

VMC Foundation External Grievance Policy

The VMC Foundation welcomes feedback and believes that being open to constructive criticism and complaints – and taking them seriously – is an important element of its organizational culture. Feedback enables the VMC Foundation to improve the quality of its work, enhance the trust and confidence of stakeholders, and ensure ethical and fair practices. The VMC Foundation is committed to listening and responding to concerns and complaints and ensuring that its complaints process is fair, effective, safe, confidential, and accessible to all stakeholders without prejudice.

1. Scope of Policy

This policy is intended to apply to any external complaint made by an SCVMC employee, VMC Foundation donor, or member of the public. Internal issues and grievances raised by VMC Foundation staff are dealt with in accordance with the VMC Foundation’s complaint procedure as outlined in the Employee Handbook.

2. Definitions

The VMC Foundation will receive and respond to all external complaints regardless of the nature or subject of the complaint.

Complaints do not include:

- A general enquiry about the VMC Foundation’s work
- A request for information
- A request to amend donor records
- A request to unsubscribe or be removed from the database

3. Grievance Process

Anyone has the right to raise a complaint, have that complaint addressed in a timely manner, and receive an accurate and thoughtful response. Every effort will be made to resolve the complaint in a satisfactory manner and, if appropriate, to keep the complainant’s identity private. Complaints may be made in person, by phone, or online. Information about the External Grievance Procedure can be found on the organization’s website.

A complaint may be made at any time to any member of the VMC Foundation staff or board of directors. Complaints should be documented in writing and relayed to the President & Executive Director within twenty-four (24) hours. If a complaint is made against the President & Executive Director, the complaint should be relayed directly with the Board Chair. The President & Executive Director (or Board Chair) will determine which, if any, other staff or board members need to become aware of the complaint and participate in the resolution process.

The VMC Foundation's handling of complaints will meet the following minimum standards:

- All complaints will be acknowledged as soon as possible, ideally within five (5) working days.
- All complainants will receive a full response to their complaint giving the outcome (within applicable legislation and legal advice) as soon as possible and, as a standard rule, within at thirty (30) working days from receipt.
- If the matter is more complex and this timeframe proves impossible, the complainant will be notified of the likely timeframe for resolution.
- All complaints and responses will be documented in the organization's External Grievance folder on the secure network.
- All complainants will be treated respectfully, whether it is felt the complaint is justified or not.

4. Staff Preparedness

Training will be provided to prepare staff to appropriately handle complaints. The training will include:

- Identifying complaints
- Receiving complaints: listening and empathizing skills
- Responding to complainants: using tact and responding with constructive language
- Interviewing skills: gathering factual information from the complainant
- Handling difficult complainants: how to respond when under pressure

5. Board Involvement

The VMC Foundation's Board of Directors plays an important role in overseeing the number and nature of complaints received by the organization and ensuring that they have been handled satisfactorily, that appropriate corrective action has been implemented, and that trends are identified and addressed. In very serious cases a complaint may require the VMC Foundation's Board of Directors to investigate and make a response. In such cases, the Board Chair and Executive Committee will assume the primary role in responding to the complaint and will follow the process timeline as described in Section 3.