

Client Grievance

POLICY: Catholic Charities Maine (CCM) supports its clients' full participation in their plans of care, including its clients' right to question how CCM is providing such care. Complaints or grievances from clients are regarded as an important and integral part of CCM's performance improvement process. Attempts will be made to mutually resolve grievances in a fair, open, honest fashion and without retaliation.

ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE: August 13, 1987.

REVISED & APPROVED: Board of Directors, April 20, 1995.

REVIEWED & APPROVED: Board of Directors, June 8, 2004.

REVIEWED & APPROVED: Board of Directors, October 13, 2016

REVIEWED & APPROVED: Board of Directors, September 16, 2021

REVIEWED & APPROVED: Board of Directors, November 23, 2021

REVIEWED & APPROVED: Board of Directors, June 28, 2024

REVISED & APPROVED: Board of Directors, September 16, 2025

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE: If a client of CCM expresses a grievance or complaint to CCM personnel, CCM will follow the procedure below:

1. Clients (adults and children) who participate in the Department of Health and Human Services' mental health (MH) programs will follow the Department's Grievance Procedure as outlined in the Rights of Recipients of Mental Health Services or the Rights of Children Who Are Receiving Mental Health Services. For clients who participate in substance use disorder (SUD) treatment programs, the procedures outlined in Maine Behavioral Health Organization Licensing Rules-Substance Use Disorder Treatment Programs will be followed and any client appeal will follow steps 13-15 below, in ten (10) working day increments, with extensions, as agreed upon, by both parties. When clients are involved in both MH and SUD programs concurrently, the more stringent procedure will apply. Clients who are served under any other programs will follow CCM's general grievance procedure below.
2. All clients shall be informed of CCM's grievance procedure upon enrollment in a CCM program. If a complaint is made, CCM will provide the client with a copy of its written grievance procedures.
3. Next, the CCM personnel and the client, if the client would like, will discuss the grievance to attempt to mutually resolve the grievance. If they are not able to resolve the issue informally and the client wishes to document a grievance through the formal grievance process, the CCM personnel will provide the client with a Client Formal Grievance Form.

4. If a client report, complaint, or grievance regarding CCM personnel involves allegations of criminal behavior, CCM will strongly encourage the client (or other appropriate representative) to contact local law enforcement and file a report with a CCM supervisor's assistance. If the client declines, the CCM supervisor will inform the client that he/she has an ethical obligation to contact law enforcement regarding allegations of criminal conduct and the CCM personnel must do so immediately. CCM may place the personnel who is the subject of the grievance on administrative leave (paid or unpaid). CCM may suspend service delivery opportunities for a volunteer who is subject to the grievance. The CCM Compliance Officer must be contacted immediately and will initiate an independent inquiry in the Quality & Compliance Department, the format and scope of which will be determined based on the issue presented.
5. Although the client should be encouraged to follow the procedures below, he/she should be informed that, at any point in the process, if the client prefers, he/she may file the complaint directly with the Compliance Officer.
6. The appropriate supervisor will be informed of any formal grievance initiated against CCM personnel under the supervisor's oversight within one (1) working day. Whenever possible, the grievance should be submitted to the supervisor in writing using the Client Formal Grievance Form. The supervisor will also be informed of and respond to a verbal grievance that was not resolved informally.
7. The supervisor will forward the formal grievance to the Program Director, who will contact the Program Officer to develop an appropriate response.
8. The Office of Quality & Compliance will be made aware of the formal grievance, upon receipt by the Program Director and will brief the Chief Executive Officer accordingly.
9. As appropriate, the supervisor, Program Director, and Program Officer will develop and implement a plan to investigate the grievance immediately. If possible, the investigation, which may include interviews and/or a record review, will be completed within fifteen (15) working days of initiation. The results of an investigation and any action taken to address the grievance will be documented by the Program Director and approved by the Program Officer.
10. The supervisor, Program Director or Program Officer will contact the client or client representative promptly upon completion of the investigation to discuss and attempt to resolve the grievance.
11. The Program Director will facilitate the completion of accurate and comprehensive documentation of the grievance process, when at that level.

12. CCM will notify the client in writing of any decisions or findings that are made during each level of the grievance process.
13. If a client is not satisfied with the outcome, the client may submit a written appeal to the Compliance Officer within thirty (30) days of meeting with the Program Director or Program Officer.
14. Upon receipt of an unresolved grievance, the Compliance Officer will obtain and review the investigation file and will initiate any further investigation deemed necessary and appropriate within fifteen (15) working days. The Compliance Officer will contact the client upon receipt of an unresolved grievance as soon as practicable. The Compliance Officer will make a determination about the grievance, including any action that will be taken by CCM, within a reasonable period of time. All decisions reached at this level are final.
15. The client shall be informed of the decision reached by the Compliance Officer in writing within thirty (30) days unless otherwise specified by law. One thirty-day (30) extension may be granted by notifying the client in writing.
16. The Quality & Compliance Department will track, analyze and report the type and outcome of grievances. CCM's grievance report will include a summary of the number of client grievances, resolution of grievances, and other pertinent information. The Quality & Compliance Department will submit this report to the CCM Executive Management Team, Program Evaluation Committee, and the Board of Directors on a quarterly basis. This report will be reviewed for patterns and any problematic or unresolved issues and plans of correction will be developed and implemented as appropriate.

Operational Procedure reviewed and updated: February 2010.

Operational Procedure reviewed and updated: July 2000.

Operational Procedure reviewed and updated: August 20, 2004.

Operational Procedure reviewed and updated: November 2007

Operational Procedure reviewed and updated: June 2010

Operational Procedure reviewed and updated: October 13, 2016

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