



PATHWAYS COUNSELING CENTER, INC.

Client Services 3 Client Rights – Grievance Procedure

Policy

It is the policy of Pathways Counseling Center, Inc. to have an established mechanism in addition to grievance procedures to resolve any conflicts which may arise between client and/or his/her guardian concerning treatment issues with Pathways Counseling Center, Inc. that is based on Ohio MHAS requirements. The Pathways Counseling Center, Inc. Client Rights Advocate will be responsible for ensuring the implementation and maintenance of the client grievance procedure.

Procedure

Upon admission, each client will be provided with a copy of the client grievance procedures. Upon written request, any other person may receive a copy of the policy and procedure. Receipt of the client grievance procedure is documented by client's dated signature in his/her individual client record.

COMPLAINT AND GRIEVANCE DEFINITIONS:

1. Complaints and grievances are similar in some ways, but also have important differences. **Complaints are to be made when a client wants to express their opinion that something has been done or some condition exists that they feel is not reasonable or which causes them discomfort or inconvenience.** For example, one may complain that the waiting room is too warm, or that the staff was disrespectful, or that the agency's clinic rules are too restrictive, and so on. Complaints can be verbal or in writing and can be given to a specific staff person or put in the suggestion box. If the person you initially complain to does nothing to address your concern, you have the option to take your complaint to higher level staff including the Director. In such cases, the complaint should probably in writing.
2. **In contrast, grievances are always to be made in writing and are restricted to the following subject areas:**
 - a. The client believes **there is a violation of law or regulation** in regard to his/her treatment at the facility of by facility staff. Examples can include violations of civil rights, sexual harassment, use of unqualified staff, and so on.
 - b. The client believes that **decisions made regarding his/her treatment or services violate the agency's own policies** in an unfair or prejudicial manner. For example, you believe that the agency is denying you services or terminating your services contrary to the rules, the agency is charging you fees other than what the rules/fee schedules require, the agency refuses to tell you your dose, or other such matters which are contrary to existing agency policies.

Grievance Procedure:

1. Grievances should be given to the Client Rights Advocate, or in the event the Client Rights Advocate is not on premises, the grievance can be given to the Medical Director or their designee.
2. All grievances must be written, dated and signed by the client or the person filing the grievance on behalf of the client and should include the date, approximate time, description of the incident and names of the individuals involved in the incident/situation being grieved. The client grievance may be made verbally and the client advocate is responsible for preparing a written text of the grievance. If the staff member is filing the grievance on behalf of the client, they must include an attestation by the client advocate that the written grievance is a true and accurate representation of the client's grievance.
3. If a problem cannot be resolved at a staff level, any client or family member may initiate a grievance at his/her discretion by requesting a grievance form from any staff person. Should the client need assistance in completing the grievance form,

Client Rights Advocate will assist in the preparation and filing of a grievance. All grievances will be submitted to the Executive Director.

- a. The Client Rights Advocate will attempt to bring about a resolution to your complaint and provide you with a written and oral explanation of the resolution within seven (7) working days of your initiation of the complaint.
 - b. If after following this step you are still not satisfied, you may appeal to the Medical Director or their designee within five (5) working days of receiving the decision of the Client Rights Advocate.
 - c. Within five (5) working days of your appeal, the Medical Director or their designee will schedule a time to meet with you to discuss your complaint.
 - d. Within four (4) working days of your meeting with the Medical Director or their designee, you will be provided, in writing, the Medical Director or their designee's determination regarding your complaint.
 - e. A final resolution decision will be made by Pathways Counseling Center, Inc. within 20 business days of receipt of the complaint.
4. Any exceptions that cause this time period to be extended will be documented in the grievance file and written notification will be given to the client or persons filing grievances on the client's behalf. Upon the client's written request to the Client Rights Advocate, the client has the option of filing a grievance with an outside organization. (Reference: Grievance Procedure)
 5. Both client and his/her family members may utilize the existing grievance procedures if desired. The person served may make a formal complaint, file a grievance, or appeal a decision made by Pathways Counseling Center, Inc. staff members or team that specifies the following:
 - a. That action will not result in retaliation or barriers to service;
 - b. How efforts will be made to resolve the complaint;
 - c. How the procedures for review will be explained to the persons served in a manner that is understandable;
 - d. Levels of review and the availability of external review;
 - e. Time frames that are adequate for prompt consideration and that result in timely decisions for the person served;
 - f. Procedures for written notification regarding the actions to be taken to address the complaint;
 - g. The rights and responsibilities of each party;
 - h. The availability of advocates for other assistance;
 - i. Grievance forms and procedures are made readily available to the persons served.
 6. The Client Rights Advocate will arrange for annual mandatory staff training on the client's grievance procedures.
 7. At any time, clients or persons filing grievances on the client's behalf have the right and option of the grievor to initiate a complaint with any or all of several outside entities, specifically the Putnam County MHRS Board, the Ohio MHAS and Addiction Services, the Disability Rights Ohio, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and appropriate professional licensing or regulatory boards, bodies or associations. (Reference: Grievance Procedure)
 8. Upon the client's written request, information concerning the client's grievance will be forwarded to any outside agent the client so identifies.