

## **TECHNICAL REQUIREMENT RECIPIENT RIGHTS APPEAL PROCESS**

### **I. Background**

Chapter 7A of the Michigan Mental Health Code, PA 258 of 1974 as amended, establishes the right of public mental health service recipients, or someone on their behalf, to file complaints alleging a violation of rights guaranteed by Chapter 7 of the Code. Chapter 7A also assures that an appeal can be made regarding the findings, remedial action, or timeliness of the complaint investigation. The purpose of this technical requirement is to establish a process for handling these appeals to assure all recipients, and those acting on their behalf, receive procedural due process, including its essential elements of notice and opportunity to be heard by a fair and impartial decision-making entity.

### **II. Definitions**

- A. Appeals Committee:  
A committee appointed by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Director, by the board of a Community Mental Health Services program (CMHSP), or by the governing board of a licensed private psychiatric hospital/unit (LPH/U).
- B. Appellant: The complainant, the recipient (if someone filed on the recipient's behalf), or the legal guardian of the recipient (if any), who seeks review by an appeals committee or the MDHHS pursuant to sections 330.1784 and 330.1786 of the Code.
- C. Complainant: The individual who files a recipient rights complaint.
- D. Grounds for appeal:
  - i. The investigative findings of the office are not consistent with the facts or with law, rules, policies or guidelines
  - ii. The action taken, or plan of action proposed, by the respondent does not provide an adequate remedy
  - iii. An investigation was not initiated or completed on a timely basis
- E. Intervention: To act on behalf of a recipient to resolve a complaint alleging a violation of a code protected right when the facts are clear and the remedy, if applicable, is clear, easily obtainable within 30 days, and does not involve statutorily required disciplinary action. Interventions, at a minimum, must contain the following elements: the specific action taken by ORR, on behalf of the complainant, to resolve the complaint, identification of the code protected right, a statement indicating whether the allegation of a rights violation is substantiated or not substantiated. Additionally, if the allegation is substantiated, the specific remedial action taken is identified.
- F. Investigation: A detailed inquiry into and systematic examination of an allegation raised in a rights complaint, as outlined in 330.1778 of PA 258 of 1974

- G. Legal Guardian: A judicially appointed guardian or parent who has legal custody of a minor recipient.
- H. Office: Any of the following:
- i. With respect to a rights complaint involving services provided directly by the MDHHS, the MDHHS Office of Recipient Rights created under section 330.1754 of the Code.
  - ii. With respect to a rights complaint involving services provided directly or under contract to a community mental health services program, the Office of Recipient Rights created by the community mental health services program under section 330.1755 of the Code.
  - iii. With respect to a rights complaint involving services provided directly or under contract to a licensed private psychiatric hospital/unit, the Office of Recipient Rights created by the licensed hospital under section 330.1755 of the Code.
- I. Respondent: The service provider that had responsibility at the time of an alleged rights violation for the services with respect to which a rights complaint has been filed.
- J. Responsible Mental Health Agency (RMHA): The hospital, center, or community mental health services program that has primary responsibility for the recipient's care or for the delivery of services or supports to that recipient.

### **III. Procedure – Local Appeals Committee**

A. Jurisdiction

An appeal shall be reviewed by the committee designated by the governing body. The appeals committee of a CMHSP shall have jurisdiction over their recipients placed for treatment in an LPH/U. For non-CMHSP recipients, the LPH/U, may appoint its own Appeals Committee in compliance with section 330.1774(4)(a) of the Code or, by agreement with MDHHS, designate the MDHHS Appeals Committee to hear appeals against the LPH/U under section 330.1774(4)(b) of the Code.

B. Training

The Office of Recipient Rights with the MDHHS, a CMHSP, or an LPH/U shall assure that training is provided to the Appeals Committee, as required by Section 330.1755(2)(a) of the Code. Topics shall include the following:

- Categories of rights violations
- The complaint investigation process

- Types and weighing of evidence
- Explanation of the preponderance of the evidence standard used by the rights office in determining whether a rights violation has occurred
- Statutory definition of “appropriate remedial action”
- Agency disciplinary guidelines
- Agency policy/procedures on the appeal process and functions of the Appeals Committee

C. Notice of Right to Appeal

Every complainant, recipient (if different than the complainant) and the recipient’s legal guardian (if one has been appointed) shall be informed in the Summary Report issued by the executive director of a CMHSP of the right to appeal to the designated Appeals Committee. Notice shall include the address for filing the appeal, the grounds for appeal as stated in section 330.1784(2) of the Mental Health Code, the time frame for submission of the appeal, information on advocacy organizations that may assist with filing the written appeal, and, in the absence of assistance from an advocacy organization, an offer of assistance by the Office of Recipient Rights.

D. Notification when the Summary Report Contains a Plan of Action

A Summary Report which contains a plan of action shall indicate a date the action is to be completed. The MDHHS facility director, CMHSP executive director or director of the LPH/U shall assure that the complainant, recipient (if different than the complainant), the recipient’s legal guardian, (if any), and the office are provided written notice that the action described in the plan has been completed. If the action taken differs from the original plan, a description of that action shall be provided.

E. Time Frame

Not later than 45 calendar days after receipt of the Summary Report, or 45 days from the mailing of a notice regarding the action that was taken when the Summary Report provided only a plan of action, the appellant may file a written appeal with the Appeals Committee having jurisdiction to act upon it. The only ground for appeal of a notice of action taken is that the action failed to provide adequate remedy.

F. Preliminary Review

Within 5 business days of receipt of the request for appeal, members of the appeals committee shall review the request for appeal to determine if the appellant has standing to appeal and if the appeal request meets the timeframe and grounds. This review may be conducted by the full Committee, or by a subcommittee consisting of at least two committee members designated by the full Committee to fulfill this responsibility. The Committee shall maintain a log of all appeals received and the disposition of each.

G. Notice of Preliminary Review Decision

Within 7 business days of receipt of the request for appeal, written notice that the appeal has been accepted, or rejected, shall be provided to the appellant and a copy

of the appeal shall be provided to the respondent, the RMHA, and the Rights Office. A notice of rejection shall describe the reason for not accepting the request for appeal.

#### H. Committee Appeal Review

No later than 30 calendar days after receipt of a written appeal the Appeals Committee shall meet in closed session to review the facts as stated in all complaint investigation documents in light of the reason for appeal. The Committee shall not consider allegations that were not part of the original complaint, but shall inform appellant of his/her right to file a complaint with the office. Upon completion of their review, the Appeals Committee shall do one of the following:

- i. Uphold the investigative findings of the office and the action taken or plan of action proposed by the respondent; OR
- ii. If the appeal concerns the investigative findings of the office, either:
  - a. Return the investigation to the office and direct that it be reopened or reinvestigated, or
  - b. Recommend that the board (CMHSP) or governing body (LPH/U) request an external investigation by the state Office of Recipient Rights.
- iii. If the appeal concerns the action taken, directs that the respondent take additional, or different, action to remedy the violation. The Appeals Committee shall base its determination upon any or all the following as required by Sec 1780 of the MHC.
  - a. Action taken or proposed did not correct or remedy the rights violation.
  - b. Action taken or proposed was/will not be taken in a timely manner.
  - c. Action taken or proposed did not/will not prevent a future recurrence of the violation.

Written notice of this direction for additional or different action to be taken by the respondent shall also be provided to the RMHA, if different than the respondent and the office.

- iv. If the appeal concerns the timeliness of the investigation and the Committee confirms that the investigation was not initiated or completed in a timely manner, recommend that the MDHHS-ORR director, executive director of the CMHSP or director of the LPH/U address the root cause of the lack of timeliness with their Rights Advisor.

#### I. Recusal

Any member of an Appeals Committee who has a personal or professional relationship with an individual involved in the appeal shall abstain from participating in that appeal.

J. Decision

The Appeals Committee shall document its decision in writing within 10 working days following the decision and shall provide copies of such to the respondent, appellant, recipient (if different than appellant), the recipient's legal guardian (if any), the RMHA and the office. Documentation shall include justification for the decision made by the Committee.

**IV. Subsequent Action**

- A. If the Appeals Committee directs that the office reopen or reinvestigate the complaint, the office shall submit another investigative report in compliance with section 330.1778(5) within 45 calendar days of receipt of the written decision of the Committee to the CMHSP executive director. The 45 calendar day time frame may be extended at the discretion of the Appeals Committee upon a showing of good cause by the office. At no time shall the time frame exceed 90 days.
- B. Within 10 business days of receipt of the reinvestigate report, the executive director of the CMHSP shall issue new Summary Report in compliance with section 330.1782. The Summary Report shall be submitted to the appellant, recipient if different than the appellant, the recipient's legal guardian, if any, the office and the Appeals Committee. If the Summary Report indicates the decision in the case remains unsubstantiated, the Summary Report shall contain information regarding the appellant's right to further appeal, the time frame for the appeal and the ground for appeal. The report shall also inform the appellant of advocacy organizations that may assist in filing the written appeal or, in the absence of an advocacy organization, offer the assistance of the office.
- C. If, upon review, the Committee feels that the reinvestigated results in the Report of Investigative Findings is still inadequate, the Committee shall inform the appellant of the ability to further appeal to Level 2.
- D. If the reinvestigation results in the substantiation of a previously unsubstantiated rights violation but the appellant disagrees with the adequacy of the action or plan of action proposed by the respondent, the appellant may file an appeal on such grounds with the local Appeals Committee. The Summary Report shall inform the appellant of this right as well as provide further information as stated in II C above
- E. If the Appeals Committee directs that the respondent take additional or different action, that direction shall be based on the fact that the action taken was not in compliance with section 330.1780 of the Code.
- F. Within 30 calendar days of receipt of the determination from the Appeals Committee, respondent shall provide written notice to the Appeals Committee that the action has been taken or justification as to why it was not taken. The written notice shall also be sent to the appellant, recipient if different than appellant, the

recipient's legal guardian, if any, the RMHA if different than the respondent, and the office.

- G. If the action taken by the respondent is determined by the Appeals Committee and/or the appellant still to be inadequate to remedy the violation, the appellant shall be informed by the Appeals Committee of his/her right to file a recipient rights complaint against the RMHA, i.e., MDHHS facility director, executive director of a CMHSP or the director of an LPH/U for violation of section 330.1754(3)(c) or 330.1755(3)(b) of the Code.
- H. If the Appeals Committee recommends that the board or governing body of the CMHSP, request an external investigation by MDHHS-Office of Recipient Rights, the Board of Directors may make the request to MDHHS-ORR, in writing, within 5 business days of receipt of the request from the Appeals Committee.
  - i. Within 10 business days of receipt of the investigative report from MDHHS-ORR, the executive director of the CMHSP, or the director of the LPH/U, shall issue a Summary Report in compliance with section 330.1782. The Summary Report shall be submitted to the appellant, recipient if different than the appellant, the recipient's legal guardian, if any, the office and the Appeals Committee.
  - ii. The complainant, recipient if different than the complainant, and the recipient's legal guardian, if any, shall be informed in the Summary Report issued by the executive director of a CMHSP or the director of an LPH/U of the right to appeal to the MDHHS Appeals Committee. Notice shall include information on the grounds for appeal as stated in section 330.1784(2), the time frame for submission of the appeal, advocacy organizations that may assist with filing the written appeal, and an offer of assistance by the Office of Recipient Rights in the absence of assistance from an advocacy organization.
  - iii. Not later than 45 calendar days after receipt of the Summary Report, the appellant may file a written appeal with the MDHHS Appeals Committee.

## **V. Level 2 Appeals**

### **A. Grounds and Timeframe**

An appeal to Level 2 Appeals may be made only if the original appeal was based on the question of whether the investigative findings of the office were inconsistent with the facts or with law, rules, policies or guidelines; and 1) only after a decision to uphold the findings has been made on the original appeal by the local Appeals Committee or, 2) when upon reinvestigation by ORR at the request of the local appeals committee, the findings of the office remain unsubstantiated. Within 45 calendar days after receiving written notice of the decision of the Appeals Committee or the Summary Report from MDHHS-ORR the appellant may file a written appeal with Level 2 Appeals. The appeal shall be mailed to:

Level 2 ORR Appeal  
MDHHS-Appeals  
PO Box 30807  
Lansing, MI 48909  
FAX: (517) 241-7973

**B. Written Notice**

Upon receipt of the appeal, Level 2 Appeals shall give written notice of the receipt to the respondent, local Office of Recipient Rights holding the record of the complaint and the CMHSP Director.

**C. Review**

The respondent, local office holding the record of the complaint, and the CMHSP shall ensure that Level 2 Appeals has access to all necessary documentation and other evidence cited in the complaint and local appeal. Level 2 Appeals shall review the record generated by the local appeal. Level 2 Appeal shall not consider additional evidence or information that was not available during the local appeal.

**D. Level 2 Action**

- i. Within 30 calendar days after receiving the appeal, Level 2 Appeals shall review the appeal and do one of the following:
  - a. Uphold the findings of the office.
  - b. Affirm the decision of the Appeals Committee.
  - c. Return the matter to the director of the department's Office of Recipient Rights, the executive director of the CMHSP or the director of the LPH/U with instruction for additional investigation or consideration.
- ii. Level 2 Appeals shall provide copies of its action to the respondent, the appellant, recipient if different than appellant, the recipient's legal guardian, if any, the board of a CMHSP, the governing body of the LPH/U and the local Office of Recipient Rights holding the record. If the appeal involves the findings of a MDHHS-ORR rights advisor, the MDHHS-ORR director shall also be provided copies of the action.
- iii. If Level 2 APPEALS upholds the findings of the office, notice shall be provided to the appellant of his/her legal right to seek redress through the circuit court.
- iv. If Level 2 APPEALS instructs that additional investigation be conducted, the director of MDHHS-ORR, the executive director of the CMHSP or the director of the LPH/U shall assure that such investigation is completed in a fair and impartial manner within 45 calendar days of his/her receipt of the written notice from MDHHS-APPEALS. The 45 calendar day time frame may be extended at the department's discretion upon a showing of good cause by the MDHHS-ORR director, CMHSP executive director or LPH/U director. At no time shall

the time frame exceed 90 calendar days. In cases of re-investigation by MDHHS-ORR, the director of that office shall be responsible for the submission of the investigative report to the appropriate MDHHS facility director.

E. Subsequent Action

- i. Within 10 business days of the receipt of the investigative report, the facility director, executive director of the CMHSP, or the director of the LPH/U shall issue a Summary Report in compliance with section 330.1782 of the Code to the department, appellant, recipient if different than appellant and the recipient's legal representative, if any.
- ii. If the findings of the additional investigation remain the same as those appealed, the department shall inform appellant, recipient (if different than appellant) and the recipient's legal guardian, if any, in writing of the right to seek redress through the circuit court. Copies of this notice will be provided to the:
  - a. MDHHS Bureau of State Hospital Administration Services (if the investigation was conducted by staff of the MDHHS-ORR)
  - b. MDHHS Bureau of Community Based Services (if the investigation was conducted by a CMHSP)
  - c. Michigan Department of Licensing & Regulatory Affairs, Bureau of Community and Health Systems (if the investigation was conducted by an LPH/U).

If the additional investigation results in the substantiation of previously unsubstantiated violation, but the appellant disagrees with the adequacy of the action taken, or plan of action proposed to remedy the violation, the department shall inform the individual(s) of the right to appeal this to the local Appeals Committee.