



**DC Department of Behavioral Health  
Office of the Ombudsman  
Frequently Asked Questions**

The purpose of this section is to provide answers to general questions you may have regarding D.C. Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) services and how to address concerns regarding DBH or DBH certified providers.

**What is a complaint?**

A complaint is a concern expressed by a consumer or an individual on behalf of a consumer about a D.C. Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) service that is or is not being received.

**How is a complaint different from a grievance?**

The complaint process begins in a writing submission or by phone call. It is an informal process that actively involves the consumer and a representative of the Office of the Ombudsman working with the provider to resolve the complaint.

A grievance is a formal written process established by Federal and District law. There are specific forms that must be completed to formally initiate the process. The grievance process involves a written request for answers to consumer concerns. The response must be in writing and provided within a specific timeframe. Once a grievance is filed, current services must remain in place until the outcome of the grievance is determined.

**How can the DBH Office of the Ombudsman help me?**

We will assist you by working with your DBH provider to resolve your complaint focusing on agency established policy and procedures. As we work with you and the provider/staff person, we will identify next steps and work with you to ensure these take place as quickly as possible. If your concern is regarding a program outside of the DBH jurisdiction, we will refer you to the appropriate agency.

**Can I file a grievance and a complaint at the same time?**

No, a grievance and complaint cannot be filed at the same time if the content of the complaint is the same or similar. Once a grievance or complaint is filed, the complainant should complete the process. If a consumer is not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint, a grievance can be filed. If a consumer is not satisfied with the outcome of a grievance, a complaint can be filed.

### **What if I don't want to file a complaint?**

It is your choice to file a complaint. If you prefer, you can report your concerns to a supervisor within the agency and they should be able to assist. The Ombudsman's Office is available with additional resources as needed.

### **Is filing a complaint the same as requesting a Fair Hearing?**

No. A Fair Hearing is conducted by the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH). You can call the OAH at (202) 442-9094 for additional information on how to request a Fair Hearing.

## **Questions about Accessing Services with DBH**

### **What is a Core Service Agency?**

A Core Service Agency (CSA) is a provider that offers mental health services based upon your individual need. These services can include the following: an assessment, medication management, counseling, skill building services in the community, support during a crisis, day services and more intensive community services for youth and adults.

### **What do I need to enroll with a Core Service Agency (CSA)?**

To enroll in a service or with a Core Service Agency (CSA), you must call 1-888-793-4357 (1-888-7WE-HELP). Prior to making the call, you will need the following information: your address, insurance provider, Medicaid/Medicare identification number, date of birth and social security number. There may be additional questions regarding your need for service.

### **What should I expect when I call the Access HelpLine?**

When you call the Access HelpLine, you can expect your call to be answered by a DBH Care Coordinator. The coordinator, will ask a number of questions, including but not limited to: contact information, age, requested service, insurance information and preferred treatment provider. The coordinator will match you with a provider that is appropriate for your service needs and your name will be added to the intake schedule with the identified provider. Upon the end of the call, you will receive the date and time for your intake appointment. If a preferred provider does not accept direct referrals from DBH, you will be given the contact information for the identified provider to schedule your intake appointment.

### **I'm having difficulty getting through to the Access HelpLine. What can I do?**

You have the option to contact a DBH provider directly to find out if they provide the needed service. You can obtain a list of providers and their phone numbers by viewing this link; <https://dbh.dc.gov/node/119532>. Please be advised that each provider has its own unique intake process.

If you continue to have difficulty getting through the Access Helpline, contact the Office of the Ombudsman at 844-698-2924, Monday thru Friday, 9:00am – 5:00pm or 1-800-345-5564. Someone from our office will assist you to connect with the Access HelpLine.

**I had an intake appointment two weeks ago and have had no contact with the provider since then the time of my appointment. Now what?**

Each Core Service Agency (CSA) has their own intake process. At the time of your appointment, the intake process and accompanying timelines should have been provided to you. It is important to ask questions and confirm information regarding intake at that time. If the information provided is not being followed, call the provider and request to speak with the intake coordinator. If this effort is not successful, your next call should be to the clinical director or a supervisor of the facility. If you cannot obtain information on next steps from the CSA, please contact the Office of the Ombudsman, at 1-844-698-2924 for assistance.

**I only need housing, not behavioral health services. Can the agency help me?**

Core service agencies (CSA) provide a number of supports to DC residents in need of behavioral health services. While housing can be a goal identified on your treatment plan, it is important to note that the Department of Behavioral Health works with another District agencies to provide housing. The CSA can explore housing options with DBH and connect you to other housing resources in the city. Individuals and families should note that linkage to a CSA does *NOT* guarantee housing with the Department of Behavioral Health.

**How can I access services for substance use?**

You can contact the Access and Referral Center (ARC) 202-727-8473 or providers in the community. They will provide additional information about services available through a referral. Please visit the DBH website for more information on the ARC and intake sites in the community. <https://dbh.dc.gov/page/apra>.

**My substance use disorder provider doesn't accept my insurance anymore. How can you help?**

You can contact the Access and Referral Center (ARC) 202-727-8473 or community intake sites and they will refer you to a provider that accepts your insurance.

**My provider told me I have to pay a co-pay to receive services. Is this true?**

Most D.C. residents who qualify for Medicaid or Alliance do NOT have a co-pay for behavioral health services provided by DBH or a DBH approved provider. There may be a minimal cost for medication for those with Medicaid, Alliance or a higher cost in the case of private insurance.

**I am a parent / legal guardian / advocate / probation officer; can I enroll my client with a DBH provider?**

If you are the legal guardian or parent of a child/adolescent under age 18, yes, you can enroll your child in services with a DBH provider through the Access HelpLine. If you have custody of a child through a court order, it will be necessary for you to provide a copy of the court order at the time of intake with the provider.

If you are the legal guardian of an adult, yes, you can enroll that person in services with a DBH provider. You must provide documentation of the court order awarding you legal guardianship of the individual.

If you are a probation officer, advocate or other professional working with a child or adolescent, the parent must be on the phone with you when calling the Access HelpLine to connect to services.

If the individual is an adult, you must have the adult on the phone when the call is made to the Access HelpLine to enroll in services. Please note, the adult will be asked by a DBH Care Coordinator, if s/he would like for you to remain on the phone during the call.

## **How Can I File A Complaint?**

### **I am a court appointed guardian/probation/parole officer/social worker. Can I file a complaint on behalf of my client?**

Yes. You can file a complaint on behalf of your client. If your client is not committed to the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) or Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), it may be necessary to obtain consent from the legal guardian or parent to move forward with the complaint. Each case is different, please contact the Office of the Ombudsman to discuss your specific situation and available options.

### **Can I make a complaint about another D.C. Government agency or Federal Government agency to the DBH Ombudsman?**

If the DC Government agency is the D.C. Department of Behavioral Health, yes, you can. If the complaint is regarding a different agency, we will refer you to the appropriate office of the identified agency to address your concern directly. We cannot accept a complaint about a federal agency because that is not within our jurisdiction. We can help you to contact the appropriate ombudsman office.

If your concern is regarding consumer safety, compliance or fraud; the Office of the Ombudsman can accept the complaint. These complaints are frequently forwarded to the DBH Accountability Administration.

### **Can I file a complaint with your office about my employer?**

If your complaint is related to an allegation of fraud or the provision of services offered by DBH or one of the certified providers, yes, you can file a complaint with our office. Issues related to human resources, such as benefits should be directed to your employer or the D.C. Department of Employment Services (DOES).

## **How Do I Resolve An Outstanding Problem?**

### **My provider has discontinued my ACT/CBI/Day services. Can I file a complaint?**

Yes, you can file a complaint. However, in this situation, filing a grievance is more appropriate. By filing a grievance, your services must remain in place until the grievance is resolved.

### **My provider does not maintain contact with me. Who should I call?**

Once you completed the intake process, a staff person should have been identified to support you during this recovery period. This may include a physician, therapist, community support worker (CSW), peer specialist or other personnel. You and your assigned staff person; at your initial meeting will determine the method and frequency of your contact with each other. The contact should be based on the goals that you have established in your treatment plan. If you do not have consistent interaction with your assigned staff person, contact the supervisor of the assigned staff person and request a meeting. If you are unable to meet with the supervisor, speak to the Clinical Director of the provider facility. If these efforts are not successful, place a call to the Office of the Ombudsman at 1-844-698-2924 for assistance. This process also applies if you are assigned an ACT case manager or a CBI worker.

### **My child needs a service that is not offered by his/her current CSA. I do not want to change my CSA. What can I do?**

You do not have to switch CSA to obtain a service for your child. At your request, the treatment team at your CSA, will evaluate your child to determine the appropriateness of receiving an additional/specialty service. The team will explain to you why your child does or does not meet the criteria for the requested service(s). If the child is appropriate for the service, the CSA will locate a provider that offers the service and is accepting referrals. Once the referral is submitted, the CSA will provide information on next steps. The CSA will also be responsible for assisting with the coordination of care for your child.

If the team says your child does not meet criteria and you disagree, request to speak to the supervisor and/or Clinical Director. If this is not effective and you still believe that the service(s) is needed you can contact the Office of the Ombudsman, 1-844-698-2924, for assistance.

### **Even with my request, a therapist has not been provided for my child. What should I do?**

If you request therapy services for your child, the provider will assess your child for the appropriateness of therapy as a service. The assessment will also provide a recommendation for the type of therapy based on your child's symptoms and presentation. Your current provider will assign a therapist or place your child on a wait list; if one is not readily available. If you believe the anticipated time for getting a therapist is too long you may do one of the following: 1) *Call the Access HelpLine (1-888-793-4357) to connect to a provider with a therapist readily available;* 2) *Ask your provider to reach out to their network to identify a provider that has a therapist;* 3) *contact the Access HelpLine to switch to another CSA that has therapy services;* 4) *contact your child's managed care insurance company directly to request a therapist.*

### **I want to change my Community Support Worker. What can I do?**

Obtain the name and contact information of your community support worker's supervisor. Contact the supervisor to request a meeting to discuss the requested change. If you do not agree with the decision, you can request to speak with the Clinical Director for the agency. If you are still unable to obtain or disagree with the resolution, you can contact the Office of the Ombudsman, 1-844-698-2924, to request assistance.

### **My CSW will not help me with housing. What can I do?**

Every consumer must have a treatment plan that identifies their behavioral health needs and goals. Housing can be a goal on your treatment plan; however it should not be the only goal. If housing is a goal on your treatment plan and your CSW is not assisting you, request to speak with the supervisor. If the supervisor is not available or does not respond, request to speak with the Clinical Director. If the Clinical Director does not respond, contact the Office of the Ombudsman.

### **My neighbor told me DBH can help me find housing. Is that true?**

No. DBH has established a small housing program with limited funding and eligibility requirements that indicate a consumer must have a behavioral health diagnosis. Any consumer's identified needs are to be included on your treatment plan and discussed with your Community Support Worker. As a consumer, receiving services from a DBH provider does **NOT** guarantee housing or participation in the small housing program funded by DBH.

### **My application for housing was submitted last year and I still do not have housing; what do I do?**

Submission of a Housing Eligibility Assessment List (HEAL) application is **NOT** a guarantee of housing. It is an acknowledgement of a consumer's need for housing; which has been identified on your current treatment plan. Contact your Community Support Worker or the CSA housing liaison to confirm the application for the program has been submitted. If your circumstances have changed, you can request to be re-assessed by the appropriate person at your CSA. Again, completion and submission of this application is **NOT** a guarantee of housing. If you have difficulty reaching the housing liaison or obtaining assistance from your Community Support Worker, regarding the HEAL application, request the assistance of the Clinical Director.

### **I work for a provider / contractor, staff are not getting paid, can I file a complaint?**

Issues regarding wages and hours are addressed by the Department of Employment Services (DOES). However, you may file a complaint with the Office of the Ombudsman as a means of notification.

### **The supervisor at my CSA will not return my calls. Now what?**

If the supervisor for your assigned worker does not return your calls or will not meet with you, obtain the name and contact information for the Clinical Director. If the Clinical Director is unavailable, you may contact the Office of the Ombudsman, Monday thru Friday, 9:00am –

4:30pm 1-844-698-2924, to request help to resolve your concern. You can also call 1-800-345-5564 after 4:30pm Monday thru Friday, weekends and holidays to file a complaint.

**What if I need services in another language?**

The Access HelpLine and DBH providers make appropriate arrangements to accommodate any client who may need assistance in communicating in a different language.

**How long should I wait before contacting the Office of the Ombudsman?**

A waiting period is not required to contact the Office of the Ombudsman. The Office of the Ombudsman encourages consumers to utilize the complaint/grievance process within their provider agency to resolve any dissatisfaction with services. We, however will accept your call and assist in resolving your complaint, regardless of efforts to resolve the issue with your provider prior to contacting our office.