

# NWF Health Network Policy & Procedure

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**Series:** 1500: Clients Rights

**Policy Name:** Client Inquiries, Complaints and Grievances

**Policy Number:** 1502

**Origination Date:** 02/02/2009

**Revised:** Board Meeting of 10/24/2024

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## Policy

It is the policy of NWF Health Network (NWFHN), to hear all client and network provider inquiries and complaints and to support the dignity and rights of all. NWFHN defines Inquiries as an act of asking for information. Sometimes inquiries are accompanied with complaints or may be the source of customer dissatisfaction, therefore NWFHN delineated the definition for the purpose of quality improvement processes. Complaints are defined as any expressed form of dissatisfaction. Complaints and grievances are terms often used interchangeably. For the purposes of this policy, NWFHN manages all inquiries, complaints, and grievance with the same level of responsiveness.

Inquiries, complaints and grievances may be made by email, mail, telephone, in person, or received.

All child welfare-related complaints will be handled through the NWFHN Client Relations Coordinator for Circuits 1, 2 & 14. All substance abuse and mental health-related complaints will be handled through the NWFHN Client Relations Coordinator for Circuits 1, 2, 3 & 14.

The NWFHN Client Relations Coordinator will be the central point-of-contact. Collaboration for resolutions will occur with Operations and the Program Directors to achieve timely and efficient resolution.

The NWFHN Client Relations Coordinator will take appropriate steps to mitigate the effects of any violation of client's rights. This Policy assures that grievances are resolved quickly and at the lowest level possible.

## Procedure

### A. Complaint Investigative Process.

1. The NWFHN Client Relations Coordinator is responsible for ensuring collaboration occurs with agency staff responsible for the program area of the complaint and/or the NWFHN Quality Department.
2. The NWFHN Client Relations Coordinator will ensure consultation occurs with any party necessary to the investigation of the complaint/grievance.
3. For assignments received from DCF, the NWFHN Client Relations Coordinator shall communicate the investigation and resolution to the COO for complaints/grievances of significant concern of safety or well-being of clients, providers or staff.
4. For all other complaints/grievances, the NWFHN Client Relations Coordinator shall communicate the results of the investigation and resolution to the grievant and will document the action taken for record-keeping purposes.

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5. Upon receipt of a complaint, the NWFHN Client Relations Coordinator will identify a due date to respond to the grievant if a date is not already assigned. It is the policy of NWFHN to respond as quickly as possible.
6. For Deaf or Hard of Hearing customer complaints of wrongfully denied access to services or discrimination, customers will be informed that they may also file externally with the state and federal government at:

The Department Of Children and Families - Office of Civil Rights

. 2415 North Monroe Street

Suite 400 Tallahassee, FL 32303-4190

Phone 850-487-1901

*and/or;*

US Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights

Atlanta Federal Center, Suite 3B-70

61 Forsyth Street, SW

Atlanta, GA 30303-8909

404-562-7881

7. If a complaint or grievance is made for a provider who s in network with Sunshine Health, the compliant will be brought to Sunshine for follow-up and investigation of the concern.

## B. Decision and Disposition.

1. If the results of the investigation indicate that a NWFHN employee or contracted employee has violated the rights of a client:
  - a. The results will need to be reported to the COO.
  - b. The COO will determine what course of action to take against the employee violating the rights of the client.
2. If the results of the investigation indicate that a subcontracted provider employee has violated the rights of a client, the COO may impose sanctions against the subcontracted provider.
3. If the complaint/grievance is not resolved to the client's satisfaction by the Program Director, the issue should be escalated to the COO.
4. The issue shall be addressed as quickly as possible and an update shall be provided to the complainant.

## C. No Retaliation.

1. There shall be no retaliation against any individual or person served, or employee for having filed or assisted on the filing of a complaint/grievance, or for investigation or acting on a complaint/grievance.

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2. Any employee who becomes aware of any such retaliatory action shall immediately report it to the COO. \*Immediate reporting is regardless of day or time and whether or not during business hours.
3. For subcontracted providers report to their leadership who shall report to the ME Program Office and NWFHN COO.