

## Client Grievance Procedure

People receiving services at Main St. Counseling Center have the means to lodge a formal complaint. Clients may either follow the procedure below or, at any time, avail themselves of the external advocacy services. The procedure is as follows:

### Level I: Supervisor

A client (or the parent of a minor client) will inform the therapist of his/her dissatisfaction and desire to lodge a formal complaint. It is then the therapist's responsibility to schedule a meeting with the client, the therapist and the therapist's supervisor. At this meeting the supervisor will hear all information presented by the client and set a date and time for a second meeting. At this second meeting, the supervisor's thoughts will be communicated verbally to the client. A written copy of the decision will also be delivered.

### Level II: Agency Intermediary

If the client is not satisfied with the supervisor's decision, s/he may appeal it to the Agency Ombudsperson, Dr. Steve Margeotes, the Executive Director. It is then the agency ombudsperson's responsibility to arrange a meeting with the client. At this meeting all pertinent information will be considered and a decision rendered. This decision will be communicated to the client verbally at this meeting, or another scheduled within ten days. A written summation will also be delivered to the client following the meeting.

### Level III: County Mental Health Board

If the client is not satisfied with the agency ombudsperson's decision, s/he may request review by the Essex County Mental Health Board. The Essex County Mental Health Board through the Administrator, shall receive and review complaints referred from the agency ombudsperson within five working days. The Essex County Mental Health Board will make its finds known to the client and the agency ombudsperson within seven working days of the complaint.

### Level IV: New Jersey Division of Mental Health Services

If the client is not satisfied with the recommendations of the Board or the Agency's response to these recommendations, the client may request review by the Division. A client may request a review by the Division directly, and in confidence, at any time. Clients shall be encouraged by the Division, however, to seek an Agency-level review first and will be asked to justify the omission of an Agency or a County-level review. The Division will advise the Agency and the County Mental Health Board of all complaints received directly, unless the client, on notice, refuses to consent to such disclosure.

The Division will review the complaint and submit a written report of its findings within seven working days.

An Agency action that is the subject of a client complaint need not be suspended pending review under these procedures. A client, however, may request expedited, direct review by the Division at any time, and such review shall be completed within 72 hours of the request.

A client who requests assistance with or review of a complaint by an Agency Ombudsperson, County Mental Health Board or the Division shall be required to consent to the disclosure of relevant records, in order to authorize persons providing assistance or review to discuss the subject of the complaint with relevant Agency staff if necessary.

*The actions of the Division are noted in Section 10:37-.6 of the Regulations/Standards Governing Community Mental Health Services in the New Jersey Administrative Code – Title 10.*