

**Applies to:
ADRC
Tribal ADRS**

Complaint Policy

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This policy applies to aging and disability resource centers (ADRCs) and Tribal aging and disability resource specialists (Tribal ADRS) herein referred to as “agency” or “staff.”

Purpose

This grievance policy is meant to ensure agencies implement and maintain due process policies and procedures to review and resolve grievances.

This policy describes the customer’s right to file a grievance and the process for resolving customers’ grievances related to the work of the agency. The goal of the grievance procedure is to allow customers of the agency to exercise their due process rights with a simple and easily understood process.

The agency will cooperate with any review of grievances conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), an external quality review organization, or an external advocacy organization.

Definitions

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction about a situation that the person making the complaint wants to see rectified. A complaint may also be called a grievance.

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Grievance: An expression of dissatisfaction about a situation that the person making the grievance wants to see rectified. A grievance is also commonly called a complaint.

Complaint or Grievance System: The overall system the agency implements to handle grievances, as well as the processes to collect and track information about them

Procedure for Informing and Assisting Customers in Exercising Their Rights

Any customer, or person acting on a customer's behalf, may express or file a grievance regarding the agency. The agency will support customers in the grievance process and will refrain from any reprisal or threat of reprisal against any individual registering a grievance.

The agency will give every customer a grievance brochure with information on their rights, procedures, and contacts for external advocacy agencies.

Procedure for Grievances Regarding the ADRC

There are two different processes for agency customers to share a grievance regarding the agency. Regardless of which process a customer chooses, all grievances regarding services will be taken seriously and prioritized for review. Customers may choose to share their grievance by:

- **Internal process:** Sharing the grievance with the agency. This can be done in a variety of ways, as described in more detail [below](#).
- **External process:**
 - Formally sharing the grievance with the [Office for Resource Center Development](#) (ORCD) at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS). ORCD is the state office responsible for contractual oversight of ADRCs and Tribal ADRSs.
 - Sharing the grievance with an external advocacy agency, such as Disability Rights Wisconsin.

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All agency staff must be knowledgeable about the grievance processes available to customers. All agency staff must be able to explain the process to the customer and assist them, if necessary, with their grievance. Customers may select whichever process they prefer for submitting their grievance. Customers may also decide to utilize a different process for their grievance at any time or simultaneously use both processes, if they so choose.

Internal Grievance Process and Procedure

A customer may make an internal grievance verbally or in writing. Internal grievances may also be identified through suggestion boxes, surveys, phone calls, email, or any other form of communication. Any customer or person acting on a customer's behalf, including service providers or agency representatives, may use the informal grievance procedure.

The agency will complete the grievance process within 10 business days of receipt of the grievance. Agency staff will document the grievance, the steps taken toward resolution, and the conclusions of their internal review in the client tracking database.

Management will investigate and record a written summary of findings of all grievances.

If a specific customer or other people are identified within a grievance, the agency director or applicable program supervisor will arrange to meet with them, along with any staff person(s) named in the grievance if the customer is comfortable having the staff person present. When a grievance is related to disability benefit specialist services or elder benefit specialist services, the agency director will share a copy of the grievance with the benefit specialist program attorney who is responsible for handling the individual cases.

The agency director will:

1. Seek to identify and clarify the matter or issues and explain the process for resolving the grievance.
2. Offer to assist the customer in putting the complaint or grievance in writing if this has not already occurred.
3. Provide a copy of the written grievance to the customer.

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4. Schedule a meeting at a mutually agreed-upon time.
5. Attempt to resolve the grievance at the scheduled meeting.
6. If resolution in this initial meeting is not possible, conduct a further inquiry into the incident or conditions that led to the grievance. This inquiry is to gather additional information with the intent of resolving the grievance.

Further inquiry or investigation that may be necessary could include interviews with relevant people, records reviews, or other efforts to form an accurate and factual basis for the resolution of the grievance. The director will prepare a written report that summarizes the grievance and the steps taken to resolve the grievance, including:

- The name of the customer or their named contact person.
- The name of the staff person involved.
- A summary of the steps taken on behalf of the customer to resolve the issue.
- Information on how the customer may request an external review by DHS if they disagree with the decision.

The agency director or applicable program supervisor will complete their inquiry and the report within 10 days of the date the formal grievance was first presented and will send copies of the report to the customer or the person acting on the customer's behalf. If the agency director or program supervisor, the customer, and/or the person acting on the customer's behalf agree to the facts, conclusions, and recommendations of the report, then the grievance may be considered resolved. If there is disagreement with the facts, conclusions, or recommendations, then the agency director may continue the attempt to seek an agreeable resolution. If an agreement resolution cannot be achieved, then the agency director will inform the individual about the option for requesting a formal external review by DHS.

External Review Process and Procedure

An external review occurs when an ADRC customer submits a grievance to DHS. ADRC customers have the right to submit grievances to DHS at any time. Upon receipt of an ADRC grievance, DHS will complete a timely review, investigation, and analysis of the facts in an

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attempt to resolve concerns and problems expressed by a customer. The agency will routinely inform customers of their right to submit grievances to DHS. Customers may seek external review at any time during or after the grievance resolution process if the customer is unsatisfied with the resolution.

Grievances related to services provided by an ADRC or Tribal ADRS should be made directly to DHS by writing, calling, or emailing:

Aging and Disability Resource Center/Tribal Aging and Disability Resource
Specialist Grievances
Office for Resource Center Development
Division of Public Health
Wisconsin Department of Health Services
201 E. Washington Ave.
Madison WI 53703

Phone: 608-266-2536
Fax 608-267-3203

[Email: dhsrcteam@dhs.wisconsin.gov](mailto:dhsrcteam@dhs.wisconsin.gov)

(Please indicate “ADRC/Tribal ADRS of _____ Grievance” in the subject line)

Training

The agency will train staff to support customers in this process and be courteous and professional. Staff will encourage customers to express their concerns to address ongoing quality improvement within the agency. The agency will train staff on steps necessary to investigate grievances. Staff will be familiar with all advocacy organizations available to customers and when customers should be referred. Staff will be familiar with policies and procedures for filing a grievance to fully and adequately assist customers with their grievances.

Continuous Quality Improvement

The agency will track all grievances related to the work of the agency in such a way to allow systematic review. The agency will analyze data for trends and use it to devise methods to improve customer service. The agency will share grievance data with staff. In accordance with [Wis. Stat. § 46.283\(6\)](#), the agency will include governing board members in the summary review



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of grievances to help them identify unmet needs within the service area of the agency and to assist in identifying areas in need of quality improvement.