

	Policy Title: Client Complaint & Grievance Policy		
	Effective Date: 1/2/2022	Policy #: OPS-605	Policy Owner: Operations
	Review Dates:	Programs Applicable To: All	Corresponding Documents: Client Handbook; Grievance Form

Policy

To outline the procedure by which clients may express a complaint and/or grievance and the process agency personnel follow to resolve the complaint or grievance

Purpose

It is the policy of BAYS that all clients have the means to file complaints and reach a timely resolution. The conditions for expressing a grievance are defined as dissatisfaction with decisions concerning the client and/or services provided to the client and are in writing. Clients have the right to file a complaint or grievance without interference or fear of retaliation. All staff members are to be attentive and respectful to any complaint or grievance registered by a client and are prohibited from discouraging, intimidating, or seeking retribution against clients who seek to exercise their rights or file a complaint or grievance. Clients have the right to timely notification of the resolution and receive an explanation of any further appeal, rights, or recourse. All clients have the right to at least one level of review that does not involve the person about whom the complaint has been made or the person who made the decision under review.

Definitions

Clients: Individuals and families that use, receive, or benefit from the programs and services at BAYS. Clients can include consumers and legal guardians.

Complaint: For clients, a complaint is a verbal expression of dissatisfaction with, including, but not limited to aspects of service delivery, manner of treatment, outcomes, or experiences.

Grievance: For clients, grievances are formal expressions of dissatisfaction or discomfort that can include, but is not limited to service delivery, manner of treatment, outcomes, or experiences. All complaints received in writing, including email, are considered formal grievances. If a client does not wish to or is unable to submit a written expression of dissatisfaction, he or she may request the formal grievance be documented by the staff person receiving the verbal report.

Procedure

- a. Notices informing all clients of their right to make a complaint are posted in an obvious location at all BAYS sites. The notice and policy is also posted on the agency website.

b. At the initial assessment, all clients will be informed of their right to make a complaint or grievance the process by which to do so, and the way in which the organization will respond. The client and staff member will sign and date an acknowledgement form which will be maintained in the client's case file and a copy will be given to the client.

c. For programs serving large groups of clients simultaneously a written copy of the policy will be made available on request and a notice will be posted in an obvious location to advise clients they may request a copy at any time.

d. In general, the first step to resolving any client concern or complaint should be to seek informal resolution within the program when a dispute arises. This process may begin with the client's direct program staff or appropriate Supervisor. If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved at this level, staff should inform the client of his/her right to submit a formal grievance.

- Informal efforts to resolve complaints and grievances should be documented in the client's case record or progress notes, as applicable.
- If the client believes for any reason that they cannot approach program staff with their concerns, they may address their concerns directly with the Chief Operating Officer.

e. At the time of a complaint, the client will be provided by staff an additional copy of the client grievance policy and a grievance form. The client will also be notified that the grievance form can be found on the agency website. The staff member will review the procedure and clarify any issues for the client. The client may also write a letter as the grievance, the form is not required. The Supervisor must forward a copy of the grievance to the Chief Operating Officer.

f. All grievances will be submitted to the Chief Operating Officer. Upon receipt of a grievance BAYS will acknowledge and document the receipt of all formal grievances.

g. The Supervisor will investigate the issue, including interviewing the client and/or other individuals involved. The Supervisor will document any communication regarding the grievance.

h. The Supervisor must submit a letter to the client and/or family within 14 days. The letter must include the findings and disposition of the grievance as well as whether the disposition was found to be acceptable. It must also include the name and contact information of the Chief Operating Officer for purposes of an appeal.

i. In the event an appeal is filed, it must be done within 14 working days. The Chief Operating Officer has 14 days to review and investigate the grievance and notify the client and/or family of any action taken.

- j. At any point in the process, the Chief Operating Officer may complete an Internal Program Review to determine the validity of the grievance.
- k. All clients/families have the right to initiate a complaint with any of the agencies that license or fund the agency's programs. In instances where the client wishes to forward a complaint to an outside authority, staff is to provide the client with assistance including pens, paper, postage and access to a telephone upon request.
- m. An annual summary of client/family complaints will be prepared for review for senior leadership by the Chief Operating Officer or designee.
- n. Should any complaint warrant further investigation beyond the scope of this policy, BAYS will communicate with the client/family making the complaint in no greater than 30-day intervals.