employees, who supply services (whether paid or unpaid) to SSSS Inc. This includes current and former contractors, and consultants, service providers and business partners
- Individuals who are associates of SSSS Inc.

Matter of the Whistleblower policy applies to

SSSS Inc. encourages anyone who suspects illegal, unethical, corrupt, fraudulent or undesirable conduct by a SSSS Inc. Board Director, employee, volunteer, or anyone who has business dealings with SSSS Inc., to report those concerns.

The report can be made about someone who has not followed the aged care law, or more broadly, about an organisation that hasn't followed the aged care law.

How to make complaint/report

You can make a complaint at any time. You can stay anonymous if you wish. Making a complaint will not affect your services. You can have an advocate or translator assist you. You can go directly to external authorities if you choose.

For complaints you can make a report to:

- Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (ACQSC) 1800 951 822
- Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) 1800 700 600
- My Aged Care 1800 200 422

You can make a complaint by speaking with us or putting it in writing. Your complaint can relate to someone who has not followed the Aged Care Act 2024, the Aged Care Code of Conduct, the Statement of Rights, the Statement of Principles or it may involve our organisation or one of our Associated Providers who hasn't met their obligations under Aged Care Laws.

You can safely make a complaint by calling us on 03 9356 4555, completing our SSSS Inc. Feedback Form or via email to serbian_sss@iprimus.com.au. Please note, if you do not feel safe with the service that is being delivered and or if you are in immediate danger as a result of the service that is being delivered, it is important that you notify head office immediately.

When making a complaint, please include as much detail as possible to help us investigate your concern.

Where you can, try to provide:

- The names of the person or people involved.
- The dates, times, and locations where the issue happened.
- Any evidence you are aware of (if available).
- A description of what occurred.

You do not need to have proof or supporting documents to make a complaint. We encourage you to report your complaint even if you are unsure or don't have full evidence. SSSS Inc. will still investigate based on the information you provide.

Complaints Levels & Examples

Complaint Level	Definition
Low (minor/service issue)	Dissatisfaction with service quality that does not pose risk to safety, rights, or wellbeing.
Medium (significant/care concerns)	Impacts client experience, dignity, or rights, many cause emotional distress; potential breach of Standards but no immediate danger
High (serious/reportable concern)	Serious risk to client safety, health, dignity, or financial security. May breach legislation or duty of care.
Critical (mandatory report/whistle-blower disclosure)	Allegations of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or systemic misconduct; breach of law or regulatory obligations.

For Whistleblowers you can make a report to:

- the Commission <https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/contact-us/complaints-concerns/what-do-if-you-have-complain>
- the department, or an official of the department <https://www.health.gov.au/about-us/contact-us/complaints>
- a registered provider
- a responsible person of a registered provider
- an aged care worker of a registered provider
- an independent aged care advocate.
- Australian Federal Police (AFP) 131 444
- ASIC Australian Securities and Investments Commission 1300 300 630
- APRA Australian Prudential Regulation Authority 1300 558 849
- AHPRA Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency 1300 419 495

People can make the report in person, over the phone or in writing. The report can also be made anonymously. The quickest way to resolve any concerns is to raise them directly with SSSS Inc.

If you make a whistleblower report, you must have reasonable grounds to believe the information you are providing is true and relates to serious wrongdoing at SSSS Inc. (this is also known as a Disclosable Matter).

Your report can relate to someone who has not followed the Aged Care Act 2024, the Aged Care Code of Conduct, the Statement of Rights, the Statement of Principles, or it may involve our organisation or one of our Associated Providers who hasn't met their obligations under Aged Care Laws.

When making a report, please include as much detail as possible to help the Whistleblower Protection Office investigate your concern.

Where you can, try to provide:

- The names of the person or people involved.
- The dates, times, and locations where the issue happened.
- Any evidence you are aware of (if available).
- A description of what occurred.

You do not need to have proof or supporting documents to make a report. We encourage you to report your concerns which we will still investigate based on the information you provide. SSSS Inc. will document what you have provided and commence an investigation. If you would like more information before making a whistleblowing report, you are encouraged to contact Aleksandra Jovic via phone on 0498 010 588 or on ssss.dandenong@gmail.com for confidential support and guidance.

If you prefer not to make your whistleblower report to SSSS Inc., you can contact external authorities (as listed under 'For Whistleblowers you can make a report to').

Whistleblowing Levels & Examples

Complaint Level	Definition
Level 1 - Internal Misconduct	Wrongdoing or breaches within SSSS Inc. that are not immediately life-threatening but breach law, policy, or ethical standards.
Level 2 - Serious Misconduct / Systemic Risk	Wrongdoing that poses significant risk to client’s safety, finances, or organisational integrity. May involve system failure.
Level 3 - Reportable Offence	Allegations of unlawful conduct, criminal behaviour, or matters that fall under mandatory external reporting.
Level 4 - Crucial Public Interest Disclosure	Matters of broad public importance or urgent risk where disclosure outside SSSS Inc. is justified.

Translators and interpreters are available via **TIS National 131 450**.
 All information is kept private and only shared on a need-to-know basis.
 In line with the Aged Care Act 2024, you are protected from reprisal, victimisation, or disadvantages.

Handling and investigating a disclosure

How Complaint Investigations are carried out

- Where possible, your complaint will first be handled by the Manager or Assistant Manager at SSSS Inc.
- If they resolve your concern and you are happy with the outcome; you can choose to withdraw your complaint.
 - If you are not satisfied, or you would like your concern to remain a formal complaint, it will be passed to the Board of Members.
 - If the Board of Members cannot resolve your complaint, you will be supported to escalate your concern to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (ACQSC).

How Whistleblower Investigations/reports are carried out

- If you make a whistleblower report, it will be reviewed promptly by the SSSS Inc. Whistleblower Protection Officer (WPO) Aleksandra Jovic.
- SSSS Inc. will assess the disclosure to determine whether it qualifies for protection and a formal investigation is required under the Aged Care Act 2024 or Corporations Act 2001.
- If SSSS Inc. determines that an investigation is required, it will initiate an investigation following the rules of natural justice and fair procedure.
- In some cases, SSSS Inc. Board of Members may be informed of the disclosure.
- SSSS Inc. will update the Discloser on the progress of the investigation and provide the Discloser with a report at the conclusion of the investigation. The objective of the investigation is to determine whether there is enough evidence to substantiate or refute the matters reported.
- If an investigation is required, the Whistleblower Protection Officer will: Conduct the investigation themselves, or appoint an independent and qualified investigator, or refer the matter directly to an external authority, such as: ACQSC Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, ASIC Australian Securities and Investments Commission, APRA Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, AFP Australian Federal Police.

Legal protection for disclosures-Protecting Your Privacy

- Your identity will not be shared with the investigator without your consent.
- You will be protected from any negative results that come from making the report.
- You will have your identity or identifying information protected, with some exceptions – for example, where it is necessary to share information with the ACQSC or a lawyer, or to prevent a serious threat to a person or people.
- You may be asked to allow the investigator to contact you if they need more information.
- If you choose to remain anonymous, SSSS Inc. will respect your decision. However, it may limit the investigation, as we may not be able to follow up with you for further details.

Timeframes and Updates

Depending on your complaint or whistleblowing report, an investigation may take **48 hours up to 15 business days**. Please note, in some cases the investigation can take longer. When a whistleblower report is referred to, or taken up by, an external authority (for example ASIC, APRA, AFP, AHPRA, or the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission), the time taken to investigate will be determined by that authority. SSSS Inc. will keep you updated on the progress of your complaint wherever possible.

Reporting the Findings

The findings from both the complaints or whistleblower report investigation will be documented and reported to those responsible for managing and overseeing the team/department/individual and or policy. Depending on the nature of the report, you may receive a summary of the investigation results once it is complete.

Keeping the Complainant and/or Whistleblower informed and protected during the Investigation

- If you make a complaint or whistleblowing report, and choose to provide your name, SSSS Inc. will keep you updated on the progress of your case wherever possible.
- How much information we can share with you will depend on the type of report and the circumstances of the investigation.
- If appropriate, SSSS Inc. will also check in on your wellbeing and explain how we will communicate with you during the investigation.
- We will let you know the expected timeframes for completing the investigation and provide updates along the way whenever possible.
- At the conclusion of the investigation, the Complainant or Whistleblower may be informed of the outcome. The extent of the details provided to the Complainant or Whistleblower as to the outcome of the investigation will vary on a case-by-case basis at SSSS's discretion.

All records related to complaint or whistleblowing reports, and investigations will be securely stored.

Ensuring Fair Treatment of Individuals mentioned in a disclosure

SSSS Inc. wishes to foster a culture of transparency that encourages reporting of misconduct and improper circumstances the subject of the Complaints & Whistleblower Regime whilst balancing the interests and rights of individuals who are the subject of the disclosure.

All investigations will be handled confidentially and in accordance with the rules of natural justice and procedural fairness.

Corrective Actions

If the complaint or whistleblower report investigation finds that misconduct or wrongdoing has occurred, the report may recommend:

- Steps to prevent the issue from happening again, and
- Actions to remedy the misconduct.

Ensuring the Policy is easily accessible

SSSS Inc. will communicate this policy to all clients, members of the Board, employees, volunteers, and put it on SSSS Inc.' website and for the clients as part of their Welcome Pack.

AUTHORISATION

Approved by: Board of Members

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Prepared by: Manager and Assistant Manager

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