

Client Grievance Policy

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 Residential Community Release Program.

Residents shall have the opportunity to express themselves regarding problems they are having with the program without being subject to any adverse action. The grievance process shall not interfere in any way with the resident's status in the program, or with other aspects of the program.

In instances of sexual abuse or sexual harassment, the Agency PREA Coordinator may receive the grievance directly.

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 Compliance Manager or PREA Coordinator.

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 or PREA Compliance Manager will meet with the Resident within 24 hours.

PREA Grievance records are considered confidential and shall be maintained by the Program in a secure manner. No grievance records shall be placed in any resident file.

When a resident files a PREA grievance, these steps are to be followed:

- Resident must complete the grievance form that is available in the program and ask for help if needed;
- Resident should submit the grievance to the PREA Compliance Manager
- If the grievance is against the PREA Compliance Manager, then the resident should submit it to the Program Supervisor or PREA Coordinator.
- Program will give priority to a grievance that indicates a situation that could jeopardize the resident's life or that of others. Staff will call 9-1-1 and SID immediately to ensure the safety of all.
- The PREA Compliance Manager/PREA Coordinator will review the completed grievance form and will contact NJDOC and SID and follow their instructions or recommendations.
- If NJDOC and SID determine that the resident(s) needs to be transported back to the Regional Institution, they will initiate the investigation of the grievance and will reach a resolution based on their findings.
- The NJDOC and SID will be responsible for informing the resident of the outcome of their investigation.

A copy of all complaints/grievances related to an incident of sexual abuse, assault, harassment or any other inappropriate sexual activity or retaliation will be sent to the PREA Compliance Manager, Program Supervisor and PREA Coordinator. They will be analyzed for monitoring and reporting purposes

THIRD PARTY REPORTING

A third party can report abuse using the same channels as a victim of sexual abuse. NJAC will accept all third-party reports received through:

- Verbal reports (made in-person or via telephone)

- Written communication such as a letter or email to the facility or corporate office
- Contact with agency officials.

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 their behalf and may also require the alleged victim to personally pursue any subsequent steps in the administrative remedy process.

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 resident's grievances must be transmitted without alteration, interference or delay to the party responsible for receiving and investigating it.

For non-PREA grievances, the resident shall initiate the grievance in writing to the appropriate supervisor via the Resident Grievance Form. The supervisor 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.

If the appropriate supervisor is unable to resolve the grievance to the resident's satisfaction, the resident may appeal that decision to the Program Supervisor. If the supervisor was the Program Supervisor, then the grievance is to be sent to the Director of Programs and Services.

The resident may forward the appeal via the Program Supervisor. The Program Supervisor shall be responsible for forwarding the resident's grievance to the Director of Programs and Services 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 Director of Programs and Services via US Mail at:

**986 S. Broad Street
Trenton, NJ 08611**

The Director of Programs and Services, or designee, shall collect all relevant information that will be presented in writing during the meeting with the resident.

The Director of Programs and Services must meet with the resident within five (5) days of the receipt of the request to meet.

If the issue is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction, the resident may continue to appeal to the NJAC Executive Director for satisfaction via mail at:

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Trenton, NJ 08611**

If all IN-HOUSE remedies fail, the resident has right to contact the funding source to seek a remedy to the grievance utilizing NJAC's procedures. Should the funding source be unable to resolve the issue the matter may be referred to an Ombudsman.

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.

NJAC may discipline a resident for filing a grievance related to alleged sexual abuse only where the agency demonstrates that the resident filed the grievance in bad faith.

