



# RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

	<b>POLICY NUMBER:</b> 18.11-3 DOC	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b> 07/08/19	<b>PAGE 1 OF 3</b>
	<b>SUPERCEDES:</b> 18.11-2 DOC	<b>DIRECTOR:</b> <span style="float: right;">Please use BLUE ink.</span> 	
<b>SECTION:</b> HEALTH CARE		<b>SUBJECT:</b> INMATE COMPLAINTS RELATIVE TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES	
<b>AUTHORITY:</b> Rhode Island General Laws (RIGL) § 42-56-10 (22), Powers of the director			
<b>REFERENCES:</b> REFERENCES: NCCHC standard P-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, <a href="#">Medical Co-Pay</a> ; 13.10 DOC, <a href="#">Inmate Grievances</a>			
<b>INMATE / PUBLIC ACCESS?</b>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	
<b>AVAILABLE IN SPANISH?</b>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	

I. **PURPOSE:**

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

- C. 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.
  - 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. 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.

- 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.