

# Charleston/Dorchester Community Mental Health Center

## COMPLAINTS BY CONSUMERS/CITIZENS

In conjunction with SCDMH Directive No. 833-02

This policy is designed to deal with complaints by any citizen regarding the activities and services of the Center and its staff. Procedures are established below for the handling of such complaints.

A list of the Local Client Advocates shall be posted at all service locations.

Complaints may generally be categorized as follows:

- a. Consumer or party acting on behalf of the consumer, involving the Center regarding their treatment and/ or services
  - As used in this policy, a "party acting on behalf of the consumer" is a person who has the proper legal authority to act on behalf of a consumer or has consumer authorization to act on behalf of a consumer.
- b. Other complaints such as:
  - Complaints about administrative matters  
(e.g. about facilities, telephone manners of a staff member, etc.)

### Procedures for Handling Complaints Involving Center Consumers:

1. Any staff member, whatever their function, who receives a complaint shall immediately report the complaint to the supervisor in charge of the service area against which the complaint is lodged. Complaints of unethical, illegal, or unprofessional behavior shall immediately be brought to the Center Director's attention.
2. At no time will a complaint or grievance filed result in retaliation or be a barrier to services.
3. Minor issues or misunderstandings may be resolved at the local treatment level by the designated supervisor in charge. If not resolved or if the consumer requests, it is the responsibility of the center staff member to do one of the following within (1) one regular workday:
  - a. Assist the consumer in completing the top portion of the Request for Review Form (PR-3), contact the appropriate Local Advocate and forward the form to that particular advocate.
  - b. Assist the consumer in contacting the appropriate Local Advocate
  - c. Making contact with the appropriate Local Advocate on behalf of the consumer

\* A consumer or party acting on behalf of a consumer should initiate a request for consumer rights review within 30 days of the event.

\* All efforts will be made to explain the procedures for review to the consumer or party acting on behalf of the consumer in a manner that is at their level of understanding.

4. At the time the local advocate receives the Request for Review form (PR-3) form, is contacted either by a staff member, consumer, or party acting on behalf of the consumer requesting a review, the Local Advocate will thoroughly review the presenting issues and determine how the complaint will be addressed. As needed, any/all parties involved will be contacted within (1) regular workday.
5. All allegations of abuse, neglect, or exploitation shall immediately be referred to the Center Director and the Division of Public Safety or other responsible agency for investigation.
6. Local Advocates may conduct informal reviews of concern by providing information and referrals when complete consumer rights reviews are considered to be unnecessary, providing the consumer or party acting on behalf of the consumer agrees. Regardless of level of review all correspondence and documentation will be forwarded to the Lead Advocate Coordinator.
5. If a formal review is indicated the Local Advocate will:
  - Complete the top portion of the Request for Review form (PR -3) form
  - Schedule and conduct an on-site interview of the issues within (2) two regular workdays of the initial complaint notification.
  - If issues are resolved satisfactorily, the Request for Review form (PR- 3) is completed, includes a remedial action report and is distributed as required within (15) fifteen regular workdays of the initial complaint notification.
    - White & Yellow = SCDMH Client Advocacy Office
    - Pink = Lead Advocate Coordinator
    - Goldenrod = the consumer or party acting on behalf of the consumer

\* An expedited response shall take place when a consumer's safety is at risk

7. If the remedial action taken by the Local Advocate does not resolve the issues or if there is dissatisfaction with the remedial action, the consumer or party acting on behalf of the consumer may request a review by the Center Director. The Local Advocate will immediately contact the Lead Advocate Coordinator, fax the PR-3 and forward the original to the Lead Advocate Coordinator. The Lead Advocate Coordinator will then immediately notify the Center Director of the pending unresolved issues and request for review.
8. The Center Director shall, within three (3) regular workdays of receiving the written report from the Lead Advocate Coordinator, review the complaint with all parties involved in an attempt to resolve the issues presented. As part of this request for review, the consumer or party acting on behalf of the consumer may request a conference with the Center Director to review the issues.
9. A review and/or conference as well as the completed Request for Review (Form PR-6) form including a remedial action report shall be completed and distributed as required by the Center Director within (15) regular workdays after the consumer or party acting on behalf of the consumer has requested the review.

\* An expedited response shall take place when a consumer's safety is at risk

10. If the remedial action taken by the Facility or Center Director does not resolve the issues or if there is dissatisfaction with the remedial action, the consumer or party acting on behalf of the consumer may request a review by the Department of Mental Health Advocacy Office. The Center Director will forward the report (PR-6) to the DMH Advocacy Office explaining the reasons for failure to resolve the issue. Once a complaint has reached this level procedures will be followed pursuant to the SCDMH Directive No. 833-02.

**Procedure for Handling other Complaints:**

All other complaints shall be called to the attention of the supervisor at the site of the situation being complained about. For instance, a complaint about a receptionist's telephone behavior shall be directed to the supervisor of that area. In cases of doubt regarding to whom the complaint should be reported, such complaints should be made to the Center Director. All complaints of unethical, illegal, or unprofessional behavior shall immediately reported to the Center Director. All complaints in this section shall be reported in writing to the Center Director.

- a. Any complaint made shall be addressed by the supervisor in question who shall report, in writing, the nature of the resolution to the Center Director.
- b. In the event that resolution is not achieved with the supervisor, the complaint shall immediately be forwarded to the Center Director, who shall appropriately resolve said complaint and document the resolution. The Center Director's office shall keep records of all complaints covered under this section.

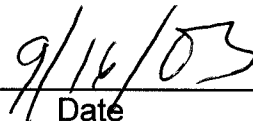
**Other Procedures:**

1. The Center Director shall periodically report all complaints to the Chairman of the Board of Directors.
2. Any staff member having a question regarding client complaints may contact the Center's Local Client Advocate.
3. All supervisors shall review this policy statement and the SCDMH Directive No. 833-02 Entitled "Consumer Rights Review Procedure" with all employees.

This policy statement rescinds and supersedes all earlier Mental Health Center policies regarding complaints



Thomas G. Hiers, Ph.D.  
Executive Director



Date  
(revision of policy dated 7/26/02)