

## TOWN OF ALLENSTOWN

**Date of Issue:** 5/5/14  
**Issuing Authority:** Board of Selectmen  
**Distribution:** All Personnel including volunteers

# PROCEDURAL DIRECTIVE 14-1 RESPONSE TO INQUIRES AND COMPLAINTS

### Purpose

The purpose of this procedural directive is to provide clear procedures across all departments, boards, commissions and committees. It is the goal of the Town to be responsive to inquiries in a timely and effective fashion. Customer service is the cornerstone of the foundation of municipal government. Complaints in regards to service or Town personnel must be addressed to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of the Town's government.

### Procedure

Procedures for responding to inquiries and complaints shall take two separate paths. It is anticipated that inquiries will be addressed at the level of entry at which the inquiry is received. If personnel at the level of entry are not able to properly respond to an inquiry that matter should be referred to staff who can properly assist. Complaints in regards to Town personnel or a Town department, board, commission or committee shall be reviewed and an appropriate level of investigation conducted.

### Inquiries:

1. Inquires may come to the town in a variety of modes;
  - a. In person
  - b. U.S. Postal Service mail
  - c. Email
  - d. Phone
  - e. Text
  - f. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, etc...
  - g. Communications Center (Police and Fire)
  - h. Third party private, non-profit or governmental entity
2. An inquiry is defined as a request for service, a request for information, notification of a matter. Inquires may come from a resident of the town, resident of some other jurisdiction; governmental, private or non-profit entity or any other source to include anonymous sources.
3. Inquiries must be responded to within 24 hours. The preference is for a faster response where applicable. Response requires at a minimum a return call, email, etc... to the inquiring person or entity to advise them that their inquiry was received and a further response is being developed.

If an inquiry is forwarded to another Town official it shall be the responsibility of that official to respond. Exceptions to this requirement are as follows;

- a. Solicitations-inquires that are clearly sales solicitations do not require a response at all.
- b. Matters that have specific timelines established by statutes such as court or hearing motions; applications to the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Adjustment, Board of Selectmen that have timelines for response specified in statute, ordinance or regulations or other rule/procedure.
- c. Responses that if were made within 24 hours would require the expenditure of overtime funds.
- d. During situations where an emergency has been declared and a response within 24 hours is not possible.
- e. Anonymous inquires by their very nature do not allow for a return phone call or message as the inquiring is not known.
- f. Officials should not make telephone responses at times that would be appropriate such as 3 o'clock in the morning. However 3 o'clock in the morning may be appropriate for some type of responses such as inquires to the police department, fire department or other emergency situation that may have an imminent impact on the health, safety or welfare of persons or property.

**Complaints:**

1. Complaints may come to the town in a variety of modes;
  - a. In person
  - b. U.S. Postal Service mail
  - c. Email
  - d. Phone
  - e. Text
  - f. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, etc...
  - g. Communications Center (Police and Fire)
  - h. Third party private, non-profit or governmental entity
2. A complaint is defined as an expression of unhappiness: the act of expressing discontent or unhappiness about a situation or Town official.
3. Complaints must be responded to within the same timeframe as that of an inquiry. Acknowledgement of receipt must be made to the complaining party within 24 hours at a minimum. Complaints shall be taken at any level by any personnel of the Town. Personnel receiving complaints shall forward them to the appropriate official to address.
4. Departments, boards, commissions and committees may develop their own internal complaint handling process. The Board of Selectmen must approve any complaint handling procedure that is outside of this policy before such a policy is implemented.
5. Complaints that allege a criminal act shall be reported to the Allenstown Police Department. Complaints against police department personnel that allege a criminal act shall be reported to

an outside law enforcement agency with jurisdiction such as the Merrimack County Sheriff's Department or the NH Attorney General's Office.

6. All other complaints will be handled by the appropriate supervisor in regards to complaints against personnel. General complaints against departments will be referred to the Board of Selectmen. The BOS may delegate an official or outside entity that it deems appropriate to conduct a review or investigation of the complaint.
7. Complaints involving sexual harassment or discrimination shall be handled in accordance with the Town's Personnel Policy or applicable department policy which has been approved by the BOS.
8. Personnel assigned to investigate complaints shall review the complaint and conduct the appropriate level of investigation. The investigator must report the findings to the appropriate official exercising authority over the person or department who/that is the subject of the complaint.

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