

SECTION: 015 Grievance Procedures

Effective: 01/14/13
Last Reviewed/Revised: 01/01/21

Policy: It is the policy of LIFE-NWPA to assure that all Participants at each center understand and have access to the established Grievance system should a concern or complaint about their care arises. A written record of all grievances shall be maintained, including the initial date, identification of the grievance, and the date of resolution, along with the resolution. All grievance trends will be reviewed on a routine basis by the Executive Director and the LIFE-NWPA Board of Directors. The QI Coordinator and Center Manager will maintain this information in order to foster an environment of continuous improvement. In addition, grievance information will be made available for review by the appropriate government entities. There shall be no discrimination against a Participant on the grounds that he or she has filed a grievance. In order to maintain confidentiality in the grievance process, all LIFE-NWPA staff members will review the Confidentiality Policy as part of their orientation and annual evaluation. The Grievance Binder will be placed in the QI Coordinator's office in a secure lock area.

Purpose: To provide Participants/family members/representatives a process for expressing dissatisfaction with the services provided by LIFE-NWPA whether medical or non-medical in nature this allows for an orderly resolution to any grievance. All LIFE-NWPA Participants/family members/representatives will have the opportunity to express their concerns or dissatisfactions with the services of LIFE-NWPA or any of its providers without the fear of reprisal.

The grievance process also provides LIFE-NWPA with opportunities to improve the service delivery system. LIFE-NWPA recognizes that grievances may be the first indication that a problem exists. The Grievance Policy and its applicable procedures will be reviewed by the designated staff member at the time of enrollment. Participants and/or their designated representatives are provided with written information about the grievance process upon initial enrollment, annually thereafter and at any time a grievance is filed. In addition, the grievance policy and procedure will be made available upon request to the Participant/family member/representative.

Definition: A grievance is defined as a complaint, either written or oral, expressing dissatisfaction with service delivery or the quality of care furnished

Filing of a Grievance

Procedure:

A grievance may be expressed to any staff member at any time.

If, during center non-operational hours, the participant/family member/representative wishes to file a grievance, the nurse on-call will be responsible for receiving and then communicating the grievance to the appropriate center the next business day. At the time a grievance is filed, information will be provided, using LIFE FORM – Grievance Handout, to the participant/representative who expressed a complaint/grievance orally, which discusses the steps including timeframes for response that will be taken to resolve the grievance.

Documentation of a Grievance

Procedure:

Policies and Procedures

1. The Grievance Universe will be maintained by the QI Coordinator and Center Manager. Every grievance will be documented on the day that the IDT receives notice.

- With LIFE FORM – Grievance Form

If a grievance was received after hours, it will be communicated the next business day to the IDT.

2. It is the responsibility of the staff member who is receiving the grievance to ensure documentation, follow up, and to discuss the grievance with the participant and provide the Participant, in writing, (using LIFE FORM – Grievance Handout) with the specific steps, including timeframes for response that will be taken to resolve the grievance.
3. All grievances will be reviewed by the IDT on the next business day.
4. Trends and patterns will be identified by the QI Coordinator and reported to Management Team. In addition, identified trends and patterns will be reported back to the Interdisciplinary Team involved, who in turn, will develop an action plan for resolving the negative trend.
5. All progress of the center's activities towards resolution of a trend in grievances will be monitored by Management Team on a monthly basis.
6. A written record of all grievances shall be made, including date, identification of the individual recording the grievance and dispositions.

Resolution

Procedure:

1. It is the responsibility of the staff member involved to investigate and seek a resolution of the grievance as soon as possible but within 5 business days of notification to the IDT during the next scheduled morning meeting.
2. The grievance and the resolution will be discussed by the IDT during the next scheduled morning meeting. The agreed resolution will be documented on the Grievance Form. The Participant/family will be notified either orally or in writing of the team's resolution within 5 business days of the team morning meeting. All efforts will be made by the IDT to pursue a resolution to its utmost ability, so that problems with service delivery do not go unresolved.
3. LIFE-NWPA will continue to furnish all required services to the participant during the grievance process.

Policies and Procedures

4. If a solution is found by the staff and agreed by the Participant/family within 5 business days of the team meeting, the grievance is resolved.
5. If the participant/family agrees with the resolution but further follow up is needed, the grievance will be considered RESOLVED but if follow up is required it will be so noted on the Grievance Form that follow up is needed. Follow up will be evident and documented on the Grievance Form along with what follow up is needed, who is responsible for the follow up, when and where it is to occur, and what follow up or consulting/education is to be completed. When the follow up is completed, the Grievance then will be considered closed with the appropriate documentation and any attachments included.
6. If the participant/family is dissatisfied with the resolution proposed by the team, he/she will be informed of what action he/she may take.

Dissatisfaction Procedure:

1. If a solution is not found by the staff or agreed to by the complainant within five business days, the staff shall develop a written report regarding the nature of the grievance.
2. The written report shall be sent to the Executive Director, or if the grievance involves medical care, to the Medical Director for final action.
3. The Executive Director or Medical Director will immediately review and approve or disapprove of the staff's written report, and forward a copy of the approved report to the complainant within five business days. The report is considered to be the final disposition to the grievance. The report is accompanied by a notice that contains a statement that if the Participant is not satisfied with this action, he/she has 30 business days to request a review by the Plan Advisory Committee. (See Attachment 15-1).
4. If a Participant is not satisfied with the action taken as a result of their grievance, he or she may ask for a review by the Plan Advisory Committee within 30 business days of receipt of the final disposition of the grievance. (See Attachment 15-2).
5. The Plan Advisory Committee will send written acknowledgment of the receipt of the grievance within five business days to the complainant. The Plan Advisory Committee will then investigate, find a solution, and take appropriate actions. (See Attachment 15-3).

Policies and Procedures

6. The Committee will send to the complainant a copy of a report containing a description of the grievance, the actions taken to resolve the grievance, and the basis for such action. The Committee has 30 business days from the day the grievance is filed with the Committee to complete its report and send it to the complainant. If the decision is wholly or partially adverse to the Participant, a copy of the report shall be forwarded immediately to the Department and the local ombudsman/AAA office.

LIFE-NWPA will forward monthly reports to the program QI Coordinator, who is responsible for maintaining, aggregating, and analyzing information on grievance proceedings. This information will be used in LIFE-NWPA's internal Quality Improvement Program. Grievances data tracked will include the number of grievances filed, specific issues raised through the grievance process, resolutions reached, and timeframes for resolutions. By analyzing the number and types of grievances, LIFE-NWPA can develop activities that will monitor and improve the grievance resolution process, as well as identify and make improvements or modifications in areas of care. This information, will in turn, be reported to Management Team, and ultimately, the governing board. Grievance data will be also be reported to the Pennsylvania DHS and CMS and will be available for review at any Pennsylvania DHS and/or CMS site review.

Annual Review

The grievance process will be reviewed and provided in writing upon enrollment, and at least annually with participants, caregivers/ representatives. Contracted providers and all employees of LIFE-NWPA will review the grievance process annually.