

User Complaints Process

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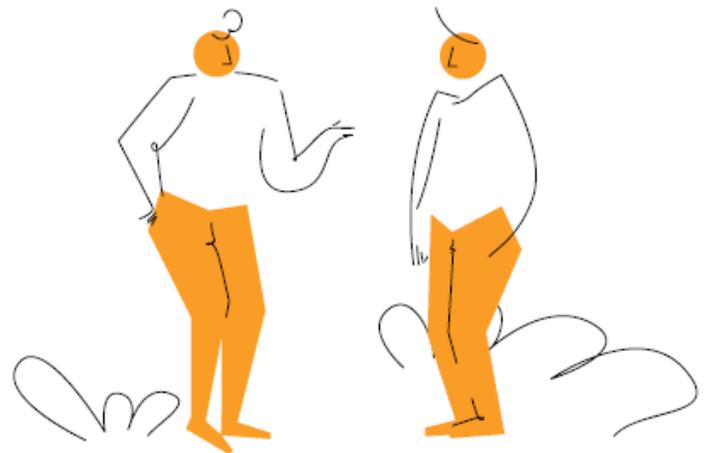


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Preamble

Mission

The mission of the Quebec Digital Suicide Prevention Service (the Service) is to use digital technology to prevent suicide. The Service provides information and support to people exhibiting suicidal thoughts or behaviours, people who are worried about someone or have lost loved ones to suicide, and professionals who work with vulnerable clientele. The Service is operated by Association québécoise de prévention du suicide (AQPS) in collaboration with its partners.

Purpose of the Complaints Process

The Process describes the procedure for handling complaints filed by users¹ of the Service. It is designed to provide a confidential, fair, and transparent process.

AQPS undertakes to:

- Inform users about the options available to them if they are unhappy with the services received
- Allow them to file complaints and assist them with the procedure if required
- Encourage mediation with users
- Provide quality, user-centred services
- Foster continuous improvement of the Service

What is a complaint?

A complaint is when a user or user's representative indicates that the services received failed to meet the user's needs or expectations, considers, in some cases, that this has resulted in harm, and requests that steps be taken to correct the situation or improve services. A person filing a complaint will be referred to hereafter as "the complainant."

Complaints Officer

The Ethics and Accountability Advisor, Digital Strategy at AQPS (hereafter the "Ethics Advisor") is designated by AQPS senior management as the person responsible for dealing with complaints about the Service.

¹ In the policy, the term "user" refers to individuals who use or have used the Quebec digital suicide prevention service, but also to anyone else who wishes to file a complaint, whether they have used the Service or not (e.g., AQPS partner, mental health professional, friend or family of a person who used the Service, etc.).

Complaints handling procedure

Filing a complaint

Complaints must be filed with AQPS using the [form available on the suicide.ca website and app](#).

In exceptional cases (e.g., the complainant is unable to fill out the form on their own), an employee from the Service or AQPS may take down a verbal complaint in writing and forward it to the person responsible for handling complaints.

Receipt and recording of complaints

Complaints are immediately forwarded to the Ethics Advisor, who will send an acknowledgment of receipt to the complainant. Note: No response will be provided to complainants who do not provide their contact information on the complaint form.

For every complaint received, the Ethics Advisor opens a file containing the following information:

- Complainant's first and last name
- Complainant's contact information, if provided
- Date the complaint was received
- Subject of the complaint
- Description of the problem and the complainant's expectations (if provided)
- Where applicable, follow-up with the complainant and, after review, the response to the complaint, the reasons for it, and the actions taken, if any
- Any other available information useful in reviewing the complaint

If necessary, the Ethics Advisor will contact the complainant to get a better understanding of their needs and obtain additional information.

Admissibility

All complaints are admissible and will be treated as such, with the exception of violent or offensive comments, which will not be considered.

Review and decision

The Ethics Advisor must review complaints within 30 days of receipt, or within 30 days of receipt of all information required for the review. Complaints are reviewed on the basis of all necessary and available information.

If required, the Ethics Advisor may seek assistance from any person he or she feels may be helpful in reviewing complaints.

Once the review is complete, the Ethics Advisors issues a recommendation to AQPS management on how to respond to the complaint. AQPS management makes the final decision. AQPS may take any action deemed necessary to improve services, implement corrective measures, provide redress to the user, or prevent similar situations from reoccurring.

The entire process is confidential.

Response to complaints

Once the complaint has been reviewed, and before the 30-day period is up, the complainant will be notified in writing of the following:

- The response to the complaint
- The reasons for the response
- The specific actions, if any, taken in response to the complaint
- Their options for seeking additional recourse if still dissatisfied

In addition to contacting the complainant in writing, the Ethics Advisor may also contact the person verbally if needed to better explain the response to the complaint.

File retention period

Once processed, all complaints are archived for 5 years. Files are securely stored and are accessible only to authorized personnel, in accordance with the [Terms of Use and Privacy Policy](#) of the Service. After 5 years, the files are destroyed.

Annual report and continuous assessment and improvement

At least once a year, the Ethics Advisor must submit a report summarizing the main points related to the complaints received. The report is presented to the AQPS board of directors. In addition to the annual report, some complaints-related data is used as part of the Service assessment and improvement process. This process is ongoing throughout the year.

The Ethics Advisor must ensure that data used in the report or as part of the continuous assessment and improvement process cannot be used to identify the complainants.

Adoption and effective date of the Procedure

This Procedure was adopted at the September 23, 2020 meeting of the Board of Directors of Association québécoise de prévention du suicide.