



California Department of Developmental Services
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
September 2025

FAQS ABOUT THE GRIEVANCE PROCESS

Q1. How is the new grievance process different from 4731 Individuals Rights complaints?

A1. The new grievance process will include complaints about rights violations in addition to other types of complaints. Grievances are filed with the Department and can be requested by anyone. Grievances have a 60-day timeline.

Q2. How is the grievance process different from the Lanterman Appeals process?

A2. The Lanterman appeals process is used to resolve disagreements about service or eligibility decisions. The grievance process is used for complaints about the quality of services, regional center policies, individual rights violations, and other issues.

Q3. Does the grievance process apply to individuals receiving Early Start services?

A3. No. The Early Start complaint and Due Process Hearing and Mediation processes will remain the same.

Q4. Does the grievance process include Whistleblower complaints?

A4. No. The Whistleblower process will remain the same.

Q5. Are there service protections (aid paid pending) while a grievance is pending?

A5. No. Disagreements about service and eligibility decisions are best addressed using the Lanterman appeal process. The Lanterman appeal process has provisions for service protections (aid paid pending) for appeals filed within 60 days of a service decision. You can learn more about the Lanterman appeal process at <https://www.dds.ca.gov/general/appeals-complaints-comments/fair-hearings-complaint-process/>.

Q6. Will the Department conduct a review of each grievance?

A6. The Department will monitor grievance responses by conducting annual reviews of a sampling of investigations and responses. Individuals who are unsatisfied with the response can work with regional center towards a solution and request a review by the Department.

Q7. Will grievance responses be formatted differently than previous complaint response letters?

A7. Yes, the Department will provide a template for grievance responses.

Q8. How will the Department determine grievance types? (Service, Quality or Eligibility)

A8. The Department has developed triage process to determine what category a grievance falls under based on the information provided about the individual served by regional center or state operated facility and the issues presented in the grievance.

Q9. Can grievances be filed anonymously?

A9. No. The whistleblower complaint process is the only process that allows for complaints to be submitted anonymously. You can learn more about the whistleblower complaint process at <https://www.dds.ca.gov/general/appeals-complaints-comments/regional-center-or-vendor-contractor-whistleblower-complaints/>

Q10. How does the Department determine if a grievance presents a health and safety issue and needs to be prioritized?

A10. The Department has developed procedures for determining if the issues presented in a grievance present potential threats to the health and safety of an individual served.

Q11. What is the expedited timeline priority grievances?

A11. The grievances will be expediated according to the Health and Safety issues presented in the complaint.

Q12. How long does a regional center have to respond to a grievance?

A12. Regional centers have 60 days from the date a grievance is received to provide a response and proposed resolution.

Q13. How will the Department safeguard against retaliation from regional centers for filing a grievance?

A13. The Department provides information to individuals about their rights and reminds regional centers that retaliation is not tolerated.

Q14. Can a complaint be filed if an individual believes a regional center has retaliated against them?

A14. Yes, if individuals have evidence of retaliation because of a complaint they submitted, they may submit a retaliation complaint to the Department.

Q15. Will the new grievance database be compatible with LOIS?

A15. Yes.

Q16. Will the new database include past complaints?

A16. The Department will retain data from past complaints but does not plan on importing past complaint data into the new database.

Q17. Does the Department keep record of the most common complaints? How do they make changes so issues do not reoccur?

A17. Yes. The Department will use collected data to identify both regional center specific and systemic issues, and work with regional centers to provide technical assistance and resolve systemic issues.

Q18. What if an individual disagrees with a regional center's proposed resolution?

A18. Individuals who are unsatisfied with a response can work with regional center towards a solution and request a review by the Department.

Q19. How will the Department protect against conflict of interest in regional center staff conducting investigations?

A19. Regional centers must assign staff members to review complaints who were not involved in the original decision that resulted in the complaint.

Q20. Does the Department have the authority to require corrective action, service restoration or policy changes?

A20. The Department has the authority to require corrective actions such as changes to regional center policies and procedures. Disagreements about service or eligibility decisions are best addressed through the Lanterman appeals process.

Q21. Will records used for a grievance be provided to individuals within a set number of days at no cost?

A21. Yes. Regional centers must provide records used during an investigation to the individual and the Department prior to issuing a resolution at no cost.

Q22. Will the Department collaborate with the community on the development of resources for the grievance process?

A22. Yes. The Department works with community members and stakeholder groups on the development of new resources and provides the community with an email address to provide feedback.

Q23. Will forms, resources and information regarding the grievance process be accessible, in plain language, and in multiple languages?

A23. Yes. Individuals may file a grievance on the Departments website, by email, by phone, by fax, or by mail. All forms and informational resources will focus on plain language and will be available in 19 languages.

Q24. How will the Department share information about the changes with the community?

A24. Information about the new process will be shared on the Department's website, during public meetings, and email blasts to community members.

Q25. Will the Department conduct training on the process changes with regional centers and the community?

A25. Yes