

SOP Template: Escalation Protocol for Unresolved or Serious Complaints

This SOP details the **escalation protocol for unresolved or serious complaints**, including the initial complaint assessment, steps for escalating issues to higher management, timelines for responses, documentation requirements, communication guidelines, and follow-up procedures. The aim is to ensure timely resolution, maintain accountability, and enhance customer satisfaction by effectively managing and addressing serious or unresolved complaints.

1. Scope

This SOP applies to all staff handling customer complaints which are unresolved after initial handling or are deemed serious due to their nature or potential impact.

2. Definitions

- **Unresolved Complaint:** Any complaint not satisfactorily addressed within the standard resolution timeframe.
- **Serious Complaint:** Any complaint involving legal, regulatory, reputational, or significant operational impact.
- **Escalation:** The process of referring a complaint to higher management or a specialized team.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Frontline Staff	Receive, document, and attempt to resolve complaints. Escalate when unresolved or serious.
Supervisor/Manager	Review escalated complaints, determine next steps, and communicate with complainant.
Senior Management	Handle high-impact or sensitive complaints. Ensure resolution and corrective action.
Compliance/Legal	Review and advise on legal, regulatory, or policy-related complaints.

4. Procedure

4.1 Initial Complaint Assessment

1. Receive and log the complaint in the complaint management system.
2. Assess whether the complaint is serious (using defined criteria) or unresolved after standard processing.
3. Attempt resolution within **2 business days** (if not immediately serious).

4.2 Escalation Steps

1. If unresolved or deemed serious, immediately escalate to supervisor or manager.
2. Supervisor/manager reviews the complaint and all documentation.
3. Where necessary, escalate further to senior management or compliance/legal.
4. All escalations must be logged with date, time, reason for escalation, and parties notified.

4.3 Timelines for Response

- Immediate acknowledgment to complainant upon escalation (**Within 1 business day**).
- Investigation and response by the next tier (**Within 3 business days** of escalation).
- Final resolution or action plan communicated to complainant (**Within 5 business days** of escalation).

4.4 Documentation Requirements

- Record all communications, decisions, and actions taken at each escalation stage in the complaint management system.
- Retain all relevant evidence and supporting materials.

4.5 Communication Guidelines

- Maintain clear, courteous, and timely communication with the complainant throughout the process.
- Provide updates on progress, expected timelines, and point of contact.

- Document all communications.

4.6 Follow-up Procedures

- Confirm satisfactory resolution with the complainant.
- Document closure and, if applicable, capture feedback.
- Review cases for continuous improvement to prevent recurrence.

5. Review

This SOP should be reviewed **annually** or after any major incident to ensure ongoing compliance and effectiveness.

6. References

- Complaint Management Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Regulatory Guidelines