

Info Sheet: What does Fairness mean?

Everyone knows what it feels like when they are treated unfairly. It's a bit harder to explain what you might expect from a process or a decision that you would call fair. You might feel fairly treated if you received:

- Information that a decision might affect you and the criteria on which the decision will be made
- Notification of the information on which the decision maker is going to base her or his decision
- The chance to provide your side of the story to the decision maker
- A response within a reasonable timeframe

These basic rights are part of what the law calls the principles of procedural fairness and they have grown out of an acknowledgement by the courts that individuals have a right to be treated fairly by an agency that has the power to make decisions that might affect their rights.

In addition to the above, fairness also includes:

- Having a decision maker who is unbiased and objective
- Accessible and easy-to-understand information about the process leading to the decision
- Having a decision that is supported by reasons
- Receiving information on possible avenues of appeal if you are unsatisfied with the decision

Fairness does not require that everyone be treated in the exact same way – it will depend on the nature of the decision being made and how it might impact the individual. Fairness also does not necessarily mean you will get the outcome you wanted – it does mean that certain steps should be followed.