



Grievance Process

You¹ have the right to file a grievance. A grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction about any matter except an “adverse benefit determination.” Grievances include, but are not limited to:

- The quality of care or services provided. For instance, if staff are rude or disrespectful.
- If you feel staff do not respect your rights.
- We did not authorize and/or provide the services you requested.

Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) will make a decision within 90 calendar days of receiving your grievance. You may share information related to your grievance in person, on the phone or in writing at any time during the process. BHRS will send you an acknowledgment letter and a resolution letter.

You will not be discriminated against in any way for expressing a problem or filing a grievance.

Appeal/Grievance Review

If you disagree with a grievance decision at any time you may refile a grievance for review. You may file an appeal if you received one of the following notices/adverse benefit determinations:

- We denied or limited your services in any way (such as the type/level of service, requirements to meet medical necessity, or restrictions around appropriateness, setting, or effectiveness of services for you).
- BHRS has changed or stopped providing a service you were getting.
- BHRS will not pay for the service you requested.
- Services were not given to you in a timely manner.
- The timeframe for a grievance or appeal was not followed.
- BHRS did not approve a request about your financial obligations.

If you disagree with a decision about your benefits and/or services, (adverse benefit determination) you can request an appeal. That means you can ask for the decision to be reviewed and potentially changed. Your request must be received within 60 calendar days from the date of the original decision. You can request an appeal orally or in writing. An oral appeal must be followed by a written and signed request, unless it is an expedited request. Your services will continue until a decision is made. If you disagree with the decision you may request a State Fair Hearing. Appeals will be decided within 30 days from the date BHRS receives the appeal, unless a 14 day extension is granted.

Expedited Resolution of Appeals

This means that BHRS, or you, or your provider has decided that taking the time for a standard appeal could seriously jeopardize your life, health or ability to attain, maintain or regain maximum function. Decisions on expedited requests will be made within 72 hours. If BHRS denies a request for a faster decision on an appeal or grievance, the timeframe will remain 30 days for an appeal and 90 days for a grievance. BHRS will send you an acknowledgment letter and a resolution letter.

Time Frame Extensions

If BHRS determines it is in your best interests, or you request it, 14 days may be added to make a decision.

If there is an extension, BHRS will make a good effort to give a quick verbal notice of the delay followed by a written notice within 2 calendar days.

If a client disagrees with an extension of the timeframe, they may file a grievance. BHRS will make a decision no later than the date the extension ends.

4 Ways To File a Grievance or Appeal

- Call BHRS Office of Consumer and Family Affairs (OCFA) at (800) 388-5189 to discuss or to set up a meeting.
- Call BHRS ACCESS Call Center at (800) 686-0101.
- In person where you receive services. They will assist you with forms and/or making calls.
- Mail/fax a completed grievance form or a letter to the OCFA at (650) 573-2934.

State Fair Hearing

If you do not agree with BHRS' appeal resolution, or if BHRS denies your request for an appeal, or does not follow the required timelines for your appeal you can request a State Fair Hearing by calling (800) 952-5253, all of your current services will continue until a decision is made. You must file for a hearing no later than 120 days from the date that you received the letter stating that BHRS denied your appeal. If BHRS does not follow the requirements for notifying you of the decision, you may file a State Fair Hearing right away.

Grievance and Appeal Rights

BHRS can help you complete the forms and guide you through the grievance or appeal process. This includes support services you may need, such as an interpreter or TTY/TDD phone lines.

BHRS ensures the people who will make a decision on your grievance or appeal will be:

- People with the right skills and training to understand your conditions or illness.
- People who will read all the records, comments, or other information you and/or your representative give us.
- People who were not involved in any earlier decision about your grievance or appeal.

For appeals you have the right to provide testimony. You or your representative may request copies of all documents in your case file, including medical records, other documents and any new or additional evidence considered, relied upon or generated by BHRS in connection with the appeal of adverse benefit determination. The information will be free of charge to you and will be given prior to any decision being made.

¹ In this document, ‘you’ means you or your authorized representative.

**For assistance, call the Office of Consumer and Family Affairs:
(800) 388-5189 | www.smchealth.org/OCFA**