

**Deaf Disability Benefit Specialist Program
Complaint Policy and Processes
Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Last Revised: February 2023**

This policy applies to the disability benefit specialist (DBS) services provided by the Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH).

Purpose

This policy describes the customer's right to file a complaint or grievance and the process for resolving customers' complaints and grievances related to DBS services. The goal of the process is to allow customers to exercise their due process rights.

ODHH will cooperate with any review of complaints or grievances conducted by the Office for Resource Center Development (ORCD) 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.

Complaint or grievance system: The overall system the agency implements to handle complaints and 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 complaint regarding DBS services. The DBS will support customers in the complaint process and will refrain from any reprisal or threat of reprisal against any individual registering a complaint.

The DBS will give every customer information on their rights, procedures, and contacts for external advocacy agencies.

Options for Sharing Complaints Regarding DBS Services

There are multiple ways for a customer to share a complaint regarding DBS services. Regardless of how a complaint is made, it will be taken seriously and prioritized for review. There are multiple options for sharing complaints about DBS services:

- **Internal process:** Sharing the complaint with ODHH.
- **External processes:**
 - Formally sharing the complaint with ORCD.
 - Sharing the complaint with an external advocacy agency, such as Disability Rights Wisconsin.

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

Internal Complaint Process and Procedures

A customer may make an internal complaint verbally or in writing. Internal complaints may be submitted through suggestion boxes, surveys, phone calls, email, or any other form of communication. Any customer or person acting on a customer's behalf, including a service provider or an agency representative, may submit an internal complaint.

ODHH will review and respond to an internal complaint within 10 business days of receiving it. ODHH will document the complaint, the steps taken toward resolution, and the conclusions of their review in the client tracking database.

If a specific customer or other people are identified in a complaint, the ODHH director will arrange to meet with them. Any staff person(s) named in the complaint will be invited to attend the meeting if the customer is comfortable with this. The ODHH director will share a copy of the complaint with the DBS program attorney.

The agency director will:

1. Seek to identify and clarify the matter or issues and explain the process for resolving the complaint.
2. Offer to assist the customer in putting the complaint in writing if this has not already occurred.
3. Provide a copy of the written complaint to the customer.
4. Schedule a meeting at a mutually agreed time.
5. Attempt to resolve the complaint 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 complaint. This inquiry is to gather additional information with the intent of resolving the complaint.

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 complaint. The ODHH director will prepare a written report that summarizes the complaint and the steps taken to resolve the complaint, 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 ORCD if they disagree with the decision.

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

External Review Process and Procedures

An external review occurs when a customer submits a complaint related to DBS services to ORCD. Customers have the right to submit complaints to ORCD at any time, and ODHH should routinely inform customers of this right.

Upon receipt of a complaint related to DBS services through ODHH, ORCD will complete a timely review, investigation, and analysis of the facts to resolve concerns expressed by a customer.

Complaints about DBS services provided by ODHH can be made directly to ORCD by writing, calling, or emailing:

Disability Benefit Specialist Program Manager
Wisconsin Department of Health Services
1 W. Wilson St., Rm. 551
P.O. Box 2659
Madison WI 53701-2659

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

Email: [DHS Resource Center Team](mailto:dhsrcteam@dhs.wisconsin.gov) at dhsrcteam@dhs.wisconsin.gov
(Please indicate "Disability benefit specialist complaint" in the subject line)