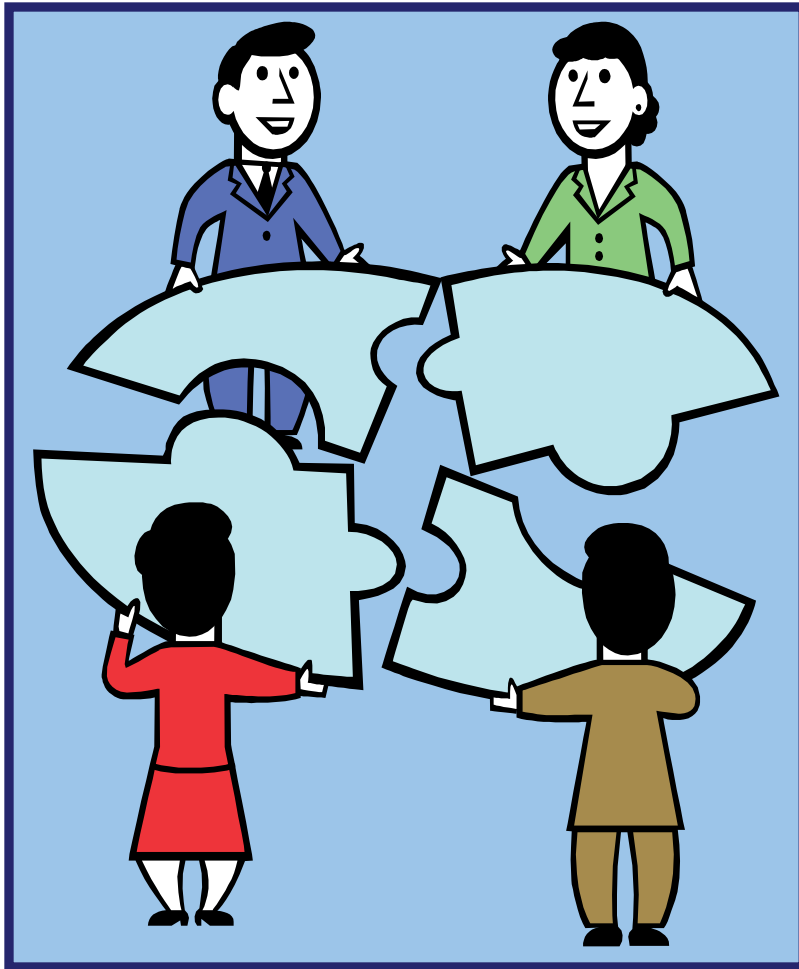


# How Do I Get Help With A HealthChoices Grievance?



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

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## WHAT IS A GRIEVANCE?

A ***grievance*** is a process to follow if you do not agree with a VBH-PA decision that a service you (or your provider) asked for is ***not medically necessary***.

That means the service that was asked for was ***not approved***

**OR**

a ***different amount or type*** of service was recommended by VBH-PA.



## WHEN SHOULD YOU FILE A GRIEVANCE?

You can file a grievance if VBH-PA does any one of these things:

- **DENIES** a service;
- Approves less than **(DECREASES)** what was requested;
- Approves a **DIFFERENT** service from the one that was requested.

**Denies - Decreases - Different**

**THESE ARE THE 3 GRIEVANCE “D’s” TO REMEMBER**

**You should know**,...that HealthChoices consumers have the right to file a grievance. Neither VBH-PA nor your provider is permitted to take any action against you for exercising your right to file a grievance.

## HOW DO I FILE A GRIEVANCE?

*If VBH-PA does not completely approve a service, they will send you a letter. The letter will tell you how to file a grievance.*



### !! IMPORTANT !!

#### TO CONTINUE GETTING SERVICES:

- If you need to continue receiving services, you must file your grievance within **10 calendar days** from the date of the letter saying your services were **denied, decreased, or different**.
- If you need to continue receiving services, these can continue until a decision is made about the grievance you filed.
- The letters you receive from VBH-PA will tell you more about how to continue receiving services.

## FIRST LEVEL GRIEVANCE

You have a total of **45 calendar days** from the date you receive the VBH-PA letter to file a grievance.

There are **3 ways** to file a grievance:



- You may **telephone** and talk with a VBH-PA staff member.

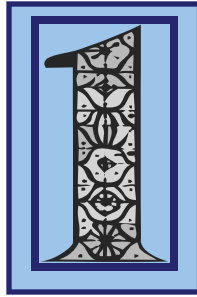


- You may **write** a letter to VBH-PA.

- Your **provider** can file for you **ONLY** if you give them permission in writing to do so. If your provider files for you, you cannot file a separate grievance on your own.

- To file a grievance 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 grievance **24 hours a day**, 7 days a week.
- If you are **hearing impaired**, the TTY telephone number is 1-877-615-8502. All calls are free of charge.
- Or you can **write to:**  
**VBH-PA**  
**520 Pleasant Valley Road**  
**Trafford, PA. 15085**  
**Attention: Complaints and Grievances**

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



- VBH-PA will send you a letter to let you know your grievance was received.



- The letter will tell you about the **first level grievance** process.
- You may ask VBH-PA to see any information they have about your grievance.



- You may also send VBH-PA any information that may help with your grievance.

## WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT A FIRST LEVEL GRIEVANCE?

You can be a part of the **first level grievance** review process.



The letter you receive from VBH-PA will explain how you can be a part of the first level review.

## IF YOU WANT TO BE A PART OF THE FIRST LEVEL REVIEW

- You have **10 calendar days** from the date on the letter to call VBH-PA to let them know you want to be included.
- You can come in person, or call in by phone, to be a part of the review.
- This is your choice - you do not have to attend if you don't want to attend.
- If you don't attend – this will not affect the decision about your grievance.

### HOW IS A DECISION MADE ABOUT MY FIRST LEVEL GRIEVANCE?

- A committee including one or more VBH-PA staff (those not involved in the issue you filed your grievance about) will review your grievance.
- The committee includes a doctor or licensed psychologist.
- The committee will make a decision about your grievance within **30 calendar days**.
- A letter will be sent to you within **5 business days** after the decision is made.
- This letter will explain the reason(s) for the decision.

## WHAT IF I DO NOT LIKE THE COMMITTEE'S DECISION?

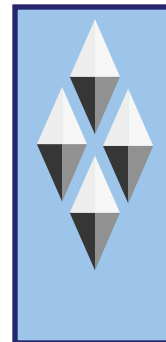


- If you are not happy with the first level grievance decision, you may file a **Second Level Grievance**.
- The first level decision letter will tell you how to file a second level grievance.

## WHEN SHOULD I FILE A SECOND LEVEL GRIEVANCE?

- When you receive the first level grievance decision letter you have **45 calendar days** to file your **second level grievance**.
- Use the same address or phone number you used to file your first level grievance.
- After filing your **second level grievance**, VBH-PA will send you a letter to let you know your grievance was received. The letter will tell you about the **second level grievance** process.

## REMEMBER....



- To file your grievance **within 10 days** to continue receiving services;
- You may ask VBH-PA to see any information they have about your grievance;
- You may also send VBH-PA any information that may help with your grievance.

## SECOND LEVEL GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE

- You can come to the meeting of the **Second Level Grievance Committee** or be included by phone.
- VBH- PA (and/or a county representative) will contact you to ask if you want to come to the meeting.
- This is your choice - If you don't attend, this will not affect the decision about your grievance.



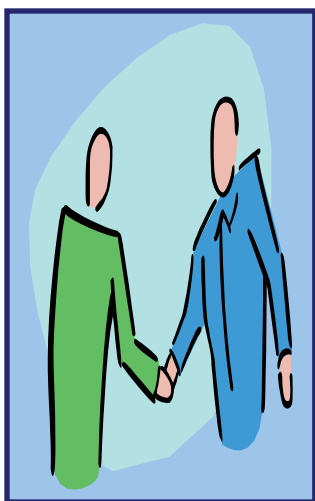
- The Second Level Grievance Committee will have three or more people on it.
- At least one VBH-PA consumer/family member, and a doctor or licensed psychologist, will be on the committee.
- Consumer/family members on the committee are volunteers who receive special training on the grievance process.
- The committee will also include a county mental health or drug and alcohol staff person, or representative.

- The people on the committee will be people who were not involved in the issue regarding the grievance you filed.
- The **second level grievance committee** will make a decision about your grievance within 30 calendar days from the date VBH-PA got your grievance.
- You will receive a letter about the committee's decision and the reason for the decision.
- This letter will be sent to you within **5 business days** after the decision is made.

### WHAT ELSE CAN I DO IF I STILL DON'T LIKE THE DECISION?

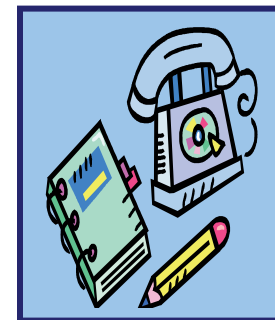
- If you are not happy with the second level grievance committee's decision you may ask for an **External Grievance Review**.
- These reviews are handled by the **Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH)**.
- You must call or send a letter to VBH-PA to ask for an external grievance review (use the same number or address you used for the first level grievance).
- You have **15 calendar days** (10 days to continue receiving services) from the date on your second level grievance decision letter to request an external review.

- VBH-PA will send your request to the **DOH**.
- The **DOH** will let you know the external grievance reviewer's name, address, and phone number.
- VBH-PA will send your grievance file to the reviewer.
- You may also provide the reviewer any information that may help with the **external grievance review**.
- This information must be provided within **15 calendar days** from the date you made the request for an external grievance review.



- A decision letter will be sent to you within 60 calendar days from the date you asked for an external grievance review.
- This letter will tell you the reason(s) for the decision and what you can do if you do not like the decision.

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



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

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

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

***Northwestern Legal Services:***

**1-800-665-6957**

***OR the Pennsylvania Health Law Project:***

**1-800-274-3258**

***More details on the Grievance processes (including Expedited Grievances 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.***