

**NORTHPOINTE BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS**

**POLICY TITLE:** Complaint and Appeals Process

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**MANUAL:** Recipient Rights

**SECTION:** Rights

**ORIGINAL EFFECTIVE DATE:** 9/15/00

**BOARD APPROVAL DATE:** 11/25/13

**REVIEWED/REVISED ON DATE:** 3/15/18

**CURRENT EFFECTIVE DATE:** 4/1/18

**REVISIONS TO POLICY STATEMENT:**  YES  NO **OTHER REVISIONS:**  YES  NO

**APPLIES TO:**

All programs operated by or under contact with Northpointe Behavioral Healthcare Systems.

**POLICY:**

It is the policy of the Northpointe Board that the Recipient Rights Advisory Committee, be designated to also serve as the Recipient Rights Complaint Appeals Committee. This committee shall meet the composition required in Section 774 of the Mental Health Code.

**PURPOSE:**

Chapter 7A of the Michigan Mental Health Code, P.A. 258 of 1974, as amended, establishes the right of public mental health service recipients, or someone acting on their behalf, to file complaints alleging a violation of rights guaranteed by Chapter 7 of the Code. Chapter 7A also assures that an appeal can be taken regarding the findings, remedial action, or timeliness of the complaint investigation. The purpose of this procedure is to establish the process for handling these appeals to assure all recipients and those acting on their behalf due process including its essential elements of notice and an opportunity to be heard by a fair and impartial decision-making entity.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Appeals Committee**

A committee designated by the Northpointe Board under Section 774 of the Mental Health Code to hear recipient rights complaint appeals brought by, or on behalf of, a recipient of Northpointe.

**Appellant**

The recipient, complainant, parent, or legal guardian who appeals recipient rights finding or respondent's action to an appeals committee.

**Complainant**

An individual who files a recipient rights complaint.

**MDHHS**

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

**Legal Guardian**

A judicially appointed guardian.

**Respondent**

The service provider that had responsibility, at the time of an alleged rights violation, for the services with respect to which a rights complaint has been filed.

**PROCEDURES:**

**A. Training for Appeals Committee**

The Office of Recipient Rights shall ensure that initial and ongoing training and education is provided to the Appeals Committee. Topics may include:

1. Categories of rights violations;
2. Complaint investigation process;
3. Types and weighing of evidence;
4. Preponderance of evidence standard;
5. Statutory definition of "appropriate remedial action";
6. Disciplinary guidelines for Northpointe and its contract providers;
7. Northpointe Recipient Rights Complaint Appeals Procedure and functions of the Appeals Committee.

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### B. Notification of Appeal Rights

Every complainant (recipient if different than the complainant), recipient's legal guardian, and parent of a minor recipient shall be informed in the Summary Report issued by the Chief Executive Officer of the right to appeal to the Northpointe Appeals Committee. Notice shall include information on the grounds for appeal, advocacy organizations that may assist with filing the written appeal and an offer of assistance by the Office of Recipient rights in the absence of assistance from an advocacy organization.

### C. Requesting an Appeal

Not later than 45 calendar days after receipt of the Summary Report, the appellant may file a written appeal with the Northpointe Appeals Committee. The request for an appeal should include the reason for the appeal. The appeal shall be mailed to:

Recipient Rights Appeals Committee Chair  
c/o Office of Recipient Rights  
Northpointe Behavioral Healthcare Systems  
715 Pyle Drive  
Kingsford, MI 49802

### D. Grounds for appeal to the Northpointe Appeals Committee shall be as follows:

1. The investigative findings of the Office of Recipient Rights are not consistent with the facts or with law, rules, policies, or guidelines;
2. The action taken or plan of action proposed by the respondent, does not provide an adequate remedy;
3. An investigation was not initiated or completed on a timely basis.

### E. Reviewing Request for Appeal

1. Upon receipt of the appeal, three members (Chair, Vice-Chair, and member at large) of the Appeals Committee shall:
  - a) Within 5 business days review the appeal to determine if it meets the criteria stated above. Within 7 business days of receipt of the appeal, provide written notice to the appellant that the appeal has been accepted or not accepted.
  - b) If the appeal has been accepted, the Committee shall provide a copy of the appeal to the respondent, the Chief Executive Officer, and the Office of Recipient rights.
2. The Chief Executive Officer and the Office of Recipient rights may provide copies of the appeal to staff as they deem appropriate.

### F. Conducting an Appeal Meeting

1. Within 30 calendar days after receipt of an accepted appeal, the Appeals Committee shall meet in closed session to review the facts as stated in all complaint investigation documents in light of the reason for appeal.
2. The Office of Recipient rights shall ensure that:
  - a. Copies of complaint investigation documents are provided to the Appeals Committee;
  - b. A date and time is scheduled for the appeal meeting;
  - c. A room is scheduled for the appeal meeting;
  - d. All appropriate individuals are notified of the appeal meeting;
  - e. Establish and maintain a written record of the appeal including:
    - 1) The appeal and any supporting documentation;
    - 2) Complaint investigation documents utilized by the Appeals Committee;
    - 3) Any other documentation utilized by the Appeals Committee;
    - 4) Notification sent to the appellant.
  - f. Maintain a log of all appeals received and the disposition of each.

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3. Clerical support staff shall:  
Prepare the Committee's response to the appeal and have it reviewed by the Committee members. The response shall include:
    - 1) The members and other individuals present;
    - 2) The Committee's decision;
    - 3) The rationale for the decision.
  4. Any member of the Appeals Committee who has a personal or professional relationship with an individual involved in the appeal, who has been contacted personally with information about the appeal, or who has any conflict of interest shall abstain from participating in that appeal.
  5. The Committee shall not consider additional allegations that were not part of the original complaint but shall inform the appellant of his/her right to file a new complaint with the Office of Recipient Rights.
  6. The Committee may, at its discretion, request additional supporting documentation from any party involved in the appeal. If the documentation is not provided to the Committee in a timely manner, the appeal will proceed and the decision will be made without the documentation.
  7. The Committee may, at its discretion, request technical assistance only.
  8. At the appeal meeting, the Appeals Committee shall do one of the following:
    - a. Uphold the investigative findings of the Office of Recipient Rights and the action taken or plan of action proposed by the respondent;
    - b. Return the investigation to the Office of Recipient Rights and direct that it be reopened or reinvestigated with specific information about what needs to be reopened or reinvestigated and the reason;
    - c. Uphold the investigative findings of the Office of Recipient Rights but direct that the respondent take additional or different action to remedy the violation;
    - d. If the Committee confirms that the investigation was not initiated or completed in a timely manner, recommend that Northpointe's Chief Executive Officer take appropriate supervisory action with the investigating rights staff or take other appropriate action;
    - e. Recommend that the Northpointe Board request an external investigation by the MDHHS Office of Recipient Rights.
  9. The Appeals Committee shall document its decision in writing within 10 business days following the decision and shall provide copies to the appellant (recipient if different than the appellant), recipient's legal guardian, parent of a minor recipient, the Chief Executive Officer of Northpointe, and the Office of Recipient Rights. Documentation shall include justification for the decision made by the Committee and inform the appellant of their right to appeal to the MDHHS within 45 days of receipt of this notice.
- G. Reopening or Reinvestigating a Complaint
1. If the Appeals Committee directs that the Office of Recipient Rights reopen or reinvestigate the complaint, the Office shall submit another Investigative Report in compliance with Section 778(5) of the Mental Health Code within 45 calendar days of receipt of the written decision of the Committee. The 45-day time frame may be extended at the discretion of the Appeals Committee upon a showing of good cause by the Office. At no time shall the time frame exceed 90 calendar days.
  2. Within 10 business days of receipt of the Investigative Report, the Chief Executive Officer shall issue another Summary Report in compliance with Section 782 of the Mental Health Code. The Summary Report shall be submitted to the appellant (recipient if different than the appellant), parent of a minor recipient, the

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Office of Recipient Rights, and the Appeals Committee. The Summary Report shall contain information regarding the appellant's right to further appeal, the time frame for the appeal, and the grounds for appeal. The Summary Report shall also inform the appellant of advocacy organizations that may assist in filing the written appeal or offer the assistance of the Office of Recipient Rights in the absence of assistance from an advocacy organization.

3. If the investigative findings of the Office remain the same as those appealed, the appellant may file a further appeal to MDHHS

The written appeal shall be mailed to:

Level 2 ORR Appeal  
DHHS-Appeals  
PO Box 30807  
Lansing, MI 48909

4. If the investigative findings result in the substantiation of a previously unsubstantiated rights violation but the appellant disagrees with the adequacy of the action taken or the plan of action proposed by the respondent, the appellant may file an appeal to Northpointe's Appeals Committee. The written appeal shall be mailed to:

Recipient Rights Appeals Committee Chair  
c/o Office of Recipient Rights  
Northpointe Behavioral Healthcare Systems  
715 Pyle Drive  
Kingsford, MI 49802

### H. Taking Additional or Different Action

1. If the Appeals Committee upholds the findings of the Office and directs that the respondent take additional or different action, that direction shall be based on the fact that appropriate remedial action has not been taken in compliance with Section 780 of the Mental Health Code. The Appeals Committee shall base its determination upon any or all of the following:
  - a. Action taken or proposed did not correct or remedy the rights violation;
  - b. Action taken or proposed was/will not be taken in a timely manner;
  - c. Action taken or proposed did not/will not prevent a future recurrence of the violation.
2. Written notice of this direction for additional or different action to be taken by the respondent shall also be provided to Northpointe's Chief Executive Officer (if different than the respondent), and the Office of Recipient Rights.
3. Within 30 calendar days of receipt of the determination from the Appeals Committee, the respondent shall provide written notice to the Appeals Committee that the action has been taken or justification as to why it was not taken. The written notice shall also be sent to the appellant (recipient if different than the appellant), recipient's legal guardian, parent of a minor recipient, the Chief Executive Officer (if different than the respondent), and the Office of Recipient Rights.
4. If the action taken by the respondent is determined by the Appeals Committee and/or the appellant still to be inadequate to remedy the violation, the appellant shall be informed by the Appeals Committee of his/her right to file a recipient rights complaint against the Chief Executive Officer for a violation of Section 755(3)(b) of the Mental Health Code.

### I. Appeal to MDHHS

1. An appeal to MDHHS may be taken only upon the ground that the investigative findings of the Office of

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Recipient rights were inconsistent with the fact, or with law, rules, policies, or guidelines and only after a decision on an appeal has been made by the Northpointe Appeals Committee.

2. Within 45 calendar days after receiving written notice of the decision of the Appeals Committee, the appellant may file a written appeal with MDHHS.

The written appeal shall be mailed to:

State Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules  
MDHHS Administrative Tribunal  
P.O. Box 30763  
Lansing, MI 48909

3. Upon receipt of the appeal, MDHHS shall give written notice of the receipt to the respondent, Northpointe Office of Recipient Rights, and the Chief Executive Officer. The respondent, Office of Recipient Rights, and Chief Executive Officer shall ensure that MDHHS has access to all necessary documentation and other evidence cited in the complaint and local appeal.
4. MDHHS shall review the record generated by the local appeal. It shall not consider additional evidence or information that was not available during the local appeal.
5. Within 30 calendar days after receiving the appeal, MDHHS shall review the appeal and do one of the following:
  - a. Uphold the findings of the Office Recipient Rights;
  - b. Affirm the decision of the Northpointe Appeal Committee;
  - c. Return the matter to the Chief Executive Officer of Northpointe with instruction for additional investigation or consideration.
6. MDHHS shall provide copies of its action to the respondent, the appellant (recipient if different than the appellant), recipient's legal guardian, parent of a minor recipient, the Northpointe Board, and the Northpointe Office of Recipient Rights. If MDHHS upholds the findings of the Office of Recipient Rights, notice shall be provided to the appellant of his/her legal right to seek redress through the circuit court.
7. If MDHHS instructs that additional investigation be conducted, the Chief Executive Officer shall assure that such investigation is completed in a fair and impartial manner within 45 calendar days of receipt of the written notice from MDHHS. The 45-day time frame may be extended at the Department's discretion upon a showing of good cause by the Chief Executive Officer. At no time shall the time frame exceed 90 calendar days.
8. Within 10 business days of the receipt of the Investigative Report, the Chief Executive Officer shall issue a Summary Report in compliance with Section 782 of the Mental Health Code to the Department, appellant (recipient, if different than the appellant), and parent of a minor recipient.
9. If the findings of the additional investigation remain the same as those appealed, the Department shall inform the appellant (recipient if different than the appellant), recipient's legal guardian, and parent of a minor recipient in writing of the right to seek redress through the circuit court. Copies of this notice will be provided to the Director of the MDHHS Quality Management.
10. If the additional investigation results in the substantiation of a previously unsubstantiated violation but the appellant (recipient, if different than the appellant), recipient's legal guardian, or parent of a minor recipient disagrees with the adequacy of the action taken or plan of action proposed to remedy the violation, the

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Department shall inform the individual(s) of the right to appeal this to Northpointe's Appeals Committee.

**CROSS REFERENCES:**

- A. Act 258 of the Public Acts of 1974, as amended (Mental Health Code), Sections 772, 774, 776, 778, 780, 782, 784, 786
- B. Department of Community Health Technical Advisory – Recipient Rights Appeal Process, Dated December 16, 1998

**EXHIBITS:**

Flow Chart for the Appeals Process produced by the MDHHS Office of Recipient Rights