

# How Do I Get Help With A HealthChoices Complaint?



*Developed by HealthChoices Consumers in partnership with Value Behavioral Health of Pennsylvania for Crawford, Mercer, and Venango Counties*

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*If you should have a problem and you are unhappy with your mental health or substance abuse treatment or your provider, you may file a **complaint!***

## **WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF A COMPLAINT?**

- You are unhappy with the *care* you are getting.
- You are unhappy that you cannot get the **service** you want because it is not a covered service.
- You are unhappy that you have not received services that you have been approved to get.



## **HOW DO I FILE A COMPLAINT?**

- In most cases, you may file a First Level complaint **at any time.** There are **2 ways** to file a complaint:
  - You may **telephone** & talk with a VBH-PA staff member.
  - You may **write** a letter.

This is a **FIRST LEVEL COMPLAINT.**

## FILING YOUR COMPLAINT

VBH-PA is available to assist you with filing your complaint.

- To file a complaint over the telephone, call the **toll-free number** on your VBH-PA membership card or have someone call for you (phone numbers are also listed on the back cover of this brochure).



- VBH-PA staff persons are available to take your complaint **24 hours a day**, 7 days a week.
- You will be asked for some ideas on how you would like your complaint to be resolved.
- If you are **hearing impaired**, the TTY telephone number is 1-877-688-8502. All calls are free of charge.

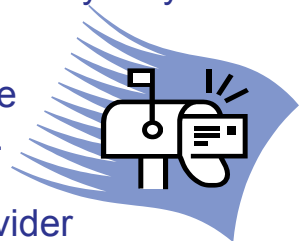
- Or you can **write** to:

**VBH-PA**  
**520 Pleasant Valley Road**  
**Trafford, PA. 15085**  
**Attention: Complaints**



## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I FILE A FIRST LEVEL COMPLAINT?

- VBH-PA will send you a letter to say they received your complaint.
- The letter will tell you about the **first level complaint** process.
- A VBH-PA Clinical and/or Provider Relations staff person will work to resolve your complaint as quickly as possible.
- A decision about your complaint will be made within **30 calendar days**.
- A letter with the decision will be sent to you within **5 business days** after the decision is made.
- The letter will also explain the reason (s) for the decision.
- You may ask VBH-PA to see any information there is about your complaint.
- You may also send VBH-PA any information that may help with your complaint.



**For some types of complaints you may get a letter explaining a different set of steps for the first level complaint process. These steps include your ability to participate in the resolution process by phone or in person.**

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## WHAT IF I DO NOT LIKE VBH-PA'S DECISION?

- If you are not happy with the first level complaint decision, you may file a **Second Level Complaint**.
- The first level decision letter will tell you how to file a second level complaint.



## FILING A SECOND LEVEL COMPLAINT

- When you receive the first level complaint decision letter you have **45 days** to file your **second level complaint**.
- Use the same address or phone number you used to file your first level complaint.
- After filing your **second level complaint**, VBH-PA will send you a letter to say they received your complaint.
- The letter will tell you about the **second level complaint** process.
- For some counties, a county staff person, or their representative, may also be involved in the **second level complaint** process.

### REMEMBER....

- You may ask VBH-PA to see any information there is about your complaint.
- You may also send VBH-PA any information that may help with your complaint.

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## SECOND LEVEL COMPLAINT COMMITTEE

- You can come to the meeting of the **Second Level Complaint Committee** or be included by phone.
- This is your choice - If you don't attend, this will not affect the decision about your complaint.
- The Second Level Complaint Committee will have three or more people on it.
- At least one VBH-PA member will be on the committee (for some counties, the committee will also include a county staff or representative).
- The people on the committee will be people who were not involved in the issue regarding the complaint you filed.
- The **second level committee** will make a decision about your complaint within 30 days from the date VBH-PA got your complaint.
- You will receive a letter about the committee's decision and the reason for the decision.
- The letter will be sent to you within **5 business days** after the decision is made.



## 6 WHAT IF I STILL DON'T LIKE THE DECISION?

- If you are not happy with the second level committee decision you may ask for an **External Complaint Review**.
- These reviews are handled by the **Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH)** and/or the **Pennsylvania Insurance Department**.
- The **DOH** handles complaints about the way a provider gives care or services and the **Insurance Department** handles complaints about VBH-PA policies and procedures.



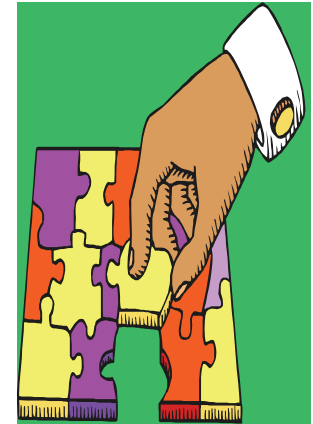
### **REQUESTING AN EXTERNAL REVIEW**

- You must ask for an **external review** within 15 days after receiving the second level decision letter. If you ask, the DOH will help you put your complaint in writing.
- You must send your request in writing directly to the **DOH or Insurance Department**. If the request goes to the wrong department it will be sent to the right department.
- The **DOH or Insurance Departments** will get your file from VBH-PA.
- You may also send them any information that may help with the **external review** of your complaint. If you wish, you may be represented by an attorney or another person during the **external review**.
- A decision letter will be sent to you after the decision is made. The letter will tell you the reason(s) for the decision and what you can do if you do not like the decision.

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***If you would like more information on how to get help with a HealthChoices complaint:***

***Call the VBH-PA toll-free number listed below for Crawford, Mercer, and Venango Counties***



**VBH-PA (866) 404-4561**

***Help is also available by contacting:***

***Northwestern Legal Services.  
(800) 665- 6957***

***OR the Pennsylvania Health Law Project:  
(800) 274-3258***

***More details on the Complaint processes (including Expedited Complaints and DPW Fair Hearings) can also be found in your HealthChoices Member Handbook.***

***If you need a member handbook, please contact Value Behavioral Health of PA.***

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