

Resident Grievance Policy

PURPOSE:

To assure those residents experiencing problems with the program may seek resolution in an equitable, non-punitive manner and with no adverse repercussions to the resident and/or his/her status in the Community Release Program.

POLICY

1. Residents shall have the opportunity to express themselves regarding problems they are having with the program without being subject to any adverse action.
2. The grievance process shall not interfere in any way with the resident's status in the program, or with other aspects of the program.
3. There shall be an appeal process that exists independently of the specific program activity that is the subject of the grievance, and shall have various levels of appeal
4. Resident's grievances must be transmitted without alteration, interference or delay to the party responsible for receiving and investigating it.
5. If the resident perceives themselves as subject to substantial risk of imminent sexual abuse, they may verbally contact or file a grievance immediately with the PREA Coordinator.

PROCEDURE

1. The Resident shall initiate the grievance in writing to the appropriate Assistant Program Director via the Resident Grievance Form.
2. The Assistant Program Director shall meet with the resident within seventy-two (72) hours of receipt of the grievance, and shall review all aspects of the problem(s) outlined by the resident.
3. If the appropriate Assistant Program Director is unable to resolve the grievance to the resident's satisfaction, the resident may appeal that decision to the Program Director. If the grievance is on the Program Director, then the grievance is to be sent to the Vice President of Maryland Programs.
4. The Resident may forward the appeal via the Program Director. The Assistant Program Director shall be responsible for forwarding the resident's grievance to the Vice President of Maryland Programs within forty-eight (48) hours of the resident requesting an appeal, and shall include specific documentation and rationale as to why the resident's grievance was denied. Or

the Resident may forward their appeal to the Vice President of Maryland Programs via US Mail at:

**7901 Annapolis Road
Lanham, MD 20706**

5. The Vice President of Maryland Programs, or designee, shall collect all relevant information that will be presented in writing during the meeting with the resident.
6. The Vice President of Maryland Programs must meet with the resident within five (5) days of the receipt of the request to meet.
7. If the issue is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction, the resident may continue to appeal to the Volunteers of America Chesapeake Chief Operating Officer for satisfaction via mail at:

**7901 Annapolis Road
Lanham, MD 20706**

8. If all IN-HOUSE remedies fail, the resident shall have the right to contact the funding source to seek a remedy to the grievance utilizing Volunteers of America Chesapeake's procedures.
9. Should the funding source be unable to resolve the issue the matter may be referred to an Ombudsman. In instances of sexual abuse or sexual harassment, the PREA Coordinator may receive the grievance directly,
10. The agency shall issue a final agency decision on the merits on any portion of a grievance within 90 days of the initial filing of the grievance. The agency shall inform the resident whether the allegation has been determined to be substantiated, unsubstantiated or unfounded.
11. If a resident verbally contacted or submitted a written grievance citing they were subject to a substantial risk of imminent sexual abuse to the PREA Coordinator, the PREA Coordinator will meet with the resident within 24 hours and a final decision will be issued in 5 days.
12. In instances of allegations of sexual abuse or harassment by a staff member or another resident, the agency shall inform the resident whenever:
 - The staff member is no longer working in the resident's program
 - The staff member is no longer employed with the facility
 - The agency learns that the staff member or resident has been indicted or convicted on a charge related to sexual abuse within the facility
13. If a third party files a request/grievance on behalf of a resident the facility may require as a condition of processing the request that the alleged victim agree to have the request filed on his behalf and may also require the alleged victim to personally pursue any subsequent steps in the administrative remedy process.
14. Residents may be disciplined for filing a grievance in bad faith.