

## 7.5 Managing Guest Complaints Policy

### Intent

Working in the hospitality industry may result in situations where employees encounter dissatisfied and/or angry customers/guests. There are effective methods to neutralize these situations and provide peaceful resolutions; this policy has been adopted to ensure that employees are provided with a set of guidelines for receiving and managing guest complaints and where required, dealing with angry customers.

### Scope

This policy applies to all employees always and without exception.

Unionized employees shall adhere to their current Collective Agreement for policies governing managing guest complaints. Where the Collective Agreement is silent, bargaining members shall refer to the contents of this policy. In situations where the directions of this policy cover issues also in the Collective Agreement, the Collective Agreement will be the final authority.

### Guidelines

When a customer complaint is addressed in a professional and courteous manner, the chance that the customer becomes disgruntled, angry or hostile diminishes greatly.

Employees are to take ownership of the complaint and resolve it in a satisfactory manner as efficiently as possible. Once resolved, employees are required to ask if the actions taken were to the guests' satisfaction and expectations. If the guest is still unhappy, the employee should escalate the matter to a member of the management team.

All complaints require immediate attention and response. Employees are also encouraged to take the time necessary to assist their fellow employees in problem resolution to make the guest stay experience enjoyable.

The following guest service procedures should be utilized with all customers/guests and in doing so, may quickly diffuse a situation where a customer/guest begins to get angry:

- Greet all customers/guests in a friendly tone, and welcome them to the hotel.
- Give the customer your full attention, and use active listening skills to ensure that they know you are working with them. Try paraphrasing the questions/concerns of the customer to show them that you are actively engaged in providing them with assistance.
- Repeat the guests concern back to them to ensure that you have understood them correctly.
- Attempt to resolve the situation as quickly as possible for the guest per hotel policy and within your assigned responsibility. Do not make any promises to the guest that cannot be delivered upon.
- Always attempt to reason with the guest and ensure that they understand the company policy, and why that policy is in place. Ensure that they understand that we must treat each customer fairly, and equally.
- If the client's requests are unreasonable, beyond your responsibility or ability to resolve, let the guest know that you will involve the manager on shift and/or employee responsible for guest services. In such situations employees are required to locate management immediately, inform them of the situation and allow management to find an appropriate and acceptable resolution to the situation.

The following are additional guidelines to be followed by employees encountering an unhappy or hostile guest.

### **Avoid Engaging in Conflict**

- Remember that the customer may be angry for several reasons and try not to take it personally. While we strive to offer customer service that will meet or exceed the expectations of our guests/customers, we need to understand that sometimes there will be external forces such as issues at home, etc. that create anger or hostility in customers, and regardless of the actions that we take, we may be unable to make the customer happy.
- Always maintain professionalism and do not engage in a heated argument with the customer as this will only make the situation worse.
- Use logic and kindness to attempt to get the situation under control.

### **Determine the Customer's Needs**

- Determine what the initial issue is/was, what was or can be done, and offer them a solution, or offer to escalate the situation to a specialist or manager.
- Try to determine what they need, and what it is that they want to tell you. Sometimes a customer will simply want to vent their anger and be heard.
- Be sure to acknowledge their anger, and where possible, attempt to alleviate the issue or solve the problem.
- Do not brush off their anger or ignore them as this may lead to increased anger.

### **Observe the Customer on Approach**

- Be observant, and pay close attention to your customers. An upset or angry customer will generally display visible characteristics like clenched fists, a red face, agitated behaviours, etc.
- If you notice a customer exhibiting behaviours associated with hostility/anger, prepare yourself for a potential situation, and remain composed and professional.

### **Relate to the Customer**

- Try to speak with the customer in a way that shows them that you understand and can sympathize with the issue, while working with them to find an agreeable resolution. An angry customer will generally decrease their hostility when they realise that you care and are genuinely interested in their issue.

### **Thank the Customer**

- Regardless of how angry a customer is, thank them for their business, patience and understanding during the problem resolution process.
- Apologize for their inconvenience, and assure the customer/guest that we will rectify the situation and ensure them that we will do our best to prevent it from happening again.

When a guest exhibits increased hostility and/or is threatening or becoming violent, the employee is required to contact security immediately. At no time should an employee attempt to handle such a situation on their own. While the provision of exceptional customer service is of the utmost importance, our number one priority is to ensure employee and customer/guest safety.