

## **Consumer Grievance Redress Standards**

1. Each grantee must have a written consumer grievance redress policy. The grantee will clearly explain the policy to all consumers (and family members in the case of minors) upon entry to services. Each consumer and family member will be given a simple language document (DMHDD approved) that outlines procedures, rights, and responsibilities under the policy. A signed form confirming that the consumer and family received this document and understands the policy will be part of the consumer's file and copies given to the consumer and family. DMHDD approved notices outlining grievance redress policy, procedures, and resources will be prominently displayed in all grantee facilities.
2. Grantee consumer grievance policies and procedures should be developed with meaningful consumer and family participation and must be stated in plain language. The grievance process must be available to all grantee clients, without regard to services used or funding source, and to all consumers denied access to services.
3. Grantee consumer grievance procedures must, at a minimum, meet the following criteria:
  - The grantee must treat all grievances as genuine and pursue resolution accordingly.
  - The grantee will provide a simple form with which consumers and family members may file grievances. The form will include an optional waiver of confidentiality. The grantee shall accept grievances submitted in other formats, including grievances submitted orally in person or over the telephone.
  - Consumers or family members may designate a representative (see advocate below) to assist them during grievance proceedings.
  - The grantee must respond in writing within 5 days of receiving a grievance or moving a grievance to the next level. If unable to respond within 5 days, the grantee must explain why in writing.
  - Grantees should develop, or have available, alternative dispute resolution techniques or resources.
4. Consumers and family members may have advocates present during all steps of a grievance. Upon request, grantees shall provide assistance to those who wish to file grievances. Grantees may identify staff to provide assistance, but consumers and family members may choose their own advocate (whether from grantee staff or elsewhere). Grantees must inform in writing those filing grievances or expressing interest in filing grievances that advocates such as the Disability Law Center, the Alaska Mental Health Consumer Web and NAMI-Alaska may be available to assist them in the grievance process.
5. Grantees will maintain separate grievance files, which contain all documents related to grievances and record all actions resulting from grievances. All grievances will be reported to the grantee governing body and consumer advisory body. These reports will maintain consumer confidentiality.
6. A grantee grievance process may not include more than three separate steps, which may include

- Direct dialogue with the staff member involved (with staff supervisor present if party filing the grievance desires) or that staff member's supervisor;
- Elevation to the executive director;
- Elevation to the Governing or Advisory Board.

Grievances unresolved to the consumers satisfaction within 30 days shall be reported to the DMHDD Regional Coordinator pursuant to AS 47.30.660(b)(12).

7. Grievances involving abuse or neglect of any description, or unnecessary seclusion or restraint will be investigated and reported immediately to the governing body and DMHDD.
8. The grievance procedure must include provisions to ensure the right of consumers to grieve without intimidation to prevent the filing of a grievance or retaliation if they do. Intimidation or retaliation will not be tolerated, and may result in sanctions by DMHDD, up to, and including, loss of grant funds.