

# CAROLINA FAMILY HEALTH CENTERS, INC.

## POLICY

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**TITLE:** RM-301 Patient Grievances

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**EFFECTIVE DATE:** October 2003

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**SECTION:** Risk Management

**REFERENCE PROCEDURE:** RM-301.01 Patient Grievances

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**RESPONSIBLE CHIEF OF STAFF:** Chief Compliance Officer

**RESPONSIBLE COMMITTEE:** Central Committee

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**REVIEWED:** 9/11, 8/12; 5/14, 7/17, 12/18, 01/26/2021, 02/27/2024, 01/28/2025

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### I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that patient complaints are handled promptly and consistently. Complaints that cannot be handled with minimal effort and time, and to the satisfaction of the patient, are addressed through the written grievance process.

### II. POLICY

Patient complaints are taken seriously by CFHC, Inc. When a medical event or break in service occurs, patients and families may feel frustrated or disappointed with their healthcare providers. The response and handling of the event or complaint influences the early and satisfactory resolution of the event. Not responding to the event in a timely and suitable manner may have a negative impact on the patient-provider relationship and result in patient mistrust, disruption of services, possible regulatory action, lawsuits, social media or media coverage, disruptive behaviors, and a detrimental effect on future care and services.

**Concerns/Complaints** are issues that can be resolved promptly and involve staff who are present at the time of the complaint. Complaints typically involve minor service issues that do not require extensive investigation and can be handled by staff who are on-site.

A **grievance** is defined as a written communication made to CFHC, Inc. by the patient or the patient's representative that cannot be resolved promptly by management staff who are present. Grievances may be initiated as a result of either a notice of adverse action directed toward a patient or as a result of a patient's dissatisfaction with CFHC, Inc. itself. A grievance typically involves a thorough investigation.

Comment Cards allow patients to make a recommendation for improvement or acknowledge staff's positive performance. The cards are not to be used to record patient grievances, refer to *RM-300P Patient Satisfaction*.

When handling complaints and grievances, CFHC, Inc. follows these rules:

- CFHC, Inc. establishes a chain of command to handle patient complaints; this includes allowing front-line staff the authority and training for handling day-to-day patient concerns. Providers and practice administrators are available to handle the more serious or complex patient complaints.

- Any patient concerns are promptly addressed and resolved by any employee of the practice within the authority and power of the individual employee. When a patient complaint is outside an individual employee's scope of authority, the employee should immediately institute the chain of command.
- The provider or Chief Medical/Dental Officer addresses any and all complaints involving the perceived quality of care.
- Patient complaints are resolved to the patient's satisfaction as quickly as possible.
- Threats of litigation are reported to the Chief Executive Officer or Chief Compliance Officer, and possibly the insurance carrier as determined by the chief and legal counsel.
- For concerns or complaints of possible discrimination on the part of CFHC, Inc. or its employees, staff immediately reports to the Chief Executive Officer or Chief Compliance Officer. Refer to *EXEC-306 Nondiscrimination Position Statement*.
- Patient concerns that can be resolved to the patient's satisfaction with minimal effort and time do not need to be documented. More serious concerns or complaints, and all complaints of discrimination and medical/dental care, must be documented in writing and routed to the Compliance Associate I. The Chief Compliance Officer or designee, tracks and trends written complaints that rise to the level of a patient grievance. Refer to *RM-100 Incident Reporting*.
- All written complaints are investigated and addressed through CFHC, Inc.'s Quality and Risk Management Program.
- The Chief Executive Officer has the final decision-making authority regarding the resolution of a patient grievance. Once the determination is made, CFHC, Inc. considers the matter closed. The Board of Directors receives a quarterly incident trending report which includes patient grievances.