

**Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services  
(CCDCFS)  
Policy Statement**

**Policy Chapter:** Management, Public Relations  
**Policy Number:** 10.06.10  
**Procedure Name:** Responding to Concerns and/or Complaints

**Original Effective Date:** 05/06/2008  
**Revision Date(s):** 02/01/2019, 01/01/2014  
**Current Revision Date:** 02/01/2022  
**Approved By:** Cynthia G. Weiskittel

**PURPOSE:** To provide a process for resolving concerns or complaints from clients or stakeholders.

**SCOPE:** This policy applies to the Customer Relations Unit and all CCDCFS staff involved with anyone wishing to report a concern or complaint regarding Division performance.

### **POLICY**

CCDCFS and its employees assist families in understanding services and works with them to achieve the best outcomes for everyone involved. CCDCFS treats everyone with respect, works collaboratively and strives to minimize potential conflict. The Customer Relations Unit provides a process for all clients of CCDCFS to express their concerns or complaints regarding the Division, its policies, services or staff and receive a response and/or assistance in understanding and navigating services. The Division also uses the information received to improve services, outcomes and overall customer experience.

### **PROCEDURES**

#### **I. Roles & Responsibilities**

- A. The Customer Relations Unit creates and supports the means and processes for receiving, tracking, responding to, closing out and reporting on complaints and concerns in a professional and timely manner.

#### **II. Receiving Concerns**

- A. Clients' concerns are first directed to the Worker of Record (WOR) to resolve the issue.
- B. If, after contacting their worker, a client still has concerns, the WOR (or other involved staff) connects the client with WOR's immediate supervisor or senior manager to resolve the issue.

- C. If a client's concern remains unaddressed after exhausting the methods outlined in steps A and B above or the methods above do not apply to the concerned party, the complaint or concern can be directed to the Customer Relations Unit by:
1. Email [CustomerServiceCCDCFS@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:CustomerServiceCCDCFS@jfs.ohio.gov)
  2. Written correspondence mailed to the following address;  
Customer Relations Unit  
Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services  
3955 Euclid Avenue, Room 112-W  
Cleveland, Ohio 44115
  3. Visiting in Person, 3955 Euclid Avenue
  4. Calling Customer Care Line (216) 432-CARE 2273
  5. Faxing the Concern to (216) 432-5047
- D. If the issue is not resolved at this level or persists, the customer relations staff contacts the senior manager on the client's behalf and requests a response in writing.
- E. Certain stakeholders may be directed to the appropriate senior manager or deputy director within the agency responsible for their interaction with us.
- F. In certain circumstances, the Customer Relations Manager may request an administrative review of a case to resolve concerns or complaints. If this occurs, continuous quality improvement (CQI) staff will prepare a review of the case for a senior manager or deputy director who then determines the appropriate follow-up to resolve the issue. See Section IV Part C (Special Review)

### **III. Responding to Informal Concerns**

- A. Informal concerns are generally issues that can be resolved at the worker or supervisor level by providing information, clarification, or re-direction to another agency or department. In general, informal concerns are addressed as follows:
1. The Customer Relations Program Officer (CRPO) receives a concern from a client or other stakeholder and enters the concern into the Customer Relations (CR) Tracking System within two business days of the receipt of the concern.
  2. The CRPO shares and discusses the concern with the appropriate Worker of Record (WOR) and (Supervisor, if necessary) to reach an appropriate resolution within two business days following the receipt of the concern.
  3. The response to the concern may be delivered to the customer via a phone call, email, or postal mail by either the assigned CRPO, WOR and/or Supervisor within 10 days of the receipt of the

concern. Any disputes about who will respond to the concern is managed by the respective supervisors.

4. The CRPO makes the appropriate documentation in the CR tracking system to close out the concern.
5. The WOR ensures copies of any written correspondence are provided to the CRPO and added to case record, as well as documented in the case notes, if necessary.

#### **IV. Responding to Formal Concerns**

- A. Formal concerns are generally issues that require supervisory review, decisions, or further agency action and often require a response in writing. They may include concerns that were sent to the Customer Relations Unit by the Director's Office, the County Executive's Office or another party on behalf of the customer. In general, formal concerns are addressed as follows:
  1. The CRPO receives a concern from a customer or other stakeholder and enters the concern into the Customer Relations tracking system within two business days of the receipt of the concern.
  2. If the concern comes to the Customer Relations Unit from the Director's Office or a third party (other than the original complainant), the CRPO attempts to contact the original party (complainant) about the concern within two business days of receipt of the concern.
  3. The CRPO documents the concern on the Formal Concern Form and forwards it to the supervisor, senior supervisor, and deputy of the primary worker involved in the matter within two business days of the receipt of the concern.
  4. A written response to the concern is prepared by any combination of the supervisory chain of command and signed by the senior supervisor and deputy. (The response may display a (cc:) copy notation to the director, if the concern was made to the director).
  5. The Senior Manager or his/her designee mails the original completed and signed response to the complainant and sends an electronic copy to the CRPO by the date indicated on the Formal Concern Form.
  6. The Senior Manager or his/her designee ensures copies of any written correspondence are added in Traverse, as well as documented in the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) activity log, if necessary.

7. Third parties reporting concerns receive written follow-up by the CRPO, when possible, without disclosing confidential information.
8. The CRPO makes the appropriate documentation in the CR tracking system to close out the concern and adds notes in the SACWIS activity log.
9. The Customer Relations staff follows up with appropriate staff on delayed responses. If additional time is needed or there is a delay in resolving a concern, the CRPO tracks and reports out on pending concerns weekly to their supervisor. When necessary, additional steps are taken by management to identify and resolve barriers to responding timely to concerns.

B. Repeat Issues - Case Conference

1. Upon the third occasion of a reported concern from the same party regarding the same or similar issue, the CRPO informs the Senior Manager and requests that a case conference be held within 14 days of the reported (repeat) concern.
2. The case conference is chaired/hosted by the Senior Manager and shall include workers and supervisory staff who are familiar and/or involved in the case and include primary family case members who expressed the concern(s).
3. All related concerns are presented and discussed, and the group works together to resolve the issue(s).
4. The Senior Manager prepares a letter to the client within one-week of the case conference, outlining the concern(s) and the agreed to resolution for signature by the Senior Manager and Deputy Director; mails the letter to the client and submits a copy to the CRPO, and client case record in Traverse.
5. This reply will be re-issued upon subsequent reports by the same party regarding the same or similar issue.

C. Special Review

1. In situations when complaints or concerns continue to be filed by the same party regarding the same or similar issue or require special attention, the Customer Relations Manager, Division Director or any Deputy Director may request a Special Review.
2. A program officer from Customer Relations and Continuous Quality Improvement reviews the concerns and the case record. Upon completion, CQI prepares a summary within 14 days of reviewing the case.

3. A team comprised of senior managers and administrators (designated for each case by the Division Director) shall meet to determine the appropriate resolution to the case which may include a meeting with the family and/or a written response from the Director. The team also determines who is responsible for: following up with the client/family; documenting information in SACWIS and/or the case record; and contacting Customer Relations to close out the concern in the CR database.

D. Civil Rights Complaints

Any worker, supervisor or program officer who receives a complaint from a client regarding a violation of their civil rights shall forward the concern or direct the client immediately to the Division's current Civil Rights Coordinator for follow up.

Stephen Rusnak  
Civil Rights Coordinator  
Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services  
3955 Euclid Avenue, Room 337E  
Cleveland, Ohio 44114  
216-881-4028  
[Stephen.Rusnak@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Stephen.Rusnak@jfs.ohio.gov)

**SEE ALSO:**

Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services Policies and Procedures Manual

Policy 7.06.01 Agency Civil Rights Plan, Clients' Civil Rights and Procedures

**FORM**

Formal Concerns Form