

Complainant Distress Practices



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1. OVERVIEW STATEMENT

- 1.1 The Hydro One Ombudsman (“the Ombudsman”) treats concerns about the safety and well-being of Complainants contacting its Office seriously. These Practices and the accompanying internal Distress Procedure Protocol were developed to provide a framework for addressing situations when in the course of providing its services, the Ombudsman’s Office becomes aware that a Complainant is in Distress or at Imminent risk of harm to self or others.
- 1.2 The Ombudsman’s Office does not act as a crisis line and is not a substitute for contacting relevant medical or emergency services. Individuals in Crisis should be referred whenever possible to the appropriate resources.
- 1.3 While the Ombudsman’s Office will treat any information shared with the utmost discretion, in some circumstances, disclosure of Complainant information (without Complainant consent) may be permissible or required by law. This includes situations where there are reasonable grounds to believe there is an Imminent serious risk of harm to a person or group of persons.
- 1.4 The Ombudsman’s Office will respond in accordance with its established internal Distress Procedure Protocol when it becomes aware a Complainant may be at risk, including threats of suicide or harm to others.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 The purpose of these Practices are to highlight how the Ombudsman’s Office responds to Complainants who contact the Office and may be at risk of self-harm or harm to others.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1 These Practices apply to the Ombudsman's Office in its interactions with Complainants during any aspect of the Ombudsman's Office's service delivery.

4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.1 "**Complainant**" means customer, stakeholder, and any affected party or group who has dealings with Hydro One respecting its services and makes a complaint to the Ombudsman's Office. A Complainant may include someone acting as a representative on behalf of a Complainant.
- 4.2 "**Crisis**" means someone who is in a state where they feel they can no longer cope and are no longer in control. A person in Crisis may be thinking of harming themselves and/or others.
- 4.3 "**Distress**" means someone who is in an emotional state of anxiety, fear, upset or anger and may have difficulty coping with these emotions, but may not necessarily be in Crisis.
- 4.4 "**Imminent**" means likely to occur at any moment, where an individual with Suicidal Ideations has the intent to carry through on their plan and has the means to do so.
- 4.5 "**Suicidal Thoughts/Ideation**" means thoughts of suicide including contemplating death by suicide and planning steps that may result in death.

5. RESPONDING TO DISTRESS AND CRISIS

- 5.1 When providing its services, the Ombudsman's Office will assess the risk posed by any Complainant comments and/or actions indicating risk of self-harm or harm to others, and will take steps in accordance with its established internal Distress Procedure Protocol.
- 5.2 When a potential risk of self-harm or harm to others is identified, the internal Distress Procedure Protocol may require the Ombudsman's Office to contact external supports regarding the Complainant, including but not limited to a Distress Centre or 9-1-1.

5.3 In responding to a Complainant’s potential risk of self-harm or harm to others, the Ombudsman’s Office is not in breach of its duty of confidentiality where there are compelling circumstances that take into consideration:

- The likelihood of harm occurring;
- The severity of the harm;
- How soon the harm may occur; and/or
- The disclosure is reasonably likely to reduce the risk of harm to the individual.

5.4 If the Ombudsman’s Office discloses a Complainant’s personal information in accordance with these Practices, the disclosure will be limited to what information is relevant to reducing the health and/or safety risk.

5.5 When personal information has been disclosed in accordance with these Practices, the Ombudsman’s Office will make reasonable efforts to notify the individual to whom the personal information relates that their information was disclosed.

5.6 In situations where a Complainant appears to be in Distress but there does not appear to be a potential risk of self-harm or harm to others, the Ombudsman’s Office may provide the Complainant with information on resources in their community, including information relating to mental health supports in the appropriate geographic region. Some of the resources may include, but are not limited to those listed below:

Resource	Details	Contact Info
211 Ontario	Connects individuals to information and services in their community.	Call 2-1-1 or search https://211ontario.ca/
ConnexOntario	Provides free and confidential health services information and referral for people experiencing problems with alcohol and drugs, mental illness or gambling.	Toll free number: 1-866-531-2600 Mental Health & Addiction Treatment Services Connex Ontario
Ontario Distress Centres	Provides listening and referral services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Many centres also have Suicide Survivor programs, support services for youth, telephone call out programs for seniors/	http://www.dcontario.org Phone numbers vary by region (check list of locations).

	vulnerable people, and mental health Crisis Lines services.	
9-8-8	Canadians can call or text 9-8-8 to access bilingual, trauma-informed, and culturally appropriate mental health and suicide prevention support. The service is free and can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Trained crisis responders will listen to you and provide support with compassion, providing a safe space for you to talk.	Get Help 9-8-8: Suicide Crisis Helpline (988.ca) Call or Text

6. FEEDBACK PROCESS

- 6.1. The Ombudsman’s Office strives to meet and surpass expectations while delivering its services. Feedback or comments regarding these Practices may be sent to Ombudsman@HydroOne.com or through one of the following contact methods:

Mail: Office of the Hydro One Ombudsman
483 Bay St., South Tower
Toronto, ON M5G 2P5

Phone: 1-844-608-8756 or 416-345-1505

TTY: 416-345-5839

Fax: 416-345-6129

7. REVIEW OF PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

- 7.1. These Practices will be reviewed annually to ensure the listed resources are up to date and may be amended as required by the Ombudsman’s Office. The Ombudsman’s Office shall also update the procedures that accompany these Practices as needed.

8. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 13.1 These Practices are accompanied by related procedures. Other documents related to these Practices are noted below.

Related Document	Effective Date of Document	Applicable Sections
Distress Procedure Protocol	March 14, 2022	Entire Protocol

Duty of Confidentiality Standards	March 14, 2022	Entire Standards
Terms of Reference	August 11, 2020	ss. 20 and 21

Approval Date: February 21, 2024