
Grievance Procedure & Legal Rights

Your Rights Before Treatment

Before starting treatment, you must be informed of your rights and the grievance process. A full copy of the program's Grievance Procedure and Patient rights are available upon request and also sent to you with intake forms.

- You cannot be threatened, punished, or discriminated against for expressing concerns either informally or through filing a grievance.
- You may also choose to file a lawsuit in court for damages or other relief if you believe your rights have been violated.

Overview of the Grievance Process

If you believe your rights have been violated while receiving mental health, substance use, or developmental disability services, you have the right to file a grievance. Below is the step-by-step process to resolve your complaint.

You may initiate court action at any time; however, starting a court case may end the grievance investigation unless there is a compelling reason to continue.

Grievance Resolution Levels & Steps

Step 1: Informal Discussion (Optional)

You are encouraged to discuss your concerns directly with staff or a supervisor. This step is voluntary and **not required** before filing a formal grievance.

Step 2: Formal Grievance Filing with Client Rights Specialist (CRS)

- Submit your written grievance within **45 days** of becoming aware of the issue (extensions may be granted for good cause).
- The CRS will:
 - Investigate grievance
 - Attempt to resolve the issue
 - Provide a written report within **30 days**
- If you and the Program Manager agree with the CRS's recommendations, they will be implemented within a specified timeframe.
- You may file multiple grievances; however, the CRS may handle one at a time and may ask you to prioritize.

Step 3: Program Manager's Decision

- If the grievance remains unresolved after CRS investigation, the Program Manager will issue a written decision within **10 days** of receiving the CRS report.

Step 4: County Level Review (If Applicable)

- For services provided or paid for by a county agency, you may appeal the Program Manager's decision to the County Agency Director within **14 days**.
- The Director must respond within **30 days**.

Step 5: Appeal to State Grievance Examiner

- If dissatisfied with the County Director's decision—or if receiving services from an independent (private) provider, you may appeal to the State Grievance Examiner within **14 days** of the last decision.

- Send your appeal to:
State Grievance Examiner
Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (DMHSAS)
P.O. Box 7851, Madison, WI 53707-7851
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Step 6: Final State Review

- Any party may request a final review within **14 days** of the State Grievance Examiner's decision.
 - Send your request to:
DMHSAS Administrator
P.O. Box 7851, Madison, WI 53707-7851
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Important Notes on Program Types & Levels

- **County-Supported Programs:** Follow all Levels I–IV (Steps 2 to 6).
 - **Independent Programs:** May bypass the county review (Step 4) and appeal directly to the State Grievance Examiner (Step 5).
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Court Action (Optional at Any Time)

You may choose to take legal action at any stage of this grievance process. Note that starting a court case related to the grievance may result in the internal grievance process being closed unless there is a compelling reason to continue.

Need Help Filing a Grievance?

Contact your program's Client Rights Specialist:

Richa Aggarwal

446 N Westhill Blvd, Suite E, Appleton, WI 54914

Phone: 920.843.9162 Fax: 920.610.7190

Additional Resources

You may request copies of the following statutes and procedures:

- Wisconsin Statute § 51.61
- DHS 94 and DHS 92
- Program grievance procedures

For more information, visit: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov
