

External Complaints Policy

Category: General Operations

Application: All parents/guardians, campers' families, and members of the public

Responsible Office: Director of Camp Development | Customer Service Department

This policy governs how STEM Camp receives, documents, escalates, and resolves **external complaints**—that is, concerns raised by parents/guardians or members of the public about our programs, services, staff, volunteers, communications, or decisions.

Internal employee complaints are handled under separate Human Resources policies.

Guiding Principles

We are committed to providing a respectful, transparent, and professional process for handling external complaints. Our approach is based on the following principles:

- Prompt, fair, and respectful handling of all concerns.
- Clear communication about processes, steps, and timelines.
- Access to escalation, including a formal written process.
- Thorough review of all escalated concerns before replying.
- Written documentation to support accuracy and accountability.
- Continuous improvement based on complaint trends.

Definition of an External Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction related to:

- Program quality or camper experience
- Safety, supervision, or behaviour management
- Staff or volunteer conduct
- Customer service interactions
- Policies, decisions, or actions taken by the organization
- Failure to follow published procedures
- Misunderstandings or errors affecting a camper or family

Anyone directly affected may file an external complaint.

Stage 1: On-Site Resolution

Parents/guardians are encouraged to raise concerns directly with the on-site Camp

Coordinator, who is responsible for:

1. Listening respectfully and gathering facts.
2. Documenting the details of the concern.
3. Providing clarity on policies and next steps.
4. Attempting to resolve the issue promptly.

If the concern cannot be resolved at the camp location, the Coordinator will refer the parent to Head Office Customer Service.

Stage 2: Customer Service Review

The customer service department receives complaints by phone or email.

Customer Service will:

- Respond within 2 business days.
- Seek to understand and resolve the concern.
- Communicate clearly with the parent/guardian.
- Document all actions taken.
- Escalate to management if the family is not satisfied or if the issue requires higher review.

If the parent/guardian remains dissatisfied after speaking with Customer Service, the matter moves to the formal Stage 3 escalation.

Stage 3: Formal Complaint Escalation (Online Form Required)

If the concern is not resolved at Stages 1–2:

- The parent/guardian will be emailed a link to the online complaint escalation form, as stated in the 2026 STEM Camp Guide.
- The form must be completed in writing.
- Escalated complaints cannot be handled by phone due to legal, documentation, and accuracy requirements.

Management Review & Response

- Once submitted, management (Director of Camp Development) reviews all information.
- A written response is provided within 24–48 hours, in alignment with the Guide.
- This timeframe allows for calm reflection and full investigation with on-site staff before issuing a final response.

All communication during this stage is conducted in writing only for many reasons, including paper trails for the legal department.

This stage represents the final level of review.

Timelines Summary

- Customer Service acknowledgment: Within 2 business days
- Customer Service resolution goal: Within 10 business days
- Management response to formal escalation: Within 24–48 hours
- Overall resolution target: Within 30 business days

Documentation Requirements

All external complaints—verbal or written—must be recorded in the Complaints Tracking Worksheet, including:

- Date received
- Nature of the concern
- Individuals involved
- Actions taken
- Communications with the parent
- Escalation steps
- Final resolution

Annual summaries are reviewed to identify trends and opportunities for improvement.

Consistency With the STEM Camp Guide

This policy aligns directly with the 2026 STEM Camp Guide’s statements, including:

- On-site resolution first

- Customer Service second
- Online written escalation to management
- 24–48 hour written response at the escalation stage
- Written-only communication for escalated concerns

This ensures our internal processes fully support what families are told in the guide.

Effective Date and Review

Board Approval Date: December 9, 2025

Last Modified: December 9, 2025

Review Schedule: Annually