

Grievance Process Questions & Answers

A Guide for Dialysis Facilities

What is a grievance?

According to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, a grievance is defined as follows:

“A written or oral communication from an ESRD patient, and/or an individual representing an ESRD patient, and/or another party, alleging that an ESRD service received from a Medicare-certified provider did not meet the grievant’s expectations with respect to safety, civility, patient rights, and/or clinical standards of care.”

Who should be responsible for receiving and documenting a grievance?

Everyone. Any staff person who receives a grievance is responsible for documenting the grievance in the grievance log and reporting the concern to the Facility Administrator/Clinic Manager for follow up. Patients, family members and care partners should be able to report any problems and/or concerns to anyone at the unit without complication. As care providers it is our obligation to create an environment that fosters open communication and patient engagement with a willingness to take every opportunity available to improve care.

Who is responsible for carrying out an investigation of a grievance?

The Facility Administrator/Clinic Manager should take the lead in investigating and resolving all grievances. If the grievance involves the Facility Administrator/Clinic Manager, the grievance should be investigated by that individual’s direct supervisor. This helps to create a process that is easy for the grievant to understand and eliminates questions about with whom they should follow up if questions arise.

All patients, family members, and care partners have the right to file a grievance, internally or externally, without fear of retaliation.

What if the grievant wants to file a grievance anonymously?

The Network encourages facilities to develop an internal process for anonymous grievances to include the date of the incident, staff involved, description of incident and any witnesses, ensuring that the grievance can be submitted to maintain anonymity. Grievances can also be reported to the Network anonymously if desired.

What fosters an environment that encourages patients, family members and care partners to voice their concerns?

- Ensure that all patients, family members and care partners are aware of the option to file a grievance internally at your unit, with the Network, and with the department of health in your state.
- Display the Network-provided grievance poster in an area that is visible to all patients and visitors.
- Place the Network-provided grievance brochures in an area that is accessible to all patients and visitors.
- Consider making your own grievance materials that provide patients and family members with information about your internal grievance process. This may encourage a grievant to work with you prior to taking the concern to outside agency like the Network or the department of health in your state.

