

La Crosse County Human Services

Child Welfare and Youth Justice Services

Complaint/Grievance Procedure

The goal of all human services agencies is to assure the safety and well-being of children. If you are a family member receiving child welfare or youth services, an out-of-home provider, or are directly involved with a child welfare or youth services case and have a concern with the child welfare or youth services provided by La Crosse County Human Services, you have the right to express those concerns as a complaint. Complaints must be submitted within 45 days of the incident which caused the concern. The agency has a responsibility to review your concerns as quickly and effectively as possible. Handling complaints at the local level helps to assure that local agencies are aware of concerns and agencies are accountable for decisions made and actions taken by agency staff. Please note this complaint process does not limit you from using other remedies that may be available to you under the law.

There are confidentiality requirements that limit what child welfare and youth services case information may be shared with individuals submitting a complaint. Persons who are not direct participants in the case will typically need the case participants to authorize release of information in order to receive case information.

There are two ways your concerns can be reviewed – informally and formally.

INFORMAL COMPLAINT PROCESS

The best way to start resolving concerns is with the informal complaint process. The informal process is the fastest way to resolve issues and helps develop the relationship between you and your agency worker. The informal process may include talking with your agency worker, another staff person with whom you have been working, or the supervisor. You can contact the agency Client Rights Grievance Coordinator (CRGC) to request a meeting with agency staff to discuss your concerns.

Jennie Buchholtz, Client Rights Grievance Coordinator
La Crosse County Human Services
300 4th Street North
La Crosse, WI 54601
608-785-6095

If you do not wish to use the informal process or have tried to discuss the concerns with the agency worker and/or supervisor and the issues are not resolved, you can use the formal complaint process. If a formal complaint is submitted, it will be handled through the formal process. You may continue to discuss the issue with the agency worker or supervisor informally while the formal complaint is being processed.

For both the informal and formal complaint process, you may request that a third party of your choice participate to help you in talking with agency staff. If you have a disability or communication limitation,

you can have someone assist you with your complaint. If you want someone to be your advocate during the complaint process, the agency will decide if the third party can participate. For a third party to participate in discussions about your case, you will have to sign a release of information form to allow the agency to share information about your case. The third party must have a completed release of information to participate. The third party should not have a conflict of interest with your case. The third party must also participate in a respectful manner. The agency will let you know if the third party can participate.

FORMAL COMPLAINT PROCESS

If you feel your concerns were not resolved through the informal process, you may file a written complaint and use the formal complaint process. To use the formal complaint process, follow the steps described below.

1. Complete the La Crosse County Human Services Complaint Form explaining your concerns and what you want the agency to do to resolve your concerns.
2. Send the complaint form to the agency Client Rights Grievance Coordinator (CRGC) at the address listed at the bottom of the form.

The CRGC will assign a Client Rights Specialist (CRS) within 3 days of receipt of the complaint. A CRS is an agency Supervisor trained in conducting informal and formal complaint investigations and issuing review decisions.

The assigned CRS will contact you to schedule a time for you (and third party if applicable) to meet by telephone, videoconference, or in person to allow you to present information about your complaint. The meeting or call will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for you. If you do not respond to attempts to schedule the meeting or call, or if the meeting or call is scheduled and you do not participate, your complaint will be closed.

The review will include:

1. Reviewing the case record and other documentation related to your concerns
2. Speaking with you to gather information about your concerns and what you want the agency to do to resolve the concerns
3. Speaking with your agency worker, other agency staff and other persons (such as service providers) as necessary to gather additional information about your concerns

The complaint reviewer will respond to you in writing within 30 calendar days from the date the complaint was filed. The written response will indicate what actions the agency will take to respond to your concerns.

SECOND LEVEL REVIEW OF THE INITIAL DECISION

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the initial review of your complaint, you may ask the agency to review your concerns at the second level. The written response for the initial review will explain the process for a second level review.

If you wish to have a second-level review of your concerns, you must submit a request to the agency Deputy Director within 14 days of receipt of the written response with the initial decision.

Serena Peloza, Deputy Director
La Crosse County Human Services
300 4th Street North
La Crosse, WI 54601

If you submit a timely request for a second-level review, the local agency Deputy Director will:

1. Review the complaint form you submitted and the agency response from the initial review
2. Review the case record and communicate with the agency staff involved with your case
3. Speak with you (and third party if applicable) by telephone, videoconference or in person regarding your complaint
4. Review additional information as needed to answer questions about your complaint

Following the second-level review, the local agency will respond in writing within 30 days from the date the request for a second-level review was filed. This is the local agency's final determination.

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (DCF) REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS

If after going through the local agency formal complaint process you are still dissatisfied with the outcome, you can request DCF, as the state agency overseeing child welfare and youth services, to review your complaint.

You may contact the Department of Children and Families Bureau of Regional Operations Regional Child Welfare Coordinator at: DCFBROCWComplaints@wisconsin.gov.