RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

DIRECTOR: Wayne P. Salisbury Jr.

POLICY NUMBER:	EFFECTIVE DATE:	SUBJECT:
18.11-4 DOC	10/01/2025	INMATE COMPLAINTS RELATIVE TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES

LAST REVIEWED:	SECTION:	SUPERSEDES:
10/2025	HEALTH CARE	18.11-3 DOC

AUTHORITY: Rhode Island General Laws (RIGL) § 42-56-10 (22), Powers of the director

REFERENCES: NCCHC standardP-E-01 (important) Grievance Mechanism for Health Complaints; ACA standard 4-4344 (mandatory) Unimpeded Access to Care; the most recent version of RIDOC Policies 2.28 DOC, Medical Co-Pay; 13.10 DOC, Inmate Grievances

INMATE/PUBLIC ACCESS: YES	AVAILABLE IN SPANISH: YES

I. PURPOSE:

To provide a procedure to address inmates' complaints relative to Health Care Services. "Health Care Services" is understood to include medical, nursing, mental health, dental health and related health services.

For inquiries regarding medical co-pay costs, please see the most recent version of RIDOC policy 2.28 DOC, Medical Co-Pay.

II. POLICY:

A. Consistent with the most recent version of RIDOC policy 13.10 DOC, Inmate Grievances, health care is not a "grievable" area of institutional life, except as it pertains to the interpretation and/or application of RIDOC and/or facility-specific rules and procedures. However, RIDOC provides a mechanism to allow inmates to submit complaints relative to Health Care Services.

B. The Medical Program Director's decisions regarding health care services complaints and decisions regarding determinations of abuse of the health care services complaints process are final.

III. PROCEDURES:

A. Inmates should first attempt to resolve complaints relative to RIDOC's Health Care Services informally and at the lowest level of the chain of command whenever possible.

1. Inmates are encouraged to seek relief from the Health Care Services staff in their facilities (i.e., nurses, nursing supervisors, physicians, etc.).

   NOTE: In some cases, a second visit to see a nurse may suffice.

2. If a complaint cannot be resolved on an informal or facility level, inmates should write to the Administrator of Health Care Services within 7 days of the incident complained of.

3. If the Administrator of Health Care Services does not resolve a complaint to the inmate's satisfaction, s/he may appeal to the Medical Program Director within 5 days of receiving a response from the Administrator. If a complaint is sent directly to the Medical Program Director, without first going through the proper chain of command, it will be returned to the inmate without an answer. The Medical Program Director will provide an inmate with a decision within 5 days and that decision is final.

B. Any staff member who receives a written inmate complaint relative to Health Care Services shall:

1. Instruct the inmate to follow the procedure outlined above, or

2. Forward copies of the inmate's complaint and any written response to the Administrator of Health Care Services.

C. The Administrator of Health Care Services will maintain an Inmate Complaint Tracking System that logs all complaints received and their outcomes.

D. Inmates are not subject to disciplinary action for submitting a complaint UNLESS they demonstrate a pattern of abuse of this process by:

1. Filing repetitive complaints addressing the same issue where enough time for response (defined as three (3) weeks from receipt of the initial complaint) has not elapsed or where a valid response has been provided;

2. Knowingly submitting false documents;

3. Filing an excessive number of complaints (defined as five [5] or more in one [1] week or twenty [20] or more in any consecutive one hundred and eighty-day [180] period);

4. Filing an appeal of a complaint that was settled in the inmate's favor at a lower level;

5. Filing harassing, threatening or abusive complaints, and/or;

6. Intentionally filing emergency complaints which are not emergencies.

E. Any inmate identified as potentially submitting harassing, threatening, or abusive complaints will have said complaints reviewed by the Medical Program Director/designee before being classified as abusing the complaint process. If an inmate is submitting abusive complaints, the Medical Director will attempt to resolve the issue(s). If the Medical Director determines that a complaint is harassing or threatening, he/she shall contact security staff and/or Internal Affairs.