

CLIENT GRIEVANCE POLICY

PURPOSE:

To outline the procedure by which clients may express a complaint and the process agency personnel follow to resolve the complaint.

POLICY:

It is the policy of Catholic Charities that all clients have the means to file complaints and reach resolution. The conditions for expressing a grievance are defined as dissatisfaction with decisions concerning the client and/or services provided the client.

Clients have the right to file a complaint or grievance without interference or fear of retaliation. All staff members are to be attentive and respectful to any grievance registered by a client and are prohibited from discouraging, intimidating, or seeking retribution against clients who seek to exercise their rights or file a complaint or grievance.

Clients have the right to timely notification of the resolution and receive an explanation of any further appeal, rights, or recourse.

All clients have the right to at least one level of review that does not involve the person about whom the complaint has been made or the person who made the decision under review.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **Clients**: Individuals and families that use, receive, or benefit from the programs and services at Catholic Charities. Clients can include consumers and legal guardians.
- **Complaint**: For clients, a complaint is a verbal expression of dissatisfaction with, including, but not limited to aspects of service delivery, manner of treatment, outcomes, or experiences.
- **Grievance**: For clients, grievances are formal expressions of dissatisfaction or discomfort that can include, but is not limited to service delivery, manner of treatment, outcomes, or experiences. All complaints received in writing, including email, are considered formal grievances. If a client does not wish to or is unable to submit a written expression of dissatisfaction, he or she may request the formal grievance be documented by the staff person receiving the verbal report.

GENERAL PROCEDURES:

1. Notices informing all clients of their right to make a complaint are posted in an obvious location at all Catholic Charities sites. The notice and policy is also posted on the agency website.
2. At the initial assessment, all clients will be informed of their right to make a complaint, the process by which to do so, and the way in which the organization will respond. The client and staff member will sign and date an acknowledgement form which will be maintained in the client's case file and a copy will be given to the client.
3. For programs serving large groups of clients simultaneously (i.e. Hospitality Center, Disaster Response disaster relief services, VITA), a written copy of the policy will be made available on request and a notice will be posted in an obvious location to advise clients they may request a copy at any time.
4. In general, the first step to resolving any client concern or complaint should be to seek informal resolution within the program when a dispute arises. This process may begin with the client's direct service worker or program Director/Coordinator. If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved at this level, staff should inform the client of his/her right to submit a formal grievance.

- a. Informal efforts to resolve complaints and grievances should be documented in the client's case record, progress notes, and/or tracking logs as applicable.
 - b. If the client believes for any reason that they cannot approach program staff with their concerns, they may address their concerns directly with the Associate Vice President of Programs (AVPP).
5. At the time of a complaint, the client will be provided by staff an additional copy of the client grievance policy. The staff member will review the procedure and clarify any issues for the client. Catholic Charities will acknowledge and document the receipt of all formal grievances.
6. Formal grievances should be submitted to the program Director/Coordinator (receiving supervisor) for review, or as appropriate to the AVPP. Upon receipt of a grievance the program Director/Coordinator should submit copies of that grievance to the AVPP.
7. The receiving supervisor/AVPP should interview the client to discuss his/her concerns directly. The receiving supervisor/AVPP will document in writing any communication regarding the grievance. This information will be submitted to the AVPP for review and/or consultation with the receiving supervisor within seventy-two hours of the receipt of the complaint.
8. The President/CEO and/or AVPP may complete an Internal Program Review to determine the validity of the grievance.
 - a. Internal Program Reviews completed by the AVPP will be submitted to the President/CEO for review and follow-up as deemed appropriate.
9. The validity of the grievance will be determined within fourteen business days and the outcome conveyed to the client within twenty-four hours of the decision.
10. At this point in time if the client remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may make one final appeal to the President/CEO. Appeals to the President/CEO will be determined within seven business days and the results conveyed to the client within twenty-four hours of a decision.
11. Copies of all correspondence regarding the grievance will be submitted to the AVPP as documentation of the resolution of the complaint.
12. All clients/families have the right to initiate a complaint with any of the agencies that license or fund the agency's programs (e.g.: TDHCA, TDSHS, etc.) In instances where the client wishes to forward a complaint to an outside authority, staff is to provide the client with assistance including pens, paper, postage and access to a telephone upon request.
13. Results from all written grievances/complaints will be forwarded to the AVPP. A quarterly summary of client/family complaints will be prepared for review by the Quality Committee.
14. As required, legal counsel will be sought to intervene in situations that are not successfully resolved through the prior avenues. Catholic Charities will not in any way restrict, discourage or interfere with client communication with an attorney for the purpose of filing a complaint.
15. Should any complaint warrant further investigation beyond the scope of this policy, Catholic Charities will communicate with the client/family making the complaint in no greater than 30 day intervals.