

CLIENT GRIEVANCE PROCESS

Effective Date: 01-01-2023

POLICY

It is recognized there will be times when clients will have grievances that they wish to have evaluated and/or addressed by the Program. Kahm Center has an obligation to investigate, whereby these grievances will be transparently and formally processed.

PROCEDURE

1. A Client may lodge a grievance (written/verbal) with any member of the Program staff. It shall be the responsibility of the staff to activate the grievance process as described below. In the event the grievance is of a highly serious nature, the staff member shall take whatever legal and reasonable steps necessary to ensure the immediate safety and well-being of the Client. Additionally, the staff member will notify the individual in the supervisory chain of command they feel most likely able to handle/address the situation/issue. No consideration needs to be given, by the employee, of the normal/routine supervision and reporting process, and the employee shall not suffer any reprisal for not following this process. If the situation does not require emergency measures, then the following process will be used:
 - a. The Executive Director or designee shall consider/evaluate and address the grievance. If the Client and Executive Director/designee feel a satisfactory resolution has been achieved, then the grievance process will stop. If a satisfactory resolution was not achieved, then:
 - b. Notification to the Client Rights Committee: If the Client and Client Rights Committee feel a satisfactory resolution has been achieved, then the grievance process will stop. If a satisfactory resolution was not achieved, then:
 - c. Notification to the Vermont Office of Healthcare Advocate:
 1. **Online:** [Complaints | VTLawHelp.org](https://vtlawhelp.org/complaints); <https://vtlawhelp.org/complaints>
 2. **Phone:** (800) 917-7787
 3. **Fax:** (802) 651-4130
 4. **Mail:** 274 North Winooski Avenue
Burlington, VT 05401
2. Interface between the Agency Representative and Client Grievance Process:
 - a. If a Client avails themselves of the Client Grievance Process and the issue is successfully resolved to the Client's and staff's satisfaction, and there are no findings to warrant further action, then the matter will be considered resolved.
 - b. Staff are specifically prohibited from engaging in any type of retaliatory actions against a Client who files any type of grievance.

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3. The grievance process should be completed in accordance with the following timelines:
 - a. Response and disposition by Executive Director within five (5) business days of initiated grievance.
 - b. Response and disposition by the Client Rights Committee within five (5) business days of the unresolved grievance by the Executive Director.
 - c. Notification to Vermont Office of Healthcare Advocate within two (2) business days of the unresolved grievance by the Client Rights Committee.
 - d. Where applicable, notification may also include the Vermont Secretary of State-Office of Professional Regulation. This determination will be made by the Executive Director or the Client Rights Committee.
 4. If the grievance lodged is against a Program staff (including Professional Staff, Program consultants, or contract individual agencies), they will be given the opportunity to provide information in their defense. Additionally, they may take any Program or legal action available to them in the event the grievance results in adverse actions being taken against them.
 5. Documentation of the grievance, the considerations/evaluations of the grievance, actions taken, and resolutions shall be made by all individuals/bodies who process/consider the grievance. This documentation shall be maintained by the Executive Director for a minimum of ten (10) years or (with children) until the Client has reached the age of majority plus two (2) years. Copies of other documentation can be included, such as: Risk Identification Reports, etc. Documentation will be maintained in a locked cabinet to which only the Executive Director or the designated representatives have access. All information is confidential, and release of this information shall only be done under the laws, rules, and regulations of confidentiality as put forth by the Program, State of Vermont, and the federal government; or by virtue of a court order from a judge.
 6. A Client will not lose their right to have their grievance formally considered and processed regardless of the method or manner in which they make known their grievance. For example, a Client verbally informs the Executive Director of a grievance instead of the attending staff or child advocate. This act by a Client in no way causes a loss or restriction of the Client's rights to grievance and the grievance process as described. An emergency situation/grievance is described as "any situation where the safety and wellbeing of the Client has been or may be significantly and adversely affected." Examples would be: Reports of Program child abuse, threats by the Client to injure themselves or others, or threats by other clients towards the Client.
 7. It is expected that grievances will be evaluated and processed in a timely manner. In the absence of an emergency situation, all individuals in the process must consider/evaluate and process the grievance within five (5) business days. In emergency circumstances, all available parties shall address the grievance immediately.
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8. Reporting of grievances to parents/legal guardians, local or state agencies, or law enforcement will be accomplished according to Program policies governing areas, which require such reporting. If no such reporting is required, the Executive Director will decide whether to make any notification outside of the Program and, if so, to whom it shall be reported.
9. If a grievance is against a staff member and involves abuse, then Program officials will take all necessary actions to ensure the Client is protected from this staff member. Additionally, Program officials will take all necessary actions to ensure a Client is not subject to retaliation from any grievance.

PURPOSE

To provide a structure and process whereby clients can file grievances and have them officially considered, evaluated, and addressed without fear of retribution.

We the undersigned have read and received orientation to the Client Grievance Process. A copy has been provided to both the Guardian and the Client.

Client

Date

Guardian

Date

Staff

Date