Dunn County Department of Human Services

808 Main Street, P.O. Box 470
Menomonie, WI 54751
(715) 232-1116; FAX: 232-5987
ADRC: (715) 232-4006

401 Technology Drive
Menomonie, WI 54751
(715) 231-2800; FAX: 233-0322

GENERAL COMPLAINT RESOLUTION POLICIES* AND PROCEDURES

PURPOSE: To acknowledge that the informal resolution of concerns, grievances and complaints is the preferred practice and to provide general procedures to receive, evaluate, resolve and document complaints in a manner that is respectful and supportive.

INFORMAL COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

A *person* expresses a concern/complaint regarding the Department to a staff person.

The *staff person receiving information about a concern/complaint*:

- asks if the person has discussed their concern with the involved staff. If the answer is no, encourages the person to speak to the staff and asks if they would like assistance to do that.
- if the answer is yes or the person does not want to talk to the involved staff, encourages them to speak to the staff's manager and asks if they would like assistance to do that.
- if a person would like assistance in discussing the issue with the involved staff or with the staff's manager, requests that the deputy director facilitate, or designate a staff to facilitate, that discussion with the appropriate staff, manager, the person and their family or other supports, of choice.
- if the person does not wish to speak to the involved staff or manager, offers the person the option to complete a Complaint Form, provides a copy of the form and the General Complaint Resolution Policies and Procedures and offers staff assistance to complete the form, if desired.

FORMAL COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Staff provides a copy of the General Complaint Resolution Policies and Procedures and the Complaint Form to anyone requesting the information and offers staff assistance to complete the form, if desired.

The *complainant* completes a Complaint Form, or another form of the complaint in writing, specifying the complaint and any proposed resolution(s) and gives/mails it to the Department.

Reception staff date stamps the complaint and forwards it to the deputy director.

The *deputy director* reviews the written complaint to determine if there is a specific, required State directive, Administrative Rule, statute or other legal process that must be implemented instead of, or in conjunction with, these Department Policies and Procedures. Such other required processes to be considered include, but are not limited to, DHS Administrative Rule Chapter 94 Patients Rights and Resolution of Patient Grievances, Division of Administrative Hearings and Appeals, Child Abuse/Neglect Substantiation Appeal, Court Hearing, etc. If there is another specific process that is required because of the type of complaint or grievance, the Deputy Director informs the complainant about that process in writing within 3 days.

If the complainant is not referred to another required process above for the whole of their complaint/grievance, the *deputy director:*

- logs the complaint.
- places a copy in the manager(s)' individual supervisory meetings file(s) until it is resolved.
- distributes the complaint to the staff person(s)' manager(s).

Within five (5) working days, the *manager:*

- contacts the complainant by phone or in writing to acknowledge receipt of the complaint.
- obtains any additional information from the complainant.
- reviews and analyzes the complaint and case file.
- determines if additional information is needed from the complainant or staff.
- determines if an appointment with the staff and complainant is warranted.
- assesses the urgency of the issue.
- decides if the complainant's issue needs to be referred to another agency in lieu of or in addition to the Department.

If the initial complaint analysis and/or contact resolves the complaint, the *manager*

- sends a written response to the complainant documenting the resolution within five (5) working days of the contact.
- provides a copy to the deputy director who files it with the complaint in the Consumer Complaint file.

If the initial complaint analysis and/or contact does not resolve the complaint, the *manager* within thirty (30) days of receipt of the complaint:

- determines if a meeting with the complainant and possibly staff and others may be needed to resolve the issue or, at least, add to the understanding of the issue by the complainant or others.
- determines if any other information or contacts may be helpful.
- sends a written response to the complainant documenting a resolution or referral to the deputy director if not resolved.

If the complaint was not resolved, the *deputy director* within forty-five (45) days of receipt of the complaint:

- reviews and analyzes the complaint, the manager's response and any other information.
- gathers additional information, if needed.
- determines if there are additional appropriate steps to potentially resolve the issue.
- determines an appropriate resolution(s).
- documents the process, information and resolution for the file.
- sends a written response to the complainant with five (5) working days of the determination, which includes an opportunity for the complainant to request that the director review the decision.

The *complainant* may request a director's review within sixty (60) days of the date of the deputy director's response. The request must be in writing stating the reason for the objection and any proposed resolution that the complainant has to offer.

The *director*:

- will evaluate the complainant's request.
- will review and analyze the initial complaint and the Department's responses.
- may meet with the people involved and consult with others.
- will send a written response to the complainant within thirty (30) days.

<u>Unless there is a requirement under statute, rule, regulation and/or ordinance that provides for further review of the complaint, the director's response is considered to be the Department's final response.</u>

The complainant may choose at any time to contact the State's Division of Hearings and Appeals, the State Regional Office, the Department of Health Services, or the Department of Family and Children's Services. See attached "State Complaint and Appeal Options" for the contact information.

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*<u>Policy statements are underlined</u> and were passed by the Human Services Board on May 27, 2003.

NOTE: At any time if all parties agree, the complaint resolution process timelines may be suspended to allow the parties to attempt an informal resolution of the matter. If the time limits are suspended, they will resume upon the request of any party.